

NSW PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS REFERENCE GROUP

Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 16th August, 1995.

The meeting of the NSW Professional Standards Reference Group was held in the Centacare Offices, Polding House, 276 Pitt Street, Sydney, on Wednesday 16th August, 1995.

1. **The Meeting opened at 11.00am.** Father John Usher led the Opening Prayer. John mentioned he could be absent in the afternoon, he had a funeral to attend and asked if we could elect a Chairperson.
2. Mrs Elaine Rickard was elected **Chairperson**
3. Father Bob McGuckin was elected **Secretary** for the Meeting.
4. **The Members of the Reference Group who were present:** Father John Usher; Father Brian Lucas (who also indicated he would need to leave in the afternoon as a matter had come up that he had to attend to); Mrs Elaine Rickard and Father Bob McGuckin. *in Bill Dunston*

Apologies were tendered for Sister Carmel Curtin and also for Professor Alex Blaszczyński.

5. **We welcomed the visitors/advisers,** Jim Grainer from Centacare Broken Bay, Mrs Julie Samuel~~s~~ and Brother Patrick McCarthy from Centacare Fairfield, Ray Reid from Centacare Parramatta, Father Michael Mullins from the Marist Father's House, Haberfield.
6. The **Minutes of the Meeting** of the 31st May, 1995, were **confirmed**.
7. **Matters arising from the Record/Minutes:**

7.1 **Reassignment after conviction:**

This topic received quite a deal of attention and it was felt a number of people had different approaches from a very rigorous approach - never reassigned, to a more liberal approach, where re-assignment could be contemplated.. It was also considered that Bishops and Religious Superiors, even if they didn't reassign couldn't step back from the pastoral care that they needed to show towards the cleric, or religious.

On the 15th August, 1995, there had been a meeting of the National Bishop's Professional Standards Committee and this matter was also considered.

The NSW Group debated the matter of reassignment. It was asked about the possibility of assessments and guarantees. There was also a question of public scandal to be considered.

On the one hand there might be forgiveness and concern for repentance, however this needs to be weighed up with other issues.

The commitment as a cleric was a way of life which was really different to other professions.

Father McGuckin raised the question of being suitable for ministry, being allowed to minister. In the July 1995 Broken Rites Magazine, 'In Fidelity', was mentioned whereby the cases of Father Peter Comensoli and Father Richard Cattell were mentioned, also their present status in the Official Catholic Directory, of being on leave, was noted in the magazine. Obviously they are watching and waiting.

The role of therapy ought be to help the person take up a role which was appropriate to their situation.

It was mentioned that perhaps if a therapist did give a guarantee then it could perhaps still be difficult for a Diocese Institute to reassign. A person after a conviction may have no insurance cover and the risks associated with reassignment may be beyond the financial capacities of a new Diocese or another Institute. Also there may be difficulty in having personnel to supervise.

It was suggested that possibly some could be appropriately reassigned and such persons might have much to offer the Church in dealing with sexual abuse.

It was felt that there needed to be developed principles prior to this matter of actual cases of reassigning coming for mention. There would be behavioural criteria and it was noted that different therapists could give different reports so there would need to be principles to show indications of suitability. There was always the danger the therapist could have a bias to succeed with his or her own client.

The State Reference Group was looking towards their clinicians for advice in these matters.

Also in the area of reassignment there would need too to be a request from the person themselves.

7.2 Australian, New Zealand Conference on Sexual Exploitation

This matter was raised at the previous meeting see notes Item No. 5 of the previous Minutes.

Ray Reid mentioned that he had obtained a Churchill Scholarship, was going to investigate community programs, programs to assist Parishes, looking at the community dimension of reassignment, how groups could accept a person after conviction. Ray said he was considering a paper on the Phenomenology of Consent.

The discussion was then brought forward Item No. 9.3. and Mr Bill Johnson a Research Officer of Centacare attended.

9.3 Report re Research Project into treatment options.

Bill mentioned that the Bishops Professional Standards Committee was investigating a research project into the treatment possibilities for paedophilia and other forms of sexual abuse to be conducted under the auspice of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes.

A consortium of three partners, namely the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, Centacare Sydney and Dr Alex Blaszczyński (Head of the Behavioural Disorders Unit, University of NSW), has been commissioned to undertake the project. The project was going to include the following process:

1. A thorough and current literature review of the area which will be distributed to all Bishops and Congregational Leaders;
2. Group consultations in capital cities with key therapists who have experience in the treatment of paedophilia and other forms of sexual abuse;
3. Presentation to Bishops and to Congregational Leaders on the findings of the consultation with leading therapists;
4. Discussions in early 1996 with individual Bishops and the ACLRI Executive Committee regarding personal responses to the recommendations of the project team;
5. Final Report with recommendations to the ACBC and the ACLRI by the April, 1996 meeting of the ACBC.

There was going to be a consultation day in Sydney on the 1st September, 1995, in Polding House that would run for three (3) hours.

Dr Alex Blaszczyński and Mr Bill Johnson will be reviewing literature and hope to have some recommendations for the Bishop's November Meeting.

Some questions being considered in the area of criminality and child abuse are:

- is this behaviour always psycho sexual disorder?
- is the behaviour always paedophilia?
- is the behaviour always homosexuality?
- are male and female offenders different?

They felt there was a need for Bishops and clergy to realise the damage done by offenders.

After lunch we dealt with the Item No. 7.3.

7.3 **The Structural Model for Operating in NSW**

It was thought that if the National Committee set up a Protocol at the outset that other groups could draw upon this. Brian Lucas has been the nominated person to draw up working document. Pat McCarthy's working pages are attached to the minutes. It was hoped that role conflict could be removed. Questions asked were who would be the victim's advocate? should people take on a variety of roles?

It was felt that the first contact was always critical and there needs to be clear intake procedures there.

The investigating team also needs to be perceived to be neutral from church officials and from the offender/perpetrator.

It was felt questions need to be pastorally sensitive, procedures need to be user friendly. Pat McCarthy and others will continue to work on the structural model.

7.4 **CEO/CCD Protocols**

Laurie Rolls of CCI is gathering all the protocols and trying to bring them together. Certainly groups can have their own protocol but they must contain the essentials of the original protocol of the central national protocol.

7.5 **Other Matters Arising**

Nothing further.

8. **Correspondence**

The letter from Friends of Suzanna had been redirected to Sydney, also to other Centacare groups. Ray Reid had replied pointing out his feelings about the letter. John Usher had replied pointing out the professional agencies were meeting all the necessary demands. Jim Grainger also replied.

9. **9.2 Reports**

Various matters were discussed. Fr McGuckin reported on the Brothers of St Gerard and the committal hearings which were coming up in November, December and February. Ray Reid pointed out the help line that was set up.

9.4 **Other Reports**

Other matters were brought up, teachers, feelings that the Church was not competent to deal with the matter. Need for support groups.

10. **10.3 Special Business**

The matter of a code of conduct was again raised.

It was also suggested that the use of advocates outside the Church was also a good idea.

Bob McGuckin mentioned that we'd spoken about the matter of reassigning after conviction, the question also needs to be looked at of reassigning where there's been no conviction. There may have been a case or cases whereby persons have been withdrawn from ministry when there's really been no due process. This is a very sensitive matter and the rights of persons needs to be upheld.

Also on that matter of reassignment there were people who haven't been discovered yet were in a conversion process. These people also needed to be considered.

The next meeting was set for the 10th November, 1995, in Polding House, timed for 11.00am to 3.00pm.

This meeting closed at 2.30pm.