

NOTES OF THE MEETING RELATING TO THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARD ORDINANCE

In attendance: +Brian, +Peter and Ms Lynne Graham (Standing in for the Chair)

Apology: John Cleary

Lynne indicated the difficulty facing the process in that people can't see the matters the PSD/PSC are dealing with nor the information that the PSD/PSC must consider. She expressed her personal frustration at the length of time taken to bring matters to conclusion and the amount of money involved.

Lynne gave a sketch of the PSC process stressing that the key questions related to whether a matter should be progressed further and whether on the balance of probabilities the matter should be referred to the PSB. She indicated that the PSC, under the guidance of the Chair, makes regular reference to the parameters of the Ordinance and the expectations outlined in *Faithfulness in Service*. The PSD presents written and verbal reports to the PSC on matters he is involved with. Detailed investigation reports are presented to the PSC in advance when it is considering referring a matter to the PSB.

Lynne indicated that the PSC has excellent and robust discussion but also indicated that the PSC has not adopted any standard operating practices for its work.

- She suggested that a risk management framework should be adopted in which the likelihood of certain risks (further offending, public knowledge etc) are assessed alongside the consequences if those risks eventuate. Using the standard risk management framework it would then be possible to identify, for example, whether suspension is required, optional or not required.
- She suggested that in managing matters the PSC needs to make a distinction between grades of behaviour. For example, the investigation of child abuse matter could be different to a professional boundary matter.
- She indicated that there was a difficulty in the Committee not having a budget for its work. She supported the idea of the DC establishing some expenditure limits after which the PSC or PSD would need to seek approval from the DBM. She added that the process would need to have sufficient flexibility to allow an investigation to be expanded or changed if, for example, additional information emerged.

Lynne outlined that Zimmerman House has approached Samaritans to provide case management support for clergy who have been stood down to ensure they have housing, income, access to legal support, meaningful tasks etc. Samaritans was approached because it is external to the Catholic Church and Catholic processes because there was a concern that Catholic Clergy would not access those resources from Catholic agencies.

We discussed the investigation processes in Samaritans and acknowledged that investigations into alleged clergy misconduct were more complex because of the different environment and supervisory structures for clergy.

Lynne indicated that in her view the three critical issues were to expedite investigations, ensure greater support for clergy and to recognise that the PSD/PSC have limited scope for responding to criticism of its work due to privacy and confidentiality issues.

The PSC has not undertaken any training. The possible areas for training included risk management and professional boundaries.

Lynne was advised that the DC will be considering a review report from Professor Parkinson at its September meeting. It will be advised of a process to prepare a Protocol with a view to a Protocol being adopted before the end of the year. The DC will also be considering such amendments to the Professional Standards Ordinance as it has the power to make to ensure process clarity.