

TO: People affected by physical and sexual abuse committed by Church personnel of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Rockhampton

FROM: Ms Jo Mensinga, Coordinator of Professional Standards Office, Rockhampton

DATE: 26 February 1998

SUBJECT: Support Services

The Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton is committed to helping people affected by abuse committed by personnel of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Rockhampton.

What is available?

A range of services is available, because each person has unique needs and experiences. Some may appreciate counselling services, while for some, their support may come through psychiatric or medical services. For others, it may be in the form of assisted child care or home help services to provide respite. Some may value a therapeutic group rather than individual counselling.

Each request will be considered individually and independently of other cases.

To whom it is available?

All people affected, including immediate family members of those who have suffered abuse, are eligible to make requests for support.

This gives recognition to the fact that more than the immediate person can be affected by difficult events - and family members may also be in need of support.

How do I link into these services?

Any person affected simply has to ring the coordinator of the Professional Standards Office to request support. Simply phone this number - 1800 652 080. If the office is unattended when you call, please leave a name and your phone number and the coordinator will return your call as soon as possible.

At the time of contact, you may choose to detail your experiences and have this information documented. Similarly, you do not need to provide details of your experiences if this is not helpful for you. Rather, you may choose only to outline your request for support and have discussions focus on how best to meet that need.

Once a case plan has been agreed upon, the coordinator will begin to activate that plan by locating suitable support providers and setting up the appropriate payment and referral systems necessary to have the plan operate smoothly.

Coordinator

The coordinator (a lay person) is a qualified social worker, but the contact between the coordinator and the person assisted is not intended to replace ongoing face-to-face counselling. The role of the counsellor and the coordinator are separate.

If for any reason, you are not able to contact the coordinator yourself, a person of your choice may assist you to make contact with the coordinator.

Who will be accepted as counsellors or support persons?

You may find the counsellor of your choice or ask the coordinator to provide some options for counsellors for you. These will not be restricted to Catholics.

The Professional Standards Committee requires that any counselling services offered must be provided by professional, qualified practitioners.

The credentials of those providing other forms of support (eg child care) will also need to be verified by the coordinator.

What about confidentiality?

All information given to the coordinator is treated confidentially.

The Professional Standards Office provides for a confidential recording system to be used. Payment for support services is made by case number rather than case name.

Is the information I tell my counsellor confidential?

All counselling sessions are confidential. Neither the coordinator nor the Professional Standards Committee receives information about the content of the counselling sessions.

To ensure accountability, the coordinator will need to speak with the counsellor to ascertain a likely time frame from the counsellor so that recommendations for continued funding can be discussed.

How many sessions of counselling can I have? Is there a limit?

The coordinator is authorised to approve up to \$1000 for support services without consulting any other group. Once this amount has been spent, a recommendation for continued funding would be taken to the Professional Standards Committee. Further funding until such time that all services/treatments have been completed to your satisfaction would normally be approved as long as your needs were being met appropriately and adequately by the existing arrangement.

If you have any questions, please phone 1800 652 080.