

Article courtesy of *The Mercury*
Thursday 18 June, 2009

Praise for sex abuse response

Sally Glaetzer

Anglican dioceses around Australia are under pressure to adopt a Tasmanian compensation model in response to a report on sexual abuse within the church.

The report examined 191 allegations of child sexual abuse reported in Australia between 1990 and 2008.

It made recommendations around staff screening and training, education about the risk of child abuse and reparation for victims.

Sexual abuse victims hailed the report, by two independent experts from Sydney University, as a breakthrough.

The report found:

- Nearly two-thirds of the 135 people accused of abuse were members of the clergy.
- Most victims were aged 10-15 when first abused.
- Most abuse happened in the perpetrator's home or church premises.
- Three quarters of complainants were male.
- The average delay in reporting offences was 23 years.

Of the 191 abuse cases, 33 were from Tasmania, spanning from the 1940s to 2004.

'The really incredible part about this document is the fact that it is a no-holds-barred, transparent, factual account of what's happened,' said Survivors Investigating Child Sexual Abuse spokesman Steve Fisher. 'This is probably the most honest report that I've seen and the fact that [Tasmanian Bishop] John Harrower was the driving force behind it is just amazing.'

Mr Fisher said Bishop Harrower should be congratulated for already implementing most of the report's recommendations.

When he arrived in Tasmania in 2001 Bishop Harrower apologised to abuse victims and set about developing an Australia-first pastoral support scheme, awarding compensation of up to \$60,000.

'To finance that we had to sell my home,' Bishop Harrower said yesterday with a smile.

Bishops Court at Sandy Bay fetched about \$1.5 million. The sale has helped pay out more than \$1.1 million to 24 Tasmanian victims.

Tasmanian priests Garth Hawkins and Louis Daniels were jailed for sexually abusing boys and the church said other perpetrators had died or left the country.

Bishop Harrower said the high proportion of Tasmanian cases in the report was partly because of the pro-active stance taken locally.