We seemed to have a lonely existence at the Home. They had children there who were under Legacy and things like that. Sadly, we didn't have any relatives to come and see us and, you know, we used to get a bit upset when other children could have relatives come, their mothers, and bring them toys and things, perhaps some fruit.

Another story runs:

Welfare just took the lot, no reason - just took us. They took mum and dad to court here for no reason. But there was no neglect. We was happy kids, you know. We just - we lived in the bush all our lives. Dad never believed in bringing his family to the city, he just loved the bush and that's where we stayed. We were all fed and happy there, but I suppose they were looking for this other family and when they came to take them they just decided, "Well, we'll take these as well."

Or there is this:

I wasn't allowed to go to the same school where my natural siblings were attending school. I knew my siblings' names but I didn't know what they looked like. I was told not to contact my natural family. My foster family and the welfare officer said to me that I shouldn't get in touch with my natural family because they were not "any good."

May God bless and make fruitful our "Year of Listening."

THE WAY OF CHRIST

I am glad to have this opportunity of reporting to the Synod on the Independent Pastoral initiative taken in October 1997 and which issued in the Report made public on Monday, March 23, 1998.

It was a step I felt compelled to take out of pastoral concern for people who may have been subjected to inappropriate sexual behaviour by clergy and officers of the diocese.

In part I was influenced by allegations relating to some twenty or more years ago which were made in the course of pastoral counselling by me last year. These later became the subject of attention by the Mercury and ABC Television.

It seemed imperative that we should, rather than protecting ourselves as a church, put our concern and care for possible victims at the forefront of our actions. As well there is a clear responsibility to ensure that others do not become victims.

I was also greatly influenced by the video Not in our Church shown at last year's Clergy Conference. Then, listening to Annette Peardon and her story as one of the "stolen children" made me think of those who may have been hurt by Anglican Clergy or officers and who had never been able to tell their story and to be taken seriously. So often it is victims who are made to feel guilty and responsible.

More recently a reporter asked me if I regretted having launched the Inquiry. In the light of what it revealed and the public attention that has ensued would I have still taken the action? The answer for me was clear. You cannot build Christ's church on a lack of integrity. What has been revealed is saddening and shocking. The human suffering it represents must
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appal all of us. But, for the first time, the victims have been able to tell their stories and have been heard sensitively and in confidence. For the first time all who have come forward have been offered professional counselling. For the first time the procedures of the Church in this Diocese have been carefully and independently assessed and are the subject of a number of recommendations.

Copies of the Report have been widely circulated and have been available in each Parish so I assume that members of Synod are familiar with the contents. However, I would like to clarify a number of points as sometimes reporting has had its own interpretation and perhaps the Report itself is not always specific about the eras concerned.

All of the eleven allegations regarding the Schools were unknown in my time as Bishop.

Of the sixteen clergy and officers referred to, we would not have had any knowledge of the vast majority of allegations prior to my counselling in 1997 and the report of the Inquiry this year. The Inquiry has not revealed any case of abuse of children by any priest or officer currently serving in this diocese.

The Report is strongly confirming of the Clergy Code of Ethics, the Diocesan Sexual Harassment Response Group and the procedures for screening and selecting Youth Leaders for diocesan events.

Concern is expressed that our processes for dealing with allegations have failed to keep complainants informed of actions taken and have neglected to supply back-up support and counselling. Transparently clear and carefully enunciated procedures are required which will ensure justice for both victim and alleged perpetrator, which provide a means of establishing that there is a prima facie case to be answered, which give the Bishop authority to suspend a person whilst investigation takes place and which, when a finding is returned, provide the necessary sanctions.

I believe that I speak for the members of this Church when I take this opportunity to express deep regret for any lapses which may have occurred. As Bishop of the Diocese I have been deeply saddened that such conduct may have been perpetrated by those in whom I and the Church have placed reliance. I express a heartfelt apology to any victim of abuse.

The Report contains a chapter which lists all the recommendations for changes in the life, structure, policy and practice of the Anglican Church in Tasmania. I would now like to deal with the various categories of recommendations and indicate the actions which have taken place or are in train.

Recommendations 1 - 3 deal with the Bishop's powers and recommend a considerable broadening to allow the Bishop power to suspend or terminate a licence when such action is manifestly appropriate. It also recommends adoption of limited tenure for rectors of five or ten years duration, much along the lines of the current practice in the Diocese of Melbourne.

The Synod will have before it a Ministry Bill which deals with these matters, although the concern behind the recommendation with regard to tenure is tackled in a different way. The Inquiry has seen a draft of what is being presented to Synod and have expressed their support.

Recommendations 4 - 7 concern the operation of the Diocesan Sexual Harassment Response Group (DSHRG) and have been referred to that Group for attention. The Chair of
the DSHRG has reported that Recommendations 4 and 5, dealing with independence of this group from church administration, have been attended to; and that the role of the Support Person has been extended to ensure that the complainant is informed appropriately and expeditiously of the response to the complaint. The DSHRG did not feel, however, that it would be appropriate for the complainant to receive a copy of the recommendations which are supplied to the Bishop.

In the pursuit of Recommendation 7, the DSHRG has recommended that the Reverend Jim Young attend a Clergy Misconduct four day workshop in Seattle in early May, as the program for this workshop includes such topics as healing for survivors and congregations.

Arrangements are being made to amend the Guidelines booklet for the DSHRG.

Recommendations 8 - 16 have to do with the ethical, professional and personal development of the clergy.

These recommendations are in the early stages of implementation. They include the need for substantial input from the laity in discussion of the Code of Clergy Ethics, the extension of the Pastoral Care and Ethics Course with more adequate funding and resourcing for this program. Clergy Peer Review and Support Groups are to be established throughout the Diocese and Dr. Jim Young has been asked to investigate all aspects of how a course with particular reference to pastoral counselling could be formulated and delivered to clergy throughout Tasmania.

Recommendations 17 - 22 have to do with youth activities within the Diocese. These have been before the Christian Formation Committee. The Committee rejoices at the encouragement given to maintain and expand activities for youth in the Diocese, accepts the recommendation that the Camping Code of Practice should detail action to be taken where there are concerns about a breach of the Code, has referred the matter of the education of children as to procedures to be followed if they have concerns to Anglican Camping Tasmania, and the Diocesan Youth Council is arranging for the prominent display of the 1800 telephone number at all venues or camps where there is a church youth activity. The Christian Formation Committee has requested an amendment to the Anglican Camping Tasmania policy which would show that final responsibility for staff selection lies with the ACT Committee, and has requested the Director of Anglican Mission Tasmania to implement such steps are required for training and understanding fundamental issues concerning sexual abuse, in consultation with Dr. Patrick Fernando and the Reverend Dr. Jim Young.

The Christian Formation Committee has gone further and requested the Director to bring a proposal to the next meeting with reference to resourcing parishes in their work with children and young people, especially with regard to the issues raised by the Inquiry.

Recommendations 23 - 25 concern the Code of Practice for the Protection of Children. These three recommendations were referred to the Chair of the group responsible for this Code. The Code, appropriately amended, was adopted by the Diocesan Council at its last meeting.

Consideration has still to be given to Recommendation 25 regarding the establishment of a secure central Church Register.