

Study of Reported Child Sexual Abuse in the Anglican Church

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1. Executive summary

Child sexual abuse occurs in all parts of society. Organizations such as schools and youth clubs that work with children and young people are especially vulnerable. Churches, which have an extensive range of activities involving children and young people, are no exception.

At the 2004 General Synod the Anglican Church of Australia took a proactive approach to the issue of child protection and put in place a number of strategies to improve policies and practices concerning child protection around the country. As part of this effort, the Professional Standards Commission requested a report on the nature and extent of reported child sexual abuse by clergy and church workers, including volunteers, since 1990. The study excluded Church schools and children's homes. Professor Patrick Parkinson and Emeritus Professor Kim Oates, both from the University of Sydney, were asked to conduct this study with the help of research assistant, Amanda Jayakody.

The aims of this research study were to:

- understand the characteristics of accused persons and complainants and the circumstances of the offence.
- ascertain patterns of abuse in relation to similarities or differences in gender and age of the child complainants.
- inform the Church on what steps could be taken towards better prevention of sexual abuse within church communities.

The report analyses 191 alleged cases of child sexual abuse, reported from 17 dioceses throughout Australia between 1990 and 2008 to see what lessons can be learned to improve efforts at child protection. This represents most, but not all of the reported cases across Australia in that period.

The key findings were:

- Unlike the patterns of abuse in the general population, three quarters of complainants were male and most were between the ages of 10 to 15 at the time of abuse.
- Most accused persons were either clergy or were involved in some form of voluntary or paid youth work.
- There were 27 accused persons with more than 1 allegation in the sample. These 27 people accounted for 43% of all cases.
- Ongoing abuse lasting 3 years or more was significantly more common amongst male complainants.
- Most of the alleged abuse episodes occurred in the accused person's home or on church premises. Almost a quarter of the episodes of abuse of girls occurred in the girl's own home, compared with 7% of male cases.
- There were long delays in reporting offences to the church by the complainants, with an average delay of 23 years.
- Just over half of the cases were treated as substantiated by the church and a third as inconclusive, with erroneous allegations by child complainants being rare.

The report concludes with various recommendations to the Church on improving its child protection strategies in the light of these findings, and in responding better to complaints of past abuse.

2. Introduction

Child sexual abuse is one of the few crimes that consistently incites public outrage and draws media attention. It is a crime that knows no boundaries. It affects both boys and girls, and occurs in all cultures and societies. In addition it is not limited to one particular type of setting. It takes place both within family units and outside the home. Organisations that work with children and young people, such as schools and youth organizations, are especially vulnerable.

Church communities, with their extensive range of activities involving children and young people, and faith-based organizations that work with children, have not been exempt from cases of child sexual abuse. There have been many high profile court cases and inquiries over the past decade. The research that has been done on offences by clergy has focused on the Roman Catholic Church (Rossetti, 1995; Haywood et al, 1996; Falkenhain et al, 1999; Farrell & Taylor, 2000; Langevin et al., 2000; John Jay College, 2004; Dale & Alpert, 2007; Smith, Rengifo & Vollman 2008; Terry, 2008; Terry and Ackerman, 2008). Despite the invaluable insights for the wider Christian community that these studies provide, there are distinctive aspects of the Catholic Church's patterns of ministry, such as the tradition of priestly celibacy, and the kinds of opportunity for interaction with children, that distinguish it from other denominations. There still remains a critical need for understanding of the offences that have occurred and are still occurring in other denominations, in order to develop tailored prevention strategies.

Child sexual abuse in the general population

Several retrospective studies of men and women, who have experienced unwanted sexual activity before the age of 18 years, have been conducted in relation to the general Australian population. Estimates of the prevalence of abuse in these studies vary somewhat. Disparities in data are partly due to differentiations in definition. Some studies include non-contact sexual abuse such as showing children pornography or inviting them to engage in sexual

acts. Others limit the definition to sexual abuse involving contact. Some studies define sexual abuse as involving a perpetrator at least five years older; others, in addition to this, include unwanted sexual contact from same-age or similar age peers.

Even with the more restrictive definitions of sexual abuse, the number of adults who report such experiences as children represents a substantial minority of the population. Goldman & Goldman (1988) reporting on a survey of nearly 1000 students in Victoria, found that 27.6% of girls and 9% of boys reported abusive experiences, including non-contact abuse, before the age of 16. Fleming (1997) found that 20% of women randomly selected from the electoral roll, had experienced child sexual abuse involving contact. Goldman & Padayachi, (1997) found in a study of students in Queensland, that 18.6% of males and 44.6% females reported at least one unwanted sexual experience before the age of 17 (a cut-off age one year later than in the 1988 study by Goldman and Goldman). When the noncontact unwanted sexual acts were excluded, the prevalence rates dropped by approximately 5% for both males and females. Mazza at al (2001) in a general population study of women aged between 51 and 62 years of age, found that 42% had experienced non-contact sexual abuse, and 36% had experienced contact sexual abuse before the age of 16. These figures were higher than in an earlier general practice study (Mazza at al, 1996).

Dunne *et al.* (2003), in another study of people randomly selected from electoral rolls, found abuse rates of 15.9% for males and 33.6% for females, with a decline in reported levels of abuse in younger age groups, especially younger men. This study included non-contact abuse within the definition.

Andrews *et al.* (2002), in a review of previous Australian studies, report that the onset of abuse occurred at a mean age of 10 years, with most cases starting before the age of 12 years, and that in 75% of cases the offender was known to the child, with 40% of cases involving an offender who was a

family member. U.S. studies also have found most perpetrators are known to the children they victimize (Finkelhor et al., 1990). Children who have experienced sexual abuse in the past (for example, children already in the child protection system) have an increased vulnerability to further abuse (Swanston et al., 2002). Child sexual abuse and revictimization is also common in families experiencing other adversity (Swanston et al., 2002; Andrews et al., 2002).

Although studies have found that almost all offenders are male, sex offenders against children constitute a heterogeneous group. Differences occur between offenders in whether they target mainly family members or outside of it, whether mostly boys or girls, or whether they target a particular age group. There is no one psychological profile (Wallis, 1995). However research has identified some common characteristics associated with the etiology of sexual deviant behaviour, such as psychological factors, deviant sexual arousal, poor quality attachments, loneliness, poor social skills and low self-esteem (Terry, 2008). Research has also found that child sexual abusers frequently use some form of grooming behaviour to entice children into complying with the abuse. A starting point is often to become friendly with the child's parents. With access to the child, grooming of the child may include persistent physical contact, games, seeking to spend an unusual amount of time with the child, and giving gifts and favours (Terry, 2008).

Child sexual abuse in Church communities

A substantial number of Catholic priests have been jailed for sexual molestation in the US (Terry, 2008). Such is the case for Australia as well. Broken Rites Australia (2009), a support organization for victims of sexual abuse in churches, reports 112 cases of Catholic priests and religious brothers who have been sentenced in Australian courts that are known to the organization. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops commissioned a recent comprehensive study that found that 4% of all priests who had

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served in the U.S. from 1950 to 2002 had allegations of child sexual abuse against them (John Jay College, 2004; Terry, 2008).

Church leaders in other denominations with responsibility for clergy misconduct have reported comparatively few child sexual abuse cases as part of their workload (Richards, 2004). It is apparent, nonetheless, that the problem of child sexual abuse is not confined to just one denomination, and CSA occurs across the spectrum of Churches (Parkinson, 2003; Morrison, 2005). One Australian website that lists clergy perpetrators of sexual abuse includes 18 Anglican ministers who have been convicted since the early 1990s of sexual abuse against minors (Pascoe, 2009). A substantial majority of convicted offenders in that list are Roman Catholic priests and brothers.

Churches provide many child-related organizations and activities, such as schools, children's homes, youth groups, camps and Sunday schools. Many of these activities are run not just by clergy, but by teachers, pastoral staff and volunteers. Therefore churches, like other organizations working with children that rely on volunteers as well as paid staff, are particularly vulnerable to a wide-variety of individuals seeking to gain access to children. Parkinson (2002) identifies factors in church life that may create greater opportunities for child sexual abuse than in the general community. Firstly, church work provides more opportunities for adults to be alone with children. For example, taking children home after a church activity, individual counselling or being alone with children on church camps. Secondly, the authority and influence clergy have as spiritual leaders can be misused in many ways such as having the power to define abuse as normal. Farrell and Taylor (2000) also argue that priests use an additional grooming technique of spiritual manipulation, or using God as an emotional grooming tactic. Lastly, Christian teaching on forgiveness potentially influences attitudes towards the offender, in that offences are seen as being forgiven as a consequence only of confession, and victims may be told they need to forgive the offender

rather than informing the police of an offence (Parkinson, 2003; Frawley-O'Dea, 2004).

