



# Diocesan Protection and Safety Council

QUARTERLY REPORT

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2020

## Welcome to the new Quarterly Reporting format

*Mindful of the mixed reaction to the Diocesan Protection and Safety Council’s inaugural annual report, we have been considering what alternative would best serve those interested in keeping advised of the Council’s work.*

*We have decided to produce a quarterly report that captures not only the Council’s meetings but other ‘protection and safety’ related activity that has occurred in the Diocese during the reporting period.*

*On behalf of the Diocesan Protection and Safety Council, I hope you find this new quarterly reporting format informative and engaging.*

Peter Owens  
CHAIR, DIOCESAN PROTECTION & SAFETY COUNCIL

## Diocesan Protection and Safety Council Meetings

During this quarter, the Diocesan Protection and Safety Council [Council] met once, on 5 August. The meeting lasted three hours and ten minutes, conducted via electronic medium rather than face-to-face.

There was the provision of information from the various standing committees, the details of which are provided later in this quarterly report.

The Council debated the challenging question of public listings of former priests appointed to a parish, which may be displayed in the parish church, near the principal entrance to the nave. These lists can include the names of known child sex abusers which can cause distress to survivors and their families when they attend the church.

The Council also debated the ongoing adverse impacts of the ABC documentary *Revelation* and the release of Vincent Gerard Ryan from prison.

## Report from the Convenor of the Standing Committee for Healing & Support

The *Perpetual Day of Remembrance* this year included an article in the [Aurora](#). It also provided an opportunity to launch the *Bishops Healing Fund*.

The release of Vincent Gerard Ryan from prison as well as his appearance on *Revelation* earlier in the year has triggered contact with direct victims, their families and others.

Healing and Support [Zimmerman Service] has seen the restoration of face-to-face meetings. However, the increase in volume of phone calls with clients during Covid-19 has continued. This may be partly due to many clients preferring not to engage in phone counselling services during Covid-19.

Suzanne Smith launched a book towards the end of August entitled *The Altar Boys*. The release of this book will see an increase in contact with victims and their families.

### Report from the Convenor of the Standing Committee for Assisting in Resolving Claims

The Standing Committee met twice during this quarter. Advice was given to the Bishop in relation to four matters.

There were two mediations held, both using electronic means, not face-to-face.

### Report from the Convenor of the Standing Committee for the Oversight of the Office of Safeguarding

The *Standing Committee for the Oversight of the Office of Safeguarding* [OoSG] is hoping to hold its initial meeting in December 2020. In anticipation of the convenor being able to report to the Council in future, the following summary report has been prepared by the Director of Safeguarding for the time being.

OoSG has had an increasingly busy quarter, with the diocesan schools and other service providers emerging from COVID-19 lock down.

During this quarter, the Alternative Dispute Resolution [ADR] service experienced significant uptake in CatholicCare. ADR is a tertiary referral service; it is expected that all reasonable attempts to settle the dispute locally will have been exhausted first.

The Prevention & Response Service [PaRS] has seen an increase in the numbers of intake received, after a period of significant reduction in volume. The rate of investigations and risk of significant harm reports to the Department of Community and Justice have increased at a slower rate than the increase in intake.

During 6 to 12 September OoSG helped promote a very successful *National Child Protection Week* with diocesan schools. It is hoped that 2021 will see an increased involvement and collaboration of parish and school to celebrate *National Child Protection Week*.

In conjunction with the Diocesan Communications Team, OoSG has engaged an external agency to consult with survivors, their families and other key stakeholders on the development of a diocesan Memorial to those affected by child sexual abuse.

The third quarter of 2020 saw the launch of the Diocesan Implementation Compliance Plan to achieve compliance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, staging electronic meetings with all diocesan school principals and face-to-face meetings in all the Diocese's parishes or regional offices. Compliance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards will be a major focus for OoSG during the next twelve months.

### Bishops Healing Fund

Bishop Wright has established the *Bishop's Healing Fund*, which is an annual allocation of funds (up to \$25,000) to assist in promoting the healing of those affected by child sexual abuse in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. The fund is managed by the Standing Committee for Healing and Support which is a part of the Council:

<https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/church-mission/diocesan-protection-and-safety-council/>

Those affected by child abuse (also stated as 'affected persons') is a collective term to describe those affected by child sexual abuse including individuals who were victims of abuse or the close relative or supporter/friend of individuals who were victims of abuse. A close relative includes but is not restricted to the parent, partner, biological, step or de facto child or sibling.

Any person seeking funding will need to submit a written application. The application form is available for download [here](#).

Approval for funding from the Bishop's Healing Fund is based on the application being deemed to be of value to those affected by child sexual abuse.

[Bishop's Healing Fund Brochure](#)

### **Bishop proclaims the Perpetual Day of Remembrance a Special Feast Day**

On 15 August Bishop Bill Wright decreed that the *Perpetual Day of Remembrance* be a special feast day in the Diocesan Liturgical calendar "to be held on the Sunday on or prior to the 15th of September".

The *Perpetual day of Remembrance* holds before us our history of child sexual abuse and the reality of its ongoing impact on the lives of those directly and indirectly affected. The day is acknowledged in two ways. One is for the church community to remember this history and do so by offering a liturgical response.

Proclaiming a special feast day allows "greater adaptability of the liturgy to the character of the Day of Remembrance, and to ensure its perpetual observance".

The Diocesan Liturgy Council produced gentle and moving prayers, readings, musical options, intercessions, and other material for masses held on the *Perpetual Day of Remembrance*.

The other form of acknowledgement is for a survivor led event facilitated or supported by the Diocese. Unfortunately, this year there could be no "event" as such due to COVID 19 and the subsequent restrictions on gatherings.

