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BISHOP-IN-COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER	SUBJECT:	PREPARED BY:	DATE:
12.iv	Professional Standards - Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme	Anne Hywood A/Registrar	27 June 2013
<p>PURPOSE:</p> <p>To identify a process for the development and implementation of a Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme to respond to sexual abuse claims in the Diocese of Grafton.</p> <p>BACKGROUND:</p> <p>A number of Dioceses in the Anglican Church of Australia have established Pastoral Care and Assistance Schemes to respond to claims arising from sexual abuse by clergy or church workers.</p> <p>In 2009 the General Synod Standing Committee endorsed Principals for schemes in the Australian Church as follows:</p> <p><i>A scheme will normally operate where the alleged abuser is deceased or no longer subject to the disciplinary process of the Church or after the completion of any disciplinary process. A voluntary scheme should have these elements:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>an application form that includes details of the financial, medical and personal consequences of the abuse;</i> 2. <i>the establishment that the complaint is encompassed by the scheme;</i> 3. <i>the offer of counselling and "emergency" assistance up to an agreed financial limit (where this has not already been offered);</i> 4. <i>the appointment of a support person (where this has not already been provided);</i> 5. <i>the investigation and determination of the complaint (where this has not already occurred);</i> 6. <i>the independent assessment of the financial and other care and assistance to be provided (up to a set limit);</i> 7. <i>the assessment must be fair and enable the person to speak with the assessor;</i> 8. <i>the assessment should permit the provision of expert medical or other advice at the request of the assessor or the diocese;</i> 9. <i>the offer to the person who has been abused of the care and assistance package which, if accepted, (after giving the person the opportunity to obtain legal advice) will result in the signing of a deed of release which will not contain any confidentiality clause.</i> <p>More information on resources available through General Synod can be found at: http://www.anglican.org.au/docs/commissions/prof_standards/The_path_to_safer_ministry_1305_links_030613.pdf</p>			

Different Dioceses have applied these principles in a number of ways. Some choose to specify and limit the financial payment available through the scheme. Some appoint internal "assessors" to identify the payment relevant.

Others come to an agreed payment through a mediation session attended by the claimant and church representatives and facilitated by a professional mediator, independent of the church.

Examples of the schemes operating in other Dioceses can be reviewed on the following websites:

Diocese of Sydney

http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/pastoral_care_and_assistance_scheme

http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/images/uploads/Care_and_Assistance_Scheme.pdf

Diocese of Adelaide

<http://www.adelaide.anglican.com.au/community/ministry/professional-standards-and-safer-ministry/healing-steps/>

<http://www.adelaide.anglican.com.au/assets/Uploads/Professional-Standards/Healing-Steps-web.pdf>

Diocese of Brisbane

<http://anglicanbrisbane.org.au/resources-downloads/professional-standards/pastoral-care-and-assistance-package/>

It should be noted that most of these schemes were introduced more than 5 years ago. Attached is a link to a media story that reports current criticism of internally managed Church schemes and there may be a shift to a different approach in the future. See link below:

<http://www.crikey.com.au/2013/06/20/towards-confrontation-future-of-catholic-abuse-protocols-in-doubt/>

PRESENT SITUATION:

In the recent past the Diocese of Grafton has implemented a legalistic response to claims. When it has offered a "pastoral care package" it has been unstructured and its inclusions and processes have not been adopted as policy or available in a format that can be easily communicated to claimants.

There are currently active claims before the Diocese of Grafton relating to historical abuse at the North Coast Children's Home. The Professional Standards Director is currently liaising with the claimants and needs to communicate the process by which the Diocese intends to respond to the claims as a matter of urgency.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Bishop-in-Council asks the Professional Standards Committee to review existing pastoral care and assistance schemes for responding to sexual abuse claims, operating both within and outside the Anglican Church, and to develop a scheme to operate within the Diocese of Grafton which is consistent with the principles adopted by General Synod Standing Committee in 2009. The Committee should present a draft scheme to the Bishop-in-Council meeting on 22 August 2013.