If there are particular differences in church life that create opportunities for sex offenders, are there also differences between the profile and characteristics of sex offenders in the church compared to sex offenders in general? Langevin et al. (2000) found in a matched study of Catholic cleric-sex offenders that clerics were comparable in most respects to the control group. Most suffered from a sexual disorder but did not differ from the controls in this respect. However they showed less antisocial personality disorders, more endocrine disorders, had a longer delay before criminal charges were laid, tended to use force more often in their offences, were older in age at first reported offence and better educated. They conclude that despite these differences, the same procedures should be used in their assessment.

The Nature and Scope study of Catholic priests in the U.S. found the average age of onset of abusive behaviour was slightly older (39 years) than non-clergy sex offenders (32 years). Most victims were male and older in age compared to victims in the general population (Terry and Ackerman, 2008). However they also found that priests who sexually abuse children are similar to non-clergy populations of sexual abusers with respect to a low incidence of chronic sexual offending, 'stranger' abuse, networking among offenders, child pornography use and paraphilic behaviour. Like Langevin et al. (2000), they also conclude that prevention techniques used in the general population can be applied to the Catholic Church.

It is clear from all the research that child sexual abuse in the North American Catholic Church, at least, does differ to that of offences in the general population with regards to gender and age targeting, age and psychopathology of the offender, patterns of opportunities and the particular authority and influence offenders have over their victims.

Church responses

Church communities have had, along with other areas of society, a poor record of dealing with child sexual abuse. This has been mostly due to a lack of awareness of the problem and a tendency to not believe that it could occur in the church (Cashman, 1993; Heggen, 1993; Parkinson, 2003). Studies have shown some of the problems in past responses by churches to abuse allegations and the way in which the organisational culture contributed to poor responses (Terry, 2008).

In the past few years there have been numerous inquiries into church-related sexual abuse (Blake, 2006). In NSW, a Royal Commission that examined paedophilia included a chapter on the response of the Churches (Wood, 1997). An inquiry into paedophilia was conducted in Tasmania (Kohl and Crowley, 1998). A prominent inquiry was conducted into past handling of child sexual abuse allegations in the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane (O'Callaghan & Briggs, 2003). The Anglican Diocese of Adelaide also established a Board of Inquiry into the handling of child sexual abuse claims following concerns about previous inadequate responses to disclosures of sexual abuse (Ollson & Chung, 2004). As part of the process of responding to those concerns the Church commissioned a report which found that there were still difficulties for clergy reconciling the reporting of abuse with pastoral concerns of confidentiality (Morrison, 2005).

The Anglican Church of Australia has been proactive in developing a coherent national child protection strategy as well as dealing with complaints of abuse and improving disciplinary processes (Blake, 2006). There has also been co-operation between churches. In 2004, the National Council of Churches conducted a national ecumenical consultation entitled 'Safe as Churches?' It discussed the development of a child protection strategy, a uniform national approach, screening processes, protection for those who disclose abuse and

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ongoing child protection training for adults working with children (Irenyi et al. 2006).

The above examples of positive church responses to child sexual abuse highlight the progress in dealing with the problem. However, as Parkinson (2002) points out, the problem of lack of awareness still remains in many evangelical and charismatic churches which have not had the same level of publicized allegations.

The following study on child sexual abuse in the Anglican Church attempts to highlight potential patterns of abuse allegations and potential preventative measures to deal with them. It was not an aim of this study to determine overall how many reported cases of child sexual abuse there have been in the life of the Church since 1990. That would require an examination of the records of the police and child protection services nationwide, as well as Church records. Nor does the study aim to find out whether the problem of child sexual abuse is greater or less than in other Churches, or comparable organizations involved with children and young people such as schools and sports clubs. Rather, the purpose was to see what patterns could be discerned by examining a very large sample of the reported cases known to the Church, in order to improve the processes of the Church for the future.

3. Method

Participants

The inclusion requirements of the study were to survey all concluded cases of reported child sexual abuse since 1990 within the church by clergy and church workers. The study did not include reported cases from Anglican schools or Anglican children homes. Accused persons were categorised in the survey as either clergy, candidates for clergy, pastoral employees or volunteers. Pastoral employees or volunteers were defined as church workers who had a pastoral role within the church, paid or unpaid, for example, a youth group leader or Sunday school teacher. A complainant was defined as less than 18 years of age at the time of the alleged sexual abuse.

Procedure

All 23 dioceses were invited to participate and were sent an information sheet about the aims of the study and what their involvement would entail. Seventeen dioceses took part in the study. Of the 6 dioceses that did not take part, 3 dioceses (all rural) declined to participate and the remaining 3 did agree to participate but were omitted from the study due to the dioceses not having any relevant cases.

The survey collected the following data on the characteristics of the accused persons: age at time of alleged offence, gender, role within the church and years as clergy prior to the offence. Information on the complainant was also collected such as gender, age at time of first alleged offence and age at time of complaint, whether the complainant alleged abuse by anybody else and family support. The characteristics of the abuse and relationship between the accused person and complainant were gathered, as well as information on the case investigations and conclusions.

The survey was piloted on the archival material of three cases in Sydney. The survey was modified as a result of this pilot study. The revised survey was sent to the Professional Standards Directors of the participating dioceses.

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Directors were provided with written instructions and the Research assistant's contact details, should they have had any questions regarding the survey instrument. The research assistant completed surveys for Adelaide, Newcastle and Sydney due to short staffing in these dioceses at the time.

The data used in the study was archival and came from diocesan personnel files. One survey was completed per complaint. All the questionnaires were anonymous and kept confidential. The study had ethics approval from the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Sydney.

This is a descriptive study which uses a large convenience sample. It is not a census of all reported cases of child sexual abuse within the Anglican Church. This is due to the fact that 3 rural dioceses did not participate and not all the cases within scope from all the dioceses were able to be analysed. In Adelaide only about 75% of files could be analysed due to the staffing constraints. In Sydney and Newcastle, substantially all the cases within scope were analysed except for a small number of cases where the files were not accessible, for example because they were with lawyers. The other dioceses reported that they had returned data on all the files within scope, although it is possible that, like in Sydney and Newcastle, a small number of files were not accessible. Overall, the study covers the vast majority of the known cases that were within scope in the 17 dioceses that participated in the study.

Even if this were a complete census of all cases of child sexual abuse complaints in the period studied, it would not indicate the incidence rates of child sexual abuse in the Anglican Church of Australia, since in many cases there is no way for the researchers to know whether an individual complaint accurately reflects actual events. The study describes *reports* of child sexual abuse, rather than confirmed incidents of abuse. As will be seen, some, but not all, of these reports led to criminal convictions or were substantiated by the Church.

There were some gaps in the data. Many surveys were returned incomplete due to deficient records in the diocesan files. Every effort was made to 'fill in the gaps' through other sources; however despite this there was still a substantial amount of missing data.

Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS for Windows Version 15.0 (Statistical Products and Service Solutions, 2006). Analyses were conducted first at accused person and complainant level, and then at case level. Univariate analyses were used in this report to identify potential patterns: if a variable was continuous, means of the two groups were compared with t-tests; and proportions across two categorical or ordinal variables were compared using Chi-square (χ^2) analyses. Binary Logistic Regression was used to obtain odds ratios to begin to discern the direction of a significant relationship between two categorical variables. However at this stage in the study analyses, controlling for confounding was not considered. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. Case numbers varied in each analysis owing to various patterns of missing data. Tables 2, 4-6, and 12, examining accused person and complainant characteristics, use single-level data whilst the remaining analyses use case-level data. Descriptive answers to open-ended questions were also considered.

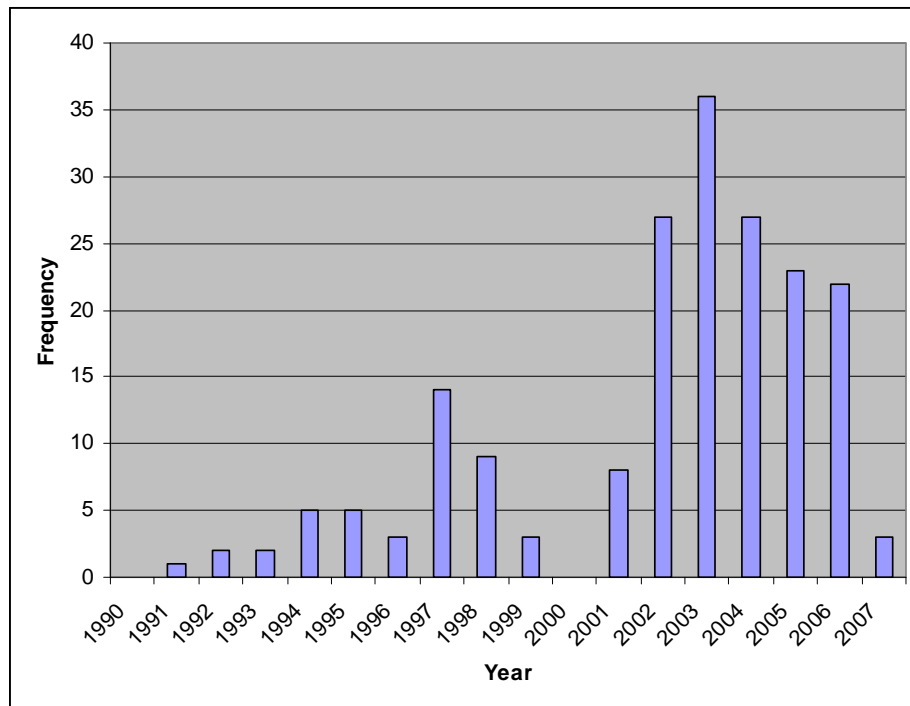
4. Results

The Study of Reported Child Sexual Abuse in the Anglican Church covers 191 cases of reported child sexual abuse from 17 dioceses throughout Australia. Cases occurred throughout Australia and in dioceses with different ecclesiastical traditions. Accused clergy had been trained at a range of theological colleges. Thus no ecclesiastical or theological tradition was exempt from having cases. Thirty-seven of the cases reviewed were not eligible to be included in the study. This was mostly due to the complainant being aged 18 or over at the time of the abuse about which complaint was made, or the accused person was a teacher or a children's home staff worker.

