



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

General Secretariat

5 June 2001

Cardinal Dario Hoyos Castrillon
Pro Prefect - Congregation for the Clergy
Palazzo del Congregazioni
00193 Roma
ITALIA

Your Eminence,

As you are aware, a meeting of representatives of a number of English-speaking Conferences of Bishops with members of various dioceses was held in the Vatican on April 4-7 2000, under the auspices of the Congregation of the Clergy.

This meeting was both helpful and welcome. The issues raised at that meeting continue to cause significant difficulties in and to the local churches.

I understand that you have indicated that a document is close to being finalised as a response to the concerns expressed at the above mentioned meeting. It is respectfully requested that further consultation be undertaken regarding your document or any proposals it may contain before it is formally issued. There is some indication that it is proposed to consult the Episcopal Conferences through their Presidents. This, in the view of the Australian Bishops, is an essential step as the views of the local churches regarding the impact of a document or proposals from the Holy See on the issue of child sexual abuse by priests or religious are vital.

I assure you of our profound appreciation for the difficulty of this work to which we are all committed. The question of how to balance the various rights and duties of all concerned is at the centre of our shared concerns. Moreover, it is important that any proposals from the Holy See should not be seen to be at variance with the civil requirements of the countries in which we live. In that situation, the Bishops would be placed in an intolerable position and great harm would be done to the Church.



You will appreciate the sensitivities of the local churches on this issue as it is impossible to overestimate the negative impact that child sexual abuse by a priest or religious has already had on our local churches and on the local presbyterate.

With best wishes and personal regards.
Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Francis P. Carroll".

+Francis P Carroll
President - Australian Catholic Bishops Conference