

REPORT ON MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING OF THE
BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS
HELD AT ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL PRESBYTERY, SYDNEY, N.S.W.,
ON MONDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY, 1995, AT 9.30 A.M.

1. PRESENT: Most Reverend Kevin Manning, Chairman,
Most Reverend Peter Connors, Secretary,
Most Reverend Geoffrey Robinson,
Ms Myolene Carrick,
Reverend Brian Lucas,
Brother Paul Noonan, C.F.C.,
Sister Angela Ryan, C.S.B.,
Reverend John Usher,
Sister Evelyn Woodward, R.S.J.

APOLOGY: Sister Helen Clarke, R.S.C.

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETINGS OF THE
BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS HELD
ON 14TH NOVEMBER, 1994, AND 29TH NOVEMBER, 1994.

On the motion of Sister Angela Ryan, seconded Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, it was agreed that the Report prepared by the Secretary was a faithful record of matters which were discussed during the meetings of the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards held on 14th November and 29th November, 1994.

Bishop Manning enquired whether Religious Leaders are aware of the implications for those schools which have decided to discontinue their insurance arrangements with C.C.I. Brother Paul Noonan reported that the matter had been discussed at the Executive of the A.C.L.R.I.

It may also be necessary for the Bishops to be once again reminded of this situation.

The problem of adverse publicity in the media for the Catholic Church was once again discussed by the members of the Committee. "Infidelity", which is the publication of Broken Rites, contains material which might well be defamatory. However, it would be most difficult to prove a case in the civil courts of such defamation.

The monies held by C.C.I., which belong to the "Pool", are still awaiting distribution. It would seem that A.C.L.R.I. will instruct C.C.I. to return these monies to the Religious Institutes.

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3. MATTER RAISED BY C.C.I.

3.1 The Protection of Records held by C.C.I. and by Bishops and Leaders of Religious Institutes.

The legal opinion, which has been obtained by C.C.I., has now been forwarded to all the members of the A.C.B.C. Arrangements will probably be made for the opinion to be forwarded to Religious Leaders.

There now seems to be need for better communications with the Police in every State. This will ensure that the Police are made aware of the Procedures which have been adopted by the Bishops and the Religious Leaders in dealing with allegations disclosed to them.

Psychologists, Counsellors and other experts need to be circumspect in writing Reports about individuals.

It is important that Bishops and Religious Leaders act in a responsible and professional manner when receiving disclosures from alleged victims and other persons.

Mandatory reporting of sexual assault does not apply when the victim is over sixteen years of age. Priests are not required to make reports to the competent authorities.

Inappropriate behaviour by a priest or a religious may not be a crime, but it may well imply that a person is not suitable for pastoral ministry.

There may well be the need for a "Pro Forma" for Bishops and Superiors to use to ensure that they act in an appropriate manner when dealing with allegations. Such written documentation should be made available to their successors in office.

Consideration should also be given to inviting priests and religious to move out of their appointment if they know that they have offended in the matter of child sexual assault.

The decision as to whether a priest or a religious is to return to ministry rests with the Bishop and the Religious Leader. There is need for formation for Bishops and Religious Leaders to act in a uniform manner in dealing with the decision as to whether an offender should return to ministry.

There is a duty for the Church to provide pastoral care for both the victim and the perpetrator.

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4. REPORT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A THERAPY CENTRE

Sister Angela Ryan has prepared a Report on the meeting attended by Bishop Geoff Robinson, Father John Usher, Sister Angela Ryan and Brother Julian Liddiard, O.H. The next meeting of the Sub-Committee is set down for 22nd March, 1995.

It will be the recommendation of the Sub-Committee that a Research Project be carried out by a qualified person with appropriate terms of reference.

One of the terms of reference will be a call for various models of therapy and intervention.

Attention should also be given as to what can be done for the accused priest or religious prior to the appearance in court after charges have been laid by the civil authorities.

5. REPORT ON THE PREPARATION OF THE DRAFT PRINCIPLES IN RELATION TO SEXUAL ABUSE AND PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT

Considerable discussion took place as to whether the Catholic Church is in need of such a statement at this time. It was also asked whether the Procedures themselves should be revised at the same time so that they can be published with such a statement of principles.

Bishop Robinson will attend to another revision of his draft in the light of the discussion which took place at the meeting.

6. REPORT ON THE PREPARATION OF A JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

It was decided to put on hold the procedures for the employment of a Chief Executive Officer for the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards until after the research is carried out as mentioned in Item 4.

7. REPORT ON MEETING SUGGESTED BY FATHER THOMAS R. BEVAN OR REPRESENTATIVES OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OF CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT

Father Brian Lucas reported that he has not received any further communication from Father Bevan.

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8. C.L.S.A. WORKSHOP ON CANON LAW AND CLERGY MISCONDUCT

Bishop Connors reported that he had received a letter from Bishop Ray Benjamin drawing attention of the Committee to a Workshop conducted by the Canon Law Society of America on Canon Law and Clergy Misconduct.

9. GENERAL BUSINESS

Bishop Robinson reported that he will be carrying out his Apostolic Visitation to Seminaries throughout Australia during the coming months. He has asked Sister Evelyn Woodward to assist him in this matter. Careful attention will be given to the assessment procedures which are used by Seminaries when candidates apply for entry to the Seminary.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Bishop Manning will arrange with Father Michael McKenna, the Secretary of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, for the next meeting of the Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards to be held at Saint Paul's National Seminary, Kensington, N.S.W., on Wednesday, 26th April, 1995, from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

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