

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

HELD AT THE ST PAUL'S NATIONAL SEMINARY, KENSINGTON NSW

26 NOVEMBER 1996

1. PRESENT: Bishops Kevin Manning (Chair), Geoff Robinson, Peter Connors; Archbishop Frank Carroll, Bishop Bede Heather; Srs Evelyn Woodward RSJ, Angela Ryan CSB, Br. Michael Hill FMS; Ms Myolene Carrick; Mr Laurie Rolls, Fr's Brian Lucas, John Usher, Kevin Dance CP, David Cappelletti (Executive Officer).
2. APOLOGIES: Mr Paul Serong (CCI); Bishop Michael Malone.
3. The chairman, Bishop Manning opened the meeting at 2.30pm with prayer
4. The agenda was confirmed.
5. The minutes of the previous meeting of the 22 October 1996 were confirmed.
6. Documentation from the Archbishop of Melbourne, Archbishop Pell regarding the newly established Melbourne diocesan procedures for responding to sexual abuse were tabled. Father Cappelletti, the executive officer informed the meeting that Archbishop Pell presented this documentation (a letter from the Archbishop's solicitors setting out a comparison between the Melbourne and new national procedures and where the national procedures are incompatible with Melbourne's procedures) ten minutes before the National Committee meeting was to commence. Father Cappelletti also informed the meeting that Archbishop Pell had asked him to relay to the National Committee his preparedness and willingness to do all in his power to co operate with the new national principles and procedures.

After some initial discussion the meeting DECIDED not to respond to this correspondence at this stage but rather to focus on the final approval of the national principles and procedures.

## 7. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES.

### 7.1 TOWARDS HEALING: Principles and Procedures in responding to sexual abuse by personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia.

The Committee APPROVED the document for implementation as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1997. It was also DECIDED that section 8 on REVIEW OF PROCESS should be highlighted for discussion at the plenary session of the Bishops Conference with some members of Religious orders also present. It was also noted that the executive of the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes had APPROVED the document in principle, at its recent meeting.

It was also AGREED that:

Provincial Conferences of Bishops and Religious Leaders be asked to establish or re establish Professional Standards Resource Groups by the end of February 1997.

In service workshops be organised between April and June 1997 for all members of Professional Standards Resource Groups in their capital city. National Committee members agreed to assist the executive officer in this work.

The National phone line be established in June 1997.

Each Professional Standards Resource Group be asked to print pamphlets indicating the names and phone numbers of contact persons and that these pamphlets be widely distributed.

The executive officer liaise with the Convenors of Resource Groups in July 1997 regarding the appointment of facilitators and reviewers in each province.

### 7.2 FLOW CHART OF TOWARDS HEALING PROCEDURES.

A flow chart was presented to the National Committee. It was AGREED that the flow chart only be used for in-service purposes and not become part of the published document. It was suggested that the flow chart be amended to provide more emphasis on action to be taken with the offender

### 7.3 STUDY OF CASES BY INDEPENDENT PERSONS

The executive officer advised the Committee that only 7 completed case studies have been received from dioceses or religious institutes.

The Committee instructed the executive officer to bring this matter to the attention of bishops and religious leaders and remind them of the decisions to carry out this project made earlier in 1996.

It was DECIDED to extend the due date for case studies to mid March 1997.

#### 7.4 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS.

The executive officer informed the Committee of the work of the advisory committee for the development of the Code of Conduct. The various drafts will also be distributed to the National Committee for information and comment. The Code of Conduct committee is very aware of the sensitivity of this issue and the need to frame the Code in terms of protective behaviours for clergy and religious in order to assist them in their pastoral ministries.

#### 7.5 NATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM

Mr. Neil Harrigan Chair of the Interim Board of the National Therapy Program was present to provide the meeting with a summary of the current status of the Therapy Program. Mr Harrigan informed the Committee that Dr Alex Blyzinski of Sydney and Professor Richard Ball of Melbourne are working very closely together in the development of a highly professional and credible model of therapeutic intervention. Mr Harrigan informed the Committee that the Therapy Program expects to be able to accept clients by the end of February 1997.

#### 7.6 STUDY BY THE ACSWC AND CENTACARE SYDNEY

Father Usher (Director of Centacare Sydney) reported that the study is proceeding according to schedule and that a draft report should be available for the Bishops Conference in April 1997.

