



Diocesan Protection and Safety Council

QUARTERLY REPORT

APRIL - JUNE 2021

Diocesan Protection and Safety Council Meetings

During the second quarter of 2021, the Diocesan Protection and Safety Council ('Council') did not meet until on 01 July. The meeting lasted one hour and fifty minutes and was conducted online via Zoom.

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

Report from the Convenor of the Standing Committee for the Support and Guidance of Healing and Support Issues

The Standing Committee met once during this time and welcomed a new member, Gerard Goldman, to join the Committee.

Gerard is from the Hunter Valley, born at Cessnock. He has worked (teaching and counselling) in the remote indigenous communities of Wadeye and Nauiyu (NT) in the 1980s. He worked as Director of Adult Faith Education & Formation for the Diocese of Rockhampton before becoming the inaugural Director and CEO of The Broken Bay Institute

(BBI). He is currently completing a program to become a Spiritual Director (Adamstown) as well as training to become an accredited Supervisor.

During this time, the Committee also worked on their Mandate to make it more relevant and changed its title to the *Standing Committee for the Support and Guidance of Healing and Support Issues*. The role of the Standing Committee is to review current and emerging issues in providing services to, and promoting healing for, affected persons, with a particular focus on persons affected by child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. It will provide support, guidance, and advice in relation to issues presented by members of the Diocesan Protection & Safety Council (DPSC) and the Manager Healing and Support Services (Zimmerman Service) as well as provide support and guidance of Healing and Support Services and issues.

During this time, the team at Healing and Support Zimmerman Service facilitated in distributing the survey regarding a Diocesan Memorial to victims/survivors and their families. The team also provided some training to the consultants conducting the survey on how to respond to disclosures of childhood sexual abuse to prepare them for such an occurrence.

During this time, the Team also presented three training sessions (two online and one face to face) as a part of the Introduction to Safeguarding Course for new employees in the Diocese. Healing and Support staff have also been working with the Communications Team on a plan to acknowledge the Perpetual Day of Remembrance on September 15 this year.

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

The Standing Committee met twice during this quarter, on 9 April and 21 May. It was a relatively busy quarter with six informal settlement conferences or formal mediations held. Four of these six claims were settled on or shortly after the mediations. One claim settled later, in August and one remains unresolved.

There were two hearings on separate, litigated claims in the NSW Supreme Court, both of which were resolved by consent orders. One claim resulted in a financial settlement, the other an agreement to put a halt to proceedings with both parties responsible for their own costs.

During this quarter the Diocese's portfolio of uninsured claims for personal injury resulting from alleged historic child sexual abuse oscillated around 30 active claims.

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

In mid-April the OoSG moved into newly renovated offices at 50 Crebert Street. There was universal appreciation from the affected staff, as the move

constituted a significant 'upgrade' of accommodation. The new office:

- retains its own entrance into Crebert St which is relatively private comparative to the main entrance
- has a confidential waiting room which is separate from the main body of the office
- includes a multipurpose room that can host Office of Safeguarding meetings, team briefings and small group training
- has a confidential interview room
- has secure file storage
- has management offices adjacent to the main body of the office rather than being 'in the vicinity' or 'nearby' like the old office space
- has additional workstations available
- has large windows to the outside that can be opened, allowing fresh air to circulate through the office rather than air conditioning.

The second quarter of 2021 was a challenging period for the operation and development of ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution). Attempts to consolidate the Diocese's tertiary complaints resolution resources proved fruitless, going from attempting to establish a collaborative, integrated service, to forming a single programme with one line of oversight. By 30 June it was apparent that it would be unlikely that a single unified tertiary complaints resolution service would be established.

It was an extraordinarily busy quarter for PaRS, the volume of Intake that required processing and responding to was unprecedented and impacted on the PaRS Team's ability to maintain momentum in the other core areas of their work, including investigations, the number of which increased as

well, with 20 investigations proceeding during the quarter. PaRS was also the primary contributor to:

- the OoSG's training regime
- schools Continuum of School Improvement (COSI) auditing and assessments of safeguarding elements
- multiple due diligences for the Director to respond to National Redress Scheme applications.

Thankfully, PaRS was fully staffed with all four investigators, senior investigator and manager being on deck, nevertheless there were significant work pressures experienced by the team, more so than most other components of OoSG. The widening gap between capacity and workload, specifically in Intake resulted in a submission for additional resources, brought before the Standing Committee on 1 July 2021.

The Director's Office also had a busy quarter. Apart from the coordination of administrative support between three sites and the logistical management of the OoSG training regime, the Executive Coordinator undertook the day-to-day case management of the Diocese's uninsured portfolios of claims, which fluctuate around 30 active claims at any one time. The Director of Safeguarding was involved in the six informal settlement conferences or formal mediations during this time as well as preparing for and attending two hearings on separate litigated claims in the NSW Supreme Court.

A remarkable seven schools underwent the 'safeguarding' component of the COSI programme during the second quarter, undertaken by OoSG personnel. Further, thanks to the generosity and support of the Director of Schools, Liz Latham of the CSO had been working in conjunction with the

Office of Safeguarding to support diocesan schools to be compliant with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS). Ms Latham's coaching-mentoring role proved to be highly effective in schools.

During the second quarter OoSG undertook 3 full day and two half day face-to-face training sessions, two full day online training sessions to a total of 315 attendees or participants. Also, the OoSG gave two presentations, one to the CSO Principals' Day on issues of students and consent and to the CatholicCare Conference.