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ANGLICAN
CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA



The Archbishop of Brisbane
The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall

2 June 04,

~~4 December 2015~~

The Chairman
Board of Inquiry into Past Handling of Complaints
of Sexual Abuse
Anglican Diocese of Adelaide
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Dear Judge Olsen

I write to address several errors of fact in the Report of the Board of Inquiry into the handling of claims of sexual abuse and misconduct within the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide, tabled on 31 May 2004 in the South Australian parliament.

On 17 March 2004, I was advised by letter from the Board that no allegations of impropriety, neglect of duty or other such matters had been made to the Board regarding me. Further no such allegations were subsequently put to me during my interview with the Board on 25 March 2004.

I wrote to the Board on 29 March 2004 confirming the Presiding Member's advice to me, at the completion of my Board interview, that if the Board intended to make any criticism of me, or to report any allegations against me, that I would be given an opportunity to respond properly prior to the Board finalizing its report.

On 26 May 2004 I again wrote to the Board seeking confirmation that there were no matters of criticism or allegations of impropriety or neglect of duty concerning me which the Board intended to report. In response the Presiding Member confirmed that the Board had finalised its report, delivered it to the Archbishop of Adelaide and 'did not consider that there was any aspect that called for further reference to Archbishop Aspinall.' The Presiding member also forwarded a copy of the transcript of my interview with the Board and apologised for not forwarding it prior to that time.

On a first reading of the report, however, it is apparent that it contains errors on the basis of which implicit criticisms of me and the discharge of my responsibilities as Assistant Bishop might be inferred. I wish to place on record, and in some instances reiterate, certain facts. Specifically -

At 215. (1) the Board reports "it was said that Bishop Aspinall was at the camp" was at the Cockatoo Valley Camp.

I was not a Bishop when I attended the camp. The camp was held in 1981. I was 21 years of age, a voluntary youth leader and not ordained.

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At 207 (1) the Board says, referring to the Rev. Don Owers memorandum of 26 October 1999, outlining suggested pastoral initiatives: "However, there was no immediate response from either the Archbishop or the Assistant Bishop to the memorandum." At 207 (2) the Board says the Rev. Don Owers received a reply "On 7 December 1999, in response to a query from him, the Assistant Bishop sent an email to Owers..."

Had the Board provided me with the opportunity to correct this error and respond to the implicit criticism I would have informed the Board of the following relevant facts. Contemporaneous records show that multiple contacts occurred between me and the Rev. Don Owers in response to Owers memorandum of 26 October and leading up to my email of 6 December. I also took other related actions. Evidence shows that on:

1 November: I telephoned Owers & left a message for him. On the same day I telephoned both the insurance brokers for the Diocese and media consultants in relation to the proposed pastoral strategies.

4 November: I wrote to Owers.

8 November: I wrote thanking participants in a recent clergy conference on the topic of sexual abuse in the Church, one of the pastoral responses Owers supported.

15 November: A meeting, organised by me, was held specifically to discuss the pastoral responses suggested by Owers. This included the Archbishop, a solicitor, a psychologist and myself. Owers and the then CEO of Anglicare were both invited to the meeting but were unavailable. A direct result of this meeting, as the report notes, was that the Archbishop was prepared to attend a meeting in the Parish of Magill and to acknowledge the known facts about the abuse by Brandenburg and extend support. Other related actions were also taken at around this time.

At 209 (1) The Board states "Owers did not receive any response to his letter", being a letter of 10 December 1999 from Owers to me. Again this is an error on which basis a reasonable person might infer an implicit criticism of me.

Had the Board provided me with the opportunity to correct this error and respond to the implicit criticism I would have informed the Board of the following relevant facts. Contemporaneous records show that I did in fact respond to that letter of 10 December 1999 by meeting with Owers at 4pm the following Tuesday, 14 December. Further, following this meeting I telephoned the diocesan insurance brokers again on 15 December trying to ascertain answers to Owers' questions.

I wish to express my disappointment that I was not provided with an opportunity to correct these errors or to respond to implicit criticisms of me contained in the report.

If I had been, I believe that the Report and the public record would not contain these errors, which reflect adversely upon me.

Yours sincerely

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