Reporting the Abuse of Children and Young People and Responding to Adult Sexual Assault:

A study into the attitudes and behaviours of clergy and church-workers in the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide when dealing with the abuse of children and sexual assault of adults

FINAL VERSION

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1. Executive Summary:

This research was prompted by two resolutions moved by the Synod of the Adelaide Diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia on the 19th of June 2004. These resolutions form the two aims of this research, which are:

1. 'To assess the knowledge, understanding and commitment by clergy and lay church workers to make immediate reports of information received with regard to all alleged abuses of children or young people by church workers to the Department of Family and Youth Services and/or the police without any prior intermeddling in the situation'

2. 'To assess the knowledge, understanding and attitudes of clergy and church workers in relation to the need to appropriately respond to claims of sexual assault of adults.'

(Motions 119 and 129 of Resolutions Passed by Synod in June 2004)

1.1 The main findings:

In regard to clergy reporting the alleged abuse of children and young people:

- More than half of the clergy surveyed have had suspicions or knowledge of at least one instance of children abuse. Almost all the clergy who were interviewed had such suspicions/knowledge.
- While reporting has increased over time, and particularly since the Diocesan Notification policy, there is an under-reporting of child abuse by clergy, particularly to the appropriate government authorities.
- The majority of clergy have not reported abuse 'immediately'.
- Most clergy have a good level of knowledge about mandatory reporting matters, and many are now vigilant about child protection in the course of their work.
- Ministry Development Council education about child protection is unanimously considered either satisfactory or very satisfactory.
- In many cases, clergy have not seen their role as that of reporter. Reporting has sometimes been left to other professionals.
- Some clergy still have difficulties reconciling reporting with other pastoral concerns of confidentiality and retaining the victim/survivor[1]'s integrity and power of disclosure.

[1] The term 'victim/survivor' is used throughout this report for the following reason, taken from a Centre Against Sexual Assault publication: 'Traditionally, women and children are blamed for 'inciting' sexual assault. The use of the term 'victim' helps to demystify this tradition. The term 'survivor' reminds us of the strength demonstrated by women and children as they 'survive' the experience of assault. The term 'survivor' implies the possibility for survival which 'victim' does not'. (CASA House, 1990a).

- The church has, in some cases, not previously been supportive of clergy reporting matters of abuse. Some clergy have had very negative experiences of attempting to report matters to the Church in the past, which include being bullied, threatened and silenced.
- Overall, while education levels about child protection are good, the shift in role of clergy to mandatory reporter may not yet, in practice, be fully accepted or complete.

In regard to (non-ordained) church-workers reporting the alleged abuse of children and young people:

- Church-workers have had a low exposure to allegations of children/young people and low exposure to adult sexual assault.
- Church-workers presented a very good knowledge of, and strong commitment to, child protection matters. Often this stems from their work outside the church.
- In practise, if a case of alleged child abuse did arise, a church-worker is likely to talk about it with the parish priest before reporting it to the relevant authorities.
- Church-workers do not receive information from the church about child protection education, but are instead dependent on the parish priests to pass this information on. Sometimes this information is not passed on.
- Both clergy and church-workers would like 'refresher' courses in mandatory reporting.

In regard to responding to adult sexual assault:

- Clergy have moderately high contact with matters of sexual assault.
- Responses by clergy to sexual assault are varied and diverse. Some clergy did appear to know how to respond to sexual assault, while some clergy appeared to have very little idea about how to respond appropriately, and their responses could have re-traumatised the victim/survivor.
- Clergy's attitudes about sexual assault are also varied. A much greater proportion have incorrect and inappropriate knowledge about how to deal with claims of sexual assault compared with how to deal with allegations of child abuse.
- More than half of clergy have not received education on how to respond to adult sexual assault. The Diocese does not provide any such education. Almost all clergy who have not received education about responding to adult sexual assault would like to receive it.

Other related substantive and procedural findings:

- Information about other abuses of power that clergy are required to respond to also arose from the data. Usually these took the form of violence against women.
- Information was also received about violence against women within the church. There were reports about emotional/spiritual abuse of middle-aged and elderly women within parishes, and abuse/assault of female clergy (sometimes by male

clergy). Acknowledging and addressing these abuses of power does not yet appear to be on the Church's agenda.

- A substantial minority of clergy interviewed disclosed that they themselves were victims/survivors of some form of abuse/assault. This has implications for how these matters are raised within the church.
- Interviewees report a marked change in their professional conduct. For example, several clergy are more reserved about hugging, and many clergy avoid being alone with children.
- There was some heavy criticism of recent guidelines for clergy - particularly the 'code of conduct' in the 'Faithfulness In Service' document. Some see these as 'overboard', and part of a conservative agenda coming from particular elements of the national Church.
- Concern was raised by some clergy about the perceived lack of independence and autonomy of the Office of Professional Standards, which has deterred at least one priest from reporting to it.
- Some clergy have not felt supported by the church when attempting to respond to abuse/assault matters, particularly in the past. Some clergy felt there was currently an 'inquisitorial' culture within the Diocese which may mitigate against open communication.
- The institution of the church is heavily criticised by many clergy in interviews, particularly in relation to its hierarchical power structures. This was felt by some to limit and even prevent accountability about abuse and assault matters.
- There is a sense of hope and even optimism amongst many clergy that the Diocese and Church is now actively and much more satisfactorily dealing with child protection matters.

1.2 The main recommendations:

- That the mandatory notification training run by the Ministry Development council is made compulsory for all active clergy and church-workers
- That a 'refresher' course on mandatory notification and other aspects of child protection is provided by the Ministry Development Council for clergy and church-workers as part of ongoing education about these matters
- That the Diocese consider the mandatory notification responsibilities of clergy when working in situations where they are dealing with victims/survivors of abuse on a daily basis (and who might already be 'in the system'), such as in a health context

- That the Diocese consider policy and verbatim requirements that clergy immediately report all matters of abuse, regardless of the of the victim/survivors intentions, when the victim/survivor is not in current or immediate danger of abuse, and particularly when the victim/survivor is now an adult
- That the Diocese clarifies whether abuse reported within a formal confessional situation is reportable
- That the above recommendations about considering reporting legislation and requirements take into account the views of clergy and church-workers
- That the Diocese acknowledge and apologise for the distress experienced by some clergy who attempted to report abuse in the past and were silenced, bullied and/or threatened
- That church-workers are encouraged to report child abuse to authorities themselves
- That all church-workers are directly sent materials about child protection education run by the Diocese
- That clergy and church-workers are educated about the rights of, and appropriate responses towards, victims/survivors of sexual assault
- That establishing education and awareness raising programmes about sexual assault for clergy and church-workers be an immediate priority for the Diocese
- That a broad based education and awareness process is established that includes issues of bullying and harassment. That such a programme should be available for use in parishes
- That the Diocese recognise and address violence against women within the church as a matter of urgency. This may include advocating change in church culture, such as through the use of inclusive language in worship, and re-considering gender inequality in positions of power held in the Church
- That the Diocese seriously consider clergy criticism of 'Faithfulness in Service' in relation to whether it is fully adopted
- That the issue of independence and autonomy of the Professional Standards Committee from the Diocese and Church is resolved
- That the Diocese offer support for clergy when attempting to deal with matters of abuse/assault, keeping in mind that some clergy themselves are victims/survivors of abuse/assault
- That the Diocese consider how it may operate in a less hierarchical manner, keeping in mind that old, male-dominated hierarchical power structures are related to a lack of accountability when dealing with matters of child abuse and adult sexual assault

2. Introduction:

The report is about the knowledge, understanding, commitment and attitudes of clergy and church-workers in the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide to reporting child abuse and responding to adult sexual assault. It was prompted by two resolutions moved by the Synod of this Diocese on the 19th of June 2004, and follows on from the detailed Report of the Board of Inquiry into the Handling of Claims of Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Within the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide, by Dr Donna Chung and The Honourable Trevor Olsson, published on the 24th of May 2004, and tabled in the South Australian parliament.

Unlike the extensive Board of Inquiry Report, the purpose of the research set out here was not primarily to investigate claims of sexual abuse and misconduct within the church. Rather, this document reports the findings of a mostly qualitative study into the behaviour and attitudes of clergy and church-workers in regard to reporting child abuse and responding to sexual assault. In the remainder of this introduction, the aims of this research will be stated, the background context to the study described, and the research methods explained.

2.1 Aims of the research:

The aims of this research project are to:

- 'Assess the knowledge, understanding and commitment by clergy and lay church workers to make immediate reports of information received with regard to all alleged abuses of children or young people by church workers to the Department of Family and Youth Services and/or the police without any prior intermeddling in the situation'
- 'Assess knowledge, understanding and attitudes of clergy and church workers in relation to the need to appropriately respond to claims of sexual assault of adults'

These aims are taken directly from Motions 119 and 129 of Resolutions Passed by Synod in June 2004

2.2 Background to the research:

There are two contexts which form the background to this research. Firstly, the public and Church context, in which there has been an increasingly widespread interest and

concern with matters of sexual abuse. Secondly, the academic research which has already been performed on the topics that are the focus of this report.

2.2.1 Sexual abuse/assault and the Church within the wider public domain:

Sexual abuse as an issue has been gaining increasingly widespread international public attention since the 1980s. It was in the 1990s that this attention began to focus on abuse occurring in Churches around the world and at the hands of church-workers and clergy. Muriel Porter (2003, 3) describes how allegations about abusive clergy became 'more and more widespread' until the 2000s when the 'pressure cooker finally exploded', with widespread allegations surfacing about abusive clergy and church-workers which spanned many decades.

Sexual abuse and assault are horrific crimes that are attacks on the very essence of a person. They invariably result in the victim/survivor of the abuse/assault experiencing feelings of powerlessness, vulnerability and self negation. They can produce a sense of being 'different', of being 'isolated', through the extreme experience of violence done to the person's body, mind and spirit (CASA House, 1990b). Because of this, sexual assault is also spiritual assault, and abuse by members of the Church has been likened by some to 'soul slaying' (Rosetti, 1990). It has widespread effects on the families of victims/survivors, and the communities that they exist within. It is understandable that the public and media have shown considerable interest in these matters.

In Australia, the prominence of sexual abuse in the Church was brought to the fore through the involvement of two high profile church-leaders, Peter Hollingworth, the former Archbishop of Brisbane and former Governor-General, and George Pell, the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney. In 2001, Hollingworth was forced to resign from his position as Australia's head of state following allegations of failing to respond adequately to the sexual abuse of girls at an Anglican school. Around the same time (2002), Pell was accused of both mishandling complaints of sexual abuse, and of being a perpetrator of abuse himself (although an independent investigation was unable to substantiate this allegation) (Porter, 2003, 5). In the Adelaide Anglican Diocese, too, the Archbishop Ian George was forced to resign in 2004 over the mishandling of sexual abuse issues (this is detailed below). Muriel Porter (2003) draws our attention to the symbolic as well as practical significance of the involvement of these men in the Australian Church's 'sexual abuse scandal'. Hollingworth and Pell, she writes, both symbolised the 'lingering church culture of priestly power and privilege that has allowed this most insidious of sins to flourish unchecked for decades, and possibly for centuries' (2003, 5).

2.2.2. Sexual abuse and assault within the Adelaide Anglican Diocese:

Within the Adelaide Diocese of the Anglican church, a disturbing history of sexual abuse and misconduct, and mishandling of sexual abuse complaints, was described in the extensive Report of the Board of Inquiry into the Handling of Claims of Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Within the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide, (delivered by Dr Donna Chung and The Honourable Trevor Ollson on the 24th of May 2004, and tabled in the

South Australian parliament, as already mentioned). The findings of this report provide part of the backdrop to the research outlined in this report, and are therefore briefly summarised here (see the 'Executive Summary' of the Report of the Board of Inquiry, pages 1-9). The Board of Inquiry report found that:

- 'Sexual abuse within the Diocese of Adelaide is not a new phenomenon' (p. 1). The Board received evidence relating to more than 80 complaints of sexual abuse by members of the clergy or other church workers, some dating 50 years previously.
- The Board was aware of 'only two cases where a person of authority within a Church organisation reported a complaint of sexual abuse to the police and/or welfare authorities. In one of those cases the report was made by a school more than a fortnight after the event, and after the offender had fled the country at the instigation of a senior Church person' (p.6).
- In general, organisational practises have not been supportive of those who have wished to pursue a complaint. There has been an uncaring and disbelieving attitude towards victims/survivors of abuse, which has had many serious negative effects for these victims/survivors, their families, and the communities of which they are part. Instead of a primary focus on the welfare of victims/survivors of abuse, the primary focus has been on the Church and, in some cases, its clergy.
- The Diocese initially adopted a 'defensive approach' to its handling of sexual abuse (p.3). Rather than putting victims/survivors first, the interest of the Church has been seen to be concerned with insurance and budgetary matters, and in some cases supporting the alleged perpetrator. Some members of the clergy subject to complaint were moved on or directed to flee the country, rather than dealt with appropriately (p. 7).
- Generally, victims/survivors have been very dissatisfied with the Church's handling of their complaints. Pastoral responses to abuse often emphasised forgiveness and concern for the alleged perpetrator, at the expense of the complainant. Victims/survivors of abuse were badly let down when informed by the Diocese (and the Police) that that nothing could be done about their complaints for legal reasons. There was a strong impression that they were not believed or had exaggerated the abuse against them. There was also a lack of feed-back as to how their claims were progressing.
- Parishes and Church organisations have had limited knowledge about child abuse until recent times. This has had particularly negative consequences for dealing appropriately with matters of abuse.
- Prior to 1992 there was no formal structure in place for dealing with these matters and so an Archdeacon or Archbishop usually dealt with claims of sexual abuse. After this, policies and procedures were developed and there was much discussion about the topic in the Diocese. Despite this, the effectiveness of the Diocese's response did not significantly improve. For example, until mid 1999 there was no formal mechanism for dealing with complaints of sexual abuse by Church workers other than members of the clergy.
- There has been a concern of 'conflict of interest' (p. 5) and lack of transparency in 'other forms of organisational life' (p. 5) dealing with complaints. In particular,

while the Professional Standards Committee has been considered a great improvement on the previous complaints process, there are concerns about the extent to which the Professional Standards Director is perceived as independent.

- It was recommended that there is a broadening of the approach to include education and training to bring about some necessary changes to Church culture in relation to sexual misconduct and abuse.
- It is accepted that major changes have taken place in the church from the 1990s onwards and consequently there is now more knowledge among church-workers. It is also recognised that the historic legacies of how the Church has dealt with complaints of sexual abuse will continue into the future as past victims find the courage to come forward and speak out. Better procedures are now in place but the range of tasks still to be undertaken are complex and wide-ranging, particularly in regard to the significant organisational and cultural change required to ensure the Church adequately caters for its future (p. 8-9).

The effects of this report on the Diocese have been major, and still continue to be felt. As has already been mentioned, the Archbishop of the Diocese, Dr Ian George, resigned his position on 11th June 2004 after the release of this Report of the Board of Inquiry, following a lack of confidence in his position expressed by the Professional Standards Committee, the Diocesan Council and even the then Acting Premier Kevin Foley, who stated that the Archbishop was 'in a state of denial' about these matters. The Diocese is yet to appoint a new Archbishop. Recently, a belated 'service of recognition' for Ian George was planned for the 13th of February, to take place in St Peter's Cathedral, only to then be cancelled by the Diocese on the 27th of January following pressure from, among others, victims/survivors of abuse. At the time of writing, the Archbishop's conduct as described in the Board of Inquiry's Report is in the local media again.

