



Catholic Education
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Catholic Education Centre

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MEMO

TO:	CHRIS RANN;JOAN ATKINSON
FROM:	ALLAN DOOLEY
DATE:	21 FEBRUARY 2002
SUBJECT:	ST ANN'S SPECIAL SCHOOL – CONFIDENTIAL BRIEFING NOTE

CONFIDENTIAL

The following is a brief summary of major elements associated with St Ann's Special School regarding allegations of sexual abuse.

1. Three families have made statements alleging that Brian Perkins, a paid bus driver and volunteer at St Ann's Special School during the period 1986 – 1991 sexually abused their intellectually disabled children (some of whom were REDA children). We are aware that other students may also be involved and details have been provided to the police;
2. It is alleged that these offences took place on the school bus, in his home, in the woodwork room of the school and on respite weekends when Perkins took students away with the permission of their parents;
3. There is some evidence to suggest that the school was aware of the respite arrangements and did say to Perkins, and at least one family, that school policy was to always have two adults present on any excursion. The respite weekends were not organised or sponsored by the school;
4. The then Principal of the School claims that he first knew of these allegations when police contacted him to speak with students in September 1991. We believe that further conversation took place between police, counsellors and the principal;
5. The police had photographs of one or some children which were found at the residence of Brian Perkins;
6. Police have a recorded interview with one student where specific details are given by the student about the abuse that took place, including possible penetration;
7. Brian Perkins may have been convicted of child stealing in 1956 and we believe that he was either convicted or charged on two counts of Carnal Knowledge in 1969 and 1974. I understand there are currently charges against him for *Inciting or procuring a sexual act for prurient interest*. I believe those charges relate to being in the possession of child pornography and enticing a child to expose their body. Extradition was sought from QLD (6/5/98) where he is currently living, and was refused or not pursued for various reasons. Police know where he lives. This charge is associated with photos of the St Ann's student LH [REDA] son of NE [REDA] and possibly MX [REDA] another student and son of NE [REDA]. I understand these photos were found at Perkins home or amongst other photos in which Perkins' home

was identified. Perkins is not in the photos. I was also told that police attended Perkins' home on 10/9/93 and searched his caravan and shed and found photos of male children, videos and letters.

8. More recent comments (this month) by one of the students (now adult) to a counsellor would suggest that the abuse was with a wider group of students than we currently know and may have included girls;
9. We have maintained close liaison with the police since reports were received in July;
10. The matters have been referred to Pauline Verity (Director Professional Standards Resource Group) under the *Towards Healing* processes;
11. The Minister for Education has been informed and the Archbishop has written directly to him as well;
12. The parents who have made contact have been offered counselling, the parent advocacy support organisation will be supported financially as they work with the parents and there has been good communication between us and them;
13. The parents have been advised that we cannot pursue further processes of investigation until the police have completed their work – this is so that we do not interfere with any processes associated with the investigations;
14. The Public Advocate, John Harly, has also been informed by the parents – Father David Cappo VG and I have met with him and have agreed to form a letter that could be written to all the parents who had children at the school during the 1986 – 91 period. A hotline and process for receiving calls, offering support and counselling is currently being established;
15. The Public Advocate has also written to the Attorney General seeking an Enquiry;
16. Lea Stevens has also written to several people seeking an Enquiry. She was invited and attended one of the parent meetings;
17. The Archbishop has decided that he will attend a meeting of the parents who have been gathering under the auspices of the Parent Advocacy Group. This should take place over the next three weeks;
18. The Archbishop is writing to the Commissioner of Police to seek a reconsideration of extraditing Brian Perkins from QLD – this extradition was considered in 1998 and not pursued for several reasons. We have offered to support the extradition financially if necessary;
19. There have been two lengthy interviews- with the Principal of the day who now has stood aside from his current position (Principal at Tenison Woods Primary School, Richmond) and is working at the Catholic Education Office pending the establishment of an enquiry which would also consider the role he (and others) played in these events. Our initial enquiries lead us to have significant concerns that further actions were not taken in 1991. We know that the CEO, and the chair of the Board of Management were aware of these matters following police contact. Again there is no evidence at this stage that anyone knew before the police contact – what is in question is how we did or did not respond after the fact.

Debra Doherty



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Alison