

"AH 23"



## ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF GRAFTON

Notes of Meeting at General Synod Office, Druiitt Street, Sydney  
Wednesday 5 June 2013 at 2.30pm

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A meeting of the Administrator and Senior Leadership Team of the Diocese of Grafton with the Primate and the Metropolitan following the resignation of Bishop Keith Slater as Bishop of Grafton.

### In Attendance:

The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall, The Most Reverend Dr Peter Jensen, Mr Martin Drevikovsky, The Venerable Gregory Ezzy, The Venerable Gail Hagon, The Very Reverend Donald Kirk, Ms Anne Hywood, The Right Reverend Phillip Huggins

### Notes of Meeting:

Archbishop Aspinall opened the meeting with prayer.

The Primate advised the meeting that Archdeacon Ezzy had declined to chair the meeting and it was agreed that The Primate should Chair the meeting.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss issues associated with the appointment of Archdeacon Greg Ezzy as Administrator in the Diocese of Grafton and general issues of strategy, support and resourcing in the Diocese following the resignation of Bishop Slater.

### The Diocese after the Bishop's Resignation:

The Administrator Greg Ezzy provided an update on the Diocese following the Bishop's resignation. He commented that this had been an additional trauma following the financial difficulties the Diocese had faced in recent years. However he noted that the Diocese had come through difficult times before.

The immediate response by the clergy and people of the Diocese to the Bishop's resignation was sadness. Some were angry and questioned the need for the Bishop to resign. There is a need for communication to facilitate an understanding of the issues associated with process failure.

There has been shock following the exposure of the mistakes in the management of professional standards. After two weeks there was now a shift from grief to action and a commitment to ensure that the mistakes do not happen again in the future.

Archdeacon Hagon advised that the divisiveness in the Diocese should be acknowledged. She advised that concerns had been expressed in the Diocese about the recent Daily Telegraph article.

The Primate advised that he anticipated there might have been concern at the reference in the article to the former bishop as 'Slater.' Archdeacon Hagon confirmed there had been negative reaction to that reference. The Primate advised that he had not referred to the former Bishop in that way, that the journalist had done so and that the Primate had requested the journalist to remove that reference. The online version was changed but it was too late for the journalist to remove the reference from the print edition. The Primate apologised for the additional pain this may have caused.

The Primate advised that the fallout in the Diocese was a long term issue and would impact on the life of the Diocese for a considerable time. He acknowledged that this was a very stressful time for the leadership.

Archdeacon Greg Ezzy advised that the Diocese is considering releasing a media statement calling for others who have been abused to come forward. The resourcing and financial implications of this strategy are understood.

Archdeacons Greg Ezzy and Gail Hagon reported on the immediate communications strategy and pastoral response put in place over the last two weeks.

It was noted that the Parish of Lismore, closely associated with the North Coast Children's Home, required particular support. A forum to identify the needs of that community was to be held shortly. The community included past workers and supporters of the Home who had a conflicted response to the identification of abuse at the Home.

The Primate acknowledged the conflict for those whose experience of the Home had been a positive one.

Updated information on the correct Professional Standards Protocol had been immediately distributed to parishes, including an updated poster providing the Professional Standard Director's contact details.

The Primate noted that much positive work had been undertaken in the last few weeks.

#### **The Administrator**

The Primate introduced two issues that had been raised with him in regard to the appointment of Archdeacon Greg Ezzy as Administrator

- 1) The validity of the appointment in accordance with the age requirements in the relevant ordinance
- 2) The actual and perceived conflict of interest given the close involvement of Greg Ezzy and his family in the management of the Home in the past.

#### Age Issue

Archbishop Peter Jensen reported on the briefing he had received from the Deputy Chancellor of the Diocese of Sydney on the issue of any age limitation on the Administrator. He had been advised that the Grafton Diocesan Chancellor held the view that it was permissible for the Administrator to be appointed and remain in office having attained the age of 70 years. However the Sydney Deputy Chancellor and the Hon Justice Peter Young both held a contrary view.

Archdeacon Greg Ezzy read from the advice provided by the Grafton Chancellor which noted Justice Young had advised that the Diocesan Chancellor's view was an arguable view.

Archbishop Peter Jensen said that if the Diocesan Chancellor holds to his view on this issue it is appropriate for Grafton Diocese to take the advice of its Chancellor.

The Primate asked if the Grafton Chancellor had taken the definition of "Bishop" in the Ordinance into account when developing his advice. Ms Hywood responded that the definition of "Bishop" had been widely discussed in regard to this issue so it was presumed that he had.

Archbishop Jensen asked the Primate if he proposed to challenge the advice given by Grafton's Chancellor. The Primate responded that was not his intention at this stage

### Conflict of Interest

Archdeacon Greg Ezzy acknowledged the issue of his perceived conflict of interest and reported that it had been the focus of discussion in the Diocese since his appointment. He advised that he had undertaken an analysis of the conflict of interest, noting the options of restricting his role, removing himself from decision making, relinquishing his involvement with the organization and resigning.