Much of the attention in the Diocese to date has focussed on the abuse of children. Certainly, the findings of the Board of Inquiry were mainly to do with abuses of children and young people rather than the sexual assault of adults. However, it has been within the remit of this research to also concern itself with the response of clergy and church-worker in the Diocese to adult sexual assault. No significant response by the Diocese on this matter can be outlined here because it does not exist. However, findings of reports written elsewhere about this matter have made clear that adult sexual assault within the Church is a deeply disturbing and fundamental matter which it also must face.

For instance, the excellent *Pastoral Report to the Churches on Sexual Violence Against Women and Children Of the Church Community* published by CASA House in Melbourne in 1990, was written in response to 'the growing number of unnamed women and children from the churches and the wider community who are gathering the courage to come forward and speak openly about being sexually assaulted by family members, husbands, friends and strangers' (CASA House, 1990b, 3). The report *Public Face, Private Pain, The Anglican Report About Violence Against Women and the Abuse of Power Within the Church Community*, found 'a high level of violence against women in the Anglican community, with sexual abuse the most prevalent form' (Porter, 2003, 82). And two *Compass* programmes telecast on the ABC in 1992 and 1993 on sexual violence

in the church showed that 'traditional male dominance in the church was leading to violence [against women], which was not only physical' (ibid). When the findings of this study are considered, it is particularly telling that this Diocese has not yet conducted any major inquiry into the matter of adult sexual assault within the Church. Indeed, Porter (ibid) states that the dominant reaction of church leaders to adult sexual assault has so far been defensiveness, disbelief and denial.

Having outlined the public, Church and Diocesan contexts this study takes place within, the major academic research that has been undertaken on the topics of this report is outlined below.

2.2.3 Academic research on reporting abuse and responding to sexual assault:

There are three related bodies of academic literature of relevance to this study: studies of the abuse reporting behaviour of professionals and non-professionals, literature about child abuse and sexual assault within the church, and literature about abuse and assault more generally. Some of this literature has already been mentioned above. There is not the space to provide a detailed summary of these fields here, rather this section will highlight their most salient points.

The first body of literature mentioned, the 'reporting' literature, dates from the late 1970s to the present, and is based on studies that are almost all quantitative in nature, with data collection consisting of small- to large-scale surveys, which are then analysed in either a statistical or descriptive manner. Many studies within this field have been conducted on the response, knowledge, attitude and reporting behaviours of professionals such as teachers, nurses, doctors, bureaucrats, social workers, police and members of the judiciary, as well as non-professionals (see for example Winefield and Bradley 1992; Lombard et al 1986; Winefield 1988; Kalichman et al 1988; Rindfleisch and Bean 1988; Dukes and Kean, 1989).

In contrast, very little research has been conducted on the reporting behaviours of clergy. The only detailed study to date was conducted in the United States by David Grossoehme (1998) (a priest himself) and was based on a survey responded to by 143 clergy. Marie Fortune (1988) has also written a chapter on the matter, particularly concerned with dilemmas clergy have about reporting abuse (detailed in another section of this report), but this is not based on any actual research with clergy.

The main findings of Grossoehme's (1998) work were an under-reporting of abuse when known to clergy, with the main reasons given for this being: suspicions of abuse being unconfirmed, and a lack of trust in the relevant authorities[2]. Many of the clergy he

[2] It is also important to note the study by Helen Winefield and Patrick Bradley (1992) on the substantiation of reports of abuse, which is the only study related to these matters based on South Australian data. Presenting a list of the sources of reports to the Department of Community Welfare in 1988-1989 (the statutory body with responsible for child protection policies when the research was carried out), clergy are not listed. Instead, teachers, relatives, 'non-professionals', and social workers were listed as the main reporters. This indicates a strong possibility that under-reporting of abuse may be also be a factor amongst the clergy in South Australia. Alternatively, clergy may have fallen into an 'other' social worker category

consulted were found to have no education about child abuse, and a significant minority believed that evidence of abuse (rather than suspicion) was required before a report could be made. In addition, there was no correlation between a priest having received abuse education, and a priest knowing that one is required to report suspicions of abuse correlation.

Indeed, what much of this 'reporting' literature conveys is that knowledge, understanding, attitude, commitment and behaviour to the reporting of abuse and response to assault is strongly influenced by the wider beliefs and attitudes of the potential reporter. That is, researchers in this field are drawing a link between an individual's wider attitudes about abuse, victims and perpetrators of abuse, and social relations in general, in relation to how they then act (or do not act) when faced with a specific abuse or assault situation (see for example Ringwalt and Earp, 1988; Johnson et al, 1990).

For example, studies which have examined the attribution of responsibility and censure in father-daughter sexual abuse cases (Ringwalt and Earp, 1988; Johnson et al, 1990), have found that attributions of censure have 'a significant impact on the actions...workers take in response to such cases' (Ringwalt and Earp, 1988, 278), leading the researchers to conclude that people who serve either the victims or the perpetrators of sexual abuse should be encouraged to examine their own preconceptions about the relative complicity of the various parties involved in such acts (ibid). It has also been found that as well as specific attitudes about the victims and perpetrators in such cases, more 'pervasive attitudes', such as 'sexual conservatism and general cultural and sexist stereotypes may influence attributions of blame and responsibility' (Johnson et al, 1990, 427), and thus, also, decisions on how to appropriately respond and react.

This 'reporting' literature does little to expand on such 'pervasive attitudes'. However, the two other bodies of literature mentioned, literature on abuse and sexual assault within the church, and in wider society in general, go into such matters in depth, and with a variety of theoretical approaches.

The theoretical approaches which will inform this research view abuse and sexual assault in the context of unequal power relations. In this context, abusive sexual behaviour is understood as existing 'where there is no genuine respect for the other' and must always involve 'differentials of power' (Porter, 2003, 13 -14). Muriel Porter points out that this 'differential of power' is often over-looked in the context of discussing sexual abuse and assault within the church (ibid). Central to this literature and perspective is the common point that instances of sexual abuse and sexual assault are not, therefore, social anomalies, but exist at the extreme end of a continuum of behaviour that pervades our society and many of its institutions, including the church. To illustrate this point in relation to sexual assault, Scott et al (1990, 4) regard sexual insult and harassment at one end of the continuum, and aggravated rape at the other. While in relation to abuse of women, Frazier (2000, 317 argues):

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and thus not been picked up. The study is also based on data that is 16 years old, and could therefore be an inaccurate reflection on the reporting behaviour of clergy today.

> 'Were we to recognise the subtle ways in which men violate women...we would understand that sexual abuse is an *extension* of our gender arrangements rather than an *exception*. We would know that male perpetrators are playing out aspects of society's sexual dynamics that are toxic for all, men and women alike.'

While we recognise that men and boys, too, are victims of abuse and sexual assault (although the vast majority of victim/survivors are girls and women[3]) the wider point being made here is important: that existing gender and other power relations, in both society and its dominant institutions such as the Church, can provide the context in which abuse and sexual assault occurs, and for which the response is both inadequate and inappropriate. As Porter (2003, 10), states:

> '[A]t the outset, it is important to recognise that sexual abuse has either gone unnoticed or been suppressed in the churches partly because they are institutions where there is habitual abuse of power, veiled by secrecy and by an obsession with presenting the best possible face to the world outside.' (Porter, 2003, 10).

In light of this academic research (viewed within the public, Church and Diocesan contexts as detailed above) the study to follow has been led to investigate the reporting and response of clergy and church-workers to abuse and assault at two levels. Firstly, at the practical level of clergy and church-workers' actual behaviour and attitudes towards these issues. But also, the study has been interested in wider cultural attitudes about power relations, abuse and assault within the Diocese. This forms the background and approach to this research.

2.3 The research methods:

There were two main research methods used in this study. Firstly, a survey completed by 57 clergy at a clergy meeting held in early December 2004. Secondly, a series of in-depth interviews with 12 clergy and 4 church-workers conducted from mid to late December 2004. In addition to the survey and interviews, the researcher also conducted an extensive review of the academic literature on these topics, relevant reports and policy documents, consulted with key individuals involved with dealing with matters of child protection and adult sexual assault within the Diocese (such as Ministry Development and Professional Standards staff), and experts outside the church (such as specialist researchers and sexual assault counsellors).

From the outset, a limitation of the scope of the study was that victims/survivors of abuse/assault were not included as subjects of this research. Because of the narrow and specific scope of the study's remit, as well as the relatively small amount of time and resources allocated to the study, only clergy and church-workers were able to be formally consulted. However, it became apparent very soon after the study began that victims/survivors of abuse/assault were in fact being included within the study, indeed

many were at its heart: a quarter to a third of all clergy interviewed disclosed that they themselves were victims/survivors of some sort of abuse and/or assault. This complex positionality of clergy and church-workers in relation to sexual abuse and assault issues provides another important back-drop to the findings to follow. In the remainder of this section on research methods, the other methodological considerations of this study will be detailed.

2.3.1 The survey:

The aim of the survey was to obtain a basic picture of clergy behaviour, knowledge and attitudes in relation to reporting abuse and responding to sexual assault. Originally, it was also intended that church-workers complete it, however due to administrative and time constraints this was not possible.

The survey was 13 pages long and consisted of 54 questions. It ascertained: basic demographic and work details of clergy; the extent of their contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults; what education they have received about responding to child abuse allegations and whether this has been satisfactory; what education they have received about responding to claims of adult sexual assault and whether this has been satisfactory; whether they have suspected or received information about the alleged abuse of a child/young person; if they reported this; reasons for reporting/not reporting the abuse; whether they have had to respond to adult sexual assault; how they responded to it. In addition, a series of statements were listed about abuse/assault that respondents were asked to agree/disagree with. The survey was both anonymous and confidential. It was processed and analysed using a statistical programme.

Clergy completed the survey at a clergy meeting, and most of them took approximately 20 minutes to do so. This method of delivery was advantageous in that it ensured a spontaneous response, and a full and speedy return rate. This was particularly important because of the tight time-line within which this research was completed. The spontaneity may have also helped elicit a 'gut reaction' response. However, this method of delivery was also possibly disadvantageous for two main reasons. Firstly, there may not have been enough time for clergy to adequately think about and recall all the information of relevance for the survey. (Fortunately, in-depth reflection on the topic by clergy was achieved in the interviews). Secondly, the context in which the survey was given and completed was in a large room full of clergy including some church superiors. In such a close, institutional context, clergy may have been less likely to 'open-up'. Again, the environment in which most of the interviews were conducted was markedly different from this.

2.3.2 The interviews:

The aim of the interviews was to acquire an in-depth and detailed understanding of the behaviour, attitudes and knowledge of clergy in relation to their experiences of reporting/not reporting abuse and responding to sexual assault.

Interviews of the 12 clergy and 4 church-workers were semi-structured in nature. This means that there was a list of questions that were asked at all interviews, but many other questions were also raised, and natural conversation often ensued, according to the information supplied by each interviewee. Of the pre-prepared questions, these covered: the experience clergy and church-workers had had in reporting/not reporting child abuse and responding to sexual assault; whether they felt they had been supported by the church in dealing with these matters; their thoughts on issues surrounding boundaries in professional relationships; how they believe the people to whom they minister have been effected by the 'sex abuse scandal' in the Anglican church; and what they think about how the church is currently dealing with these matters. There was also opportunity for interviewees to bring up topics they themselves thought were important, and this generated significant additional insights.

The interviewees were randomly selected from a list of names of clergy in the Adelaide Diocese and a list of church workers' names. There was also a small amount of purposive sampling of clergy interviewees to ensure that at least some clergy were interviewed who had positions of power within the church. The Ministry Development Council initially e-mailed all clergy to give them advance notice that they might be asked to do an interview (the church-workers did not receive this warning). The interviewees were then e-mailed with details about the research, and a request for an interview. There was a relatively good response rate to these e-mails, with more than half of clergy responding, and approximately the same proportion of church-workers responding to the interview request.

All interviews took place at either the workplace or home of the interviewee, and the researcher performed all interviews herself. The interviewees lasted approximately an hour, although some interviews were substantially longer than this and a couple slightly shorter. All interviews were taped and then transcribed by a professional transcriber. Their contents are confidential (only the interviewer and transcriber have seen, and will see, the transcripts)[4]. The transcripts were analysed through a method that involves extracting major and repeated themes, words and images.

In most interviews, the clergy and church-workers interviewed appeared to give much thought, energy and consideration to what they said in the interviews, engaging with the topics at hand. Because of the grave nature of the subject matter of this research, as well as additional topics that were sometimes raised, the interviews sometimes elicited strong emotional responses.

2.3.3 Anonymity and confidentiality:

[4] The transcriber was selected on the basis of his/her experience of dealing with confidential subject matters. They signed confidentiality clauses, and were also provided with a psychologist at the end of each day's transcribing for the purposes of 'de-briefing' due to the distressing nature of the some of the subject matter on the interview tapes.

As has already been mentioned, the survey and interview participants remain anonymous. To this end, every effort has been made to avoid any identifying details being given in the contents of this report.

2.3.4 Other ethical considerations:

Before all interviews began, the researcher discussed with the interviewee the aims of the research, confidentiality and anonymity issues, and issues surrounding dealing with the potentially distressing nature of the topics to be discussed.

Before both the surveys and interviews were undertaken, a proposal for this research was submitted, reviewed and accepted by a Board of Review.

2.3.5 Resources:

One researcher worked on the research report for six months. Initially, the research was conducted on a half-time basis. However, after the first three months, it became evident that the project required full-time employment and the researcher was subsequently employed on a full-time basis. Given the breadth and importance of the issues concerned, more resources could have been beneficially employed to perform this study.

2.3.6 Positionality of the researcher:

The research was performed by a white Australian woman who has some background knowledge of the Adelaide Anglican Diocese, having lived in Adelaide as child, and having been both baptised and confirmed in the Anglican Church. However, she is now based in Melbourne, and previous to this spent an extended period of time overseas. The researcher is an academic with particular interest and expertise in gendered power relations.

3. Reporting by clergy – and not reporting - the abuse of children and young people

The first aim of this research was to assess the knowledge, understanding and commitment of clergy and lay church-workers to make immediate reports of information received with regard to all alleged abuses of children or young people to the Department of Family and Youth Services and/or the police without any prior intermeddling in the situation. Before presenting and discussing the data relating specifically to this aim, it is important to briefly describe the context in which this aim (or Synod resolution) was formed. Specifically, how clergy and church-workers have become required to report the alleged abuse of children and young people. Indeed, this background context becomes particularly pertinent in light of what this study has found.

3.1 The requirement of clergy and church leaders to report child abuse:

Up until recently, clergy and church-workers have not been required to notify authorities about the alleged abuses of children and young people. While the SA Children's Protection Act 1993 (sections 11(1) & (2)) obliges by law various professions to notify the Department of Family and Youth Services (FAYS) if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child/young person has been or is being abused or neglected and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person's work or in carrying out official duties (Ministry Development Council, September 2000), the majority of clergy and church leaders are not currently included in this law as mandatory notifiers of child abuse.

