

8 May 2000

His Eminence
Edward Cardinal Clancy AC
Chairman, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
13th Floor Polding House, 276 Pitt St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Your Eminence

In recent times in the diocese of Wollongong, Father John Nestor was required to take leave from active ministry following an allegation of sexual misconduct involving an adolescent boy. The judicial process which followed was quite public and extensive. Father Nestor was initially found guilty but was later successful in having an appeal upheld.

After Father Nestor's appeal was upheld, the Bishop of the Diocese of Wollongong, Most Reverend Philip Wilson, set in place the procedures of the "Towards Healing" document as a way of dealing with issues raised by the presiding Judge in handing down his judgement. Accordingly, Bishop Wilson directed Father Nestor to undertake formal assessment in the Church-sponsored *Encompass* programme. Father Nestor refused this direction and made representation to the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy. Bishop Wilson subsequently responded.

It now appears likely that a decision will soon be announced in Father Nestor's favour.

As members of the College of Consultors of the Diocese of Wollongong, we take this opportunity to communicate to you our deep concern about the impact that such an outcome would have on the local church of Wollongong and also, we think, on the wider church in Australia.

In trying to resolve this matter as justly and as compassionately as possible for all concerned, Bishop Wilson has been guided closely by the "Towards Healing" document.

We would be grateful, Your Eminence, if you would take a personal interest in this matter and the way in which it is announced and made public. We feel that the focus should be on the need for further development of the "Towards Healing" document rather than on its being a result unfavourable to Bishop Wilson.

Yours sincerely

Mgr Paul Ryan PP VG PA

Rev Patrick Kenna PP

Rev Bryan Jones PP

Rev Graham Schmitzer PP

Rev Patrick Faherty PP

Rev Michael Healy PP

Rev Sean Cullen ADM

Rev Michael Williams PP

Rev Christopher Sarkis PP

