

# Church offers reprieve on counselling for abuse claim victim

Anglicans said they were not going to pay for weekly sessions and transport costs

WILL JACKSON  
will.jackson@northernstar.com.au

ALLEGED abuse victim Richard 'Tommy' Campion has received a brief reprieve after the Anglican Church threatened to cut off his counselling.

For the past year the Church has been paying for weekly sessions and transport costs for Mr Campion after he came to them claiming years of sexual and physical abuse at the North Coast Children's Home in Lismore.

However, in February, the Church told him the support was not an open-ended commitment, and earlier this month he received word through his lawyers that the Church was going to stop paying for the counselling entirely.

They paid for about another month's worth of sessions, but declined to give him any more mon-

ey to pay the \$50 it costs Mr Campion to travel from his Broadbeach home to his Currumbin therapist.

"I told them I'd hold them responsible if I fell by the wayside," said Mr Campion, who can't afford the counselling or travel costs.

Following a call from *The Northern Star*, the Reverend Pat Comben, Diocese of Grafton registrar, agreed to continue the support.

But the reprieve could be short-lived.

Once legal action commences, which is expected to happen in the coming weeks, Mr Campion's counselling will be cut off, Mr Comben said yesterday.

Mr Campion said he was a 'blithering mess of worry' when he first went to the Church with his claim, and his 'life was down the chute'.

The counselling was having some effect, he said, but there was still a long way to go.

"I had a psychiatric report done which said I'd need about three more years' treatment to make any lasting difference," he said.

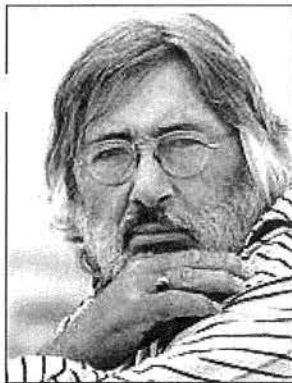
Mr Campion is one of more than 40 former residents of the North Coast Children's Home considering suing the Church.

It could be years before Mr Campion receives any sort of payout through litigation.

Mr Comben said the counselling was part of a 'care and assistance' package supposed to provide immediate short-term help and was generally an alternative to legal action.

He said the Church had already spent almost \$10,000 on counselling and travel for Mr Campion.

Only one other former children's home resident has applied for and received counselling through the Church.



**'TOMMY' CAMPION:** Still a long way to go on road to recovery.

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