However, on July 11 2001, the Diocesan Council of the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide approved the 'Notification of Child Abuse' policy, the purpose of which is to 'ensure that [church] leaders who suspect on reasonable grounds that a person under the age of 18 has been or is being abused or neglected notify the Department of Family and Youth Services' (FAYS). Thus, Diocesan Council formed the view that while most clergy and church leaders do not have a legal duty to make such notification, they do have a 'moral responsibility' to do so, and one now explicitly required by church law.

Further to this 2001 policy, Diocesan Council have also approved the 'Interim Protocols for Dealing with Sexual Misconduct by Clergy and Church-workers'. Among other things, this requires that 'a member of the Clergy and a Church authority in the Diocese should as soon as possible refer any information [on examinable conduct] in his her or its possession or knowledge to the Director'.

This research has found that these policies constitute a significant departure from the previous message and practice received from the Church by clergy about confidentiality in pastoral relationships. And while most clergy are now aware of this requirement to report, the shift in role of clergy to mandatory reporter is not yet, in practise, either fully accepted or complete. For this, and other reasons, there is an under-reporting by clergy of child abuse/neglect. Importantly, in the majority of clergy, this does not appear to reflect a lack of commitment to child protection issues in general. Rather, it reflects a clear and sometimes acute tension and conflict felt by clergy between confidentiality for the purposes of pastoral care, and the duty to report abuse (and also assault) as stipulated by the church.

In the following sections, survey data relating to the education of clergy about reporting issues, and the reporting behaviour of clergy will be presented and then discussed in light of the more detailed and in-depth data received in interviews about reporting and under-reporting behaviour. Because church-worker (ie non-clergy) experiences in relation to allegations of child abuse/neglect were found to be so significantly different from clergy, with a much lower exposure to child abuse allegations, they are dealt with in a separate section.

3.2 Suspecting and receiving information about child abuse:

At least half of all clergy (and probably substantially more) have had at least one experience of suspecting/receiving information about child abuse in the course of their church work: In the survey 49% (28) of clergy stated that they have suspected or received information about the alleged abuse/neglect of children/young people at some point in the course of their church work. In the interviews this proportion was substantially higher: all clergy except for one had heard allegations of child abuse/neglect or at least concerns about the possibility of child abuse/neglect. Often this was limited to only one or a few incidents over the course of their working lives. Some of these situations concerned abuse that had occurred some time ago when the now adult victim/survivor was a child.

There are several possible reasons for a degree of under-reporting about this matter in the survey. Some clergy may have not often realised that a particular situation was a reportable instance of suspected abuse/neglect. Also, as noted in the methods section, clergy may not have had sufficient time to recall all instances of abuse they have been suspicious of/received information about when answering the survey. In addition, some clergy may have put down in the survey only those instances of abuse where the perpetrator was alleged to be a church worker (that this may have happened became apparent in the interviews, which were conducted after the survey had been delivered).

In fact, much of the child abuse/neglect most clergy are suspicious of/receive knowledge about are situations where the perpetrator is not a church-worker. The original aims of research only mention the abuse of children/young people as perpetrated by church-workers. However, in light of the high level of exposure of clergy to child abuse when the alleged perpetrator is not a priest or a church-worker emerging in the results, and given that the Diocese now views clergy as mandatory reporters of (all) child abuse, this research has considered all cases of child abuse to which clergy have responded.

3.3 Reporting – and not reporting - the abuse of children/young people:

In the survey, when asked if they had reported the abuse they had suspected/received information about, 54% (19) said yes, they had reported suspicions of abuse, while 46% (16) said they had not. It should be noted that 29 clergy responded to this question in regard to 35 incidents: some clergy responded in relation to more than one instance of abuse, and some clergy had both reported and not reported (different) instances of abuse.

Crucial to consider is to whom the reports of abuse were made. The Diocesan Notification Policy stipulates that reports must be made to the Department of Family and Youth Services, who then take over responsibility for the situation. In the survey, of the 19 clergy who had reported abuse, 9 (47%) stated that they had reported it to the Department of Youth and Family Service, 6 (32%) that they had reported it to the police, 5 (26%) to church authorities, 4 (21%) to the church help-line, 2 (11%) to the Professional Standards Officer, and 3 (16%) to other services/people. In many instances, clergy reported the allegation/s to more than one source.

It is interesting to note that clergy answering the survey interpreted 'reporting' of abuse in a broad sense. That is, they included reporting to sources such as superiors within the church, as well as notifying the Department of Family and Youth Services (and/or the police), as the Diocesan Notification Policy requires. If we were to only include those reports which were made to the Department of Family and Youth Services, then the percentage of suspicions reported is substantially lowered, with just over a quarter (26%) of suspicions reported in this way to the Department. In fact an even lower rate of reporting to the Department was found in the interviews, with only one (1) of the 11 clergy interviewees who had exposure to instances of child abuse stating that they had ever reported suspicions to the Department of Family and Youth Services. These results reflect a significant under-reporting of abuse by clergy. This is in line with other existing research on this matter, as outlined in the Background section of this report.

Before going on to discuss this reporting and under-reporting in the context of the Adelaide Diocese and what it may say about the 'knowledge, understanding and commitment' of clergy in relation to these matters, three other pieces of key data emerging from the survey need to be considered in relation to the research aims. Firstly, the extent to which this under-reporting reflects the behaviour of clergy before they were mandated by the church to report (ie pre-2001 Diocesan Notification Policy). Secondly, how soon after suspicions arose were those reports made– that is (as stipulated in the research aim) do clergy report 'immediately'? Thirdly, and crucially, the education clergy have received on this issue.

3.4 Reporting behaviour before and after the Diocesan Notification Policy:

The information received about reporting in the survey and interviews refers to instances of abuse dating from the 1960s to the present time. Given that clergy were only mandated by the church to report in 2001, combined with the fact that social views on child abuse and reporting have changed substantially over this period of time[5], it could be expected that there was a high degree of under-reporting before this time, particularly to government authorities.

Indeed, survey data shows that reporting by clergy has increased over time. Of the reporting whose dates were disclosed in the survey: 1 'report' was made by clergy in the 1960s, 1 in the 1970s, 3 in the 1980s, 5 in the 1990s and 8 in the 2000s. The year most reports were made was 2004, with 5 reports made in that year, and in total, 8 reports had been made since the Notification policy came into place[6].

However, it needs to be noted that before the 1990s, the 'reporting' disclosed was not to state authorities or the police, but rather church authorities or other sources (such as the child's school). After the 1990s, when there was an increasingly greater awareness about

[5] Reports of suspected child abuse and neglect in South Australia have increased markedly, reflecting a growing awareness of child protection issues (Ministry Development Council, 2000).
[6] 18 clergy responded to this question compared to the 19 who stated that they had reported abuse

these matters in the Church and the Diocese, reports started to be made to FAYS. When the 8 reports (one priest made two of these) made after the Diocesan Notification policy was approved are considered in more detail, it can be seen that while more clergy report to FAYS, clergy still report to a variety of sources. 3 of the 8 instances of reporting since 2001 disclosed in the survey did not include a report to FAYs. Therefore, while reporting has increased over time, and reporting to the Department of Family and Youth has also increased over time, very few reports by clergy are made to the government authorities about child abuse.

3.5 Do clergy report 'immediately'?

The research aim regarding child abuse queried whether clergy reported abuse 'immediately' after suspicions arose or information was received about an allegation of abuse. The Diocesan Notification Policy 2001 does not stipulate that reports must be made 'immediately'. However, immediacy in action or at least reporting 'as soon as possible' is required by the more recent *Interim Protocols for Dealing with Sexual Misconduct by Clergy and Churchworkers*, approved by Diocesan Council on 16 June 2004, although this concerns reporting examinable conduct to the Director of Professional Standards.

In the survey, 30% (6) of clergy stated that they made their reports about abuse immediately, 25% (5) stated that they reported it in the days following, 35% (7) in the week following, and 10% in the month following, with 20 clergy responding to this question. Therefore, while a substantial minority stated that they did report immediately, the majority of clergy did not. It needs to be noted that in interviews, there was not one instance of clergy reporting abuse to the relevant authorities 'immediately' as in as soon as they had first heard about the abuse. In fact, this issue of reporting immediately or as soon as possible was found in interviews to tap into a wider and more fundamental issue about letting the victim/survivor of abuse retain a degree of control over the situation, which is discussed in detail below.

To summarise the data so far: the majority of clergy have contact with at least one instance of child abuse/neglect in the context of their working lives. As would be expected, reporting has increased over time, however a high degree of under-reporting of child abuse/neglect still exists, particularly to government authorities. While a substantial minority of clergy stated in the survey that they made reports immediately, the majority did not, and no interviewees described cases where they had reported abuse to the authorities 'immediately'.

3.6 Education about child protection:

Alongside clergy behaviour, it is also crucial to consider what education clergy have received on child abuse matters. Overall, most clergy surveyed stated that they had received some sort of child protection education, and all of those who had received it from the church found it either satisfactory or very satisfactory.

In terms of actual figures: 81% of clergy surveyed stated that they had received some sort of child protection education. It should also be stated, however, that since the survey was administered at a (voluntary) clergy meeting, it became apparent during interviews that the clergy who attended this meeting and thus responded to the survey are probably also some of the mostly likely to be those to attend at least conferences, if not training.

While these figures are encouraging, it is important to consider what clergy themselves have defined as 'education' – that is, what their education has consisted of. 29 of 59 priests (62%) stated that they had received their education from the Ministry Development Council. The training for mandatory reporting is currently voluntary. In relation to other forms of education: 5 (11%) reported that they had received it at a clergy conference, 2 (4%) with former employees, 3 (6%) in their own education (eg academic degrees) and 8 (17%) from other sources, which included the South Australian Police Force and South Australian Government.

Given that clergy are required by the church to be mandatory reporters, it is perhaps surprising that the training for mandatory notification is not yet compulsory. All clergy who completed this course stated that it was either satisfactory to very satisfactory. The vast majority of clergy who received child protection education from other sources also almost always found it satisfactory. However, clergy who received education from other sources probably received varied forms of child protection education, and may not have been able to have clergy-specific reporting questions resolved.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That the mandatory notification training run by the Ministry Development Council is made compulsory for all active clergy and church-workers.***

Both clergy and church-workers in both survey and interviews stated that they would like 'refresher courses' (even though this was not a specific question in either). Of those who have received education, 15 stated that they had received it in the last year, 11 in the last two years, 10 in the last two to five years, 5 in the last 5 to 10 years, and 3 ten or more years ago. Even if clergy or church-workers had received child protection education in the last couple of years, they still brought up their desire for a 'refresher' course in interviews. That is, clergy and church-workers appear to consider that the education should be ongoing, and not a once-off.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That a 'refresher' course on mandatory notification and other aspects of child protection is provided by the Ministry Development Council for clergy and church-workers as part of ongoing education about these matters***

This positive attitude towards education is in many ways an excellent reflection on the education currently provided by the Diocese. It also sends an extremely encouraging signal for the introduction of more education about these issues. Indeed, the results on under-reporting discussed above, and the more in-depth reasoning of clergy about under-

reporting to be discussed below both suggest areas in which additional education and discussion about these issues is very much needed.
Thus, having considered the key survey data on this issues, in the next section we will look at more in-depth data which may help provide some explanation for the trends in behaviour that have been observed.

3.7 A changed culture in the church?:

As has already been mentioned, it is a relatively new requirement that clergy report child abuse to authorities. This research found that previously, clergy have felt that matters heard in confidence (and most particularly under confessional seal – although that is a separate matter that is discussed below), should be kept confidential. 'Where did the message that it was confidential come from?' I asked one priest in an interview. 'From the Archbishop down', this priest replied. 'And they are all sort of like that', s/he continued, 'that pastoral confidences should be kept'. The priest then went on to explain that s/he had heard this explicitly confirmed at a clergy conference by the Archbishop five or so years ago (ie 1999, 2000), and then stated:

> 'But I think it's a general feeling that clergy don't rush off to the authorities if it is given to them in terms of information. And luckily, in the [x] number of years that I've been ordained, I haven't had to deal with any sexual situation. I am not sure how I would have responded. Still don't know how I would respond, but my feeling is that children ought to be protected.' [Excerpt from clergy interview C]

This quote, in some ways, sums up the attitude of many clergy towards these child protection issues. While the majority of clergy recognize and feel strongly about the need to protect children from any known abuse/neglect, there is also a deep ambivalence, questioning and, in some cases, outright contradiction of the church's policies on these matters. Usually this is because the policies for reporting abuse are perceived as conflicting with how clergy see their role, particularly in relation to their pastoral care duties. This perceived conflict between keeping pastoral confidence and reporting was found to be a key reason for under-reporting, and reflects both previous culture within the church on confidentiality, previous experiences some clergy have had in the past when they have attempted to report, a desire to maintain the integrity of the victim/survivor's disclosure (this was found to be particularly important), and issues also of hierarchical power in the Church, all of which will now be discussed.

3.8 Keeping pastoral confidences – the confidentiality/reporting dilemma:

In the survey, when asked why they didn't report, respondents often gave more than one reason from a given list, with the most prevalent being a lack of knowledge about reporting, having a low level of suspicion about the abuse, and that they perceived that reporting would further harm the victim/survivor and/or the victim/survivor's family. Crucially, when asked what they did instead of reporting, while there was also often more than one response, discussing the allegations with the victim and/or victim's family was

the most prevalent[7]. This is particularly interesting, because it indicates that these 'discussions' were kept confidential – they were not reported.

Further to this, it is also pertinent to consider how clergy became aware that the abuse was occurring: The most prevalent was disclosure by the family (19), followed by disclosure by the child/young person (17), then disclosure by someone else (7). After this, it was observation of the child (6) and observation of the child's home life (4), and lastly, there were instances of disclosure by the child in the context of the confessional (1), disclosure by the perpetrator (1), and (4) others.

In summary, most clergy become aware of abuse through the direct disclosure of someone closely involved with the situation. Therefore, in order for a report to be made, it is the contents of this (otherwise confidential) disclosure that must be reported. Because of this, resolving the conflict felt between keep pastoral confidence and reporting is all the more important.

3.9 'Other professionals report':

In the interviews, there were several cases where clergy did not report instances of abuse because other professionals (such as teachers, social workers and doctors) were said by clergy to have also had some suspicions/knowledge about the abuse and reported the matter themselves.

To illustrate, one priest in an interview described a situation where they had discussed an instance of neglect with the child's teacher, and after a series of discussions, the teacher then went on to report the case to the authorities. The clergy in this case did not themselves do the reporting. In another case, a priest was aware that an abused child's mother and doctor had reported an issue of sexual abuse. In this instance, the priest believed that because someone had reported the abuse, his/her own responsibilities were alleviated. In fact, in this case, the doctor's final report to the authorities was then perceived by the priest to have minimised the abuse (which was of a potentially serious sexual nature), and no further action by authorities was taken. This was a case where an additional report by the priest could have possibly brought more due attention to a suspicion of child abuse.

