

ARCHDIOCESE OF ADELAIDE

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February 21, 2002

Commissioner Mal Hyde
 Commissioner of Police
 PO Box 1539
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Dear Commissioner,

I am writing regarding allegations of sexual abuse that have been raised with me recently by parents of intellectually disabled students who attended St Ann's Special School, Marion during the period 1986 – 1991. The allegations relate to a person by the name of Brian Perkins who was employed as a bus driver at the school. The police investigated the allegations back in 1991 and we provided support and counselling for the families who were identified at the time as having been potential victims of the alleged abuse.

The parents who have now approached us have also spoken with police from the Child Exploitation Unit over recent months. Police have recently attended meetings with those parents. Our Director of Professional Standards and Director of Catholic Education have also maintained close contact with police. The support of the police in the Child Exploitation Unit has been very helpful and greatly appreciated over these months.

Our publication *Towards Healing* (first published in 1996, revised 2000) details the principles and procedures we apply in responding to complaints of abuse made against personnel of the Catholic Church of Australia. I have included a copy of that document for your information.

In addition to attending to the immediate care of the families concerned, we are conscious of the need to ensure that any matters relevant to any potential criminal prosecution are referred to the police.

I understand that, following the allegations being investigated in 1991, charges were laid against Perkins but he absconded to Queensland where he currently resides at Gin Gin. I also understand that in 1998 extradition was considered but was not pursued. In spite of that decision in 1998, it is our wish that Perkins be brought back to South Australia to face the charges that were laid against him.

Mr Dooley, Director of Catholic Education, has indicated to the police with whom he has been working that we would be prepared to contribute to any costs associated with an extradition, should costs be an issue. I confirm our offer in that regard.

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I respectfully ask you to reconsider the decision not to extradite Perkins from Queensland so that the serious charges of sexual abuse of intellectually disabled students can be tried.

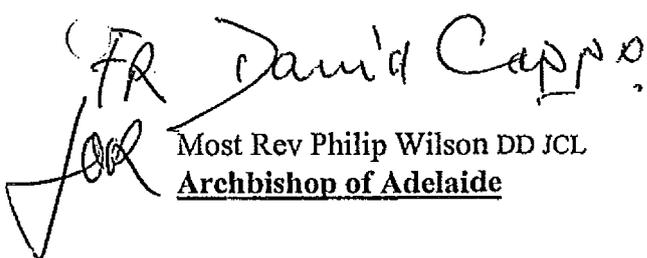
I am concerned that many parents who had children attending St Ann's Special school at the relevant time may not be aware of the allegations (whether or not their children had contact with Perkins). I wish to write to those parents to ensure that they are as fully informed as practicable and so that we can gain an appreciation of the extent of the impact of what is alleged against Perkins.

I am conscious of the potential of a letter to that effect to cause unnecessary anxiety in parents whose children may not have had any contact with Perkins and in parents whose children may have been involved but who (for whatever reason) have no wish to revisit the issue. While they are matters of serious concern to me, I believe the interests and welfare of those parents and children who did have contact with Perkins and who may need assistance are paramount. I want to ensure that all parents of children at the school at that time are made aware of the allegations so that we can identify any other possible victims of the alleged abuse. I want to do that because, first, I believe they have a right to know of the allegations and, secondly, so that we can provide support and access to our processes if they choose to make contact with us.

I am also very conscious that in writing such a letter I need to have proper regard to the presumption of innocence pending the outcome of any trial of the allegations against Brian Perkins and to avoid compromising your ongoing investigations. It is in that regard that I write to you to invite your comment on (and hopefully your support for) my proposal to write to the parents. I will provide you with a draft of the letter before I send it.

I would be most grateful for your consideration of those two matters and look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

 David Cappo
Most Rev Philip Wilson DD JCL
Archbishop of Adelaide

Vicar General