

24-JUL-1997 09:44 FROM CATHOLIC EDUC COMM TO 042297666 P.02/02

## Professional Standards Office

Established by the Bishops and Leaders of Religious Institutes  
of the Catholic Church  
in NSW and the ACT

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23 July, 1997

Most Reverend P. Wilson, DD  
Bishop of Wollongong  
PO Box 874  
WOLLONGONG EAST NSW 2520

Dear Bishop Wilson,

I enclose the original of the complaint dated 14 July, 1997 against two priests who at the time (1989 - 92) were working in the Diocese of Wollongong. I enclose also a copy of a letter from Mrs M Phelan who took the complaint..

### Comment

Mrs Phelan saw no reason to conclude that the complainant was not a credible witness. The allegations appear to refer to a failure to maintain professional boundaries and a significant lack of prudence in behaviour towards children. The behaviour in question could, however, be an indication of a more serious problem for one or both of the men accused.

### Recommendations

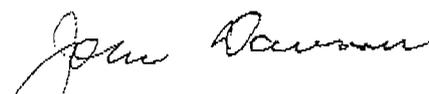
Regarding the complainant I note that Mrs. Phelan recommends that she be given the opportunity of speaking to someone in the Church who could give her information about how people operate who prey on children. I suggest that the complainant be invited to a discussion with an appropriately expert counsellor at Centacare Wollongong to discuss that matter further, with the possibility, if the complainant agreed, for that issue to be taken up with her psychiatrist. The question of the need and appropriateness of assisting with her psychiatrist's fees could also be taken up in that discussion at Centacare.

Regarding the response to the accused it would be preferable to by-pass assessors in this case. It is possible to do so if you already have some evidence of such behaviour on their behalf or they admit to it. Encompass, however, will not agree to a psychological evaluation as a means of investigating the truth or falsity of the complaint. An Encompass assessment could help to identify underlying causes of the aberrant behaviour and help you, and them, to deal with their unacceptable conduct.

I would be very happy to assist in arranging a referral for one or both when the accused know that you know of their offence and that you want them to go into assessment to assist them and to help you make the best decisions in their regard - and they may not necessarily include a further pastoral appointment. The worrying possibility of a more serious problem is one reason why I strongly suggest the evaluation option speedily and assessors only if the facts in the case cannot be established otherwise.

I am very happy to discuss all of these matters in greater detail should you wish.

Yours sincerely,

  
JOHN DAVOREN