3.10 'The clergy's role as not that of reporter':

Leaving it up to other professionals to report is also part of a wider point that clergy have not, and in many cases still do not see their role as that of reporter: 'The social workers deal with it', one priest said in an interview,

> 'They're responsible for the reporting...My job is to support [the person] and not be judgemental of [them]...my role as [a priest] is to be compassionate with [the

[7] Only 10 clergy answered this questions, compared with the 16 who originally stated that they had not reported suspected abuse.

> person] and help [them] face whatever the outcome is...your primary responsibility is to ensure that the [child] is out of harm's way...it's very hard to be judgemental'. [Excerpt from clergy interview E]

Again, in the case of this priest, reporting abuse was seen to in fact conflict with his/her role of offering pastoral support.

It should also be pointed out that some clergy were working in contexts where contact with victims/survivors of abuse was high (ie daily), such as in a health context. In these situations, clergy did not see their roles as to report each or indeed any instance of abuse that they came across. This was the domain of other staff, and something that would have usually in fact been carried out before the priest had contact with the child in question (ie they were already 'in the system'). In professional circumstances such as this, it needs to be considered whether the church does in fact expect clergy to report all instances of abuse that they have come across (particularly if they are already being dealt with by authorities).

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That the Diocese consider the mandatory notification responsibilities of clergy working in situations where they are dealing with victims/survivors of abuse on a daily basis (and who might already be 'in the system'), such as in a health context***

In addition to some clergy not seeing their role as that of reporter, some clergy argue that the people to which they administer also do not see the clergy's role in this way. For example, as one priest put it in an interview:

> 'I've not had to deal with it in the sense of people reporting it to me and wanting me to act on it, but I've, in a numbers of scenarios, had people who I've been pastorally caring for who have had issues of abuse in their lives that they've talked to me about. That part of action [reporting] has been taken by other people historically...If someone tells you that story [about prior abuse] it's obviously a powerful story that they want to tell you for some reason. Most simply, they've got the chance to tell it and need someone to listen, and they think I'm a trustworthy person to do that...It's never been, 'I'm telling you this because I want you then to go and help me deal with it', in terms of reporting it. It's always that this story then becomes part of what we talk about when we see each other, the spiritual direction of the counselling, or something like that...it's then [my role to] be with them, helping them to work with and to live with that experience in a health way, helping them to do that. And that can take all sorts of different forms.' [Excerpt from clergy interview H]

3.11 The victim/survivors 'integrity of disclosure':

For some priests, the conflict between confidentiality for the purposes of pastoral care and reporting manifests itself not so much in terms of not reporting at all, but with a concern that the victim/survivor of the abuse needs to retain some power over the

disclosure. This was in fact one of the most important reasons for under-reporting, or not reporting 'immediately'.

For example, one priest described a situation of suspected child abuse where the victim/survivor that s/he was counselling would not let him/her immediately report the abuse. This priest only wanted to report the matter with the victim/survivor's consent, because, as the priest plainly put it 'to do anything other than that would have meant to disempower [the victim/survivor]'. This circumstance occurred before the Diocesan policy and protocols on reporting came into place. The priest is now acutely aware that s/he is no longer allowed to give the victim/survivor this lee-way, and drew my attention to the relevant clause in the *Professional Standard Committee and Director Policy*, which requires that such information is to be immediately reported to the Professional Standard's director, and which this priest did not agree with. S/he stated:

> 'I still think it's preferable to encourage the victim of abuse to have power in their disclosure and that's a very good pastoral principle. It actually runs closer to the other principles, which is securing the safety of the person...[The policies] don't allow us to give victims' power, because I think except in cases where children are in danger, and that's part of the mandatory reporting aspects of our roles anyway. Adult victims of sexual abuse need to have power in the disclosure, otherwise we victimise them...Since the Archbishop pronounced that we are all mandatory reporters, that was a clear cut statement that said to me at the time that you can no longer give that pastoral leeway to somebody who is a child, or someone reporting or alleging abuse of a child. You can no longer give that couple of days leeway until they come on board with the idea that it would be a good idea to report it. I was always one who would have given that leeway. However, I wouldn't have given it...I have to make that clear too. I wouldn't have given that in a situation where I felt the child was in immediate danger''. [Excerpt from clergy interview K]

In publications which deal with sexual assault, not further dis-empowering the victim in any way is viewed as of primary importance. For example, *A Guide to Supporting Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault* stipulates the victim/survivors 'right to retain maximum control over decision making...this is not only their right, but it is also of primary importance to the survival and healing process' (CASA House, 1990a, p. 29). While this was written with adults in mind, it is also stated as relevant to child victim/survivors, who also deserve the right to 'be responded to as autonomous individuals; to full information and to exercise their right to choose; [they have the right] to clear, unambiguous messages from their support workers regarding the options they face' (ibid, p. 31).

Indeed, some clergy would go as far as to say that reporting in a situation where a victim/survivor does not want a situation reported is abuse within itself. Crucially, this is not in regard to a situation when the victim/survivor might be in immediate danger. Rather, it might be a situation where someone was abused in their childhood and is now an adult, or where the child is no longer in any immediate danger.

For instance, there were several cases where clergy heard about instances of child abuse that had happened to a member of their congregation many years ago (the victims/survivors were now elderly). One priest stated very strongly that even if this were the legislation (to report) they would definitely not report this abuse, if this were against the adult/elderly victim/survivor's wishes. 'The pastoral consequences of that would be *enormous*', they stated. To report in this case, against the person's will, would be, in this priest's eyes 'another form of abuse to that person':

> 'No. In the end there has to be that person's choice as to whether to deal with it or not, and for me to report something that happened 20 or 30 years ago, it could be absolutely disastrous in terms of pastoral [relationships]... in itself it could be incredibly abusive' [Excerpt from clergy interview D]

It was the verbal and informal opinion of an experienced and informed church official/worker that such a situation should probably be reported. However, it should also be pointed out that this researcher rang a FAYS adviser to discuss this specific issue, and they were unable to give a definitive answer, erring on the side of it not being reportable. Also, a sexual assault counsellor was asked about this matter, and they stated that the purpose of mandatory reporting is only to protect a child in immediate danger, and that to report when the victim/survivor is not in immediate danger and does not want that situation is highly inappropriate (this matter is written on in greater depth in the section on sexual assault).

3.12 Other aspects of reporting and power relations

It could be said that this general dilemma about confidentiality, disclosure and reporting relates to issues of hierarchy and power. For a priest to no longer be responsible for holding onto confidential information, that is, through passing such information on to another authority outside the Church, means handing over a degree of the power and authority of their own professional role. This could be an important contributing factor to the under-reporting of abuse by priests.

It can be illustrated by the comments of a church-worker in an interview. S/he had the perception that some still see priests, and some priests still see themselves, as the 'be-all and end-all' (that is, very powerful and with much authority), and that handing over responsibility to another authority through reporting would not be consistent with this attitude towards their role and position. This authority was also related to an almost arrogant sense of autonomy:

> 'I still think there is that slight problem of the priest still thinking that they'll handle it their way, and not go that next step...' [Excerpt from interview with Church-worker A]

Fundamental concerns about dealing with child abuse and also adult sexual assault matters within a hierarchical institution are also raised in sections below.

Marie Fortune (1987) makes some useful reflections on this confidentiality/reporting dilemma in relation to the welfare of the victim/survivor in her chapter, 'Confidentiality and Mandatory Reporting: A Clergy Dilemma'. In this, she describes how 'confidentiality has traditionally been the ethical responsibility of the professional within a professional relationship and is generally assumed to be operative even if a specific request has not been made by the clergy or congregation' (1987, p.199). She makes the distinction between confidentiality and secrecy:

> 'Secrecy is the absolute promise never under any circumstances to share any information that comes to a priest; this is the essence of the sacramental confession. But a commitment to secrecy may also support maintaining the secret of abuse of a child, which likely means that the abuse continues. Confidentiality means to hold information in trust and to share it with others only in the interest of the person involved, that I, with their permission, in order to seek consultation with another professional, or in order to protect others from harm by them. Confidentiality is intended as a means to assist individuals in getting help for a problem so as not to cause further harm to themselves or to others. Confidentiality is not intended to protect abusers from being held accountable for their actions or to keep them from getting the help that they need.' (ibid, p.201).

It is important to note here that while Fortune advocates reporting overall, she also emphasises that confidentiality should only be broken with the child's express permission.

Fortune also mentions the point of justice. 'Justice-making in response to harm done by one person to another...is the other ethical principle that applies here...Christian principle is very specific here...The one who sins and who harms another must be confronted so that [he or she] might seek repentance' (ibid, p. 202). Fortune states it is critical to also keep in mind the context of child abuse, where offenders will most likely reoffend and deny their abusive behaviour if they are not reported, and will not be able to improve their behaviour without outside help. Concluding, Fortune states that:

> 'While the premises supporting pastoral confidentially are strong, they cannot support practises of secrecy that undermine and contradict the very respect for persons and for human bonds that confidentiality was supposed to protect. The utilization of reporting of child abuse should be viewed in this context rather than as a challenge to the principle of pastoral confidentiality. It can be a means of assisting a priest to fulfil his or her responsibility to other persons whom he or she serves.'

In the Diocese at the moment there appears to be a zero-tolerance view towards any instance of not reporting. Not reporting abuse when a child is in immediate or current danger, or fear of danger, is obviously unacceptable behaviour. It is also clearly important to report abuse in order to protect other people from the perpetrator, and to make sure that the perpetrator's abusive behaviour is stopped. However, reporting the abuse of an adult

that happened to them as a child many years ago, and which they explicitly do not want reported, or reporting the abuse of a child who is not yet ready to have that abuse reported and is in no immediate danger, are both quite different matters, and need further consideration by this Diocese.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That the Diocese consider policy and verbatim requirements that clergy immediately report all matters of abuse, regardless of the of the victim/survivors intentions, when the victim/survivor is not in current or immediate danger of abuse, and particularly when the victim/survivor is now an adult.***

3.13 Confession and confidentiality:

As Fortune (1987) infers in the first quote above, the formal confessional presents a potentially different situation in relation to confidentiality. However, perhaps surprisingly, the issues of confidentiality within confession rarely arose during the interviews, or indeed the survey. This may be because hearing a formal, sacramental confession is now very rare within the Anglican Church. Certainly, the literature (and politics) relating to this matter is mostly in reference to the Catholic church context. In addition, it is said to be very unlikely for a perpetrator to confess to abuse. This was confirmed in the results of the survey: only one priest stated that they had found out about an instance of child abuse through the disclosure of the perpetrator, and none had heard about abuse from the perpetrator during a formal confession (although it is also extremely unlikely that a priest would disclose if this had been the case).

However, there does also appear to be some ambiguity on this issue. The Diocesan Council 'Notification of Child Abuse Policy' states that confession is an exception to the rules about reporting:

> '[Principle] 6. This policy does not apply to information that forms part of a formal confession, when the absolute seal of the confession is binding', (Notification of Child Abuse Policy, 2001).

Yet verbal communication from an experienced and informed church official/worker indicated that if a priest suspected in a confessional situation that the confessant was about to confess to child abuse, they should halt the proceedings and warn the person that they will have to report the matter. Also, they should not offer absolution until the matter is satisfactorily dealt with (presumably through the proper official channels). This is also therefore an issue that needs to be resolved.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That the Diocese clarifies whether abuse reported within a formal confessional situation is reportable.***

In summary, there are clearly some issues around reporting a variety of past and present child abuse cases that need to be not only thought through further by the Diocese, but in honest and open discussion with clergy. It seems evident from the above results that if a

particular piece of legislation goes against what an individual priest strongly believes, they may not obey it. Therefore making or revising this legislation (and education about the legislation) in inclusive conversation with clergy and church-workers is vital.

> ***RECOMMENDATION:*** *That the above recommendations about considering reporting legislation and requirements take into account the views of clergy and church-workers.*

3.14 The silencing, bullying and threatening of previous reporters:

As well as some clergy feeling ambivalent about their role of reporter, it also needs to be pointed out that a number of the clergy interviewed have attempted to report the abuse of children/young people in the past to church officials/people higher in the church hierarchy, and these people did not respond appropriately. This meant that the priest's attempt to do something about the matter was effectively quashed. For instance:

> 'I suggested strongly to the [church superior] that [they] should take some sort of action to relieve [the alleged perpetrator] of [his] responsibility. That [superior] listened, but didn't act on it. I reported back to [another superior], and that person said to me 'you've done as much as you can''
>
> Interviewer: 'How did you feel about the [superior's] response?'
>
> 'Oh, pretty frustrated. I thought he could have acted sensibly. I thought [he] thought it was too big a – that it was just a headache to have to work out how to deal with it, and that it would have meant more effort…I think more [he] was thinking that it was a whole lot more work and perhaps unnecessary to go through disciplining that particular person when they are actually showing some signs of repentance, not doing it again…'[Excerpt from clergy interview B]

Or another example:

> 'Once again, we went to a senior person and the issue was minimised, put on the shelf...there was a bit of 'oh shucks, the offence wasn't really that bad, and also I'll fix it up'…the senior person's behaviour was abysmal in both incidences. He did the classic minimising [s/he describes details pertaining to this]. I was flabbergasted'.
>
> [Excerpt from clergy interview F]

Some clergy said that they had been dismissed, even quite aggressively, when seeking in the past to find out more about reporting issues:

> 'I sounded out a senior member of the clergy who had some responsibility towards [clergy in my position] and I left the issue with him, and his response to me was to say that he really didn't know and I would have to speak to my

> colleagues about it...I said that we need some help, and I never heard anything more about it. In fact his attitude towards me was extremely dismissive and almost quite aggressive'.

Alarmingly, in some cases clergy reported being bullied, threatened and effectively silenced by church officials for attempting to report the matter (or even for attempting to enquire about it). In some cases, this bullying of priests by church officials for attempting to report the abuse of a child/young person constituted abuse/harassment within itself. Some priests still feel they are suffering the effects of this treatment by the church.

> 'Even when I raised my concerns about the responsibility to the people, that was minimised. So that was really distressing...I was dismissed, I was verbally punished, or bullied, so I faced...I felt I was verbally abused for raising the issue.' [Excerpts from clergy interview F]

> '[After submitting a report about the offence] I was called in by a senior official of the church and berated for reporting this matter and I was told very clearly that I didn't have a future in the church because of that matter and that distressed me at the time, and it still causes me to carry a great deal of bitterness and concern...the only person to support me [through this] was my [spouse] and a couple of friends outside the church. I felt I couldn't approach the church...I have brought [this matter again] to the attention of the church, but - nothing [ie not apology/response].' [Excerpt from clergy interview I]

In addition to these, another clergy interviewee described how s/he had been silenced and threatened in regard to his/her concern over dubious activities in another parish. Rather than his/her concerns being given due attention, s/he felt s/he was perceived as a 'trouble-maker'. S/he was told by a senior church official not to believe what the victims/survivors had told him/her, was told again to 'stay out of it' when s/he repeated his/her concerns, and was told that the senior church official believed the alleged perpetrator's version of events. When the matters were finally brought to justice, this priest also received very little follow-up from church authorities.

