

Minutes
St. Ann's Taskforce Meeting
Held at West Terrace on 27/08/03

Present: Allan Dooley, Tony Fuller, Monsignor David Cappelletti, Chris Rann, Sue Cain, Archbishop Wilson, Anne Carolin, Joan Atkinson, Pauline Frick.

Apology: Jane Swift.

Sue presented overview of issues discussed at the Working Party meeting held on Monday 25th August. For list of issues refer to minutes distributed.

Business arising:

Payments:

CCI – Sue has spoken with Edmund Fernandez who will be attending the next working party meeting on Wednesday 1st September. Edmund will be liaising with Laurie Rolls regarding advice on recommended monetary amount for the ex-gratia payments to victims and their families.

The issue of a small payment to families in Category 3 was discussed by the working party. Sue explained the two positions on this issue, namely that a small payment to these families would take the edge off the Archbishop's letter explaining the church's decision to make an ex-gratia payment to families based on evidence received by TH and the enquiry. The other opinion was that such a payment could be construed as an indication that these students had been abused.

Chris Rann said that this gesture would be a worthwhile public relations move.

Archbishop Wilson said that the group needed to be aware that whatever action was taken in this case would be setting not a precedent. St. Ann's was a unique situation. Any monetary help needs to be considered within this context. The people concerned are the most vulnerable in our community and have already had extraordinary challenges to deal with. This places terrific responsibility on the church to deal with these people in a compassionate and pastoral way.

David Cappelletti said that caution needed to be exercised in terms of point 2 and 3 of tabled document. The diocese needs to make an independent decision about compensation while taking into account advice from CCI.

To whom would payment be made to:

Sue invited further discussion about whom compensation payments would be made to. In the case of ME [redacted] it was expected that payment would be made directly, subject to inquiry that she manages her own finances. For all other parties it was expected that the parents or caregivers of the former students would receive the payment on their behalf. Tony Fuller had emphasized the importance of requiring recipients to sign an indemnity that preclude their children or any other

interested 3rd party making a future claim against the church. Allan said that we could expect some difficulty between those former students who were now considered to be legally able to manage their financial affairs and their families or caregivers. The State may need to authorize who the recipient is or alternatively a trust fund may need to be set up for some former students and managed by a designated authority. Tony to explore in more detail.

Administration of payments.

Sue asked the Archbishop who needed to be involved in the administration of payment to families. Archbishop Wilson suggested that the working party and taskforce needed to work out what needed to be done before handing this over to the finance department at the church office. It will be important to make them aware of the spirit of the situation. The process has already started with the diocese. The Archbishop has kept informed the diocesan consultors of developments.

David Cappo suggested that the only task for the finance department would be to write the cheques.

Categories:

Eileen and Anne have undertaken to clarify any discrepancies relating to Category determination by 1/09/03. They will also find out from the police whether Brian Perkins asked for any offences against other students to be considered in his guilty plea. This may determine whether any Category 2 students were to be included in Category 1.

Communication with families.

Clarification was sought about the wording and content of letters that would be sent to families. Tony had suggested that families were given minimal information about the criteria for determining payments. Sue felt that this might prove to be a point of contention and suggest lack of transparency.

Archbishop Wilson said that recipients needed to be informed of the general principle upon which decisions were made. *Decisions were based upon estimations of known facts that characterized the level to which people have been abused.*

It had been suggested that the Archbishop's letter to families should include a package of documents including a letter of acceptance, an indemnity document and any information about HIC reimbursement.

Chris Rann said that this may be intimidating for families and be counterproductive. Families may fail to focus on the generosity and spirit of the letter and focus instead on the legal nature of the package. The letter would shadow that there would be a public statement by the Archbishop in the near future.

Once the letters were sent it was highly likely that the media would be informed and it would be important to have a media response ready.

Correspondence would also need to be sent to Parent Advocacy at the same time. Donald Craig would also need to be contacted.

A telephone helpline would be set up and Eileen and Anne would respond to telephone enquiries. A list of possible enquiries and responses would need to be worked out ahead of time.

HIC Payment. Edmund Fernandez and Angela Ryan are exploring the issue of HIC reimbursement as well as any possible implications for recipients in relation to their disability payments.

The question of a pastoral meeting with the Archbishop for families who expressed a wish to do so was discussed. It was decided that this could be fraught with difficulties given the number of families in question. Archbishop Wilson indicated that the letter to families would include reference to his earlier meeting and apology on behalf of the church. It should also express his desire to reiterate his sincere regret for what had occurred.

Archbishop Wilson made the point that people had complained about when Towards Healing was going to operate. They need to be made aware that there has been ongoing support and intervention over the past months. This has included financial support for counselling, psychological assessments, transport and retraining.

Timeframe

- Letter would go out to families by the end of the fourth week in September.
- The public statement would need to be scheduled prior to 29th September as the Archbishop would be away in October.
- Tony Fuller would also be away in October.
Media Strategy
- Chris Rann said that it would be helpful to have a copy of Tony's draft letter to families to use in planning the media response.
- The Archbishop said that he would be reporting to the Central Committee of Bishop's Conference about the unique nature of the St. Ann's Enquiry.
- The Archbishop said that he would need to let the clergy in the diocese know what was happening on the same day as he made the public statement.
- He also suggested that it would be helpful to send a letter to parishioners. This would be read out at Masses in the diocese.
- He also said that a backlash from some parishioners could be expected. They would be concerned that monies from their planned giving was being used to compensate child abuse in the church. Parishioners needed to be reassured that this was not the case. Monies would be sought by exposing some of the diocese assets.

- Allan said that it would be important to retest the address list and recheck the current database for families. Anne to follow up.

Dates for Working Party Meetings:

Mondays 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th September at Church Office.

Anne Carolin