4.1 Reporting and investigations

The majority (79.1%) of complaints of child sexual abuse made to the church were made by the complainant themselves. Three-quarters of all complaints were made after 2000 - corresponding to greater awareness emerging in the church (Figure 1). Since a peak in 2003, there was an apparent decline in the number of complaints.

Figure 1: Year complaint was made to the church



Dioceses were asked to report the types of information they had available for each complaint (Table 1). Most diocesan records had at least a written complaint of the sexual abuse and just over half had a file note of the complaint. A recorded admission by the accused person, corroborative evidence of some kind and evidence of more than one complainant were all treated as indicia of the probable validity of the complaint. Only 7% of cases had all three types of information available, whilst 22% had two out of the three, and 28% one out of the three.¹

¹ It must be noted that many diocesan records were deficient; sometimes due to documentation being held by lawyers.

Table 1: Information available on allegations (not mutually exclusive).

| Information available on allegations | Number & Percentage of total cases |
|---|---|
| Written complaint | 135 (70.7%) |
| File note of complaint | 112 (58.6%) |
| Contemporaneous record of interview | 37 (19.4%) |
| Subsequent recollection by church official | 26 (13.6%) |
| Recorded admission by accused person | 29 (15.2%) |
| Corroborative evidence of some kind | 74 (38.7%) |
| Evidence of more than one complainant at any time | 73 (38.2%) |
| Other | 87 (45.5%) |

Data on the types of investigations that were made for each complaint by the church authorities, police and child protection department or other statutory authority were collected in the survey. Eight percent of cases were reportedly not investigated at all; 42% were investigated by police and only 4 cases were recorded as being investigated by a child protection department/other statutory department. Child protection authorities would not be expected to investigate unless there was reason to believe children were currently at risk of abuse – and when allegations are of historic abuse, it is more likely that investigation will be left to the police. Church authorities made an investigation into three-quarters of the complaints. Investigations ranged from interviewing the complainant and accused person (27), using an independent investigator (14), or using a formal church enquiry (11). In some cases where the church did not investigate, it was in a position to rely on the outcome of the police investigation. Church investigations might also not occur where the accused person had died or was no longer involved in

the life and work of the Anglican Church, since no disciplinary or employment response could occur in such circumstances.

4.2 Characteristics of accused persons

There were 135 accused persons in total included in the study; 133 were male and 2 were female. Twenty-four percent of the accused were deceased by the time the complaint was made to the church or had died during the investigations.

Table 2 outlines the main characteristics of the accused persons. There was a wide age range at the time of alleged abuse; however most were aged in their 20s and 30s. Nearly two thirds of accused persons were clergy or candidates for clergy. The remaining non-clergy were pastoral employees or volunteers within the church. The majority of non-clergy were involved in youth work, of which half were CEBS (Church of England Boys Society) youth leaders. It was not an aim of this study to determine whether clergy were more or less likely than pastoral workers or volunteer children's and youth leaders to have complaints made against them. That could only be assessed by knowing the total numbers of people in each category over a 40 year period.

Amongst clergy, there was on average a 12.7 year time gap between when the person was ordained and the first incident about which a complaint of abuse was made.² This time gap ranged from under one year to 37 years. Three-quarters (102/135) of accused persons were alive at the time of the survey.

² Standard Deviation (SD)=9.6; Median=11.

Table 2: Accused persons' main characteristics

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Age at time of abuse* | |
| Under 20 | 5 (5.2%) |
| 20s | 24 (24.7%) |
| 30s | 33 (34.0%) |
| 40s | 18 (18.6%) |
| 50s | 14 (14.4%) |
| 60s | 3 (3.1%) |
| Total | 97 (100%) |
| Job within church* | |
| Clergy | 78 (58.6%) |
| Candidate for clergy | 8 (6.1%) |
| Pastoral employee | 29 (21.8%) |
| Volunteer | 18 (13.5%) |
| Total | 133 |
| Pastoral employee/volunteer role | |
| CEBs Leader | 18 (38.3%) |
| Other youth group leader | 17 (36.1%) |
| Choir master/Organist | 6 (12.8%) |
| Other | 6 (12.8%) |
| Total | 47 |
| Years as clergy prior to offence* | |
| <i>Mean (Median)</i> | <i>12.7 (11.0)</i> |
| 5 and under | 16 (28.6%) |
| 6 to 15 | 17 (30.3%) |
| More than 15 years | 23 (41.1%) |
| Total (N) | 56 (100%) |

*Missing data for Age = 38, Job within church = 2 and Years as clergy = 22.

More than one complaint

There was only one complainant against the majority of the accused in this sample (80%). Twenty-seven accused persons had more than 1 complainant making complaints against them. These offences accounted for 43% of all cases. Nearly two thirds of these repeat offenders were either clergy or candidates for clergy. The remaining were either pastoral employees or volunteers: 6 were CEBS youth leaders, 3 were other youth group leaders and 1 was a choir master/organist. There were no significant differences in characteristics between those against whom more than one person complained and those in relation to whom there was only one complainant. There was no significant difference in the complainant gender ratio amongst repeat and non-repeat accused persons (Table 3).

Table 3: Type of accused person by complainant sex

| Complainant sex | Accused person Type | |
|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Repeat Accused persons | Non-repeat Accused persons |
| Male | 66 (79.5%) | 79 (73.1%) |
| Female | 17 (20.5%) | 29 (26.9%) |
| Total | 83 (100%) | 108 (100%) |

* $\chi^2 = 1.04$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.31$

4.3 Characteristics of complainants

Tables 4 to 6 show the complainant characteristics. There were 180 complainants included in this study. Nine had more than one complaint included in the study, which accounted for 20 cases. Three-quarters (135) of complainants who alleged sexual abuse were male and a large majority of those were between the ages of 10 to 15 at the time of the alleged first

abuse. 50.6% of complainants were under 14 at the time of the alleged first abuse, but few were under 10.

Table 4: Age of complainant at first abuse

| Age of complainant at first abuse* | Complainant sex | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Male | Female |
| Under 10 | 10 (8.2%) | 9 (20.9%) |
| 10 to 13 | 56 (45.9%) | 16 (37.2%) |
| 14 to 15 | 38 (31.1%) | 11 (25.6%) |
| 16 to 17 | 18 (14.8%) | 7 (16.3%) |
| Total | 122 (100%) | 43 (100%) |

*Missing data for Males=13 and for Females=2.

Whether the complainant had an alleged abuse by another person, church-related or not, was also recorded (Table 5). Seventeen percent of male and female complainants alleged abuse by somebody else as well. The majority of males alleged the other abuse was by a clergyperson. However family members, friends/acquaintances, CEBS leaders and teachers were also reported as other alleged abusers. Five victims reported abuse by other clergy, and three reported abuse by CEBS leaders, which were not otherwise included in this study.

Table 5: Complainant also alleging abuse by other perpetrators

| | Complainant sex | |
|--|-----------------|------------|
| | Male | Female |
| Complainant also alleging abuse by other perpetrators | | |
| Yes | 23 (17.0%) | 8 (17.8%) |
| No | 112 (83.0%) | 37 (82.2%) |
| Total | 135 (100%) | 45 (100%) |
| Specified other alleged abuse* | | |
| Family member | 2 | 1 |
| Friend/acquaintance | 3 | 0 |
| Clergy | 10 | 1 |
| CEBs Leader | 3 | 1 |
| Teacher | 1 | 2 |
| Other/not enough detail given | 4 | 3 |
| Total | 23 (100%) | 8 (100%) |

As Table 6 shows, there appeared to be little family support for many complainants, especially for boys.³

³ Odds Ratio=2.8; $p < .05$

Table 6: Family support for complainant

| Family support for complainant ^{*†} | Complainant sex | |
|--|-----------------|------------|
| | Male | Female |
| None at all | 49 (49.0) | 11 (25.6%) |
| Some | 39 (39.0) | 24 (55.8%) |
| Extensive support | 12 (12.0%) | 8 (18.6%) |
| Total | 100 (100%) | 43 (100%) |

* $\chi^2 = 6.80$; $df = 2$; $p < 0.05$

†Missing data for Males=35 and for Females=2.

