

"AH 20"



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF GRAFTON

Ms Anne Hywood
Acting Registrar

Bishops Registry
50 Victoria Street
PO Box 4
GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6642 4122
Facsimile(02) 6643 1814

Email: actingregistrar@graftondiocese.org.au

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The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall
Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia
GPO Box 421
Brisbane QLD 4001

Dear Archbishop

Diocese of Grafton – Professional Standards Matters

Following your meeting with Bishop Keith Slater last week, the Bishop asked to meet with myself and other members of his Senior Leadership team on Saturday afternoon to review the documentation presented to him at that meeting.

As the author of the report to you dated 1 May 2013, which was provided to him, I was asked to clarify some of the points I made and confirm the evidence referred to in my report and the supporting timeline document. I was willing to do so as, given the gravity of the matter, it is important that all the information I have provided is correct and not presented in an ambiguous way to allow misinterpretation.

As an outcome of that meeting I am now writing to you to clarify some aspects of the information I provided in my letter and the timeline attachment.

1. Source of Information

The Bishop shared the document you presented to him to guide discussions at your meeting. That document states that the information I provided was as a result of "two separate reviews of Diocesan files" one being an "audit of sexual abuse complaints in the Diocese" as requested by Bishop-in-Council in November 2012.

I would like to clarify that the information I provided to you was drawn solely from the hard copy files located in the Registry Office in regard to claims associated with abuse at the North Coast Children's Home (NCCH).

It is not correct to suggest that the audit requested by Bishop-in-Council has been completed and there are other files on matters not associated with the NCCH which are still under review.

It is also important to note that I relied on the hard copy documents on file and that I did not seek out additional electronic documents on private computer drives which may have been related to the matters detailed in the report.

The review was focused on obtaining summary background information to assist with the preparation of a media response and could not be considered to be a report following a detailed audit of all Professional Standards matters in the Diocese.

2. Handling of 20 claims of sexual abuse at NCCH

In my report to you I noted that "The files did not give any indication how the 20 claims alleging sexual abuse had been processed in accordance with the Professional Standards protocols in place in the Diocese of Grafton since 2004, or whether the police had been informed of any named perpetrators."

However, I also reported that there is evidence in the minutes of Professional Standards Committee meetings in 2006-07 that the Police had been notified of allegations against two members of clergy who were still alive.

The document you presented to the Bishop, detailing failure to comply with the Professional Standards procedures, does not acknowledge these two specific referrals to the Police.

It should be noted that Mr Michael Elliot, PSD, is currently liaising with the Mid Richmond Police to ascertain what information was provided to the Police at that time. Until this investigation is complete it is not known what additional information was referred to the Police in 2006-2007.

Mr Phillip Gerber of the Diocese of Sydney was providing services as Professional Standards Director at this time and has not been contacted to clarify the extent of the PSD's involvement in managing the complaints of sexual abuse beyond what can be ascertained in the PSC Minutes.

3. Bishop's Apology to NCCH claimants

In the timeline I prepared it is noted that, in April 2007, the solicitor acting for the NCCH claimants advised that three of them sought a personal apology from the Bishop. Prior to the preparation of my report the Bishop had advised me that he had not met with any of the NCCH claimants for this purpose. I noted in the timeline that the meetings for the purpose of personal apology "do not take place."

In your document presented to the Bishop it is suggested that the Bishop "declined to apologise in person to three NCCH abuse victims". I do not believe that this can be inferred from my report. I did not locate any information on why the apologies did not take place. I understand that the Bishop believes the requests were later withdrawn.

4. Bishop's Response to two new NCCH Claims - 2011

In my report I noted from the file that the two persons who wrote to the Bishop with new claims of abuse at NCCH only received a response from the Diocesan Solicitor. I write in my report that "The Bishop did not respond to these letters personally." I am since advised by the Bishop that he has located an electronic copy of one letter he wrote to one of the correspondents. This letter was sent prior to the letter from the Diocesan solicitor.

On this basis I amend the statement in my report that the Bishop did not respond personally as I acknowledge that the files I reviewed may not have contained a complete record of all correspondence.

5. Meeting with Tommy Campion

In my report I quote from a letter Mr Campion wrote to the Bishop after attending a meeting with him and Garth Blake in August 2012. In that letter Mr Campion wrote that he considered the meeting to be "unbalanced and unfair" as his request to attend with a lawyer was not agreed to.

In the same report I made an editorial comment that this action "was perceived as bullying and intimidating, even if this was not the intention". In your document presented to the Bishop the words bullying and intimidating have been linked to Mr Campion's statement in his letter. It should be clarified that the words bullying and intimidating are my own and not Mr Campions.

6. Tommy Campion Correspondence

I note in my report that the Bishop did not respond to many of the letters received from Mr Campion. The Bishop has informed me that he has located electronic copies of a number of responses written over a period of time. I accept that my report should not suggest that the majority of the correspondence from Mr Campion was ignored.

7. Meeting of Senior Leadership Team (SLT) – Wednesday 16 January 2013

I would like to clarify that the report of my findings at this meeting was a verbal presentation and not a written report.

My SLT colleagues in attendance at that meeting have suggested that I may not have made all of the points detailed in my report (listed as 1-11) during the course of this meeting. However they do acknowledge that I did make these points and express these views during other meetings and conversations around this period of time. I accept that this may be the case.

In my report I state that "My comments were acknowledged as factual and were not challenged." My SLT colleagues reflect that, due to their lack of involvement in the management of NCCH claims, they were not in a position to refute the information I reported.

The intention of this statement in my report was to indicate that the Bishop did not challenge my report on how the NCCH claims had been managed. I must acknowledge that he did say at that time that he believed that relevant matters had been referred to the Police.

In my report I note that "At the next meeting of the Senior Leadership team the Bishop advised that he did not intend to seek an extension of his term as Bishop as he had previously intended to do."

The Bishop has since confirmed that he actually made this announcement at the same meeting on 16 January 2013, which was his first meeting with the SLT after his return from leave. I acknowledge that the inclusion of this statement in my report implies that his decision was related to the identification of past failings which is not based on any fact.

8. Engagement of PSD in 2013

In your document presented to Bishop Keith it is suggested that the Diocese was without a Professional Standards Director for a period of time this year while an MOU was being negotiated with the Diocese of Newcastle.

I think it is more correct that the Diocese of Grafton was accessing PSD services under the previous "fee for service" arrangement until the MOU was finalized.

Conclusion

I have prepared this document in consultation with Bishop Keith Slater and we have agreed on the areas where some clarification of the details in my report to you is required. In regard to the other matters outlined in my report I am satisfied that these are supported by the documents I have reviewed.

Please accept these points of clarification as an addendum to my report to you dated 1 May 2013. I think it is important that the two documents are presented together in the future.

Yours sincerely



Anne Hywood
Acting Registrar