

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS
HELD AT THE CONGREGATIONAL OFFICES OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY,
49 GORDON STREET, PADDINGTON, N.S.W.,
ON TUESDAY, 4TH JUNE, 1996, AT 10.00 A.M.

1. PRESENT: Most Reverend Kevin Manning, Chairman,
Most Reverend Geoffrey Robinson,
Most Reverend Peter Connors, Secretary,
Most Reverend Bede Heather,
Most Reverend Michael Malone,
Ms Myolene Carrick,
Sister Helen Clarke, R.S.C.,
Reverend Brian Gallagher, M.S.C.,
Reverend Brian Lucas,
Sister Angela Ryan, C.S.B.,
Reverend John Usher.

Mr. Chris O'Malley and Mr. Laurie Rolls of Catholic Church Insurances Limited were also present at the meeting, along with Dr. Robert Grant, Psychologist.

At the request of Bishop Robinson, Dr. Grant suggested that the Committee is finding it very difficult to meet its objectives because there are insufficient criteria for making decisions. The issues which are on the agenda of the Committee are very urgent so there is need for a more appropriate procedure for obtaining approval for the documents which are to be published by the Committee. He noted that there is to be a balance between the legal issues and pastoral concern for victims. Moreover, there is a need for the Committee to act more collaboratively.

In reply, the members of the Committee pointed out that the Committee is really a servant of the Bishops and the Religious Leaders. In other words, the final decisions are made elsewhere rather than within the Committee. The Committee is always working towards obtaining a consensus.

It was also noted that Archbishop Carroll, Bishop Heather and Bishop Malone have been asked by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference to attend the meetings of the Committee so as to facilitate the publication of the two documents.

Bishop Robinson also explained that Father David Cappo of the Archdiocese of Adelaide was invited by him to attend the meeting because Father Cappo is considering the possibility of being appointed the Executive Officer of the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards.

APOLOGIES: Most Reverend F. Carroll,
Sister Evelyn Woodward, R.S.J.

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2. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS HELD ON 16TH APRIL, 1996.

On the motion of Father Brian Gallagher, seconded Bishop Robinson, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards held on 16th April, 1996, were confirmed as being an accurate record of the decisions made on that occasion.

3. MATTERS RAISED BY C.C.I.

Mr. Laurie Rolls of Catholic Church Insurances Limited gave a brief report on the safekeeping of documentation held by Bishops and Religious Leaders.

4. ACTION ON MOTIONS PASSED BY THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE IN APRIL, 1996.

4.1 Review and Update of the draft Statement of Principles concerning Sexual Abuse by Priests and Religious

Prolonged discussion took place concerning a further draft of the Statement of Principles which had been prepared by Bishop Robinson after seeking advice from persons with expertise in civil law.

Bishop Robinson will now make another revision of the draft and discuss the alterations with the legal advisers.

Copies of the draft will then be forwarded to the members of the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards.

The Religious Leaders will discuss the draft Statement at the Assembly of the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in July, 1996, and decide whether they are prepared to give their approval to its publication.

4.2 Review and Update of the draft Document setting out Procedures to be followed when Allegations of Sexual Abuse are made.

Bishop Robinson drew attention to the difficulties which he and Father Lucas are experiencing in the review of the Procedures so that they do not contradict the Statement of Principles.

It was agreed that Bishop Robinson and Father Lucas should meet again to review both documents and make them available for consideration by the members of the Committee.

The Religious Leaders are to be asked at the forthcoming Assembly of the A.C.L.R.I. to give a Mandate for the Committee to publish the two documents.

Meanwhile, the Procedures as approved in 1992, remain the operative document for making a response to allegations.

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4.3 Establishment of a Committee to prepare one or more Codes of Conduct covering all Clergy and Religious in Australia.

Bishop Power has already commenced work on the process for preparing a Code of Conduct for Clergy and Religious in Australia. He has written to the Associations of Clergy and to the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes asking for representation on his Committee. He has also obtained copies of the Codes of Conduct used in the Archdioceses of Adelaide and Melbourne.

Bishop Connors will provide him with a copy of the Code which has been approved for use in Canada by Catholic Clergy and Religious.

4.4 Process to Study Factors leading to Sexual Abuse in the Church.

Bishop Robinson has convened a preliminary meeting to commence a process for studying factors leading to sexual abuse in the Church. It seems that the procedure will be along the same lines as those used to draft the Report on the Establishment of a Therapy Programme in Australia. The process will also call for consultation with offenders.

4.5 Employment of a Full-time Executive Officer.

The Committee agreed that Father David Cappo has the experience and the expertise to carry out the role of Executive Officer for the Committee.

Because of his duties as parish priest of Hectorville in the Archdiocese of Adelaide he will need an adequate support structure.

Father Cappo suggested that he would use the facilities of Centacare Sydney and/or of the Catholic Social Welfare Commission in Canberra in carrying out his duties.

The Archdiocese of Adelaide has indicated that it will continue to pay the approved stipend for Father David Cappo.

Bishop Kevin Manning will now write to Archbishop Faulkner seeking the release of Father David Cappo to carry out these duties while remaining parish priest of Hectorville.

A statement of duties for the Executive Officer is being drafted by Father John Usher and his associates.

4.6 Establishment of a National Programme for Priests and Religious with Psychological and related Disorders under the auspices of the A.C.B.C. and the A.C.L.R.I.

Recommendations for appointment to the Board of Management for the Therapy Programme are being prepared and will be tabled at the next meeting of the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards. The establishment of the National Therapy Programme will also require approval and support from the Religious Leaders, which will be sought at the Assembly of the A.C.L.R.I. in 1996.

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5. REPORT FROM DELEGATES TO THE MEETING OF ENGLISH SPEAKING EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES DEALING WITH CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE BY CLERGY.

Sister Angela Ryan, C.S.B., Bishop Connors and Mr. Laurie Rolls provided written Reports of the meeting of representatives of English speaking Episcopal Conferences held in Chicago, U.S.A., from 7th - 10th May, 1996.

It was agreed that further discussion of these Reports should be held over to the next meeting of the Committee.

6. LETTER OF DR. NEIL OMEROD TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE DATED 5TH MAY, 1996.

Bishop Kevin Manning provided a copy of a letter which he has received from Dr. Neil Omerod, along with a discussion paper entitled 'Sexual Abuse: Moral or Psychological Problem?'.

It was agreed that Bishop Manning should thank Dr. Omerod for the paper and seek approval for its distribution to the Bishops and Religious Leaders.

7. MANDATE FOR BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Bishop Connors will forward a copy of the draft Mandate for the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards to Dr. Robert Grant for comment and advice on how it can be more acceptable for approval by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

Bishop Robinson reported that Sister Evelyn Woodward and Father Brian Gallagher had met in Canberra with Father John E. Ryan to discuss the contact which has been made with Father James Gill, S.J., concerning the possible establishment of a Centre for Human Sexuality in Australia.

The project would contain a very strong research element, but would be under the auspices of the Bishops' Committee for Clergy and Religious.

It was agreed that the project should be encouraged, as it would provide much necessary assistance for clergy and religious at the present time.

Bishop Kevin Manning will arrange for Catholic Church Insurances to consider funding aspects of the projects which have been entrusted to the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards.

Sister Helen Clarke, R.S.C., will also ask the Religious Leaders to discuss this matter of funding at the forthcoming Assembly of the A.C.L.R.I.

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9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards will be held at the Congregational Offices of the Sisters of Charity, 49 Gordon Street, Paddington, N.S.W., on Tuesday, 6th August, 1996, commencing at 10.00 a.m.

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