4.4 Circumstances of abuse

Relationship between the accused person and complainant

One of the aims of the study was to understand the circumstances of the abuse in order to identify potential preventative measures for daily church life. What was the relationship between the complainant and the accused person? Where did the abuse take place? And what were the characteristics of the abuse?

The survey reveals that complaints of long-term abusive relationships were not that uncommon. Three-quarters of both male and female complainants reported there was more than one alleged offence by the accused person. The length of the abusive relationships varied; ranging from only 2 incidents to a long-term relationship of over 5 years (Table 7). An alleged long-term abusive relationship of 3 years or more was much more common amongst males than female complainants.⁴

⁴ Odds Ratio= 3.0; $p < .05$

Table 7: Length of relationship from first alleged offence to last by sex of complainant*

| | Complainant sex | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Male | Female |
| 2 – 3 incidents | 18 (17.8%) | 10 (30.3%) |
| Up to 6 months | 7 (6.9%) | 4 (12.1%) |
| 6 -12 months | 20 (19.8%) | 4 (12.1%) |
| 1 – 2 years | 16 (15.8%) | 9 (27.3%) |
| 3 – 5 years | 35 (34.7%) | 1 (3.0%) |
| More than 5 years | 5 (5.0%) | 5 (15.2%) |
| Total | 101 (100%) | 33 (100%) |

* $\chi^2 = 17.96$; $df=5$; $p<0.01$

It appears from the profile of complaints, that Church workers were accused of abuse of minors to whom they had immediate and convenient access. Youth group was the most common primary church activity for the accused church worker and complainant to meet, accounting for 50% of all cases. This was just as common for male complainants as female complainants, and when looking at accused persons with more than one complaint against them. Although youth groups are led mostly by pastoral employees or volunteers, 41% of clergy primarily met the complainant through the youth group (Table 8). Eleven percent of cases involved the accused person being a family friend, which descriptive answers given confirm; namely many accused persons socialised with the complainant's family and were considered a family friend. Other relationships were based around music lessons or church choir (6%), individual pastoral counselling (8%) or generally through the role the accused person had as parish priest (8%). Only three cases involved sexual abuse in the context of a relationship

developed through Sunday School. In one of those, there were almost no details and in the other two cases the alleged abusers were clergy.

Table 8: Relationship basis between complainant and the accused by accused person's job*

| Relationship basis between accused person & complainant | Job of accused person | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Clergy | Candidate for clergy | Other pastoral employee/Volunteer |
| Youth group | 44 (41.1%) | 3 (25.0%) | 46 (70.7%) |
| Non-youth group | 63 (58.9%) | 9 (75.0%) | 19 (29.3%) |
| Total | 107 (100.0%) | 12 (100.0%) | 65 (100.0%) |

* $\chi^2 = 17.6$; $df=2$; $p < 0.000$

The accused person's role in the church is significantly related to complainant age amongst males (table 9). Clergy were accused of abuse of a wider age group of male complainants, whilst a large proportion of non-clergy allegedly abused males aged 10 to 13. When looking at the 10 to 13 age group compared to all other ages, non-clergy were significantly more likely to be accused of abusing this group compared to clergy.⁵ This may coincide with non-clergy's common role in youth groups and other organisations for children and youth.

⁵ OR=3.0; $p < 0.01$

Table 9: Age of complainant at first abuse and offender job by complainant sex

| Sex of complainant | Complainant age at first abuse | Offender job | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| | | Clergy & candidates for clergy | Non-clergy |
| Male | Under 10 | 7 (8.2%) | 3 (6.5%) |
| | 10 to 13 | 30 (35.3%) | 28(63.0%) |
| | 14 to 15 | 30 (35.3%) | 10 (21.7%) |
| | 16 to 17 | 18 (21.2%) | 4 (8.7%) |
| | Total | 85 (100.0%) | 45 (100.0%) |
| | Female | Under 10 | 7 (21.2%) |
| 10 to 13 | | 11 (33.3%) | 4 (36.4%) |
| 14 to 15 | | 8 (27.3%) | 4 (36.4%) |
| 16 to 17 | | 6 (18.2%) | 1 (9.1%) |
| Total | | 32 (100.0%) | 11 (100.0%) |

*Amongst Male complainants: $\chi^2 = 9.14$; $df=3$; $p < 0.05$

Type of sexual acts

A range of different sexual acts were alleged to have occurred (Table 10). Around half of all male and female cases involved allegations of more than one abusive act. The majority of incidents of sexual abuse allegedly involved fondling of the complainant for both male and female complainants. Abuse involving vaginal intercourse was alleged by 28% of girls. 30% of boys alleged anal intercourse. Only 18% of complainants claimed to have resisted the sexual abuse, however half of the cases did not have this information on record. 'Other' types of sexual acts that were reported included: inappropriate hugging, massaging or touching of a sexual nature; invitations/approaches or attempts for a sexual act; sharing a bed with a

victim or being naked with a victim and involving kissing/simulations of intercourse; abuser's self-masturbation in presence of or by contact with the complainant; viewing pornography with child or photographing child with pornographic intent; penetration by finger or object.

Table 10: Type of alleged abuse by cases (not mutually exclusive)

| Type of alleged abuse | Male cases (N= 145) | Female cases (N=46) |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Fondling of complainant | 96 (66.2%) | 27 (58.7%) |
| Complainant made to fondle accused person | 38 (26.2%) | 6 (13.0%) |
| Attempted anal intercourse | 26 (17.9%) | 0 |
| Anal intercourse | 44 (30.3%) | 1 (2.2%) |
| Attempted vaginal intercourse | | 0 |
| Vaginal intercourse | | 13 (28.3%) |
| Oral sex- complainant to accused person | 27 (18.6%) | 3 (6.5%) |
| Oral sex – accused person to complainant | 31 (21.4%) | 4 (8.7%) |
| Other | 75 (51.7%) | 26 (56.5%) |
| <i>More than 1 type of abuse</i> | <i>85 (58.6%)</i> | <i>22 (47.8%)</i> |

Location

The accused person's home and church premises were both common locations of alleged abuse for male and female complainants (Table 11). However church camp was also common amongst male complainants and the complainant's home amongst females. The accused person's job appeared to have some bearing on the location of abuse. According to the profile of complaints, the most common locations for clergy to abuse are in their home or on the church premises. Accused persons who had a non-clergy role had a

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wider spread of opportunities. The accused person's home and camps were common locations as well as in the church premises and car journeys. Other locations of alleged abuse that were listed included: public spaces such as beaches; drive-in movies; residential accommodation in a theological training college; parks; public bathrooms.

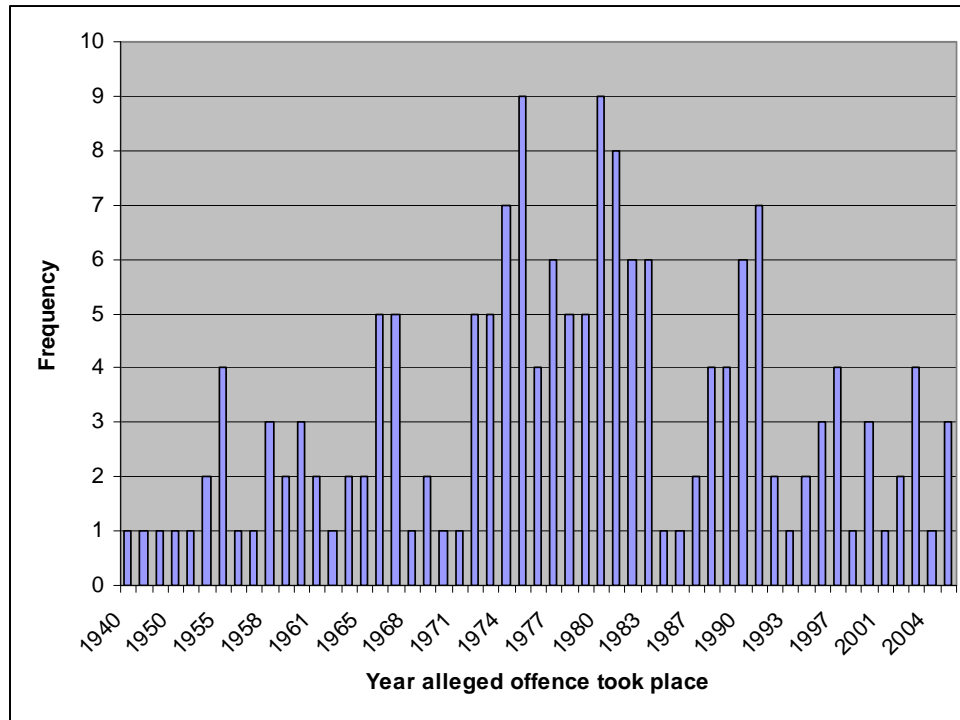
Table 11: Location of Offence by Complainant sex and Accused person job (not mutually exclusive)

