

# NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

A Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops & the  
Australian Leaders of Religious Institutes

ACBC VOL4/26

## BRIEFING NOTE NUMBER 2

**TO: NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

**FROM: FATHER DAVID CAPPO**

**RE: UPDATE ON CASE STUDIES**

**DATE: 8 APRIL 1997**

The following statistics apply as of this date:

50 replies have been received from womens' religious institutes indicating that they have not had any complaints to date.

3 replies have been received from mens' religious institutes indicating that they have not had any complaints to date.

4 dioceses have replied indicating that they have not had any complaints to date.

6 dioceses have submitted case studies.

4 mens' religious institutes have submitted case studies.

10 case studies have been submitted to date.

The information contained in the case studies submitted is very helpful in indicating directions for the future.

From the small case study sample, the problems of the past have included:

A failure by some church authorities to understand that if criminal activity was reported to them in any way other than the confessional, that they had a responsibility to act on the information, even if it was to clarify the matter as much as possible.

A failure to be open about the Church's procedures; the existence of the former protocol was not widely known; the existence of 'special issues committees' was widely unknown; members of committee's did not have a developed understanding of

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their roles, including whether they simply advised the bishop or whether they have a pro active role to play; there was a failure to respond quickly to the needs of victims; there was disappointment and anger with the Church for dealing with matters from only a legal perspective and not a pastoral one; there was a failure to respond to the needs of the offender through proper management, supervision and treatment; there was a failure to respond to the needs of secondary victims eg parish or religious communities including the lack of openness and honesty in providing information to parishes whose pastor suddenly left for a reason later to be seen as a 'smoke screen'; there was a perception from victims that different approaches were adopted by different church authorities depending upon their ability to face issues and respond to victims.

Procedures worked well when the Church personnel involved were quick to act, open and honest, blended the legal and pastoral responses, gave apologies, co operated in police investigations, responded with honesty and frankness to parish or religious communities concerned.

Other issues that the current case studies indicate include the need for an adequate treatment program for offenders; that priests should NOT be investigating other clergy ( the argument that a priest is more likely to tell another priest about such matters, is not seen as credible); the need for independence to be visible in the personnel responding to the complaint.

A more extensive report will be provided upon receipt of further case studies.