

MESI

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE
DIOCESE OF GRAFTON

Bishop in Council Report September 26th 2013

The PSC met by teleconference on August 29 and September 12 for the specific purpose of framing a draft Pastoral Care and Financial Assistance Scheme for presentation to Bishop in Council. The following matters were also dealt with:

1. Further discussion re membership. Mrs Sue Blackmore and Mrs Leonie Allsopp declined an invitation to join the Committee. Collen Pritchard submitted his resignation from mid December. I think Collen has been a member of the Committee since its inception. The Ordinance requires a minimum of 3 members including the Professional Standards Director. We continue to meet those requirements; however Collen's departure means we fail to satisfy the requirement of 'a member with experience and appropriate professional qualifications in child protection, social work or counselling. One avenue is being explored but further suggestions from Bishop in Council would be appreciated.
2. The Chair reported on steps taken to finalise 2 matters requiring further action as identified through the auditing of existing files. File Notes were added to update the existing files.
3. The Professional Standards Director reported on a summons received by the Newcastle Diocese from the Royal Commission for documents relating to a retired clergy person who also served in the Diocese of Grafton.
4. A recommendation was made to the Administrator for an immediate payment of \$5000 as an act of good faith, and to provide practical assistance, to another victim of the NCCH who failed to receive an appropriate response in her initial contact with the Diocese.
5. The Professional Standards Director reported that after the publication of the public apology he received a small number of anonymous calls commending the apology, one negative call that an apology had been made and contact from 2 people who have previously made claims related to the NCCH.
6. Further information about a referral to the PSC in 2008 was sought. A search of previous minutes revealed gaps in the recording of what action was taken. This is being followed up by the Chair.

With regard to the draft Pastoral Care and Financial Assistance Scheme attached to this report. I make the following comments:

- i. The PSC regards the document as a 'living' document that we will continue to monitor and amend if necessary in the light of its reception and use. The Committee is satisfied with the initial draft and believes it provides what is necessary for the PSD to respond to claims with an appropriate framework.
- ii. In thinking through the process of developing a Diocesan scheme, the Committee identified 3 aspects: pastoral support for complainants; the public document explaining our commitment and response to claims; the financial package and application forms.
- iii. The PSC is mindful of the importance of quality, compassionate pastoral support. Initial focus was on a set framework to be put in place. However the PSD shared how that had not worked in the Diocese of Newcastle. Discussion led us to believe the best way forward was for the PSC to accept responsibility for developing a network of pastoral support throughout the Diocese which could be accessed as requested by the PSD. This is a work in progress though the PSC recognises that Heartfelt House will play a role in this through its personnel and in the training of pastoral support workers. If such support was requested tomorrow the PSC believes it can respond though there is much further work to be done.
- iv. What is before the meeting today is a draft of the public document and financial package.
- v. In discussion it was felt strongly that the document needed to be brief, easy to read and comprehensive. In preparing the final draft the Committee extensively referred to and was guided by existing documents from other Diocese.
- vi. The draft was reviewed by the Director of Heartfelt House who was very positive about the language and style of the document apart from the final section relating to the Deed of Release. Further email discussion amongst the Committee resulted in some changes to that section.
- vii. The scale of compensation is that used in some other Diocese. We believe it is the appropriate scale as it is similar to the scale used under Victims' Compensation legislation in NSW.

The next meeting on October 24 will continue the audit of Diocesan files.

David Hanger
PSC Chair