

BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

A Committee of Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference

and the

Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes

REPORT

ACBC PLENARY MEETING 9 – 18 May 2000

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1 "TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING"

"Towards Understanding" formed the basis for last Saturday's pastoral discussion between bishops and Congregational Leaders. This Committee expresses appreciation to all participants and gratitude to Sr Angela Ryan and Mrs Mary Gow for their facilitation.

2 THE TYBURN NUNS

The Panel of Review appointed to assess complaints emanating from the Tyburn priory in 1999 has completed its brief. It concluded that, while "there were some serious deficiencies" in following the "Towards Healing" process, there were also significant problems on the part of those involved in the appropriateness of their responses. A process of Mediation between the parties is being established.

3 ENCOMPASS AUSTRALASIA

Encompass Australasia continues to do well. There has been some increase in referrals from bishops and Leaders, from Anglican Dioceses and individuals referring themselves. While the mens' programme is proving successful, the womens' programme is struggling a little. Financially, Encompass remains self-sufficient and the deficit incurred by the closure of the Melbourne office is gradually being reduced.

4 A FORMATION CONFERENCE

A Formation Conference, based on elements of "Integrity in Ministry", is being planned for 2001. Participants will include bishops, Congregational Leaders, formation personnel and others invitees. Questionnaires seeking a direction for the proposed conference will be distributed quite soon. Your prompt assistance will be greatly appreciated.

5 "INTEGRITY IN MINISTRY"

"Integrity in Ministry", a document of principles and standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia, continues to be accepted by more Dioceses and Congregations. The November 1999 ACBC Conference passed a Motion. (Carried) which read:

"In accordance with 'Integrity in Ministry' (Appendix I, No.13) least four members of the Conference and two independent civil lawyers to a stably established group".

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be appointed

Lack of time prevented this election.

6 LETTERS OF TRANSFER

Bishops and Congregational Leaders are reminded of the need to take seriously our agreed protocol to write a letter of transfer when arranging to transfer a priest or Religious to another Diocese, declaring the good character of the one being transferred.

7 RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE

At the April 1999 ACBC Conference three questions were asked regarding pastoral care of priests-offenders and parish communities, and the release of appropriate information when a complaint has been made. APPENDIX I is a Working Paper resulting from the responses to the three questions. Use of this information should assist bishops in their own response. Is more required?

8 MEETING IN ROME

In April, Bishops Geoffrey Robinson and Philip Wilson attended a four-day meeting in Rome on the subject of sexual abuse. Nine (9) Conferences of Bishops from English-speaking countries were represented. Most Vatican Congregations were represented.

Vatican officials insisted that Canonical processes be assiduously applied in all cases. APPENDIX II is a report on some of the implications of the meeting for "Towards Healing".

9 REVIEW OF "TOWARDS HEALING"

Professor Patrick Parkinson, engaged by NCPS to review the document "Towards Healing", has completed his work. However, as a result of the meeting in Rome in April, the review process will need to be revised further. This will include discussion among Tribunal Judges and Convenors of Professional Standards Resource Groups.

10 STATISTICAL DATA

Data prepared for the meeting in Rome is included as APPENDIX III.

Sister Angela Ryan, Executive Officer of NCPS, reports that there has been a sudden and unexpected surge in allegations during the early part of 2000. The majority of these allegations have been made against known offenders.

Most Rev M Malone
Secretary

14 May 2000