

REPORT ON MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING OF THE
BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS
HELD AT ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL PRESBYTERY, SYDNEY, N.S.W.,
ON MONDAY, 14TH NOVEMBER, 1994, AT 9.30 A.M.

1. PRESENT: Most Reverend Kevin Manning, Chairman,
Most Reverend Peter Connors, Secretary,
Most Reverend Geoffrey Robinson,
Ms Myolene Carrick,
Reverend Brian Lucas,
Brother Paul Noonan, C.F.C.,
Sister Angela Ryan, C.S.B.,
Reverend John Usher.

APOLOGIES: Sister Helen Clarke, R.S.C.,
Sister Evelyn Woodward, R.S.J.

Bishop Robinson acted as Chairman for the meeting until the arrival of Bishop Kevin Manning, who was delayed because of air traffic problems. Likewise, Ms Carrick arrived at 10.25 a.m.

Bishop Manning welcomed Ms Carrick to her first meeting and informed the members that the Central Commission of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference had also given approval for Sister Evelyn Woodward to become a member of the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards.

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE REPORT OF THE MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING OF THE BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS.

It was agreed that the Report prepared by the Secretary was a faithful record of matters which were discussed during the meeting held on 18th August, 1994.

3. MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY C.C.I.

Mr. C. O'Malley and Mr. G. Ripon attended the meeting at 9.30 a.m.

- 3.1 Statistics provided by C.C.I.

Mr. Ripon presented a Report on claims for damages which had been referred to C.C.I. for process.

- 3.2 Balance of Funds in the Pool

It was decided that instructions should be sought from the members of the A.C.B.C. concerning the dispersal of funds which are held by C.C.I. and which were intended to establish the Pool.

Sister Angela Ryan will arrange for similar instructions to be obtained from the members of the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes.

3.3 Other Matters to be raised by C.C.I.

Mr. Ripon made mention of a questionnaire prepared by solicitors in a case involving a possible claim for damages, incurred as a result of alleged sexual assault by a priest. The questionnaire was forwarded to Archbishop Little and careful consideration was given to the preparation of the response.

It was decided that Bishops should be asked to reply in a similar manner when they receive questionnaires seeking the type of information asked of Archbishop Little.

Father Brian Lucas tabled notes which he had made after his visit to the office of C.C.I. to inspect files which are held by C.C.I.

Mr. O'Malley stated that the cover provided by C.C.I. is conditional on the use of the Procedures approved by the A.C.B.C. and the A.C.L.R.I., and the purchase of a Public Liability Policy with C.C.I.

Some schools have decided to discontinue their insurance arrangements with C.C.I. and have now been informed that there is no longer any cover for child molestation offences. Therefore, some areas of the "church" are exposed. When a school decides to discontinue their insurance arrangements with C.C.I., the policy is also extinguished as regards previous cases, which may have been known to C.C.I.

Mr. O'Malley is to supply a written exposition of this particular matter so that Bishops and Leaders of Religious Institutes can be fully informed of the situation.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE REPORT OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 Protocol for Church Workers

This item will now be dealt with under Item 6.

4.2 Report on the Establishment of a Therapy Centre

Now that Brother Julian Liddiard, O.H., has returned from overseas Father John Usher will convene the Task Force, which is to comprise Mr. Tim Burns, Brother Julian, Sister Angela Ryan and Bishop Geoff Robinson and himself.

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4.3 Report on the Preparation of the Draft Document "The Catholic Church's Principles in relation to Sexual Abuse and Professional Misconduct".

Bishop Connors reported that the draft document "The Catholic Church's Principles in relation to Sexual Abuse and Professional Misconduct" has been revised in the light of submissions made by various persons and had been distributed to the members of the A.C.B.C. for approval at the November, 1994, Meeting.

Bishop Robinson expressed some disquiet with the methodology used in drawing up the Report and tabled a partly completed alternative presentation of the material contained in the draft document.

It was agreed that Bishop Robinson should complete his draft and that it should be made available for consideration by the Bishops at their meeting this month.

5. APPOINTMENT OF "NATIONAL PROJECT OFFICER FOR CHILD PROTECTION"

Father John Usher tabled a draft job description for the National Project Officer for Child Protection, which had been prepared by Sister Angela Ryan and himself as requested at the previous meeting.

Discussion took place concerning various aspects of the job description which seemed to demand too much of one person. Eventually, it was decided that such a person would really become the Executive Officer of the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards. It would also seem preferable for a lay person to be appointed to the position. Father John Usher will now revise the job description for presentation to the A.C.B.C. for comment and advice.

6. REVISION OF THE NATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR

It was decided that the revision of the National Procedures should be held in abeyance until a decision is made concerning the publication of the document concerning the Catholic Church's Principles in relation to sexual abuse and professional misconduct.

7. REQUEST OF MS LIZ MORIARTY FOR INFORMATION RE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS PROCEDURES

Ms Moriarty had written to the Chairman seeking information which would assist her in the preparation of her research studies at Monash University.

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It was decided that some of the information which she requires is contained in the draft Principles, a copy of which has already been forwarded to her by the Secretary of the Committee.

Father Brian Lucas will draft a response to Ms Moriarty pointing out that the information which she requires cannot be made available by the Committee.

8. LETTER OF FATHER T. BEVAN

Father Thomas R. Bevan, the Executive Director of the Secretariat for Priestly Life and Ministry in the U.S.A., suggests that there should be a meeting to share information as a means of setting up an effective international network of English-speaking countries dealing with the problem of child sexual assault.

It was noted that Church insurers in the U.S.A. and Ireland do not provide cover for Dioceses and Religious Institutes against damages awarded by the Civil Courts in cases of child sexual molestation. However, they do provide insurance cover against legal costs incurred by Dioceses and Religious Institutes in such cases.

When an agenda is drawn up for such a meeting, the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards will decide how many representatives from Australia should be sent to the meeting in the U.S.A. It was also recommended that the meeting should not deal solely with legal matters, but also with prevention and treatment. Perhaps there should also be a representative of the A.C.L.R.I.

Father Brian Lucas will now make contact with Father Bevan and inform him that the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards supports the proposal in principle.

9. FACULTIES GIVEN TO THE UNITED STATES BISHOPS' CONFERENCE BY THE APOSTOLIC SEE

The United States Bishops' Conference have received certain Faculties from the Apostolic See for dealing with priests who are convicted of child sexual molestation. It seems that the Faculties would be of very little if any assistance to Bishops in Australia dealing with such cases if these Faculties were extended to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference.

10. PUBLICITY GIVEN TO PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS VIOLATIONS IN THE MEDIA

General discussion took place concerning publicity given in some Catholic newspapers concerning convictions of priests in the Civil Courts for child molestation offences.

11. GENERAL BUSINESS

Bishop Robinson suggested that he would devote special attention to the preventative aspects of the Charter given to the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards.

Father Lucas reported that he had received four drafts of procedures which are being prepared in the U.S.A. to deal with professional misconduct by Catholic Church personnel.

Because the matter is very complex it was decided that no further action should be taken on the preparation of such procedures in Australia until more work has been done in the U.S.A. and in Canada.

Date of next Meeting: Monday, 20th February, 1995, at 9.30 a.m. at St Mary's Cathedral Presbytery, Sydney, N.S.W.

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