| Location of abuse | Complainant cases | | Accused person's Job cases | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| | Male (N=145) | Female (N=46) | Clergy (N=123) | Non-clergy (N=66) |
| Complainant's home | 10 (6.7%) | 11 (23.9%) | 16 (13.0%) | 5 (7.6%) |
| Accused person's home | 69 (47.6%) | 14 (30.4%) | 57 (46.3%) | 26 (39.4%) |
| Church premises | 55 (37.9%) | 19 (41.3%) | 56 (45.5%) | 18 (27.3%) |
| Car | 21 (14.5%) | 5 (10.9%) | 13 (10.6%) | 13 (19.7%) |
| Camp | 32 (21.1%) | 2 (4.3%) | 8 (6.5%) | 26 (39.4%) |
| Outing | 13 (9.0%) | 6 (13.0%) | 12 (9.8%) | 7 (10.6%) |
| Holiday premises | 7 (4.8%) | 0 | 4 (3.3%) | 3 (4.5%) |
| Other | 17 (11.7%) | 9 (19.6%) | 17 (13.8%) | 7 (10.6%) |

4.5 Complainant Reporting and Disclosure

This study examined cases reported since 1990. However reported offences went as far back as the 1940s.

Figure 2: Year alleged offence took place



Females were more likely to be under 19 years of age at time of complaint than males (table 12).⁶ 31% of girls were under 19 at the time they complained compared with just over 10% of boys. There were 8 complainants (4.4%) who were aged under 14 at the time of their complaint.

⁶ Odds Ratio=4.2; $p < .01$

Table 12: Age of complainant at time of complaint*

| Age of complainant at time of complaint | Complainant sex | |
|---|-----------------|-----------|
| | Male | Female |
| Under 16 | 10 (8.1%) | 9 (22.5%) |
| 16 to 19 | 4 (3.2%) | 5 (12.5%) |
| 20s | 14 (11.3%) | 5 (12.5%) |
| 30s | 41 (33.1%) | 8 (20.0%) |
| 40s | 33 (26.6%) | 6 (15.0%) |
| 50s | 16 (12.9%) | 7 (17.5%) |
| 60s | 5 (4.0%) | 0 |
| 70s | 1 (0.8%) | 0 |
| Total | 124 (100%) | 40 (100%) |

* $\chi^2 = 16.05$; $df=7$; $p < 0.05$

†Missing data for Males = 11 and for Females=5.

Females were significantly more likely to disclose to another person within a month of the incident.⁷ This is consistent with the finding that they were more likely to report before the age of 20. Twelve percent of all cases were disclosed to another person within one year of the incident for males and females combined. Of those with available information, 46% of complainants chose to first disclose the offence to a church worker, followed by a family member or friend (33%), the police (9%), and a state authority (8%). Only 4% first disclosed to a lawyer.

⁷ Odds Ratio=6.3; $p < 0.01$

Table 13: Length of time complainant first disclosed the events to another person by complainant sex.

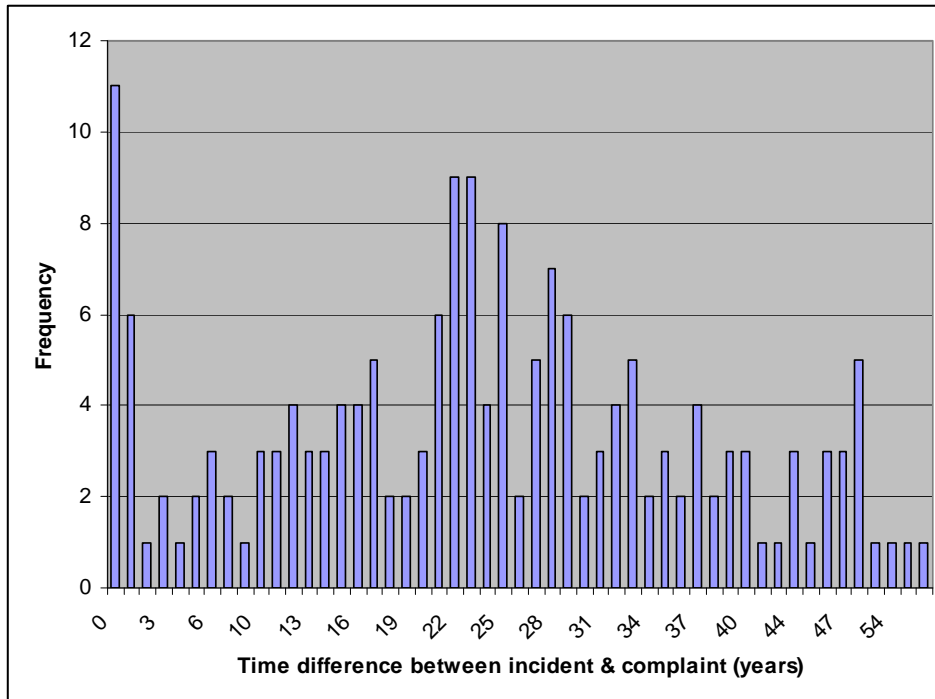
| Length of time complainant first disclosed the events to another person | Sex of complainant | |
|---|--------------------|-------------|
| | Male | Female |
| < 1 month | 5 (3.7%) | 8 (19.5%) |
| 2 - 6 months | 6 (4.5%) | 1 (2.4%) |
| 7 - 12 months | 1 (0.7%) | 2 (4.9%) |
| 13 months - 2 years | 1 (0.7%) | 1 (2.4%) |
| > 2 years | 121 (90.3%) | 29 (70.7%) |
| Total | 134 (100.0%) | 41 (100.0%) |

* $\chi^2 = 16.17$; $df=4$; $p < 0.01$

Based on the information available in this sample, there were long delays in reporting and disclosure of incidents of sexual abuse. Figure 3 shows the time difference between the year of the first abuse and the year the complaint was first made to the church. The length of time ranged from 0 to 63 years, with an average of 23.7 years (SD=14.0; Median=23). Males had a significantly longer average time delay of 25 years compared to 18 years amongst females.⁸

⁸ T-test=2.87; $p < 0.01$

Figure 3: Time difference between alleged incident and complaint to the church (years)



4.6 Outcome of Investigations and Action Taken

As Table 14 shows, half of cases were treated as substantiated by the church and a third as inconclusive, with erroneous allegations by child complainants being rare.

Table 14: Assessment by church at the time

| Assessment by church at the time* | Frequency (percent) |
|---|----------------------------|
| No decision made on validity of complaint | 19 (10.5%) |
| Treated as substantiated | 91 (50.3%) |
| Treated as inconclusive | 62 (34.3%) |
| Alleged events occurred but not abuse | 6 (3.3%) |
| Erroneous allegation - by child | 2 (1.1%) |
| Erroneous allegation - by adult on behalf of self | 1 (0.5%) |
| Total | 181 (100.0%) |

*Missing data = 10.

Fourteen percent of all cases included in the study reported that the church changed its assessment of the case in light of subsequent information, and 81% had not (there was no information for 5% of cases).

Of the 44 cases that were known to go to court, 53% ended in the accused person being convicted. Nineteen percent of cases resulted in dismissal, license removal or deposition from Holy Orders by the Church; whilst the transfer of an accused person subsequent to the complaint was uncommon. Counselling was offered to complainants in 52% of cases and compensation or other reparation by the church in 36% of cases. Table 15 shows action taken in relation to the accused person by year complaint was made to the church.

Table 15: Action taken in relation to accused person by year complaint was made to church (not mutually exclusive).

| Action taken | | Year complaint was made to church | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| | | <2000 (N=44) | >2000 (N=146) |
| None | | 16 (36.4%) | 74 (50.7%) |
| Case went to court | | 15 (34.1%) | 29 (19.9%) |
| | <i>Convicted</i> | 9 (20.5%) | 14 (9.6%) |
| | <i>Acquitted</i> | 0 | 1 (0.7%) |
| | <i>Prosecuted but not convicted</i> | 2 (4.5%) | 1 (0.7%) |
| | <i>Other*</i> | 2 (4.5%) | 7 (4.8%) |
| Disciplinary action taken by Church authority | | 21 (47.7%) | 49 (33.6%) |
| | <i>Dismissed/License removed/Deposition from Holy Orders</i> | 13 (29.5%) | 24 (16.4%) |
| | <i>Resignation</i> | 2 (4.5%) | 0 |
| | <i>Licence suspended</i> | 1 (2.3%) | 1 (0.7%) |
| | <i>Other</i> | 5 (11.4%) | 16 (11.0%) |
| Transfer to different location/position | | 1 (2.3%) | 8 (5.5%) |
| Counselling offered | | 12 (27.3%) | 31 (21.2%) |

*Four accused persons committed suicide and one died of natural causes before court case was completed; 3 court case outcomes were unknown and 1 court case ended with the charges being dropped.

