

REPORT OF MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING OF THE
SPECIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE OF THE
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
HELD ON SATURDAY, 12TH MARCH, 1994, AT 9.00 A.M.,
AT SAINT MARY'S CATHEDRAL PRESBYTERY, SYDNEY, N.S.W.

PRESENT: Most Reverend P. Connors, Reverend B. Lucas,
Sister Angela Ryan, Reverend J. Usher.

Mr. Chris O'Malley (C.C.I.) attended the meeting at
10.00 a.m. and remained until 11.00 a.m.

APOLOGIES: Most Reverend K. Manning, Brother P. Noonan.

1. ESTABLISHMENT OF THERAPY CENTRE

On 18th February, 1994, Bishop Connors wrote to Mr. Graham Wright, the Secretary of the Saint John of God Hospital Board, care of the Saint John of God Hospital, Richmond, N.S.W., seeking assistance from the Board in the provision of a programme of therapy and on-going counselling for priests, religious and church workers who are perpetrators of sexual abuse and misconduct.

Mr. Tim Burns, the Chief Executive Officer of the Saint John of God Hospital, Richmond, has expressed support for the project. However, there do seem to be some factors involved with the establishment of such a Therapy Centre in close relationship to a Saint John of God Hospital, which are causing disquiet for at least some of the members of the Council of the Saint John of God Brothers' Provincial Leader.

As a reply has not yet been received from Mr. Graham Wright, Bishop Connors is to ring Mr. Tim Burns to ascertain when such a reply might be expected.

It was agreed that there is an urgent need for such a Therapy Centre and for a Safe Place, where alleged perpetrators can reside while they await the outcome of the legal process.

If there is no response from the Saint John of God Hospital Board within a few days, or if the response is in the negative, then arrangements will be made to discuss the project with the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of Charity and the Little Company of Mary. The Saint John of God Sisters might also be able to participate in the project.

Mt. Vernon, which is presently owned by the Brothers of Saint Gerard Majella, might well be a suitable residence for the purpose mentioned above.

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2. MATTERS CONCERNING THE POOL

In the light of experience gained over the past few years, it now seems that the establishment of a Pool, into which all the Dioceses and Religious Congregations would be contributors, is ill- advised.

It is now the intention of Catholic Church Insurances Limited to hand over all funds which are held by C.C.I. on behalf of Dioceses and Religious Congregations. It will then be the decision of the Special Issues Committee as to how these funds are to be retained or returned to the original donors.

C.C.I. Ltd will now write to all Bishops inviting them to take out Special Issues Insurance. The letter will also provide details concerning the nature of the cover provided by the Special Issues Policy.

It will be important to refrain from publicising the restrictive form of insurance cover which is now available to Dioceses and Religious Congregations. The key issue must always be our immediate and concerned response to the victims.

Consideration is to be given to the appointment of a Risk Management Officer, who will be able to offer expert advice and assistance to Dioceses and Religious Congregations, particularly when they are the recipients of major disclosures of sexual abuse. An appropriate title for the Risk Management Officer might be "National Project Officer for Child Protection". The officer might also be linked to Centacare.

Father John Usher and Sister Angela Ryan will draft a job description for the officer. It will also be recommended to the Bishops and Major Superiors that the funds which have been paid into the Pool now be used to fund the Budget for the National Project Officer for Child Protection.

The appointment of such an officer is not to be made until after the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes have discussed the suggestion.

3. PROTOCOL FOR CHURCH WORKERS

One of the first tasks for the National Project Officer for Child Protection will be to attend to the revision of the current procedures for dealing with allegations of sexual abuse and professional misconduct. Particular attention will also be given to the procedures to cover allegations made against church workers.

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4. REVISION OF THE DRAFT DOCUMENT - "The Catholic Church's Principles in relation to Sexual Abuse and Professional Misconduct".

Father John Usher and Sister Angela Ryan will review the draft document in the light of comments and advice which have been received from individuals and organisations which have obtained copies of the draft.

5. CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN BISHOP HOWARD TRIPP AND FATHER BRIAN LUCAS.

Bishop Howard Tripp, who is the Episcopal President of the Catholic Child Welfare Council in England, has written to Cardinal Clancy seeking information concerning the children who migrated to Australia from England and Wales after the Second World War.

Father John Usher will obtain relevant information from Mr. Toby O'Connor of the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, which will be used by Bishop Connors in forwarding a reply to Bishop Tripp. He will consult with Father Brian Lucas before forwarding the reply.

6. REVIEW OF THE TITLE OF THE SPECIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

After some discussion, it was recommended that the title for the Special Issues Committee might now be "Child Protection and Professional Standards Committee".

It was also recommended that the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference now establish a Bishops' Committee for Child Protection and Professional Standards. The Bishops' Committee will have overview of the Australian Catholic Committee for Child Protection and Professional Standards. It will be important that the membership of the National Committee possess expertise rather than being representative of all the States of Australia.

The appointment of members to the National Committee will be made by the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference upon receipt of nominations.

In addition to the re-appointment of Fathers Brian Lucas, John Usher, Brother Paul Noonan, Sister Angela Ryan, consideration for nomination to the Committee might be given to Monsignor Gerald Cudmore, Father Glynn Murphy and Ms Myline Carrick, of the Archdiocese of Brisbane. There should also be two more representatives of the A.C.L.R.I. and a Bishop, who is a member of the Bishops' Committee, should also act as Chairman of the National Committee.

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