



PRIMATE OF AUSTRALIA

8 April 2009

Professor Patrick Parkinson AM
School of Law
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006

Dear Patrick

Thank you for attending the national bishops meeting on 21 March 2009 and for presenting the work undertaken to date on the study project relating to reported child sexual abuse in the Anglican Church of Australia.

We are most grateful to you and to Emeritus Professor Kim Oates and Amanda Jayakody for the work that you have undertaken. The material that you have presented so far suggests that the research will be of great assistance to Anglicans in refining our responses to the sexual abuse of children within the church.

When the Standing Committee of General Synod met in February it requested me to include the research project as an item for discussion at the bishops meeting and requested you and Emeritus Professor Oates, in consultation with the Professional Standards Commission, to give consideration to any comments and/or recommendations arising therefrom in the finalisation of the study.

Following the session of the meeting that you attended, together with Garth Blake SC and Marilyn Redlich, the bishops spent a further session discussing the material that you presented to us. I invited the bishops, who were seated in table groups of 5-8, to identify in that material errors or matters requiring further elucidation or clarification. I also invited bishops to identify the kind of assistance that they would individually require once a report is finalised.

The responses of the bishops to these invitations is the kind of feedback that you would have received had there been more time for discussion while you, Garth and Marilyn were present with us. I enclose the verbatim responses of each of the eight groups of bishops for your information. It may be that some of the responses are wide of the mark. Please be assured that the bishops welcomed the study and the findings contained in it, including those that are difficult or challenging, and are committed to acting appropriately in response.

I believe that these wide-ranging comments and recommendations (of varying merit) suggest two significant points upon which further clarification is needed:

1. The data on which the reflections are based is neither the entire population of abuse cases (some data is missing) nor a random sample

from that population. Does this affect the statistical significance of the results?

2. The sizes and relative sizes in the overall population of clergy and church-workers is not stated (are they known?) How is it then possible to know whether a particular class of church-worker (clergy, youth worker, CEBS leader) is over- or under-represented in the results? Similarly, how is it possible to know whether graduates of a particular theological college are over- or under-represented when:
 - The sample is incomplete and not random; and
 - The total number of graduates and of graduates from a particular college is not known?

Thank you again for undertaking this very important work. I look forward to seeing a final report of the study.

Yours Sincerely



The Most Rev'd Dr Phillip Aspinall
Primate

Cc: Garth Blake SC