



**Office of the Primate
Anglican Church of Australia**

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Media Release

Anglican Church report to strengthen child protection

The Anglican Church has released the report of a major research project commissioned to help strengthen its child protection protocols.

The report into past cases of child sexual abuse was received on Saturday at a meeting in Sydney of the Standing Committee of the Church's General Synod.

It examines 191 alleged cases of child sexual abuse reported between 1990 and 2008 from 17 dioceses around Australia.

Anglican Primate, Archbishop Phillip Aspinall, said the research project was the first of its kind in Australia, with a project by the Roman Catholic Church in the USA being the only similar undertaking anywhere in the world.

Archbishop Aspinall said, "While this report is aimed at strengthening our child protection protocols as we look to the future, it also reminds us of the tragic events of the past and of the pain which still exists. We reiterate our apology, our sorrow and our deep regret for abuse which has occurred.

"The Australian Church has been developing processes which include screening of those working with children and young people, a code of conduct and safe ministry training. The General Synod commissioned this report to ensure the Church continues to be proactive in the important matter of child protection."

The study was prepared by leading child sexual abuse experts, Emeritus Professor Kim Oates AM of the Medical Faculty of the University of Sydney and Professor Patrick Parkinson AM of the University of Sydney Faculty of Law.

Archbishop Aspinall said the report highlighted key issues. "The review of past cases showed that the majority of complainants were males between the ages of 10 and 15 years. Being aware of this is clearly important to us as we continue to strengthen our child protection measures.

"Another factor emerging through this research is that there tends to be a long time lag, averaging 23 years, between the abuse of young people and the reporting of that abuse. Again, this is something we must take into account as we encourage people to feel they can come forward to deal with something deeply painful from their past, and as we try to support them as they do so.

"The report contains a series of recommendations, ranging from a review of the education measures in place in dioceses through to a more coordinated national and uniform approach for the selection and accreditation of leaders of youth groups.

“While the Anglican Church has made very real progress over recent years in the area of child protection, the recommendations in this report will provide an important focus and impetus to our continued efforts in this area. It may well be that they are of assistance to other churches as well”, the Archbishop said.

Media Enquiries please contact:

Anglican Diocese of Adelaide

Belinda McCulloch

Mobile: 0411 872 434