

Professional Standards Board

The Professional Standards Board comprises Mrs Ann Skamp, president, the Very Revd Dr Peter Catt, Ms Aniko Cripps-Clark, Mr Col Pritchard and the Registrar.

The Board met by teleconference on nine occasions during 2005.

During 2005 seven matters were considered to “live.”

One matter was referred to the Professional Standards Board for a hearing which determined the matter against the priest adversely named. The Bishop, acting on the advice of the Professional Standards Board, deposed the priest from Holy Orders. At year’s end a substantial settlement in the form of a Care and Assistance package was negotiated with this person.

Another matter was in the hands of the police throughout the year.

Insurers were responding to a third matter, which is ongoing and appears unlikely to reach any clear resolution in the short term.

The matter concerning a former Bishop of this Diocese has been finalised by the Diocese of Brisbane, but matters of a Care and Support package for the victim are still unresolved. The Diocese of Grafton have agreed to make a modest contribution to any settlement.

One matter was referred to the Professional Standards Board of the Diocese of Bathurst during the year and the processes involved in the hearing have been the subject of media attention on a number of occasions. The claimant has been referred to the Sydney appraisal Board to determine a recommendation for Care and Assistance.

Another matter was finalised through discussions during the early part of the year.

The matter of greatest concern is that of the North Coast Children’s Home and a prospective action said to be being brought by a large number of former residents. An initial approach for support from one former resident, being treated with considerable sympathy and urgency by staff, was referred by the claimant to lawyers. Associated with this was considerable publicity and claims that a “class style” action was to be brought by some 90 or more litigants. When the Diocesan Advocate sought further and better particulars of the claimants and their claims only a list of 34 individuals was supplied with a statement from the solicitors that further names and details would be supplied by the end of March. To the date of writing no further correspondence has been received. It is the view of the Diocesan Advocate that substantial legal hurdles face the claimants in this matter. This will, tragically, almost certainly result in increased costs to the claimants, delays and uncertainty.

It remains the intention of the Committee that all matters of possible sex abuse are handled discretely, professionally and quickly with appropriate support to victims and those accused.