

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 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 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 a general 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;
- we are committed to dealing appropriately and justly with the perpetrator according to law and the disciplinary procedures of the church.

OUR RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS

Initial complaints will be responded to by an independent Professional Standards Director (PSD) who will ensure that the person is properly cared for from the initial point of contact. The responsibility of the PSD 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.

Claims for financial assistance will be made by filling in a claim and assessment form provided by the PSD. You will be guided throughout the application process by the PSD. With the consent of the claimant, the PSD may ask for any relevant medical and counselling records to assist in the assessment of the claim. There will be a proper assessment of the claimant's allegations and current needs regardless of whether the financial claim would be likely to succeed if legal action were commenced. 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 compassion to the claimant.

Your acceptance of any offer of financial assistance will involve giving an appropriate Deed of Release and discontinuing any relevant civil legal proceedings against any church body or office holder. Such release will not prevent victims from telling their 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.