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P.L.T. M E M O

To : PLT
 From : Br. Tony Shanahan, cfc
 Date : 12 July, 1996
 Subject : **NOTES ON PRESENTATION TO THE A.C.L.R.I. ASSEMBLY BY
 i) MR. ROBERT GRANT and ii) BISHOP ROBINSON - JULY 6, 1996**

1. Robert Grant

(Clinical Psychologist from the USA, experienced in working with Diocese and Congregations in regard to matters of child abuse; working with the St. John of God Brothers in Australia for twelve months from March 1996; available for seminars and workshops).

- a) All of this is part of a worldwide phenomenon, and not just a Church problem.
- b) We must address the issue from within the pain that this matter represents for all concerned, especially the pain of victims.
- c) We must be very aware of those men in our own ranks who are themselves survivors of abuse in their younger years.
- d) He spoke of five waves in the growing awareness of abuse (see the pages of notes attached).
- e) He then spoke about changes in laws regarding confidentiality, litigation, etc. (see sheet of notes); about policies and procedures (see notes); and about the presence of victims of abuse in religious life (see notes).

2. Bishop Geoff Robinson

- A. He outlined six blocks to owning the problems connected with sexual abuse, six blocks to an effective and consistent Australian response by the Church:
 - i) In the Australian Church there are more than thirty Dioceses or equivalent units (e.g. the military vicariate) and more than 120 religious orders / congregations / provinces, each of these with its own autonomy. Effective and consistent action across the Church means that more than 150 autonomous units agreeing to act according to certain policies and procedures! There is also the problem that allegations are heard "in-house" and there is no appeal against a finding. The same superior often is dealing with the accused (sometimes a friend) and with the complainant. Once again, having some independence in investigation and some Body to whom appeals can be directed will involve some surrender of independence.

- ii) Too often fear characterises our reactions, fear of the victim, of the financial cost, of being the one responsible for sorting out the mess, of further offences, etc. Connected with this, over reliance on lawyers can result. When we brief our lawyers, we need to include in the brief our desire and intention to respond with compassion and fairness, so that the issue being addressed by our legal advisers is not solely one of protecting our assets.
 - iii) Too many complaints regarding the sexual exploitation of adults are dismissed as "consensual relations". This overlooks the inequality of power between, e.g. a priest and his parishioners. This results in too much blaming of victims.
 - iv) More thought is needed in regard to questions of corporate responsibility in addition to the individual responsibility of the offender. This is particularly true when we look at the corporate responsibility for the personal formation and care of a religious over a whole lifetime (often starting in early or mid teens). Thus, the Order has some responsibility for what that person has become.
 - v) There is an inescapable tension between the rights of victims and the rights of offenders / accused. Too often this leads to most of the money and energy going on treating offenders and on paying lawyers, rather than on assisting victims.
 - vi) Too often we get caught on blaming and deploying the media coverage of the issue, and this itself becomes a denial of the problems and realities.
- B. Bishop Robinson spoke about a whole series of dilemmas facing the Church which mean that almost any response or action can be misconstrued or criticised, e.g. if the religious order itself investigates complaints, it is criticised as too "in-house" or a whitewash; if the order doesn't investigate and leaves it to some other body, it is seen to be uncaring and protecting offenders. Or, if an offender is given treatment (often very expensive) and given another job within the order, we are criticised for paying more attention to offenders than victims and of protecting offenders; if we dismiss an offender, we are accused of turning untreated abusers out into the community.
- C. Bishop Robinson stressed that it is unrealistic to hope that all of this controversy will go away and life will go back to "normal". Life will never go back to normal! The "norms" have changed as a result of all this.
- D. He spoke to a draft of a statement of principles relating to sexual abuse by priests and religious. This draft is still confidential, but will be published in the coming months.
- E. Following this, an updated procedures protocol will be finalised and published. These two documents belong together, with the procedures needing to be read in the light of the general principles.
- F. Bishop Robinson then put before the Assembly a series of proposals that came from the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference in April this year. Some clarification and revisions of wording were suggested, but all proposals were ultimately approved. These proposals include,
- i) Diocese and Religious Institutes being invited to have professional and independent persons make case studies of how they have handled

incidents of sexual abuse by their members, and how well or badly they have met the needs of victims.

- ii) Diocese and Religious Institutes being invited to make case studies of how sexual abuse was handled in relation to the community in which it occurred, what lessons might be learned, what effects the whole matter has had on the community, and what the Church might now do to assist the community.
- iii) Drawing up a code of ethics for clergy and religious with particular attention to the guarding of sexual boundaries (this task would involve the Bishops' Conference, ACLRI, the National Council of Priests and the Australian Con-Fraternity of Catholic Clergy).
- iv) A research study of factors leading to sexual abuse (Robert Grant is to be involved in this).
- v) An executive officer to be engaged to carry out and coordinate the above mentioned projects.
- vi) That Centrecare offices be empowered to invite from time to time and when appropriate Bishops and Leaders of Religious Orders to meet with groups of victims of abuse so as to be better acquainted with the effects of abuse and the concerns of victims.

Br. Tony Shanahan, cfc

July 11, 1996

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