Clearly, it is highly important that the church both acknowledge that this silencing and bullying has occurred, apologise to the clergy this has happened to, and offer to resolve the issue in the way these clergy would see fit.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That the Diocese acknowledge and apologise for the distress experienced by some clergy who attempted to report abuse in the past and were silenced, bullied and/or threatened***

3.15 Other aspects of vigilance about child protection:

It also needs to be pointed out there is high level of awareness or at least vigilance amongst some clergy about child protection matters, particularly in relation to being with

children alone in a work context. This matter was indeed a recurrent theme throughout most clergy interviews:

For example, one clergy interviewee said:

> 'I don't have a lot to do with children...but I will not be with a child without anybody there.'[Excerpt from clergy interview G]

> 'The way that has significantly changed is the way I [relate to young people in the course of my work]...[s/he explains how s/he was doing an activity that involved shaking young people's hands – young people that s/he knew well, then] one of the girl's said, 'I'll give you a hug'...her mum and dad were there. I could feel the hair follicles on the back of my neck going 'I'm really really uncomfortable. I don't want to be here'. So for her that was really the natural thing to do and a number of years ago [I would have felt more comfortable with it], but [instead] I was going – 'Oh God'.'...I was the only one uncomfortable' [Excerpt from clergy interview D]

It should also be stated that for clergy with a high personal commitment to child protection matters, they also watched, monitored and even in some cases disciplined people whose behaviour was unacceptable. It should be noted that such a commitment was often borne from personal experience with these matters. Clergy who had themselves been, or were close to someone who had experienced abuse/assault, were generally the most committed to these matters.

> 'I'm hyper vigilant about the boundaries within the parishes that I've been in...people who've got responsibility for children, and who's patterns of behaviour are suspicious. There have been a number of times in parishes where I've warned people about their behaviour, had a quiet word. You know, men who like to hug teenage girls, you know, old men, middle aged men who do the big hug after that service. Just inappropriate behaviour. And [I] maybe saying to them 'it's not on''. [Excerpt from clergy interview]

It should be noted that this high level of awareness appears in some cases to not only be borne out of concern for the issues, but a real fear in some clergy of being accused of something themselves:

> 'I know a lot of fellow clergy are a lot more careful with kids around now than they have been in the past, bordering on paranoia in some cases. I must admit even myself, I don't like it if a child runs up to the vestry at the back and comes in. You feel quite vulnerable now if they are by themselves. You end up saying, 'Please grab Mummy if you want to come down here', or something, because it is so easy for someone to say something. You haven't got a leg to stand on if you are in there on your own'.[Excerpt from clergy interview I]

Overall, most clergy now appeared to have a high level of awareness about these particular matters. However, it also needs to be pointed out that a small minority were strikingly less aware.

3.16 A lack of commitment by some clergy to child protection:

So far in this section, we have seen data that reflects varying degrees of commitment by clergy to child protection matters, albeit juxtaposed with a high level of under-reporting of abuse. In fact in some cases, particularly in the past, it appears that individual clergy have been committed to child protection, while the Church has not. However, it also needs to be pointed out that a small minority of clergy interviewed and surveyed did not reflect a lack of commitment to child protection issues, and indeed in some cases a problematic attitude indeed.

In the survey, a small minority of clergy (4) stated that while they had received no education about reporting child abuse, they were also not interested in receiving any such education. A small number (2) also stated that they were not interested in receiving any education about sexual assault. (It should be noted that while this may be evidence to support a lack of commitment to child protection matters, there is also a possibility that this includes the views of clergy who are victims/survivors of abuse themselves and therefore for other reasons do not want to attend such education events).

Some problematic attitudes also emerged in a small number of interviews. For example, one priest described a situation where a mother in a parish had approached him/her about concerns that she had about one of the church-workers, saying 'I'm uncomfortable about having my child around this person'. The response was to tell the mother that they should go and talk to the priest in charge who, among other things, told the mother that 'we all have a responsibility' and 'OK, if you're uncomfortable, you take responsibility as well'. Subsequently, the parish did in fact put in place measures to ensure that there was always more than one adult around when working with children. However, this priest also indicated points of view that signalled a marked lack of commitment to child protection, for example that child sexual abuse was culturally specific, that is, a cultural construct, and therefore not considered problematic in other cultures.

It must also be pointed out that, given the researcher was clear and open about the aims of this research before the survey was under-taken and all interviews commenced, and given the current climate both within the Diocese and the wider public, clergy are obviously more than well aware that child protection issues are supposed to be something they are highly committed to. While this should in no way cast doubt on the genuine sentiments expressed in the comments above, it does need to be kept in mind that, while all efforts were made to make interviews as relaxed and open as possible, there is a likelihood that both clergy and church-workers presented as they perceived the Church and the (independent) interviewer wanted, which was genuinely committed to child protection matters. It should also be noted that since the bulk of the interviewing for this research involved speaking with clergy, there is less direct counter-evidence from victims/survivors of clergy and church-worker behaviour.

4. The reporting behaviour and attitudes of church-workers:

4.1 Reporting suspected abuse/neglect:

As mentioned above, the experience of church-workers in dealing with allegations of child abuse is markedly different from that of clergy. Firstly, only 1 church-worker out of the 4 interviewed had ever been exposed to a case of child abuse in the context of their church-work. This obviously reflects a much lower exposure overall to abuse/assault matters and also perhaps highlights the extent to which people confide with clergy over these matters compared to other available people in a church context.

The church-workers that were interviewed usually came from a background of having contact with children in other professional capacities (for example as teachers), or if not professionally, at least having a good deal of experience working with children. All church-workers interviewed presented as very aware of child protection issues, and highly committed to them.

However, while presenting as aware of (and in some cases, highly educated about) these issues, there was a sense in the interviews that some church-workers working with children and young people may not immediately report a case of abuse themselves if they were to suspect/receive information about it. Rather, they might be more likely to talk about it with the parish priest first, before reporting it.

For example, in the one case mentioned above of a church-worker suspecting the neglect of a child, the church-worker initially spoke about it with the parish priest, who subsequently liaised with the child's school about the matter. The church-worker believes that the school eventually reported the matter.

As one church-worker put it:

> 'The problems is a lot of lay people won't take the next step – they'll let the priest [do it], and I think that's a real problem we have to jump over. They still think that the priest is the be-all and end-all of everything in the parish, so [lay church-workers] don't take that responsibility.'[Excerpt from interview with church-worker A]

This church-worker also perceived that priests themselves may not report the matter (this quote was also used above):

> 'I still think there is that slight problem of the priest still thinking that they'll handle it their way, and not go that next step…' [Excerpt from interview with church-worker A]

In another case, when a church-worker presented as particularly well educated about child protection issues (having studied such matters at a tertiary level), there was still also

a reluctance about reporting the matter immediately him/herself, rather than discussing it with a superior within the church in the first instance:

> 'I know [from my professional background that] if I have any hunches or whatever [about child abuse], I am sure I can ring directly myself. As a matter of protocol, I'd actually want to talk to somebody who was above me before I made that call. Not that I'd think that they would stop me, but just so that they were aware'.
> [Excerpt from interview with church-worker B]

This church-worker was also in charge of several volunteers, and s/he also advocated that they talk with others before reporting the matter themselves:

> 'If I knew anyone that was a bit concerned [about an abuse/neglect issue], I'd encourage them to talk to me or to someone who actually had a bit more involvement in making that contact, not to stop them in anyway for that support. Because the first time you do it, it's a little bit full-on and not a nice thing to have to deal with. And it's not nice if you think you are the only one that knows.'
> [Excerpt from interview with church-worker B]

In practice, it is probably not uncommon for reporters to discuss the matter with others before reporting it to authorities. Hopefully, in a child-protection conscience Church, the person would still make sure that they lodged the report. However, previous experience in the Church shows that talking to superiors does not guarantee that a report is made (indeed it may mitigate against it – see the section on Silencing above). Also, it is interesting that in many of these cases the church-workers were probably more educated about child protection issues than the clergy, and yet still felt the need to confer with others. This is no doubt reflective of the persistent hierarchical culture of the church and the power dynamic between the ordained clergy and non-ordained church-worker. It should also be kept in mind that most ordained clergy are still men, and that most (often volunteer) church-workers are women.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That church-workers are encouraged to report child abuse to authorities themselves***

4.2 Education about child abuse/assault matters:

Most church-workers had received education about child protection matters, both in a church context, and many outside of it. Again, there was a high-level of commitment shown by church-workers on these matters. For example, one church-worker interviewee had paid out of his/her own pocket for their church-based child protection education, and was now attempting to persuade the parish council of his/her church to pay for family-worker volunteers to do the course, too.

However, it should also be noted that information about child protection education run by the church (eg the one-day training course run by the Ministry Development Council) has

not been sent straight to the church/family worker in a parish. Instead, church-workers reported that they only receive material through the parish priest. This means that church-workers are dependent on the priest for information about these courses. In one case, in a parish with a large number of children/young people and an extensive child/youth ministry and worship programme, the family worker in charge of several volunteers did not know of the existence of the mandatory reporting training course run by the Ministry Development Council and had not done the course him/herself; nor had the volunteers.

Such a situation puts the child protection efforts of church-workers effectively in the hands of clergy, and again reflects the hierarchical nature of church culture, which is not effective in dealing with child protection matters. This is particularly unfortunate, when some of the church-workers interviewed were not only some of the most highly committed, but also the most well-educated about dealing with child protection matters. Church workers such as this could indeed be considered an under-used, under-recognised and under-acknowledged resource in the Diocese in this regard. In summary, there was a desire by church-workers to at least receive this information directly, and evidence of their commitment and education on the matters would suggest that this information would be most effectively used by them.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That all church-workers are directly sent materials about child protection education run by the Diocese***

In regard to the church-workers who have completed the mandatory reporting course run by the church, similar to clergy, there was also a perceived need for a refresher course. Some church-workers, for instance, wondered if legislation might have changed since they had completed the course.

The support church-workers perceived in parishes for child protection issues ranged from extremely supportive to not particularly supportive. Mostly, however, church-workers appeared to perceive a climate in which child protection issues were advocated, although it often appeared to be the church-worker who brought such issues onto the parish agenda. Again, their role should be recognised and appreciated in this regard.

It should also be noted that some church-workers were aware of other issues of the abuse of power in their church contexts. Unlike clergy, they were usually not directly involved in dealing with these matters. However, by their own observations, they had observed some abuses of power within church contexts which concerned and distressed them, and which will be raised in the following sections of this report.

5. Responding to adult sexual assault:

In the following sections, we move from discussing the abuse of children to discussing the sexual assault of adults. It is important to note from the outset that the sexual assault of adults requires a different response to the abuse of children (where a child is in immediate danger). In particular, while clergy are mandated to report to authorities the abuse of children, it is not appropriate to respond to adult sexual assault with an automatic report to authorities. As has already been mentioned, publications produced by organisations which advocate the rights of victims/survivors of sexual assault state that the victim/survivor of sexual assault has a number of general rights (separate from their medical and legal rights). It is important to state and be clear about these general rights here. The rights of victims/survivors of sexual assault are:

- **'The right to be believed**: One of the most dominant myths relating to sexual assault accuses victims of 'crying assault' when no assault has taken place. Contrary to this mistaken belief, police statistics indicate that false reporting of sexual assault is almost non-existent...The figure indicates that victims of sexual assault remain silent about their experiences more often than they report it...It is of utmost importance that victims do not encounter disbelief from the people whose task it is to support them...the foremost role of the worker is to support and not judge the victim'

- **'The right to be treated with dignity, respect, sensitivity and understanding**: Sexual assault is one of the most traumatic experiences individuals can encounter. People who work with and support sexual assault victims must acknowledge the extent of this trauma and ensure that their actions and words do not compound it'

- **'The right to information**: After a sexual assault has taken place, the victim will have to make decisions about reporting the assault to the police, undergoing medical examinations, or attending counselling sessions. In order to make informed choices, the sexual assault victim must be provided with accurate and detailed information. It is essential that the victim understands the implications of the options available. It is the right of the victim to receive accurate information at all times. This includes the right of access to an interpreter as requested...'

- **'The right to control decision making**: Adult victims of sexual assault must retain maximum control over decision making. This is not only their right, but it is also of primary importance to the survival and healing process...Victims of sexual assault have experienced a total denial of their right to have control over their own physical and sexual experiences. Therefore the victims/survivors must regain control over decision making through determining what will happen to them in the future. The worker has a responsibility to enable the victim to make her own choices, for example, as to whether she wishes to make a formal complaint to the police; to have a medical examination; to engage in counselling sessions. Wherever possible, these decisions must not be taken out of her hands; to do so will render her helpless and powerless once again.

- **'The right to privacy and confidentiality**: It takes courage for sexual assault victims to speak out about their experience. The trauma involved should not be under-estimated. The victim will only confide in the most trusted individuals. Any person trusted by a victim has the responsibility to honour this trust with complete privacy and confidentiality. This includes confidentiality concerning information shared verbally by the victim, and also includes legal and medical records. It is the right of the victim to decide who will be privy to her experience and who will not'

  (CASA House, 1990a, p. 28-30).

These rights should form the basis of any response to adult sexual assault.

In the publication *A Pastoral Report to the Churches on Sexual Violence Against Women and Children of the Church Community*, a checklist of such responses for ministers is given to assist in their response to victims of violence seeking help from the church. It is relevant to also outline this check-list of responses here:

'Sexual violence requires direct support to women and children.

- A response of righteous anger that the victim should be subjected to such a hideous crime.
- A response of compassion for the victim, emphasising with the injuries experienced, getting involved, running the risk of helping.
- A response of advocacy for the victim, speaking out about the rights of the victim, seeking justice against the offenders and those systems which can further victimise women and children.
- A response of holding the offender legally and spiritually accountable for his actions which requires a clear understanding that sexual violence is a crime and an act of evil.
- A response of prevention, which requires that Christianity examines its personal and collective conscience in a search for truth and preventative action.'

(CASA House, 1990b, 32).

Both these general rights of victims/survivors of assault, and this check-list of appropriate and desired responses should be kept in mind when considering the data on adult sexual assault in the Diocese as presented below.

5.1 Being required to respond to sexual assault:

Clergy have moderately high contact with matters of sexual assault. In the survey, just over a third of all priests (35% or 20) said that they have had to respond in some way to a claim of adult sexual assault. The rate of exposure to sexual assault was again higher for interviewees: in the interviews, 9 out of 12 interviewees had been required to respond in

some way to claims of sexual assault. Reasons for under-reporting exposure to sexual assault in the survey may be similar to those mentioned above for under-reporting exposure to child abuse: clergy may have only counted those instances where the alleged perpetrator was a church-worker, clergy may not have had the time to recall all instances of sexual assault they have been required to respond to. In addition, it became apparent during interviews that because of a lack of knowledge and education about sexual assault matters, some clergy may not recognise a case of sexual assault when it presents itself.

5.2 How clergy respond to sexual assault:

The responses by clergy to sexual assault varied. In the survey, when asked how they responded to a victim/survivor of sexual assault, the most prevalent responses were: counselling the victim/survivor (9), advising the victim/survivor (5), referring them to someone else (5), and simply listening to them (4). It should be noted that victims/survivors of sexual assault should be presented with the option of counselling, but are also likely to benefit from a counsellor with expertise in this field.

The survey showed that when clergy are required to respond to a claim of adult sexual assault, it is usually because the victim/survivor has disclosed this information to them (this was the case in 15 out of 18 responses to this question). This indicates that it is all the more important for clergy to have an adequate and appropriate understanding of sexual assault, how to respond to it, the core rights of the victim/survivor of sexual assault as outlined above, and also where and how to refer victims/survivors of assault to any necessary external expert supporters.