He believed that further changes in leadership in the Diocese would create immediate instability and if he was to step aside it should be done in a way that did not cause further damage.

The Primate asked Mr Drevikovsky to comment on his perceptions of the issue. Mr Drevikovsky advised that the potential conflict between the Administrator's duty and his personal and family interests arose from the Administrator's role in the future management of all abuse matters arising from the Home. This was likely to include the administration of new claims, revisiting old claims, disciplinary action in relation to perpetrators and the pastoral care of victims and their families including making personal apologies. Survivors of abuse may perceive a conflict if Archdeacon Ezzy was to undertake these roles and might be unable to accept his ministry. The Administrator may also be called before the Royal Commission and the conflict identified in a very public way. Mr Drevikovsky encouraged the Administrator to consider the perceptions of victims, the general public and the Royal Commission.

Archdeacon Gail Hagon advised that there had been discussion on how the Administrator may not be involved in the future management of matters related to abuse at the Home.

Archbishop Peter Jensen sought to clarify the facts of Archdeacon Ezzy's association with the Home.

Archdeacon Ezzy confirmed that he had been Chair of the Management Committee for 10 years in the 1980/90's, his wife had been Superintendent of the Home and his son worked there on a casual basis as a carer. He was unsure about the involvement of another family member as a carer. He advised that he was not aware of any complaints reported at the time but understood that complaints may come forward in the future. The Primate commented that he understood there had been a complaint made and settled related to the Ezzy's time at the Home. On further questioning by Archbishop Jensen, Archdeacon Ezzy confirmed that a resident during the period of his and his wife's involvement had alleged physical, psychological and sexual abuse during an earlier period when the home was under previous management. The claim was settled in 2007. The claim also included a complaint against Mrs Ezzy in regard to a "skateboard ramp" incident. Archbishop Jensen commented that the information provided by Archdeacon Ezzy sounded very close to acknowledging a conflict.

Bishop Huggins advised that he had advised Archdeacon Ezzy that the risk of controversy and adverse media coverage was a risk not worth taking. Bishop Huggins considered that it was in Archdeacon Ezzy's best interests to stand aside from the role of Administrator and identify another role which would enable him to continue to play a role in the preparation of the Diocese for a new Bishop.

The Primate commented that, if this option went ahead, it would be necessary for Archdeacon Ezzy to make a public statement advising that he was standing aside in the interests of the Diocese.

The Primate sought the views of the Dean and Acting Registrar. Fr Donald Kirk advised that he supported Archdeacon Ezzy continuing as Administrator but shared Bishop Huggins' concern about the personal impact on Greg and his family.

Ms Hywood advised that she agreed that Archdeacon Ezzy continuing as Administrator would provide immediate stability in the Diocese but was concerned that his association with the home would eventually become public which would damage both the Administrator and the Diocese.

There was discussion about an alternative role for Archdeacon Ezzy and the requirements of the relevant ordinance in regard to the appointment of an alternative Administrator. Archdeacon Ezzy automatically took up the role of Administrator following his appointment as Commissary. Should the Commissary be unwilling or unable to serve then the Diocesan Archdeacon, Gail Hagon would then take on the role of Administrator until the Bishop-in-Council appointed an Administrator from within or outside the Diocese.

The Primate noted that the pressure on the leadership of the Diocese will continue and additional resources would be required to cope with the load.

Archdeacon Ezzy confirmed that he would be willing to serve alongside Archdeacon Hagon as Administrator and the other members of the Senior Leadership team, with a particular focus on projects to ensure the Diocese is in a healthy position for the arrival of a new Bishop.

He advised that he was unwilling to stand aside based on the perceptions of conflict of interest but was prepared to stand aside on the basis that his appointment had become an unnecessary focus for the Diocese. He was willing to stand aside if this would allow the Diocesan leadership to get on with the important work in the area of Professional Standards and preparing for the new Bishop.

The Primate encouraged Archdeacon Ezzy and the members of the Senior Leadership team to consider developing a proposal to take to Bishop-in-Council when it next met which put forward Archdeacon Hagon for appointment as Administrator and Archdeacon Ezzy to continue to participate in the leadership team during the interregnum.

There was general discussion about how this arrangement would be presented to Bishop-in-Council and how it would be implemented.

The Primate also suggested that the matter of additional resources be considered and recommended that a dedicated resource be allocated to the coordination of all Professional Standards policy development, the management of new abuse claims and media management. He recommended that the existing team did not attempt to manage these complex issues as well as the day to day work of the Diocese. The resourcing of this extra position should be a priority for Bishop-in-Council.

The group discussed the pastoral care requirements throughout the Diocese following the Bishop's resignation and the acknowledgement of past abuse at the Children's Home. The Primate outlined the structure and roles of the pastoral care team in the Diocese of Brisbane which is activated in response to allegations of abuse in parishes and organizations in the Diocese.

The Primate encouraged the members of the Senior Leadership Team in the difficult task ahead of them and thanked all for attending.

The meeting closed at 5.15pm