

## Anglican Diocese of Grafton

**OUR COMMITMENT**

As a Christian church, we are committed to living out the love, care and compassion of Jesus Christ to everyone. Victims of child abuse or sexual misconduct at the hands of a member of the clergy or church worker have been violated and had their trust betrayed. When an individual makes a claim or allegation of child abuse or sexual misconduct, by a member of the clergy or church worker:

- we are committed to responding promptly with empathy, support and respect;
- we are committed to providing assistance to victims to help them with their needs and to help them rebuild their lives;
- we are committed to providing opportunity for those who have been abused to tell their story and to have the damage of the abuse acknowledged;
- we are committed to providing counselling and pastoral support;
- we are committed to providing financial assistance;
- we are committed to providing a voluntary alternative to costly and stressful court processes;
- we are committed to an acknowledgment that all child abuse or sexual misconduct is grossly wrong and should never occur;
- we are committed to the Christian response of apology to a person who has had child abuse or sexual misconduct perpetrated against them;
- we are committed to this apology being expressed in a pastoral context by a senior church leader on behalf of the Diocese;
- we are committed to this apology being in response to the victim having first been given the opportunity to tell their story and be listened to;
- we are committed to procedural fairness to the church worker against whom allegations are made by conducting an investigation into the allegations;
- we are committed to dealing appropriately and justly with the perpetrator according to Federal and State law and the disciplinary procedures of the church.

**OUR RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS**

Initial complaints will be responded to by an independent Professional Standards Director who will ensure that you are properly cared for from the initial point of contact. The responsibility of the Professional Standards Director is to investigate the claims and make recommendations to the Diocesan Professional Standards Committee as to appropriate courses of action including financial assistance, if requested, and to refer to external agencies if appropriate. An offer will be made to you for support from the Pastoral Support Worker who is not a member of the Professional Standards Committee. You are free to seek your own network of support.

Claims for financial assistance will be made by filling in an application form provided by the Professional Standards Director. You can be guided throughout the application process by the Professional Standards Director or the Pastoral Support Worker. With your consent, the Professional Standards Director may ask for any relevant medical and counselling records to assist in the assessment of the claim. We acknowledge that financial assistance alone cannot make amends for the harm caused by child abuse or sexual misconduct. Rather, financial assistance is seen as a means by which the Diocese of Grafton can acknowledge the harm caused and show you compassion.

The assessment of any financial assistance will be based on the Schedule of Financial Assistance attached and will be made by an assessment panel consisting of the Diocesan Advocate, the Diocesan Registrar and the Chair of the Professional Standards Committee following a report received from the Professional Standards Director. The Professional Standards Director will keep you informed as to the progress of your claim and you will be promptly informed of the outcome of the assessment. You will be offered the opportunity of meeting with the Chair of the Professional Standards Committee for an explanation of your assessment and if dissatisfied with the assessment you may seek a review by an independent panel consisting of a solicitor and psychologist whose decision will be final in respect of the offer. Neither you nor the Diocese is bound to accept the recommended assessment of the independent panel. The members of the independent panel will not be members or employees of the Anglican Church of Australia. Mediation may be used as part of the proceedings to assist in bringing resolution.

Your acceptance of any offer of financial assistance will involve signing a Deed to release any church body or office holder (excluding the perpetrator) from being a party to any court proceedings arising out of the child abuse or sexual misconduct. Such release will not prevent you from discussing publicly the events that gave rise to the allegations or telling your story, nor will it have any impact on any criminal proceedings arising out of this matter. You are encouraged to obtain legal advice on the Deed of Release.

Our commitment to you receiving a personal apology from a senior church leader will be affirmed by an invitation to meet with a senior representative of the Diocese with the opportunity of telling your story before receiving a personal apology that we hope may bring some closure for you.