In interviews, there was a diverse range of views expressed as to how to respond to adult sexual assault. Some clergy were, for instance, highly aware of the importance of the victim/survivor of a sexual assault retaining as much power as possible after the sexual assault has taken place. On the other hand, some clergy appeared to have very little idea how to respond appropriately to sexual assault, and their responses were sometimes so problematic that they are highly likely to have re-traumatised the victim/survivor of the assault.

For instance, one interviewee expressed frustration with the perceived inaction of a victim/survivor who had been sexually assaulted by a member of the clergy. She 'only wanted to talk about what had happened to them', rather than 'do something about it'. As stated above, it is of fundamental importance that a church-worker enables a victim to make her own choices, with all available information presented. (Some adult victims/survivors choose not to go ahead with making a formal complaint. To do so may simply cause too much additional trauma).

It was also inferred in more than one interview that most of the female victims/survivors of sexual assault clergy people had had contact with were mentally ill. The victim/survivors' marital status and sexual history were also sometimes inappropriately commented upon when discussing these matters.

Finally, it became apparent that there were particular victims/survivors of sexual assault, or particularly stories about the sexual assault of certain women, which were assumed as almost common knowledge within the Diocese. 'You've heard about this?' one priest asked me in an interview. 'Oh, you haven't?' s/he repeated, when I replied that I had not. This, also, is a worrying finding: if such stories continue to be heard and not responded to appropriately in the Diocese, then surely the violence they describe is being implicitly condoned and tolerated.

> *RECOMMENDATION: That clergy and church workers are educated about the rights of, and appropriate responses towards, victims/survivors of sexual assault*

5.3 Clergy and church-worker education about responding to adult sexual assault:

Clergy education about sexual assault contrasts sharply with clergy education about child protection. Just over half (53%) of clergy stated in the survey that they had not received any education on responding to adult sexual assault. This is despite the fact that almost half of all clergy surveyed (44%) have contact with vulnerable adults daily, several times a week, or weekly.

Of those who have had education on sexual assault, 6 said they had received some from the Ministry Development Council, 6 from clergy conferences, 3 through self-education, 5 from a former employee, and 7 from other sources. It is important to note that while 12 of these respondents state that they have received some sort of education about sexual assault from the church, the church does not yet provide any formal education about adult sexual assault for clergy, either through the Ministry Development Council, or through ordination training. It could even be a possibility that those priests who stated that they had had some education about adult sexual assault from the Ministry Development Council mistook this for what is essentially a course about child protection and not, for instance, about how to respond to adult victims/survivors of rape. This could also mean that the proportion of clergy who have not had any education about adult sexual assault is greater than the figure of 53%. On a positive note, almost all (94%) of clergy who had not had education about adult sexual assault said that they would like to receive such education.

For those who had not yet responded to a claim of adult sexual assault, when asked if they felt they would know how to respond to such a situation, 27 answered yes, 10 answered no, and 7 stated that they were unsure. In an attitudinal question in the survey which clergy were required to agree/disagree to, more than half of all clergy (56%) agreed or strongly agreed that 'a priest or church-worker should immediately report to the police claims of sexual assault of an adult'. 37% disagreed or strongly disagree with this, while 7% stated that they did not know. This is a very concerning statistic, and is clear evidence of the lack of clergy education on this matter. As already mentioned, publications on sexual assault make it quite clear that a person should only ever immediately report claims of adult sexual assault to the police if they have the explicit

permission of the victim/survivor. To do so otherwise takes control of the situation out of the victim/survivors hands, when victims/survivors of assault have experienced through the assault total denial of their right to have control over their own physical and sexual experiences. The victim/survivors must regain control over decision making through determining what will happen to them in the future.

Slightly more encouragingly, elsewhere in the survey there did appear to be some acknowledgement of this: in another attitudinal question, 77% of clergy agreed/strongly agreed that 'an adult victim of sexual assault should retain maximum control over decision making'; 11% disagree/strongly disagree with this; 11% did not know.

It seems clear from the above data that the Diocese is yet to provide any adequate training for clergy on either attitudes towards sexual assault, and how to respond appropriately to victims/survivors. Currently, there are some clergy who have a good understanding of these matters, and who are currently actively and positively pastorally supporting victims/survivors of sexual assault. Often, it appears this understanding has come through their own experiences of dealing with abuse/assault, or because of their diligent self-education on the matter, rather than through anything the Church has provided. While it appears that child protection issues are now 'on the radar', as one priest put it, adult sexual assault has yet to be a priority for the diocese. Clearly, it needs to become one.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That establishing education and awareness raising programmes for clergy and church-workers about sexual assault be an immediate priority for the Diocese***

As has already been mentioned above, when we discuss adult sexual assault, we need to keep in mind that it is a gendered experience: research has shown that a large majority of victims are women and virtually all assailants are men. In this way, the currently inadequate awareness and response to adult sexual assault within the Diocese is not only problematic within itself, but can also be viewed as symptomatic of a wider Diocesan culture which is in many cases not supportive of and indeed hostile towards women. This became particularly apparent in other data that emerged from interviews, usually in an unsolicited way, and which is considered below.

5.4 Assault, harassment and hostility towards women in the Diocese:

In addition to the issues of reporting child abuse and responding to adult sexual assault that have been mentioned so far in this report, information other abuses of power in the Diocese also regularly arose in interviews. These additional abuses of power overwhelmingly took the form of violence against women.

For example, some clergy discussed cases of physical violence, rape, and emotional abuse of women parishioners within marriage which they had been required to provide a pastoral response.

There was also a strong feeling by some interviewees that some middle-aged to elderly women within parishes in the Diocese were sometimes subject to emotional and spiritual abuse or 'bullying' by clergy and/or members of the congregation. It should be noted, again, that this matter was volunteered in interviews rather than specifically solicited, (since it was not included in the initial scope of the research) indicating the strength some interviewees felt about this matter. As one interviewee stated:

> 'I think kids have got their rights sorted out at school because they are taught their rights. I think there is still a problem with middle aged women...knowing their rights and not being abused in minor ways by people or men or priests' [Interview with church-worker A]

This interviewee then gave the example of a priest putting what s/he considered to be an undue amount of pressure on middle-aged and elderly female congregants to attend church services at times that were going to have a potentially low turn-out. The interviewee explained that while the priest said it 'in a jokey way', s/he was 'very much aware that some of these ladies think that because it comes from the priest', it means that they have to do what the priest is suggesting. Again, what is salient here are issues of hierarchical power, and differential power relations: clearly the priest in this case is either not sufficiently aware of, or is using coercively the power they have due to their position within the church. Unfortunately, findings about the abuse of power in this research did not stop at emotional and spiritual coercion.

Two interviewees had themselves experienced emotional/spiritual abuse by male clergy and also male parishioners. In one case this consisted of persistent bullying and put-downs in a parish council context. In another case this consisted of severe emotional and spiritual abuse by a male priest when the interviewee was ill, which not only furthered the interviewee's already grave illness but also caused other personal damage.

In addition to these cases of emotional and spiritual abuse of women in the Diocese, there was another particularly alarming finding in interviews about the abuse/assault of women in the church: the abuse/assault of female clergy by male clergy, including of a sexual nature. For reasons of confidentiality, no further details about this will be given here, except to emphasise the highly disturbing nature of this matter.

Indeed, the statements the interviewer heard about this violence against adult women within the church was particularly distressing research material, perhaps because while some other forms of violence appeared to be recognised and acknowledged by the church (they are 'on the radar screen'), the issue of violence against women still does not appear to be adequately acknowledged in the Church and Diocesan context; it does not appear to be currently 'heard'.

In fact, it was found that women in the church had been effectively 'silenced' about these issues, with this silencing taking two forms:

- Explicit silencing, when the victim was told to effectively 'shut-up' about the matter (as was with the case of one interviewee), and
- Implicit silencing, where the victim is ignored, not adequately acknowledged and side-lined within the church.

What these sorts of reactions mean for victims/survivors is that in addition to the trauma of the assault, because their past and present suffering is neither appropriately acknowledged or heard, the trauma of their experiences is effectively extended and deepened by the church's subsequent reactions and indeed further abusive treatment of them.

In light of these circumstances, it is particularly problematic that the Diocese and Church in general has not yet implemented any education processes or awareness raising agendas about adult sexual assault (particularly given the extent of previous research on this topic at a national level, which was detailed in the Background to this report). Given the success this Diocese has had so far in raising awareness about child protection matters, it would seem ideally placed to take up this opportunity to immediately respond appropriately to matters of adult sexual assault.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That a broad based education and awareness process is established that includes issues of bullying and harassment. That such a programme would be available for use in parishes.***

5.5 A continuum of violence against women:

Research on this matter suggests the impact of wider institutional cultural factors in contributing towards violence against women. As was expressed towards the beginning of this research, sexual assault forms part of a continuum of violence:

> 'At one end of the continuum is sexual insult and harassment, such as wolf whistles and verbal sexual innuendo. At the other end of the continuum is the most extreme expression of power by men over women and children, that is, forced penetration. All of these uninvited behaviours debase and de-humanise the victim and assert the dominance of the attacker' (CASA House, 1990b, 7).

In the context of the Church, it should also be noted that, for instance, 'traditional theology, along with culture provides the support for the entrenched belief that men should have more power in all relationships and with it the right to impose their sexuality on others, regardless of their consent' (CASA House, 1990b). As the *A Pastoral Report to the Churches on Sexual Violence Against Women and Children of the Church Community* report describes:

> 'God in symbol, image and language has also been expressed, in the main as exclusively male in form…If our images of God are in the main male, the woman who has been raped or bashed, or the child abused by a father or father figure, may have no means of perceiving God as loving and protective of the vulnerable.

> This language and symbolism has also been shown to contribute to the cultural belief that men are acting out of a seemingly 'God given' power'.

It should be noted that this belief is also particularly enforced by the fact that the vast majority of clergy are still men, there is only one female Archdeacon in the Diocese, and the Anglican Church's National Synod in 2004 voted not to allow women to become Bishops. Clearly, these matters all contribute to an environment of male-dominated power relations, and one which can be hostile and even abusive towards women.

The *Pastoral Report* continues:

> 'Sexist language, particularly in worship, creates a disparity between image and experience, by neither expressing the collective lives of women or making an understanding of God and humankind accessible for women and children. Non-inclusive language along with sexist practices contribute to the abuse and violation of women.'

This research would suggest that it is important for the Diocese to also consider the pervasive dominant and exclusive masculinity of the Church if it is to genuinely address matters of adult sexual assault. As child protection matters have shown, education about procedural matters cannot in itself create wholesale cultural change. And while wholesale cultural change may appear at this instance over-whelming or difficult, there appear to be some clear and relatively simple practical measures that could be taken to begin this process (for example the regular and prominent use of female images of God in services of worship, and the use of other inclusive language).

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That the Diocese recognise and address violence against women within the church as a matter of urgency. This may include advocating change in church culture, such as through the use of inclusive language in worship, and re-considering gender inequality in position of power held within the Church.***

In light of this attention required to power dynamics, it is important to also draw attention to a theme that surfaced and re-surfaced in almost all interviews with clergy and church-workers. This regarded criticism of the hierarchical nature of the church. That this theme appeared so important to clergy and church-workers is significant, because it suggests, among other things, that there may be wide-spread support in the church for changing the old (male-dominated) hierarchical power dynamic, particularly in relation to the inherent failure of such a system to deal adequately with matters of assault and abuse.

5.6 A hierarchical institution:

Many clergy and church-workers were critical of the rigid hierarchical power relations within the Church and the Diocese, which some said led to an institutional culture which became unaccountable when attempting to deal with matters of abuse and assault. This theme is particularly pertinent when we consider that abuse and assault are fundamentally

about '*differentials in power*', and an often over-looked part of considerations about abuse in a Church context (Porter, 2003).

Sometimes, criticism of the church in this way related to the position of specific church leaders, such as the (former) Archbishop, and even the Archdeacons:

> 'It was a feudal understanding of leadership and it just encouraged a lack of transparency and healthy relations.' [Excerpt from clergy interview B]

> 'A Bishop is the prince of the church. They tell, people do, and so therefore when stuff came up, there is an understand that 'whatever I saw will be right, and even if it's wrong, it will be right''[Excerpt from clergy interview D]

> 'It's got to do partly with the hierarchical structures in the church, because if you give one person, like the Bishop or an Archbishop the full responsibility to deal with very delicate issues, that person is extremely isolated by virtue of his position. So I think those structures didn't help at all.' [Excerpt from clergy interview K]

> 'But it isn't just the Archbishop...my personal belief is that the culture of the Diocese is seen through the Archdeacons...The culture of the Archdeacons reflects the Archbishop, with their main responsibility being to protect the church, the reputation of the church. That's the foremost. And the pastoral response is somewhere down the line somewhere'. [Excerpt from clergy interview A]

Some clergy also related these problems to problematic decision-making procedures:

> 'We often think that the church is a democracy and that's a fallacy. The church is not – well, we may have Synod – but that's nowhere near a democracy. We are just fooling ourselves really. We have to understand that the church is a theocracy, and once you do that, it is easier to understand some of the mistakes – some of the power stuff'. [Excerpt from clergy interview D]

> 'There's a linear understanding of power and control...there's a linear understanding of authority' [Excerpt from clergy interview D]

There is also a criticism of the 'clubbiness' of the church, and that there is an 'Adelaide clergy club'. This was recognised by some clergy as gendered: its an 'old boy's network', as one priest said. This was said to mean, among other things, that:

> 'People from the church including people in management couldn't believe that such things would happen. They knew these alleged perpetrators so well – and they just didn't believe they'd do that.' [Excerpt from clergy interview L]

Alongside these criticisms of the hierarchical nature of power relations within the church, in some interviewees there was also a sense of change afoot:

> 'You might have heard the phrase, 'the culture of princes' where it's a hierarchical system...it's funny, in our recent bishop selection Synod that we had a few months ago, the number of people who said 'we don't want a prince'. Now, that was to me a symptom of the clergy mainly wanting a change of culture, because it was partly a cultural thing that we lauded senior people, we were sycophantic towards them, and then we wondered why they didn't feel accountable.' [Excerpt from clergy interview F]

> 'It's a very challenging time. We are challenging everyone's authority. A Diocesan Council said to a Bishop that you don't have our trust anymore and the Bishop resigned. This is not usual. This is a change. And people have been named in the Board of Enquiry as not acting in the way that they should have. This is a change. Most people are unhappy and feel like they have been unfairly done by – but I think it's part of the change. You can't just use your power in any way. You have to be accountable in an open democratic way. You are accountable to lots of people'. [Excerpt from clergy interview H]

It is words such as these from clergy that provide glimmers of hope, even of a changed vision of the church. For example, one priest pointed out that we, the church, are 'supposed to be the ones crucified on the hill outside the city walls. Not constantly building up the temple, which is torn down anyway [at the moment, due to the current 'sex abuse scandal']; razed to the ground' [Excerpt from clergy interview E]. As another priest put it:

> 'We have to be an organisation with integrity. And I define integrity as doing the right thing at all times, regardless of the cost. And if the cost means that we lose our church buildings or have to pay out more, so be it. But we need to come clean. We need to root all evil out of our organisation as it exists, and be ruthless in doing that, and become the real church of Christ, one that shows love and compassion and care about people. Put them first, not our riches and our stained glass windows.' [Excerpt from clergy interview I]

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That the Diocese consider how it may operate in a less hierarchical manner, keeping in mind that old, male-dominated hierarchical power structures are related to a lack of accountability when dealing with matters of child abuse and adult sexual assault.***

This matter of hierarchy, structure, accountability and power, fundamental to this report, also relates to other procedural matters relating to abuse and assault which were brought up in interviews.