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Table 16 shows the action taken by the Church by decision concerning the substantiation of the case. This data must be treated with caution however, because often the files did not indicate what view the Church took of the allegation. No action may be taken for a number of reasons. With 'historic' claims of abuse (complaints alleging abuse many years before), the alleged offender may be dead. The older the complaint, the harder it may be also to reach a clear determination about whether the abuse occurred.

Table 16: Church assessment by action taken against the accused person

| Action taken in relation to accused person (not mutually exclusive) | Church assessment at the time | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| | No decision made on validity of complaint | Treated as substantiated | Treated as inconclusive | Alleged events occurred but not abuse | Erroneous allegation – by child | Erroneous allegation – by adult on behalf of self |
| Nil | 11 (50.0%) | 38 (34.2%) | 31 (32.3%) | 3 (37.5%) | 1 (20.0%) | 1 (50.0%) |
| Case went to court | 4 (18.2%) | 24 (21.6%) | 13 (13.5%) | 0 | 2 (40.0%) | 0 |
| Disciplinary action by church authority | 4 (18.2%) | 35 (31.5%) | 26 (27.1%) | 1 (12.5%) | 1 (20.0%) | 0 |
| Transfer to different location/ Position | 0 | 2 (1.8%) | 7 (7.3%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Counselling offered | 3 (13.6%) | 12 (10.8%) | 19 (19.8%) | 4 (50.0%) | 1 (20.0%) | 1 (50.0%) |
| Total | 22 (100.0%) | 111 (100.0%) | 96 (100.0%) | 8 (100.0%) | 5 (100.0%) | 2 (100.0%) |

5. Discussion

This study on child sexual abuse in the Anglican Church provides important insights about allegations of abuse by clergy and church workers. A key finding of this study is the similarities in pattern of abuse found between the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. Similarities were found in patterns of male victim characteristics, location and types of abuse, accused person characteristics, and delayed reporting and disclosure of abuse.

This similarity is despite significant differences in the nature of clergy vocations (the Anglican Church does not require singleness or celibacy). The similarity between the Anglican and Catholic churches is also despite significant differences in ministry involving children. In the Catholic tradition, priests may have opportunities to abuse children who act as servers. Servers are less common in the Anglican Church, although they are a feature of some churches in the Anglo-Catholic tradition. In the Catholic Church also, the main responsibility for Christian education of children lies with Catholic schools rather than through Sunday schools. In the Anglican Church, Sunday Schools, youth groups and boys and girls' organisations operating at parish level are an important part of church life.

This suggests that the church community throughout Australia may be showing a similar child sexual abuse pattern in terms of the gender of victims and locations of abuse despite differences in the detail of ministry with children. This may warrant future collaboration on child protection strategies and sharing of best-practice models. There remain significant differences between the Catholic Church and other churches in terms of the numbers of clergy or religious convicted of child sexual abuse.

Although only about half of the complaints were treated as substantiated by the Church authorities, it is important to recognise that child sexual abuse can be extremely difficult to prove. Apart from the offender and victim there are usually no other witnesses. Those cases judged to be inconclusive simply

mean that there may have been abuse or there may not have been abuse. There was just not enough evidence for substantiation. Those in the category "no decision made on validity of the complaint" are similar.

Contrary to widespread belief (Yarmey and Jones, 1983, Lieppe and Romanczy, 1989), children rarely make false accusations of sexual abuse. The best evidence suggests that false accusations of sex abuse made by children comprise less than 2% of cases (Oates et al., 2000, Trocme and Bala, 2005), which is consistent with the very low incidence of cases where the Church authorities concluded that there was an erroneous allegation by a child in this study.

Gender distribution of complainants

Three quarters of complainants were male. This is a mirror reversal of the pattern of victimization in the general population. While there are variations between studies, generally about three times as many females are abused as males (Cappelleri et al., 1993; Andrews et al, 2002).

One explanation for this is that any study of abuse in church contexts is a study of extrafamilial abuse. Generally, most studies indicate that girls are more likely to be abused within the family than boys. Ronald and Juliette Goldman (1988), in a study of sexual abuse prevalence reported by university students in Victoria, found that 35% of girls were abused by a family member compared with 17% of boys. In a large population sample in the USA, Finkelhor et al (1990) found that 29% of the abuse of girls was intrafamilial abuse, compared with 11% of boys. Conversely, boys were more likely to be abused by strangers (40% vs. 21% for women). Fritz et al, (1981) also found that boys were much more likely to be abused by strangers. Similar findings have been made in most studies of prevalence around the world (Finkelhor, 1994), although one study in Canada (Fischer and McDonald, 1998) found that while overall, girls (77%) were more likely

to be victims than boys (23%), they were equally likely to be abused by intrafamilial and extrafamilial offenders.

These general population studies that examine the abusive experiences of girls and boys indicate that girls still represent a significant majority of victims of child sexual abuse even if the gap between the victimisation of girls and boys is narrowed once abuse by family members is excluded. Girls are also substantially in the majority in clinical samples of victims of extrafamilial child sexual abuse (Ligezinska et al, 1996; Edinburgh et al. 2006).

Certainly, boys represent the majority of child victims of organised sex rings (Burgess et al, 1984). Yet boys represent three quarters of all the victims in this study (75%), and 73% when repeat offenders are excluded.

The findings of this study are nonetheless consistent with figures from the Nature and Scope Study of Catholic Priests in the U.S (John Jay College, 2004; Terry, 2008). In that study, 81% of the complainants were boys and 85% of these male victims were 11–17 years old.

What could be the explanation for this level of abuse of boys? Terry's explanation is that priests had the most unrestricted access to males (2008). One alternative theory of the levels of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, is that while there are many different patterns of abuse by Catholic priests and different personality disorders (Lothstein, 2004), there is at least in some cases a link with the tradition of priestly celibacy. One explanation is that being the arrested psychosexual development of young men who are on a pathway towards a celibate vocation (Sipe, 1995, Frawley-O'Dea, 2004). Dr Frawley-O'Dea, an experienced therapist with sexually abusive Catholic priests, writes for example (2004, pp.129-30):

“Central to this cohort of abusers is their psychosexual immaturity. Many of these priests entered seminaries when they were as young as

14 years old. Throughout their adolescence, sexuality was wholly dissociated from the verbally validated and symbolically processed realm of life...All these aspects of priestly formation combined to infantilize many priests, to keep them eternal boys intellectually, sexually and relationally."

Another explanation for the abuse of boys in the Roman Catholic Church is that some priests believe that having sexual relations with teenage boys and men does not represent a breach of their vow of celibacy (Lothstein, 2004).

While issues about celibacy, psychosexual immaturity and priestly formation may help to explain the apparently high rates of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church compared with other denominations proportionate to their respective sizes, alternative explanations need to be found for the prevalence of sexual abuse of boys, rather than girls, given a similar pattern in a Church that does not require celibacy of clergy.

The most likely explanation of the levels of abuse of boys in church communities by contrast with the gender distribution of victims of extrafamilial abuse generally, is that churches give many more contexts for male abusers to be alone with boys than with girls, and that parents and congregations provide much less supervision of such relationships.

In order for abusers to sexually abuse children, there are a number of preconditions. They need to have a desire to do so and to overcome their internal inhibitions of conscience, or fear of being caught. However, those are not sufficient. Perpetrators also need the opportunity to be alone with the child and to entice or coerce the child to engage in the sexual activity (Finkelhor 1984).

There is no reason to believe that either the Anglican Church in Australia, or the Catholic Church around the world, has a greater proportion of men in

pastoral ministry who are attracted towards boys than in the general population. It may be however, that the opportunity for abuse of boys is greater than for girls. In the life of the Anglican Church of Australia, there is a multitude of ways in which clergy and others involved in pastoral ministry can be involved with children. However the opportunities to be *alone* with children, and not to arouse suspicion in other adults, are much fewer. While a relationship between a leader and an adolescent girl which involves frequent time alone may well cause parents and others to be concerned, a similar relationship between a male leader and a boy may not attract suspicion. Indeed, it may be encouraged and commended, especially where the young person is troubled and lacks male role models.