#### 7.7 SUBMISSION TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO THE NSW POLICE SERVICES.

Father Cappelletti reported that the Committee's submission is to be a public exhibit in the final report of the Royal Commission.

#### 7.8 CONTACT WITH POLICE SERVICES.

A letter has been written by the executive officer to all Archbishops requesting that they initiate contact with the Police Commissioner in their respective State or Territory in order to establish dialogue between the police and local professional

standards personnel regarding the implementation of **Towards Healing**. Dialogue has already taken place in Sydney, Melbourne, Darwin and Adelaide.

#### 7.9 PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE BISHOPS

The Committee AGREED to recommend to the Bishops Conference that a pastoral letter be released providing a summary and progress report on the implementation of the 9 point plan agreed to and publicised at the April 1996 Bishops Conference meeting.

#### 7.10 MANDATE AND STATUS OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

The executive officer tabled a draft mandate for the National Committee.

The Committee AGREED that the issue of the status of the national committee needs to be resolved by the ACBC and the ACLRI before the mandate is further developed. Bishop Connors is to raise this issue with the ACBC in his secretary's report. It is the Committee's RECOMMENDATION that the National Committee be seen as jointly and equally established by the ACBC and the ACLRI and responsible to both bodies.

#### 7.11 UPDATE ON THE MELBOURNE ARCHDIOCESE'S NEW PROCEDURES.

The executive officer reported on meetings that he together with Mr Laurie Rolls have attended with the Archdiocese of Melbourne's solicitors. Father Cappelletti informed the Committee that he spoke to the draft national principles and procedures. Father Cappelletti also tabled a letter that he subsequently sent to the solicitors pointing out issues of concern in the Melbourne procedures and suggesting that in view of the imminent approval of the national procedures that a short delay in releasing Melbourne's procedures was advisable. Father Cappelletti expressed his thanks to Laurie Rolls for the skilful assistance he gave in these delicate discussions.

The meeting AGREED that the initiative taken by the Melbourne Archdiocese undermines the credibility of how serious the bishops and religious leaders are in making this statement (**Towards Healing**).

The meeting AGREED to inform the ACBC of this resolution.

### 8. BUDGET MATTERS

As requested by the ACBC secretariat Father Cappelletti tabled a consolidated budget for 1997 of all areas of National Professional Standards. The Committee ENDORSED this budget.

It was also NOTED that the ACLRI have already made a commitment to <sup>jointly</sup> fund the Professional Standards Budget. At this stage the budget agreement with the ACBC secretariat has not been reached. CCI have already provided \$50,000 for 1996 to the ACBC secretariat. The generosity of CCI and the ACLRI was NOTED with the appreciation of the National Committee.

## 9. CORRESPONDENCE

9.1 The executive officer tabled a letter sent to all bishops, some religious leaders and some priests from HOLLOWS LAWYERS. This letter seeks to pursue the issue of compensation on a national basis. The Committee ENDORSED the suggestion that the executive officer respond to this letter on behalf of bishops and religious leaders and send copies of the letter to all bishops and others concerned.

9.2 Other correspondence was tabled for information; a letter from Centacare Sydney informing the National Committee of the introduction of a service dedicated to victims of abuse; a letter from Brother Patrick White cfc providing information of his availability to be involved in the therapy team of the National Therapy Program; a letter of acknowledgement of the committees submission to the NSW Royal Commission into Police Services. The correspondence was NOTED.

## 10. REPORTS FROM ACLRI AND CCI

There was no specific report tabled from the ACLRI or CCI

## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 The executive officer reported that he had met with the Darwin Diocesan Professional Standards Resource Group and provided in service training as well as joining with Bishop Collins in meeting with the local Police Services in order to establish local procedures in implementing **Towards Healing**.

11.2 The executive officer reported that he had met with representation of bishops and religious leaders from Queensland as a preparatory meeting for the establishment of a Queensland Professional Standards Resource Group.

11.3 The executive officer reported that he has met with the Province of Sisters of St Joseph in Adelaide to discuss issues of sexual abuse.

The executive officer informed the Committee that he attended a meeting on media issues in relation to sexual abuse organised by CCI. The executive officer said that this was a very informative meeting and commended CCI for this initiative.