

ACBC PLENARY MEETING 28 November – 2 December 1994

BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

REPORT

1 REPLIES BY BISHOPS TO QUESTIONNAIRES FORWARDED BY SOLICITORS ACTING ON BEHALF OF ALLEGED VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

The Archdiocese of Melbourne has been asked to supply written answers to a questionnaire prepared by Solicitors acting on behalf of a prospective plaintiff in a case of sexual abuse by a priest. The purpose of the questionnaire is to enable the Archbishop to avoid attendance at Court to elucidate orally the matters referred to in the questionnaire.

It is strongly recommended that when Bishops receive similar requests from Solicitors, their replies be substantially in accord with the answers given by the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

If and when such a similar request is made in another diocese, the Bishop is asked to contact Bishop Connors for further information.

This Committee has also received a request for assistance from a Research Student for information relating to the Catholic Church's Policy in cases involving allegations of sexual abuse.

For your information a copy of the relevant documentation is attached. It is recommended that Bishops reply in a similar manner to such requests.

2 REPORT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A THERAPY CENTRE

The Committee has appointed a Sub-Committee to investigate the establishment of a management/treatment programme for paraphillia and other psycho-sexual disorders. The Sub-Committee has been waiting the return from overseas of a very important member and is now in a position to carry out its mandate. It is hoped that detailed information will be made available at the next meeting of the ACBC.

**3 REPORT ON THE PREPARATION OF THE DRAFT DOCUMENT
"THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S PRINCIPLES IN RELATION TO
SEXUAL ABUSE AND PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT"**

Bishops will have received a further draft of the document "The Catholic Church's Principles in relation to Sexual Abuse and Professional Misconduct" prior to coming to this meeting of the ACBC.

Since then, there has been a meeting of the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards when queries were raised about the methodology used in drawing up the document.

It has been suggested that one of the members of the Committee be invited to draft another document. However, the Committee is most anxious to receive the comments and advice of the Bishops on the present draft at this Meeting of the ACBC.

4 APPOINTMENT OF A CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Because of the urgency of the matter and its complexity, the Committee considers that it can no longer carry out its mandate without the assistance of a full-time Executive Officer. Presently a job description is being prepared for presentation to the ACBC and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes. It is also envisaged that the office can be funded from monies which are held in the so-called "Pool".

**5 FACULTIES GIVEN TO THE UNITED STATES BISHOPS'
CONFERENCE BY THE APOSTOLIC SEE**

In reply to a request from the United States Bishops' Conference, the Apostolic See has given a derogation from certain Canons of the Code of Canon Law dealing with the penal process for crimes mentioned in Canon 1395, par.2.

It is the view of this Committee that a similar concession to the ACBC would be of little if any advantage.

**6 RESPONSE TO THE PUBLICITY GIVEN TO PROFESSIONAL
STANDARDS VIOLATIONS IN THE MEDIA**

Once again this Committee has been asked to suggest ways and means by which an appropriate response can be made to the adverse publicity given to the Catholic Church concerning sexual abuse and professional misconduct by its personnel. However, after seeking advice from competent persons and organizations, there is little that can be done so long as new cases are being brought to the attention of the public.

7 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS.

Since the April 1994 meeting of the ACBC the Central Commission has given approval for the appointment of Ms Myolene Carrick of the Archdiocese of Brisbane and Sister Evelyn Woodward, RSJ to membership on the Committee.

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson has now taken up his membership on the Committee and will devote special attention to the preventative aspects of the mandate given to the Committee.

Most Rev P J Connors
Secretary

29 November 1994