It is also important not to draw erroneous conclusions concerning the issue of homosexual orientation. Just over half of the complainants were under 14 at the time of the alleged abuse in this study. There is a general consensus that paedophilia, that is, sexual abuse of prepubescent children, is not related to sexual orientation towards adult partners. Many men who abuse prepubescent boys are heterosexual in their adult sexual relations. Indeed in one study of a clinical population of sexually abused children, 74% of the male children were abused by a man who had a heterosexual relationship with a female relative (Jenny, Roesler & Poyer, 1994). As Watkins and Bentovim (2000, p. 52) write:

“Homosexual abuse involving children is not related to adult homosexuality, any more than child abuse involving girls is related to adult heterosexuality.”

The position may be different with older teenagers. The sexual abuse of post-pubescent teenagers is not classified as paedophilia. Slightly under half of the complainants were 14 or over at the time of first abuse. No information was available in this study about the sexual orientation of the alleged offenders.

Gender differences in victimisation and reporting

Not only were boys more likely to be abused than girls in this study, but there were also other gender differences. Boys were much more likely to experience an abusive relationship of 3 years or more than girls. For 40% of boys, the abuse lasted three years or longer, compared with 18% of girls.

There were also gender differences in when reports were made. 19% of girls reported the alleged offences within a month, compared with less than 4% of boys. Conversely, 90% of boys delayed longer than 2 years, compared with 70% of girls. On average, males took 25 years to report compared to 18 years amongst females. Male complainants were less likely to have had family support than female complainants. Descriptive answers indicated that adult complainants may have feared their family's reaction and this may well be a significant explanation for the greater delays in reporting by men.

The risks of abuse in work with youth

Half of all complainants and accused person's primary point of contact was around the youth group or another youth organisation such as CEBS. This corresponds to the largest age group of complainants ranging from 10 to 15 years. 71% of all abuse by non-clergy was in the context of youth groups or organisations. Surprisingly, perhaps, nearly 41% of all the clergy abuse was in the context of a relationship established through the young person's involvement in a youth group or organisation. Clergy are often involved in youth ministry as curates and assistant ministers in the first few years after ordination, but in only 29% of cases did the first known offence of clergy come within the first five years of ministry. It seems therefore that a lot of clergy abusers had sufficient involvement in youth ministry to give them the opportunity to abuse young people even many years after ordination when they were ministers in charge of parishes.

By way of contrast, there were only three complaints where the context of the relationship was Sunday School. Two of the alleged abusers were clergy.

It is hardly surprising that there were few Sunday School cases. The opportunities for either clergy or volunteers to be alone with children are typically so limited in Sunday School classes. Even if there is only one leader taking a group (for whatever reason) the fact that there are several children makes abusive behaviour much more risky. Put differently, the likelihood of discovery would be high if a leader tried to abuse a child or children when several other children were in the same room. It is also uncommon for Sunday School teachers to have the opportunity to be alone and unsupervised with primary school age children whom they know as a result of their Sunday School involvement. However, they may become friends of the family, and this can lead to opportunities for time with the child away from other people.

Location of abuse

The accused person's home and church premises were common locations for both male and female complainants. Camps and car journeys were also common locations for the abuse of males. A similar pattern of locations was also found in the Nature and Scope Study in the USA (Terry et al. 2008).

Clergy, mostly take opportunities on church premises and their home. Non-clergy appear to be less restricted than clergy in locations of abuse. The wider spread of opportunities may correspond to the common role of youth group leader being 'out and about' with the young people.

Nearly a quarter of the alleged abuse of girls occurred in the complainant's home, compared with only 7% of the abuse of boys. Females who were abused at home were mostly abused by clergy. Boys who were abused in their own home tended to be at the younger end of the spectrum, although this did not seem to be the case with the girls.

48% of abuse of boys occurred in the accused person's home compared with only 30% of the abuse of girls.

These gender differences in location of abuse are not easy to explain. It may be that boys are much more likely to be allowed to go to the accused person's home unsupervised, and if this opportunity is available, then it will be taken in preference to the riskier location of the complainant's home.

Delays in reporting abuse

The average delay before reporting offences to the church was 23 years. While the study appears to indicate that incidents of alleged abuse peaked in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Figure 2), given the long delays in many cases between the incident and reporting, it may well be that the levels of CSA occurring in more recent years are understated.

The long delay in reporting abuse by the complainant is well documented in other studies (Smith et al., 2008; Finkelhor et al., 1990; Hershkowitz et al., 2007). As Cossins (2002) notes, the psychological literature clearly shows that a majority of children delay disclosure and it is a typical response of sexually abused children. They may be experiencing confusion, denial, self-blame and threats by offenders. Hershkowitz et al. (2007) interviewed thirty victims of child sexual abuse and their children, and found delay of disclosure was associated with characteristics of the sex offender, such as familiarity with the offender. Through grooming processes, familiarity may create a relationship of power between the child and offender causing the child to not disclose (Cossins, 2002; Hershkowitz et al., 2007).

A further reason for delay in reporting to church authorities is that until the last few years, potential complainants may have been unaware of the avenues for reporting. When widespread publicity is given to issues of church abuse, reporting rates increase significantly. It is no surprise, therefore, that complaints of abuse in this study should have peaked in 2002-2004. 2002 was the year in which the controversy emerged concerning the then Governor-General, former Archbishop of Brisbane, Peter Hollingworth. In

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June 2002 a Board of Inquiry was established into complaints about his handling of cases brought to his attention during his tenure as Archbishop, as well as other cases. The Board of Inquiry reported in April 2003 (O'Callaghan & Briggs, 2003). Not long afterwards, the Governor-General resigned in reaction to criticisms of his role as Archbishop in dealing with these issues, so as to avoid the Office of the Governor-General continuing to be mired in controversy.

In May 2004, the Board of Inquiry into the handling of claims of sexual abuse and misconduct within the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide reported (Olsson & Chung 2004). Soon afterwards, the Archbishop of Adelaide resigned.

Such highly publicised events seem to have generated a raft of new complaints from the public.

Action taken on complaints

The data indicates that in cases reported after 2000, it was more common for no action to be taken and less common for cases to go to court. This is not surprising given that the publicity about sexual abuse in the Church since 2000 has given rise to a large number of 'historic' complaints. In many of these cases, the alleged offender will have died or, in the case of volunteer youth leaders in particular, no longer be part of the life of the Church. Consequently, while the complainant may have wanted the Church to know about this abuse for one reason or another, and the Church may have offered some support or compensation to the victim, no action could be taken against the alleged offender.

As Table 14 shows, another reason for inaction is that the Church is not able to make a determination about whether the abuse occurred. Only 28% of files had a recorded admission by the accused person, corroborative evidence of some kind or evidence of more than one complainant. The older the

alleged abuse, the harder it often is to substantiate the complaint or for the police to prosecute successfully.

Has the number of complaints peaked?

While 2007 was a year in which few complaints were received, it cannot be said with any confidence that the number of complaints will be as low in the future. It may be that if there is another highly publicised case of abuse in the Anglican Church, it will lead to further cases of historic abuse being uncovered.

One other reason that the Church needs an ongoing, long-term capacity to deal with complaints of abuse is that there will probably continue to be a gap of many years between the offences and the time that many of them are reported to the authorities. This is because many victims of abuse do not recognise the behaviour as abusive at the time, or are too afraid or ashamed to say anything to anyone. It is often only many years later, as adults in their late twenties and thirties, that children who have been sexually abused are able to deal with it and seek help. It is therefore no surprise that on average, complainants in this study waited 23 years before reporting. Some did so at the time of the abuse or soon after, but not many. Boys in particular were very unlikely to report at the time of the abuse.

As long as there is child sexual abuse, therefore, the phenomenon of long-delayed reporting is likely to continue. There has nonetheless, been an apparent decline in the number of abuse allegations in the general population in the U.S. and Australia (Finkelhor & Jones, 2004; Dunne et al., 2003) as child protection strategies have had an effect. This offers a great deal of encouragement for churches to maintain and increase their efforts to reduce the opportunities for abuse of children in the context of church life.

Record-keeping of dioceses

The ability to discern patterns in the files of the Anglican Church of Australia was limited by the quality of the data available. While this was only to be expected for complaints of abuse in the 1990s when there were few systems in place for dealing with such complaints, the record-keeping in relation to recent complaints also left much to be desired. It was often unclear, for example, what conclusion the Church had reached on the validity of the allegations. This not only makes it difficult for the Church to monitor the adequacy of its response to complaints of abuse; it also makes it more vulnerable to allegations of negligence in the handling of these complaints. The inadequacy of its record-keeping might, in certain cases, have adverse consequences for the Church in defending litigation.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study. First, many different people completed the surveys which could lead to a lack of uniformity in the information provided. Second, this study was not a comprehensive examination of cases in every diocese and nor was it possible to assess the validity of all complaints. For these reasons, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the overall distribution of child sexual abuse in the Anglican Church. Third, there is a significant amount of missing data due to incomplete diocesan files.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

A major purpose of this study was to explore what avenues there may be for the better prevention of child sexual abuse within Anglican Church communities. We recognise that in the last few years in particular, the Church has done much at a national level to improve child protection. This study has revealed some very important insights into how abuse can be better prevented which can inform these child protection strategies and lead to new initiatives.