6. Other procedural matters relating to abuse and assault:

Having now considered responding to sexual assault, and the broader cultural patterns that detract or aid this response, there are some other procedural matters about reporting abuse and assault that need to be mentioned before the Conclusion. These are: awareness about professional boundaries in pastoral relationships; guidelines about professional conduct; the Professional Standards Committee; triggering 'flask-back's and other forms of distress through raising abuse/assault matters; and finally, some thoughts by respondents on positive outcomes and hopeful futures.

6.1 Awareness about professional boundaries:

A lack of awareness about professional boundaries can, at worst, lead to abusive relationships. In fact, abuse is considered by some to be the ultimate in personal boundary violation. To this end, it is important that clergy are clear about professional boundaries.

In fact, findings in regard to this were positive. Many interviewees reported a marked change in how they conducted pastoral relationships since the issue of sex abuse has been raised to such a high profile issue within and outside the church. (This raised awareness about physical contact with others was also brought up in the sections on child protection, where clergy describe not being comfortable being alone with children in a work context). In particular, hugging was a recurrent theme in interviews, particularly in the context of worship (such as during the 'greeting of peace' in church services) and pastoral care:

> 'I honestly don't think I'd be stuck in a circumstance giving someone a hug. In the right circumstances you know – I don't think it takes that away. It's about making sure that you either ask permission or that you are pretty sure it's okay. Don't take things for granted.' [Excerpt from clergy interview I]
>
> 'I would usually work within agreed boundaries. We shake hands, we don't hug. Those sorts of things' [Excerpt from clergy interview A]
>
> 'My training is such that I am very aware of the boundaries so even though people, you know, they do need to hug or different things, it has to be appropriate. It has to be. And I think because I'm fairly, again just from experience, a lot more suspicious dealing with people…' [Excerpt from clergy interview L]
>
> 'Now clearly one of the things I am more reserved about is hugging. [The priest describes a situation where s/he accidentally touched the forearm of a young woman to get her attention, and then felt uneasy about this]: 'Oh gosh, what if that's reported. I knew I was at one level setting myself up, but I thought even to have thought that, it shows there's a change in culture.' [Excerpt from clergy interview F]

When explicitly asking clergy about how they assert professional boundaries, some also mentioned ways that they kept relationships with parishioners professional rather than personal:

> 'I've always tended to follow the counselling model of keeping it to a time limit' [Excerpt from clergy interview I]

> 'If I have had two or three sessions with someone, anything longer than that is usually time for a referral'. [Excerpt from clergy interview F]

> 'I set the rules pretty well straight away when I went into a parish. If they actually wanted to see me about a specific matter, then they needed to make an appointment, and I usually set a time limit.' [Excerpt from clergy interview L]

> 'I have always tried to be clear in professional relationships. I don't think I have muddied the line in between, and I always sort of tended to regard my pastoral work as an expression of pastoral responsibility, so I have treated it that way. Some people may have wanted me to be more their friend than their priest, and I've tended to think that I am their priest first, and if friendship develops that's all well and good, but my first role is that of the professional.' [Excerpt from clergy interview C]

Defining professional relationships could also involve being aware of the environment that they saw parishioners in. For instance:

> 'I don't have a lock on my door...I always have the door slightly ajar. But more so, just being aware of the emotional potential for things to go wrong, if there's any misunderstanding of what people perceive as compassion'. [Excerpt from clergy interview A]

> 'I wouldn't see you at home by myself.' [Excerpt from clergy interview I]

> '...that's why I'm seeing you in a coffee shop...' [Excerpt from clergy interview B]

Certainly some clergy seemed to be more aware of these matters than others. For example, one priest described to me how they would only ever see young people for a one-to-one meeting in a room with glass walls, while this priest also had the one-on-one interview take place in a closed room with no windows. Some clergy also acknowledged both the complexity, but also clear boundaries of pastoral relationships, which some of the interviewees had evidential given much genuine and deep consideration. For example:

> '[Defining relationships boundaries] is more difficult than in other professional relationship, because a parish priest is meant to be a pastor and shepherd...that means we are meant to love [the parishioners], and we do. We live in the

> community with people and we have a deep regard for their well-being and deep love for them…However I think my own commonsensical way of looking at this [is] – I would never invite individual people or individual couples for dinner, just as a social thing. I don't actually seek friendships in the community. That sounds a bit out of kilter with what I just said, so as I have that love for people and I would respond to any of their needs pastorally and put forward immediately with great compassion, I hope that I would try to do that, I don't actually regard them as friends'. [Excerpt from clergy interview K]

6.2 Guidelines about Professional Conduct:

In fact, the church has recently written extensive guidelines about pastoral and professional relationships, in particular, the recent *Faithfulness in Service: A National Code for Personal Behaviour and the Practise of Pastoral Ministry by Clergy and Churchworkers*, issued by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia, Child Protection Committee in Draft form in 2004. Several clergy commented on these guide-lines.

While there was a variety of opinions on these guide-lines, many clergy were critical to heavily critical about a number of aspects of them. Firstly, some simply saw these particular guidelines as 'over-board', as having 'gone too far'. For example:

> 'I think we do need some guidelines and some pretty clear guidelines, but I just felt that the code of conduct went overboard in some areas.' [Excerpt from clergy interview C]

> 'In the legislation that's coming through from General Synod, there's things like – you have to dress in an appropriate way, but it doesn't say anything about what you have to eat, or not to be overweight, not be underweight, or what sort of car do you drive. Like – where do you leave it? Where do you stop?…I think they're, well, bizarre, to be honest.' [Excerpt from clergy interview I]

> 'I must admit the draft code for guide-lines concerned me…it seems to me that that draft has gone too far. It's starting to regulate the private lives of clergy. And I think that our professional life and our private life should have some connection. I mean, I am a Christian professional and a Christian in private life, but some things are private, and I just think that maybe the church is getting a little bit intrusive…The general synod working group was supposed to be looking at child protection, but now they have decided that they want to analyse every aspect of clergy and church-worker life, and I think, well, you know – they've overstepped their brief.' [Excerpt from clergy interview C]

In other comments, the guide-lines were criticised for promoting a conservative agenda indicative of the Sydney Diocese of the Anglican Church and, in particular, as using child protection issues as a way of legislating about sexuality. For some, this felt like

legislation by stealth, because they were perceived as effectively cutting short the conversation on these issues and, more specifically, being anti-homosexual:

> 'The Child Protection Committee was established to protect child protection policies, and they took it upon themselves to include in the child protection policies a code of conduct, and it's the code of conduct that's the problems for a lots of us, and there's a lot of issues with it, and I feel strongly that it's not accepted in its present form by this Diocese. But if it is, I'll have major dilemmas, and I don't know quite how I will deal with them. But I will have them.' [Excerpt from clergy interview K]

> 'The General Synod stuff, I believe, is a very conservative agenda initiated by the Sydney Diocese, as modified by [x]…who have inadvertently or deliberately heeded that - assisted that process' [Excerpt from clergy interview H]

> 'Sydney is very puritanical about it, connecting its professional conduct with its private sexual behaviour, and private sexual choices. I think that the church has to do a lot of work in that area to make sure that it's appropriate to be separate for both clergy and lay, and putting a blanket policy together which lumps them altogether is not good. It's not going to work.' [Excerpt from clergy interview K]

> 'They have used child protection to broaden it out, pick on, get rid of what they would see as sexual immorality. If they can legislate about sex outside of marriage of any sort, then they can clear out the gays, then can clear out the promiscuous people…One of the problems was that it applies to, not only the clergy, but to lay people and those who are employed in church bearing incorporated bodies such as schools. So if we follow that code of conduct, we need to start turfing out any teacher in a church school that's de facto or in a homosexual relationship…It started with child protection and it broadened the umbrella to include everything which is outside their mandate anyway'. [Excerpt from clergy interview I]

> 'The other thing that concerns me about this document is that I don't think we have worked out as a church our response to sexuality, and I think they are still working that out. Some concerns are that the document is going to cut that discussion short…I'm a bit concerned too that if we decide that homosexual activity is wrong, that this document would be used as a sort of big stick to hit homosexual clergy and church-workers, and I just think we are getting into abuse again'' [Excerpt from clergy interview C]

This last quote, where the priest likens consequences flowing from the guide-lines to abuse itself, particularly in regard to homosexual clergy and church-workers, was particularly concerning. Another clergy was also concerned about a potential 'witch-hunt' climate being created.

In addition to these, there seemed to be a sense of disempowerment in some clergy on these matters, as if they had been taken out of their hands. There wasn't, for instance, the perception among 'rank-and-file' clergy that they would have any influence on whether these guide-lines were adopted or not. Perhaps this also contributes to clergy's general criticisms about church hierarchy mentioned at the beginning of this report. Clergy in higher up positions did appear to perceive that they had more power to at least lobby against them. Again, one can see that church hierarchy and power is an important issue here.

Alongside these criticisms, there was also a reluctance by some clergy to have guide-lines in general, and to pay attention to guide-lines. They were seen in some respects as irrelevant, or at least only partly relevant, with personal management of these issues, such as through giving due attention to personal growth and development, the key to acting appropriately in regard to these issues:

> 'You've got to do the self-awareness stuff...There needs to be processes and policies...I'm not of the cynical ilk that says 'they're all rubbish in the church office and they don't care'...[but], you know, you can have the best polices in the world but unless the priest, himself or herself, says 'I have a problem here...I keep drooling over the women in my parish'...The policy or process will not do that. It may create or make an agenda, but really it's about training our leadership to be able to say 'I think you've got an issue here', and maybe having the facilities for personal growth ought to be done'. [Excerpt from clergy interview F]

> 'But in the environment when things were still not really clear – I mean clergy were not being clearly guided as how to handle [these issues] – I had to do a bit of work, a lot of work, on my own response' [Excerpt from clergy interview K]

> 'I must admit, again this is a judgement call, but if I had the situation happening here and in the end I had no concerns about those two individuals, because I would hope that I would know those two individuals, and there were some guidelines, I would probably turn a blind eye to it rather than enforce it.' [Excerpt from clergy interview D]

On the other hand, there was also statements to the effect that guide-lines in general were in some way useful. For example:

> 'I think we need guidelines and some pretty clear guidelines' [Excerpt from clergy interview A]

> 'I think the guidelines on professional boundaries are OK. Some rough guidelines [are needed], but not a list of dos and don'ts.' [Excerpt from clergy interview I]

> 'I think boundaries and guidelines are useful...I don't think that I need to have a list of regulations, but I can see how they are maybe useful...' [Excerpt from clergy interview C]

> 'I think I have a clearer idea now of the resources available and to whom I can refer people to more clearly, and also it's better, there's more guidance to cover a wider range of situations I might find myself in, so I think that all is good...I think it has made me more conscious to be more alert and watchful if you like in my behaviour, but also noting and reporting thing. Certainly done that. More conscious of the sort of dire possibilities and my vulnerabilities because people could make use of a situation for their part.' [Excerpt from clergy interview M]

In addition to these positive comments, some clergy also acknowledged that there were not sufficient guide-lines previously, for example in terms of how to react to a situation of child abuse, which has already been discussed.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That the Diocese seriously consider clergy criticism of 'Faithfulness in Service' in relation to whether it is fully adopted.***

6.3 The Professional Standards Committee:

In relation to processes and procedures, some concern was raised by some interviewees about the Professional Standards Committee, particularly in relation to its perceived lack of independence from the wider body of the church. As was also mentioned in the Background to this report, it should be noted that this was also a finding of the Board of Inquiry:

> '...the Board has concerns about the extent to which the Professional Standards Director I perceived by potential complainants to be independent...' (Board of Inquiry Report, p. 8)

This appears to still be a matter of concern for some in the Diocese. For example:

> 'I do think we still haven't got this thing right about having...the Professional Standards Committee is too closely bound to the Diocese... I mean you can't be the umpire if you are also playing in one of the teams. And I think this has nothing to do with personalities involved...I mean, it would be a bit like...if I had an argument with another priest and wanted this sorted out, I mean we'd probably need to see a 3rd person, and probably it would be wiser for it not to be another priest, but a counsellor...So I think that's the next stage – [for it to be a] completely autonomous process. [It would] probably have to be somebody completely independent... one of the problems sitting in our Diocese has been historically a princely culture but also the lack of autonomy...you need professional and independent persons to do this...It has to be an independent person from outside the system, outside the diocese, not even Anglican. Someone

> who has got skills in either child protection or sexual harassment who's non-Anglican, with some authority.' [Excerpt from clergy interview F]

Another stated that because the position had so many responsibilities, they were unsure about where the Officer's loyalties lay. The Report of the Board of Inquiry suggested that this perception of a lack of independence might discourage some complainants from reporting to the committee. In fact, one priest did disclose in an interview that the perceived lack of autonomy meant that s/he did not report a reportable offence to the Professional Standards Committee, because they did not feel comfortable doing so (instead they reported it to someone else, who apparently subsequently reported it to the Committee). There was also a feeling that the Committee was under-resourced in terms of funding.

There also seemed to be a frustration amongst some clergy about the actions the Professional Standards Committee were able to take in relation to some matters that were reported, particularly when they did not concern the abuse of children. For example, two clergy disclosed that the Committee could not act on a particular matter that they reported concerning the assault of adults because a formal complaint had not been made. In one case, a priest felt effectively 'silenced' about this complaint because of this response.

On the other hand, other priests also reported good experiences of dealing with this Committee and, incidentally, the Ministry Development Council:

> '[We received] good support from MDC, and the Professional Standards Director has been helpful'

Another priest expressed much faith in the Professional Standards Director and their staff, inferring that they were indicative of the positive and responsible way the Diocese was now dealing with some of these issues:

> 'I don't feel that anybody who [contacts] the Professional Standards Director, or who contacts the Help-Line now would face any brush-off, or feeling that they shouldn't have contacted these people, or would feel that there's no attention being paid to their complaint. I feel comfortable about that'. [Excerpt from clergy interview K]

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That the issue of independence and autonomy of the Professional Standards Committee from the Diocese and Church is resolved.***

6.4 General support for clergy in dealing with these matters:

Several clergy made requests for greater support in dealing with matters of sexual abuse/assault. Much of this was made in the context of having previously experienced a profound lack of support when attempting to deal with these matters, and also reflects the bullying/silencing some clergy have received by the church in relation to these matters

(as discussed above). For example, one priest who had attempted to report a matter and was then threatened and humiliated by church authorities said:

> 'It would have been good to have had someone that could have advised me in a better way in how to proceed in reporting the matter. Perhaps I didn't do it in the best way that it could have been done. I don't know. I only did it in the way that I knew at the time...Now the thing was that when I was rebuffed by the church, to have had a supervisor, I think that it would have given me a great deal of consolation and personal support to carry me through difficult times for some weeks. And I would have really valued that support in a rather non-judgemental environment. I think it would have been very important'[Excerpt from clergy interview I]

It should be noted that in the *Professional Standards Committee and Director Policy* (12 November 2003), there is a statement to the effect that the Diocese now provides for the 'Informant' of abuse/assault to have a 'support person'. While experiences of this were not commented upon in any of the interviews or survey material, it would seem that this is potentially an excellent provision. However, there is also a potential problem surrounding the autonomy of this support person if they are provided by the Diocese. Given the deep ambivalence expressed by some clergy in regard to the church hierarchy, a support person associated with this hierarchy may not necessarily be the optimal facilitator. In interviews, clergy gave the impression that such support would either need to come from outside the church, or be someone familiar that they had an existing relationship with (eg a fellow priest). For example, one priest said 'I would probably go to [my close colleagues] personally, before I went to the heavy hierarchy'. In particular, the concern here was that the support came from someone who would fully support the Informant, and not have other loyalties, such as to Diocese or institution of the Church.

