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REDACTED

11 August, 2003

Dr Duncan McFetridge,
Member for Morphett,
19 Nile Street,
GLENELG SA 5045

Dear Dr McFetridge,

We are writing to enquire if you are able to ask the following question in Parliament:

“It is understood that the Anglican Church in Adelaide has undertaken to present their final report into child sexual abuse in the diocese, to Parliament.

Will the Premier request the Catholic Archbishop of Adelaide to present the results of their Inquiry into the Bus Driver’s sexual abuse of children at the St Ann’s Special School, so that it too, can be tabled in Parliament?”

A number of children who attended St. Ann’s Special School for intellectually handicapped during 1986—1991 were sexually abused by one Brian Perkins, who was employed at the school during this period, and has now been found guilty in the Adelaide District Court. He is due to return to Court for sentencing in mid-September 2003.

We, the parents, learnt of the abuse in August 2001, ten years after the Church, Police and Welfare were made aware of the events. We strongly believe that there was a conspiracy to cover up these events at the time and since. It is our understanding that as a result of pressure applied by this parent group, Brian Perkins was extradited from Queensland, two internal inquiries were conducted by the police and the Government instituted the Layton enquiry into child abuse. Further, we have been advised by the police and welfare and they have stated on ABC radio that mistakes were made at the time.

Twelve months ago, on 17 August 2002, the Catholic Archbishop announced in a Media Release that an Inquiry would be undertaken

“ .. to provide information on circumstances surrounding the alleged events.

I (the Catholic Archbishop) hope this Inquiry will provide us with information that will help us to understand more clearly exactly what happened and to use that information to review our current circumstances so we can put plans into place for the future.”

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Mr Chris Kourakis was appointed to review the information to advise the Archbishop.

Following the public announcement of the Inquiry, parents received a letter from the Archbishop, dated 15 August 2002, inviting submissions to be sent to EMA Legal. As this legal firm acts for and advises the Catholic Church, parents question the independence of this Inquiry.

In his letter, the Archbishop concludes, *“this inquiry is part of the Catholic Church’s commitment to the attainment of truth and understanding in relation to matters pertaining to alleged sexual abuse at St Ann’s Special School 1986—1991”*.

Late last year, Mr Kourakis was appointed Solicitor General and therefore, relinquished his position with the Inquiry. To date no parents have been formally advised as to who has taken his place.

We have recently learnt through the media that the Catholic Church expects the Inquiry to be completed in another 2 months (October 2003) but may not release the report publicly.

If this is correct and based on our experience with all of the authorities but particularly with the Catholic Church, we are not assured of the transparency of the Inquiry nor the authenticity of the Catholic Church’s commitment to attain truth and understanding, in particular for the families and victims of these abuses.

We believe that if the report is tabled in parliament then it then becomes a public document and open to scrutiny.

As a result of frustration at the lack of action and at the urging of the Catholic Church we have now engaged a lawyer to seek compensation as this is the only course available to us. It was never our intention to take this action but only to seek justice and understanding what happened at the time and why the “system” failed to protect our children and why we have never been told the truth. The Catholic Church refuses to engage with us and in fact since the court hearing on 4 August, 2003, when Brian Perkins pleaded guilty to five charges of sexual abuse the Church has not contacted any of the parent group.

Should you require additional information we would be happy to meet with you.

Yours sincerely,

LS and LR