1. Concentrate on youth groups and organisations

The Church needs to concentrate its effort on youth groups and other organisations for children and youth ten years or older. The last few years has seen a flurry of activity to improve child protection in church communities. Typically this activity has occurred without much differentiation across the range of activities in which children and young people are involved. While it is valuable to ensure that all those who are regularly involved in children's and youth ministry receive training in child protection, the effort can be difficult to sustain when there are so many volunteers and a high level of turnover. It is important therefore to concentrate the greatest effort on the areas of most risk.

There are also different kinds of risks with different age groups. While in this study, the location and context of the abuse could not always be identified with particularity, there was little evidence that children were at risk of abuse in crèches or primary school age Sunday school programs. Indeed, only 11% of complainants at the time of abuse were under 10 (Table 4).

There really is very little need to be concerned about child sexual abuse in the crèche, as long as basic safeguards are observed such as always having more than one carer at any time. This is the main safeguard to prevent

sexual abuse, but it is also sensible for other reasons. Although it remains important for people to be vigilant about the risk of child abuse in the crèche, there is a much greater need for vigilance about the physical safety of the babies and toddlers. Similarly, in Sunday School programs, the greatest dangers may well be the most mundane and preventable risks of physical harm from accidents. These are all child protection issues. They tend not to generate as much attention or alarm as the issue of child sexual abuse; but they represent far greater risks statistically.

Conversely, there is very good reason to be highly vigilant about the risks of sexual abuse arising out of activities for upper primary school age children and young people in high school, and to concentrate abuse prevention efforts on this age group. These include careful reference checks on volunteers, (including inquiries of leaders of a previous congregation with which the volunteer has been involved) and strict codes of conduct for leaders (Parkinson, 2003). Particular care needs to be taken in relation to organisations that run camps, outdoor activities or other such programs. While CEBS is no longer the large organisation it once was, churches have a range of programs that are designed for a similar age group.

Another valuable safeguard is to make checks on available registers. This should not be limited to criminal record checks because so few perpetrators of abuse end up with criminal convictions (Parkinson et al, 2002). The Anglican Church has developed a national register to record information about abuse that goes beyond criminal records, and this is an important resource to check the suitability of people for youth work.

Recommendation 1

Each Diocese and Church body undertaking youth work should introduce a system of selection and accreditation of people involved in youth work that complies with the *Model System for the Selection and Accreditation for Lay Parish Church Workers* approved by the Standing Committee as a resource in October 2006, if they have not already done so.

Recommendation 2

Each Diocese should ensure that its system for the licensing of clergy and for the selection and accreditation of leaders of youth groups includes a check of the National Register if it has not already done so.

2. Enforce Codes of Conduct strictly

The best way to prevent child sexual abuse in church communities is to eliminate the opportunities for abuse. That in turn means restricting the opportunities for adults and children or young people to be alone together in contexts that would allow for sexual activity to occur without discovery.

The locations in which abuse allegedly occurred in this study were all places where the opportunity was presented for the clergy or lay leader to be alone with the child or young person. These locations included the homes of the accused or complainant, church premises, in cars or on camps. Considering this situational element to child sexual abuse (Terry & Ackerman, 2008), particular focus should be on ensuring that pastoral staff, whether employed or volunteers, are not allowed to be alone with children or young people on church premises and in the leader's home, as these were the two highest risk areas identified in this study.

Child sexual abuse is notoriously difficult to detect. One way of reducing the risk of people falling over a cliff is to have strict rules about going anywhere near the cliff, and clearly marked fences some way back from the edge of it. A Code of Conduct is the fence in preventing child sexual abuse. It is important to ensure that the boundaries are observed and the fence maintained. That people breach the rules does not mean that they are abusers; but if someone flouts those rules, then that ought to be a warning sign about suitability for ministry.

If the Code of Conduct is vague and subject to too many exceptions, then it loses its effectiveness as a boundary fence. The Anglican Church's Code of Conduct, *Faithfulness in Service*, provides an appropriate Code of Conduct in general terms. However, given the findings of this study, the Anglican Church should review its Codes of Conduct for youth work. In particular, careful attention needs to be paid to the codes of conduct in organisations such as CEBS (in dioceses where it still operates) or other organisations which are established to conduct activities with boys. Any review of such codes of conduct should ensure that the boundary lines are very clearly drawn, even if it is at some expense in terms of inconvenience in such matters as giving young people lifts home or in the manner and location for conducting pastoral counselling sessions.

The findings of this study are that significant numbers of clergy who are in charge of parishes have abused children. The risks are such that people other than the Minister need to be responsible for ensuring that the Code of Conduct is enforced. An ethic needs to be established within parishes that all pastoral staff must abide by that Code of Conduct, including the Minister, and avenues for complaint established for breaches of that Code by the Minister. Codes of conduct need to be applied as firmly to clergy as to volunteers. The structure of authority and responsibility in parishes may make this difficult, since the Minister is the CEO of the local parish church. This requires the development of systems to ensure that Ministers are subject to the same

rules as they are required to enforce for those for whom they have responsibility.

Recommendation 3

Each Diocese should review its protocols for youth work, and where applicable, the role of servers, to ensure opportunities for adults and young people to be alone together in contexts that would allow sexual activity to occur without discovery are restricted to situations of unplanned necessity, and where necessary amend its protocols to ensure that this requirement is explicitly stated.

Recommendation 4

The Professional Standards Commission should review *Faithfulness in Service* as to whether it adequately addresses the risk of sexual abuse in youth work in parishes and other organizations such as CEBS and in the relationship between clergy and servers.

Recommendation 5

Each Diocese should review its safe ministry policies and structures to ensure that a person or persons other than a member of the clergy or their spouse are responsible for ensuring that *Faithfulness in Service* and other Diocesan protocols are enforced in each parish.

3. Focus educational efforts on awareness of the risk of abuse of boys

The clear finding of this study is that boys are much more at risk of abuse in church communities than girls (a reversal of the position in the general population). The most likely explanation for this is that those with a disposition to engage in the sexual abuse of minors are more likely to have the opportunity of doing so with boys, and with less risk of discovery. Not only were three quarters of the complainants boys, but boys were much less likely than girls to report the abuse within one month of its occurrence – that

is, much less likely to tell at a time when evidence can be gathered that is sufficient to sustain a criminal prosecution, and there is not a concern about the reliability of the allegation based upon the delay in reporting.

By educating church communities about the risk of abuse of boys as well as girls, and by limiting as far as possible, the opportunities for unsupervised one-on-one relationships between boys and clergy or youth leaders, the Church may be able to reduce significantly the levels of abuse of boys in church contexts.

Of course, the Church should continue to make every effort to prevent the abuse of girls as well; nonetheless, there is a particular need for community awareness of the risk of abuse of boys in church contexts, and for increased vigilance by parents and church leaders to deal with this particular form of risk.

The lessons from this research are of course not confined to the Anglican Church of Australia or to churches. All organisations working with children and young people need to have similar policies in place.

Recommendation 6

Each Diocese should ensure that there is adequate education of church workers concerning the risks of child sexual abuse in any organization that works with children and young people, and in particular, the risk of abuse of boys demonstrated by this study.

4. Improve record keeping

There should be a uniform and transparent style of record keeping on each allegation of child sexual abuse. In particular, the Church should record its conclusions on the case for its internal use, with appropriate safeguards in

relation to the use to which that information is put and the people to whom it can be disclosed.

Recommendation 7

The Professional Standards Commission in conjunction with Professional Standards Directors' Network develops a common form for the recording of information about child sexual abuse.

5. Develop a pastoral response to victims of sexual abuse for the long-term

The recognition that there may well be a long-term issue of how to address the needs of victims of sexual abuse in church programs should lead each diocese to consider and formalise its pastoral response when complaints are made to it of child sexual abuse by clergy or in the context of church programs. A pastoral response to the needs of victims is something much more than offering compensation in an attempt to prevent lawsuits. In many cases, legal proceedings against the Church will not be a viable option for victims – there are several reasons for this - and in any event this is not necessarily what victims want in relation to dealing with their histories of abuse. A pastoral response should be made because the Church cares for the victim and deeply regrets his or her suffering in the context of church life. It may involve elements of apology, reparation and the provision of expenses for counselling. However, it ought to be driven by the theological convictions of the Church and not by the Church's legal advisers. Several dioceses have introduced programs of this kind. Other dioceses should look to their example and to the example of other programs such as the Towards Healing program in the Catholic Church.

Recommendation 8

All dioceses should develop protocols for a pastoral response to victims of child sexual abuse who may make complaint to the Church many years after the events occurred. This pastoral response should include elements of apology, reparation and payment of counseling expenses as is appropriate in the circumstances of each case. The Professional Standards Commission should assist the dioceses by developing a recommended model for best practice.

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