Apart from when they are specifically responding to abuse and assault, another theme emerged from interviews of some clergy currently feeling generally isolated and alone in their work. In the most extreme cases, this involved much hurt and disillusionment:

> 'There was no one, no one...it just got all too much for me because I was getting no assistance...' [Excerpt from clergy interview L]

> 'I'm disillusioned with the church...I am even at a stage when I am thinking about retiring...this whole business [sexual abuse/assault] has shaken me a fair bit really. You see the same sort of things still happening, not with the sexual things and that, but even with administration and the way things are done around this place.' [Excerpt from clergy interview]

Other clergy described less extreme but no less pervasive feelings of isolation and aloneness. For example, one priest described a sense of competition within the Diocese, experienced as needing to project an image of everything in one's parish being 'fine', rather than being able to openly express concerns with colleagues and superiors about their work. Two other clergy spoke about senses of isolation, distance and distrust, while

another priest linked this sense of isolation and aloneness with the hierarchical structure of the church, and also its inability to deal effectively with abuse/assault matters (this quote has also been used above): 'If you give one person, like a Bishop or Archbishop the full responsibility to deal with very delicate issues, that person is extremely isolated by virtue of his [sic] position, so I think those structures don't help at all'.

It should also be added that, in addition to these feelings of isolation, aloneness and lack of support, there was a perception among some clergy of an 'inquisitorial' climate in the church surrounding abuse/assault issues. This did not appear to be felt by all – on the contrary, most clergy were at ease and extremely open about discussing these issues in interviews – however it was evident in a small minority of the clergy that they felt in some way threatened by discussing these topics.

For instance, one priest was markedly nervous both before and during the interview, answered interview questions with general statements, and displayed an almost hysterical degree of relief when the interview came to a close (this matter has already been touched on above). Another priest rang me several days after their interview had taken place and, speaking rather abruptly, wanted to check that it was 'all okay'. There seemed to be an assumption by this small number of respondents that the research was in some way checking up on them and threatening in some way.

Thus, it is important to point out that for genuine dialogue to take place about some of the pressing issues raised in this report, the Diocese must ensure that a non-hierarchical, inclusive and non-threatening environment is created. Otherwise, many clergy are unlikely to be open about these matters, because it seems they fear they will say the 'wrong thing', and be persecuted for doing so.

Alongside these feelings of aloneness, isolation and lack of support, it also needs to be noted that some clergy experience open hostility and harassment by members of the public because of the sexual abuse issue within the church. For example, one priest reported that one of their colleagues had been heckled in a local shopping centre, another described a situation where they had overheard someone saying outside the church that they 'wouldn't let her kids go to church', which they found distressing. Several clergy also stated that they now wore their collar less in public:

> 'You tend to get a lot of backhanded comments from the community now. I tend to not wear a collar as much now because there has been a few sad comments made'. [Excerpt from clergy interview I]

> 'It's nice to get out of the place and say, 'Hi, I'm an Anglican priest', and they go 'Oh right, OK – you're a paedophile!' [Excerpt from clergy interview H]

Given this hostile public context, influenced by the media coverage of these matters, it is important that clergy feel supported within the church. It should also be mentioned that this hostility is particularly galling to deal with when clergy are themselves victims/survivors of abuse.

6.5 Triggering flash-backs and other forms of distress:

In relation to support for clergy, it should also be noted that since a proportion of clergy are themselves victims/survivors of child abuse/adult sexual assault and other related trauma, how these matters are raised in the church must be done with much care, because they can form a trigger for the victim/survivor of memories of the previous abuses/assaults, or show a lack of sensitivity to the victim/survivor.

For example, one priest who was abused as a child described a situation where comments were made in casual conversation at a clergy conference that implied that children who are abused fail to pick up warning signs about the perpetrator. This left the priest who had been abused feeling that the abuse was 'their fault', that they had been somehow 'stupid' as a child not to have picked up such signs. Such meetings can certainly trigger some extremely uncomfortable feelings in clergy that have are victims/survivors themselves: 'All of a sudden [I found myself thinking] 'I don't actually want to be here [listening to this] but I can't actually leave. I don't actually like this at all''. Because of the potential for these sort of interactions, some clergy in fact avoided some clergy meetings and other events where they believed abuse/assault matters would be brought up: 'So there is some stuff I choose not to go to'. Clergy who have been victims/survivors may also avoid education programmes about abuse/assault for the same reason.

> ***RECOMMENDATION: That the Diocese offer support for clergy when attempting to deal with matters of abuse/assault, keeping in mind that some clergy themselves are victims/survivors of abuse/assault.***

In addition to this, it could also be particularly galling for some clergy to attend these events and see church hierarchy speaking about abuse/assault when, in the past, these same people have perpetrated abuse/assault (sometimes against the particularly priest) in the past and/or bullied others for attempting to bring up such matters:

> 'I'm still incredulous about how some people respond...and then they are lauded by the community...so I'm bitter that sometimes these people who didn't respond adequately are then held up in the wider as – they are made out as saints. I find that galling, really.' [Excerpt from clergy interview]

Indeed, for a small minority of clergy, their experiences around these issues have led to a level of profound distress and disillusionment (see quotes above).

It should also be noted that many clergy and church-workers mentioned that since these matters have been brought up in the church, this has also 'triggered' memories and recollections for people in congregations. This was in fact a recurrent topic that came up in most interviews, with many clergy describing how the 'sex abuse scandal' had caused some members of congregations to re-live their own memories of abuse. For example:

> 'There was one lady [in the parish] who had been sexually abused herself as a

> child, who was struggling with it, and we offered to call a public meeting for her to address some of these issue. She didn't think that the way it was being dealt with in [the Ollsohn/Chung report] was the right way…' [It should be noted that this women did not want such a meeting to be called, and it was not.]

Many clergy also described how congregations and parishes had been deeply effected by these matters. For example, many of the clergy interviewed had existed in parishes where there had been some incident of abuse/assault that had had to be dealt with. Also, comments by clergy indicated the level of distress these matters had caused lay-people, particularly those who felt a strong sense of identity with the Anglican church and church superiors. For example, as one priest put it:

> 'To have the bishop leave in the circumstances which he did, it was highly problematic to people, really hurtful to them, and they had to grieve over that'. [Excerpt from clergy interview K]

Another said, 'I think they [members of he congregation] feel the credibility of the Christian faith is at stake [over these matters]' [Excerpt from clergy interview B]– this comment was in relation to elderly worshippers. In relation to younger worshippers the following comment was made 'They don't like to be associated with the word *Anglican'[Excerpt from clergy interview B]*.

Also there was a sense of outrage over the stories that have come out about abuse/assault in the church and how it has been dealt with: 'Some people have been absolutely furious about what was disclosed in that report' [Excerpt from clergy interview K], one priest said. And it has also been pointed out that the effects of this are widespread. For example, one clergy wrote at the end of the survey:

> 'I think a lot of stress has been internalised by congregations and not named. It has made life harder in parishes and thus increased stress!' [Comment on anonymous clergy survey]

Overall, there is, as one priest put it, a heightened level of awareness about these issues:

> 'People feel very strongly about it, and I think it's a heightened time of awareness, a very heightened time. And I think for a lot of people who have been hurt by the church, or where the misuse of power has taken place, this is giving them an opportunity for their stories to be revisited. But it's also meaning that a lot of people can verbalise their anger with the church about what they have experience, so it's a fairly uncomfortable time'[Excerpt from clergy interview H]

Indeed, some of this heightened awareness is a large part of the positive outcomes to come of this period for the Diocese and church.

6.6 Some positive outcomes, some hopeful futures:

Alongside these painful consequences of these issues being raised within the church, it is also important to state that there have been some extremely positive outcomes for such issues finally being brought more into the open. Apart from the policies and procedures the Diocese has subsequently introduced to deal more effectively with these matters, there have also been cases where the matters have helped individuals to think further about and even start to resolve some of their own experiences of abuse/assault. For example, one priest wrote at the end of the survey:

> 'The 'sexual abuse scandal' in the church is what precipitated me reporting my own sexual abuse...because the Diocese encouraged people to do so. That has been extremely helpful to me - life-changing, in fact. At the same time it has been bloody hard being a priest in the church, because it means that for the last 18 months or so, the issue has been in my face 24 hours a day, and I have felt a victim and part of an abusive system at the same time. I have received some support from Diocese in doing my job, but most of the time felt unsure about what help I needed. These circumstances have meant that I have been quite adverse to learning much about these issues - I suppose I was responding to them from a personal emotional perspective. Thanks.'

Again, this quote shows the importance of taking into account the different ways clergy and church-workers are positioned in relation to the issues.

Overall, there was also a recurring theme throughout interviews of optimism (for some) or guarded hope (for others) that the Diocese was at last starting to deal with some of these matters:

> 'Yes I am [happy how things are now being dealt with]. I mean – yes, and no. I've told you about some of my concerns about the Professional Standards Policy...so I am not entirely at ease. No. But I do think that in the area of handling of complaints to the church, if there is a complaint, then I feel confident that those will be dealt with now different and much more effectively. I think that all clergy are all very, very aware of the need to be responsible in reporting, where that's appropriate, and I know we have got avenues of communication that have opened up with the Help-Line, which has extended to the church and the Professional Standards Director, who is the first point for anybody who wishes to make a formal complaint. So that is in place now....[Also] I'm really delighted at the development of the Healing Steps programme.' [Excerpt from clergy interview K]

> 'Well, we are certainly getting better with these matters, there's no doubt about that. And it' a learning process, and mistakes are always made in learning processes, and that's okay, providing we do learn from our mistakes'[Excerpt from clergy interview H]

> 'Optimistic? Oh, I'm a bit of a realist. I think it's a slow process of change that will inevitably come...So, optimistic in the sense that yes, this is confronting us with some deep issues. I don't know if we are going to handle this very well. I

think there will be blood on the floor all over the place...So I think it's a really messy time, but it's great that these things are out in the open. I think it's going to be really hard on us, and people will have to be brave and stand up, and that's difficult, but hopefully good things will come out of it'. [Excerpt from clergy *interview H]*

'I think there is a genuine effort to deal with the problem, and that some significant and substantial gains have been made. But my concern is that we are under-resourced, *[these matters should be] Federal and State government* supervised and resourced, and I also think there's conflict of interest problems that have not been dealt with' [Excerpt from clergy interview F]

'I'm just thankful that at last we can be honest about what has happened and is happening with our children' [comment on anonymous survey]

Conducting this research project was also seen by some respondents as a positive part of this change:

'I think it's good that you are doing this research. I think it's important and I think it's a step in the right direction...I mean I see it as part of education and getting people to continue to think about these sorts of things. I mean I just hope that eventually [we] get to the stage where you don't need to have special education, that this becomes just a normal part of life that we protect our children and all that.' [Excerpt from clergy interview I]

7. Conclusion:

7.1 The main findings:

The main findings of report are detailed in the Executive Summary. To briefly summarise them here:

- In relation to child abuse:

The Diocese has gone some way to addressing child protection issues, with some good education and awareness now in existence about these matters; child protection is, as one priest put it in an interview, 'now on the radar screen'. Most rank and file clergy appear committed to child protection in principle, however in practise there still exists a culture whereby reporting child abuse to authorities is viewed as conflicting with pastoral concerns of confidentiality. This is not perhaps surprising, given a church culture in the immediate past that actively discouraged and even threatened clergy for reporting abuse.

- In relation to adult sexual assault:

The Diocese is not yet addressing adult sexual assault, both in terms of educating and awareness raising to facilitate the adequate response of church-workers and leaders to victims/survivors of assault, and preventing sexual assault taking place within churches. There is no formal education about these matters, and there exists evidence to suggest a culture of violence and hostility against women within church culture which is alarming. Immediate steps need to be taken by this Diocese to raise awareness and educate about responding to sexual assault. Overall, there needs to be a wider structural change in the church that sees old patterns of hierarchical, male-dominated behaviour surpassed by new, more inclusive models of leadership and service.

7.2 The recommendations:

The main recommendations of this report are:

- That the mandatory notification training run by the Ministry Development council is made compulsory for all active clergy and church-workers
- That a 'refresher' course on mandatory notification and other aspects of child protection is provided by the Ministry Development Council for clergy and church-workers as part of ongoing education about these matters
- That the Diocese consider the mandatory notification responsibilities of clergy when working in situations where they are dealing with victims/survivors of abuse on a daily basis (and who might already be 'in the system'), such as in a health context
- That the Diocese consider policy and verbatim requirements that clergy immediately report all matters of abuse, regardless of the of the victim/survivors

intentions, when the victim/survivor is not in current or immediate danger of abuse, and particularly when the victim/survivor is now an adult

- ☐ That the Diocese clarifies whether abuse reported within a formal confessional situation is reportable
- ☐ That the above recommendations about considering reporting legislation and requirements take into account the views of clergy and church-workers
- ☐ That the Diocese acknowledge and apologise for the distress experienced by some clergy who attempted to report abuse in the past and were silenced, bullied and/or threatened
- ☐ That church-workers are encouraged to report child abuse to authorities themselves
- ☐ That all church-workers are directly sent materials about child protection education run by the Diocese
- ☐ That clergy and church workers are educated about the rights of, and appropriate responses towards, victims/survivors of sexual assault
- ☐ That establishing education and awareness raising programmes about sexual assault for clergy and church-workers be an immediate priority for the Diocese
- ☐ That a broad based education and awareness process is established that includes issues of bullying and harassment. That such a programme should be available for use in parishes
- ☐ That the Diocese recognise and address violence against women within the church as a matter of urgency. This may include advocating change in church culture, such as through the use of inclusive language in worship, and re-considering gender inequality in positions of power held in the Church
- ☐ That the Diocese seriously consider clergy criticisms of 'Faithfulness in Service' in relation to whether it is fully adopted
- ☐ That the issue of independence and autonomy of the Professional Standards Committee from the Diocese and Church is resolved
- ☐ That the Diocese offer support for clergy when attempting to deal with matters of abuse/assault, keeping in mind that some clergy themselves are victims/survivors of abuse/assault.
- ☐ That the Diocese consider how it may operate in a less hierarchical manner, keeping in mind that old, male-dominated hierarchical power structures are related to a lack of accountability when dealing with matters of child abuse and adult sexual assault

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