

ACBC PLENARY MEETING 12 - 21 APRIL 1994
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## **SPECIAL ISSUES SUB-COMMITTEE**

### **REPORT**

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#### **1 QUESTION OF DISCOVERY OF DOCUMENTS AND THE PROCEDURES FOR RECORD KEEPING**

It has been agreed by the Committee that prudence demands that no documents which have relevance to a matter of Special Issues be destroyed. If necessary, an argument can be made in the civil courts against the discovery of documents.

Experience indicates that it is unwise for Bishops themselves to receive disclosures either from alleged victims or perpetrators. The Committee also discussed the issue of whether an approach should be made to those victims when a perpetrator has made admissions about sexual assault which was not already known to the ecclesiastical authorities. It would seem advisable to make such an approach when the victim is still under the age of 18 years.

#### **2 REVISION OF PROCEDURES TO BE USED BY BISHOPS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN DEALING WITH MATTERS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT.**

It is noted that some dioceses have drawn up their own procedures. This is in order provided that the diocesan procedures do not contradict or omit any requirements set down in the national procedures.

The present national procedures will be revised and special attention will be given to dealing with allegations made against lay employees of the Catholic Church.

#### **3 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A THERAPY CENTRE**

It now seems unlikely that the Saint John of God Brothers will be able to assist with the establishment of a Therapy Centre in one of their health care facilities. Meanwhile approaches will be made to Congregations of Religious Women to ascertain whether they can assist with the establishment of a Therapy Centre.

It should be noted that an entry permit into the United States for alleged perpetrators who have been charged in the civil courts is unlikely to be given.

There is urgent need for a residence to be made available for alleged perpetrators who are waiting to be charged or are waiting for those charges to be heard in the civil criminal jurisdiction.

**4 "THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S PRINCIPLES IN RELATION TO SEXUAL ASSAULT AND PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT"**

**Motion:** That Conference approve publication of the "The Catholic Church's Principles in relation to Sexual Assault and Professional Misconduct" which has been revised in the light of submissions from those who took up the invitation to comment on the draft.

If approval is given for publication, then it will be submitted to the next assembly of the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes for the Approval of that Conference.

**5 STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH PAIN AND CONFUSION WHICH AFFECTS CHRIST'S FAITHFUL IN THE WAKE OF SEXUAL OFFENCES INVOLVING CHURCH PERSONNEL.**

Although it has been suggested that Public Relations Consultants be engaged by the Church to respond to the negative publicity in the Media, the Committee is uncertain as to whether this is the appropriate course of action. The Committee will continue to give attention to this matter, and in particular make recommendations as to how parishes and other communities can be assisted when they have been affected by such publicity involving one of its leaders or employees.

**6 ESTABLISHMENT OF A "SECULAR EMPLOYMENT POLICY"**

The Special Issues Committee of the Dioceses of Ballarat has suggested that an effective strategy be drawn up in co-operation with lay avenues, for appropriate placement within the secular workforce of members of the clergy who will leave active ministry due to the indefinite suspension of all priestly faculties or through formal laicisation. This Committee was not able to devote sufficient time for adequate study of this proposal.

**7 APPOINTMENT OF A "NATIONAL PROJECT OFFICER FOR CHILD PROTECTION"**

Because of the complexity of the present situation and the need for expert advice and assistance to be made available to State Resource Groups, it is

recommended to Conference that a National Project Officer for Child Protection and Professional Standards be appointed. A Job Description is being prepared at the present time.

Sources of funding for the Officer might be funds which have been paid into the Pool, Catholic Church Insurances Limited, and/or annual levy from dioceses and religious congregations.

**Motion:** That Conference approve the appointment of a National Project Officer for Child Protection and Professional Standards.

*e. c. I.  
Involvement?*

**8 REVIEW OF THE TITLE OF THE SPECIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE**

**Motion:** That this Committee now be known as "Bishops' Committee for Child Protection and Professional Standards".

**9 REVIEW OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SPECIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE**

**Motion:** That Conference establish a Committee which will be independent of the Bishops' Committee for Clergy and Religious.

*of 3 Bishops  
for Child Protection + Professional Standards  
consists of three Bishops.  
that 3 reps of ACHR + other persons be invited as consultants to be able with the offer*

It is recommended that three Bishops be appointed to the Committee. There will also be three representatives of the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes on the Committee.

*Needs clarification*

**Motion:** That Father Brian Lucas and Father John Usher be reappointed for a term of three years.

Because the Committee will require the appointment of at least one additional member, Conference is asked to give approval for the Central Commission to make an appointment when nominations are made by the Committee.

**Motion:** That Conference give approval for the Central Commission to make appointments to the Bishops' Committee for Child Protection and Professional Standards when nominations are made by the Committee.

Most Rev P J Connors  
Chairman

*Pool - Needs Discussion*

April 1994