



Statement by the Diocese of Adelaide January 2021

This statement supersedes the statement issued by the Diocese in 2004 and reflects the findings of the 2016 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

1. In 2004 the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide received comments from the legal advisors to Gerard Menses which are highly critical of certain findings of the report of the Board of Inquiry established to comment on the Diocese's response to allegations of sexual abuse. Those findings are ones which affect the reputation of Mr Gerard Menses.
2. The Diocese commissioned the Board of Inquiry as an independent body which would offer its own conclusions about the Diocese's handling of allegations of sexual abuse. The Diocese has accepted, and continues to accept, the Board of Inquiry's criticisms of the manner in which the Diocese addressed these issues in the past and has taken steps, based on the Board of Inquiry's conclusions, to address the criticisms that have been made. Given the independence of the Board of Inquiry, it is inappropriate that the Diocese attempt to influence any action that may be taken by the members of the Board of Inquiry with respect to any matter that may now be raised in relation to its report. Rather, the Diocese continues to support the status of the report and to accept its fundamental significance to the Diocese's response to the allegations of sexual abuse within our Church.
3. In 2004 the Diocese received additional documents relating to Mr Menses which were not previously supplied by any person to the members of the Board of Inquiry during the process of the Board's investigations. These documents support Mr Menses' claim that he took legal advice prior to conducting an interview with Mr Brandenburg, then an alleged sexual abuser, and were provided to the Board of Inquiry. The Board of Inquiry then made a further statement based on these documents that had come to light, conceding that, on the evidence then available, any adverse inference as to Mr Menses' credibility arising from incorrect information before the Board concerning the obtaining of legal advice could not be sustained.
4. In 2016 the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made findings different from those of the Board of Inquiry in respect of the following matters:
 - a. The Board of Inquiry had found that in June 1997 Mr Menses had received from two employees of Anglican Community Services two reports – one concerning Occupational Health & Safety deficiencies at the Harrogate campsite arising out of a request by Mr Menses for a review of campsites under Brandenburg's management, and one concerning Brandenburg's alleged paedophile conduct. The Royal Commission "did not consider that there is sufficient evidence before us to conclude that Mr Menses was given two reports. We accept his evidence that he was only given one report, which dealt only with OHS issues"; and
 - b. In relation to the Board's criticism of Mr Menses not taking further action in July 1998 when made aware of a newspaper report in Tasmania concerning alleged paedophile activity by Brandenburg and others, the Royal Commission noted that Mr Menses took no further action based on legal advice that in the circumstances none was necessary.



5. Whilst the Royal Commission affirmed shortcomings in the manner in which an interview by Mr Menses was conducted in 1997, they differed from the Board of Inquiry in that they said that:
 - a. Mr Menses was following legal advice;
 - b. he acted promptly after becoming aware of concern raised by an employee against Brandenburg; and
 - c. Mr Menses should have informed the Archbishop post the interview but did not suggest that other authorities should have been contacted.

6. The Diocese does wish to acknowledge the valuable contribution that Mr Menses made to the Anglican Church while serving with Anglican Community Services over a substantial number of years. Any fair assessment of Mr Menses' time serving with the Anglican Community Services must, by necessity, take that contribution into account.

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