

ACBC PLENARY MEETING 26 – 30 NOVEMBER 2001

BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

REPORT

1. TOWARDS HEALING AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS RESOURCE GROUPS: -

The revised document of principles and procedures, *Towards Healing*, has been in operation since March 2001 and has, in general, been received favourably. People continue to come forward with allegations to the Professional Standards Resource Groups, though in some States in smaller numbers. There are a significant number of cases where the abuse has happened in recent years. While each case is different and some are very complex and many of the victims are very fragile people the process would seem to be proceeding more smoothly.

In many of the cases the two main desired outcomes are that the Church hears the pain of the victim and that there is an assurance that steps have been taken to ensure that this does not happen to anyone else. The facilitation process provides for this pastoral component where the victim can tell of his/her pain, can feel heard and can hear a response from the current leadership of the church. It is then left to other parties, at this or a later time, to negotiate any details of assistance with education, on-going counselling or compensation.

As Executive Officer, Sister Angela Ryan, reports that she has been impressed where she has been present or has heard reports of facilitation processes where Bishops or Leaders have reached out to those present in a spirit that assists to bring healing. It would appear that a positive pastoral experience is one of the most significant factors in the healing process, especially given that most of the victims come from previously strong Catholic families, where priests or religious were welcome. In some of the complex cases, especially with very fragile women, Angela is willing to be present in a support role if any Bishop or Leader would find this helpful.

The work of the Directors of Professional Standards, of the Professional Standards Resource Group members and of those who act as Contact Persons, Assessors etc. is a very valuable contribution to the life of the Church in these times.

2. GUIDELINES FOR BISHOPS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS

During the Review of *Towards Healing* Professor Patrick Parkinson collected additional information, ideas and comments which he believed that it would be valuable to pass on to Bishops and Leaders. Therefore he produced the basic text of the *Guidelines for Bishops and Religious Leaders* and it was subsequently adopted, with some few modifications as a document of the National Committee for Professional Standards. The Guidelines have been distributed to Bishops and Leaders and to members of the Professional Standards Resource Groups.

Currently a similar handbook is being finalised for those who are working with the process, the Directors of Professional Standards, the Contact Persons, Support Persons for the Accused, the Assessors and the Facilitators. Copies of this document will be made available to the Bishops and Leaders as well as those involved in the different stages of the healing process.

3. INTEGRITY IN MINISTRY

Recently you will have received information about the Review of *Integrity in Ministry*, A Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia.

The members of the Review Committee are -

Father Peter Fitzgerald	Nominated by the National Council of Priests
Ms. Mary Gow	Nominated by the Nat. Comm. for Prof. Stds
Sister Moya Hanlen	Nominated by ACLRI
Father John Hannon	Nominated by the National Council of Priests
Brother David Hawke	Nominated by ACLRI
Bishop Bill Morris	Nominated by ACBC
Mr. Michael Salmon	Nominated by the Nat. Comm. for Prof. Stds
Sister Angela Ryan	Executive Officer - NCPS

The Review Committee is planning a Consultation Process and hopes that as many people as possible will be able to attend a discussion group and have the opportunity to explore the document with others. Where this is not possible the opportunity to respond via a questionnaire will be provided.

Thank you to all who have responded indicating where you wish to take a co-ordinating role yourself or whether you wish nominate a facilitator (or more than one in larger or more scattered Dioceses) to carry forward the process.

If you have not already done so a copy of the sheet is provided here to assist with your response.

The time-line for the Consultation Process is as follows: -

November/December 2001	Receive nominations of potential facilitators; prepare documents; communicate with facilitators.
February – March 2001	Work with facilitators (As Easter is early the Consultation Phase is delayed to avoid a clash with Lenten programs.
April – mid-May	Consultation Phase; Discussion groups.
Before the end of May	Responses received.
June – September	Preparation of draft.

This first stage being undertaken is to review the current document *Integrity in Ministry*, which is a Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia. However a gap does exist for others employed and appointed as volunteers in the Church. Some groups of pastoral associates and some groups of volunteers have agreed to voluntarily accept *Integrity in Ministry* as their principles and standards. The National Committee for Professional Standards has become aware of some attempts to prepare documents of principles and standards for others in the Church. At this stage these are in draft stage, local and minimal but are a recognition that a gap exists. As an initial thought, maybe following the review of *Integrity in Ministry*, there could be a document prepared which would give overall guidelines and which could be adapted nationally to suit the needs of the main sectors of ministry within the Church.

RECOMMENDATION: -

THAT ALL PERSONS EMPLOYED OR APPOINTED TO VOLUNTARY POSITIONS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA SHOULD BE COVERED BY SOME FORM OF CODE OF CONDUCT.

4. NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FORMATION

The National Conference on Formation

**Ministry in the New Century
Challenges for Formation**

is to be held at the Lidcombe Catholic Club, Sydney
on Tuesday 16 July, Wednesday 17 July and Thursday 18 July 2002.

Brother Sean Sammon, the keynote speaker,
has recently been elected as the Superior General of the Marist brothers.
Also he has a new book due for publication early in the New Year.

A letter, an invitation and a flyer have been sent to the Bishops, Congregational Leaders and Rectors of Seminaries and will be sent to other Formation and Vocation Personnel at the end of this week.

Four bulletins addressing each of the four strands of the Conference viz.: -

- a) Pastoring those in our Care
- b) Ministerial Standards and Appraisal
- c) Initial Intake Procedures
- d) Adult Growth in Adult Systems

will be distributed in the months prior to the Conference. It is hoped to make these Bulletins interactive, so that the thinking and the dialogue are in place prior to the actual Conference.

Planning for the Conference is underway, with about 150 people expected to attend. The current thought is to charge a minimal application fee as a result of a contribution from Catholic Church Insurances and the fact that each participant will need to arrange his/her own accommodation. Additional expenses will be covered from the contributions of Dioceses and Congregations to the National Committee for Professional Standards.

5. UPDATE ON THE OPERATION OF ENCOMPASS AUSTRALASIA.

Encompass is providing assessment and then both treatment and prevention programs, as originally envisaged. There are now a number of self-referees in the program and the women's program has begun albeit slowly.

Earlier in the year the police came with a search warrant to obtain documents relevant to a particular case from Encompass. At this stage there have been no further developments about the court action. Encompass has made a submission which aims to protect the privacy and the records of clinicians

After the conclusion of this case it would be crucial to engage in dialogue with the NSW police to explain the role and work of Encompass and to establish appropriate protocols.

6. POST CUSTODIAL CARE OF OFFENDERS

The National Committee for Professional Standards continues to research this matter and has not been in a position to provide group sessions as proposed. The paper,

**On legal responsibilities under the civil law
on Bishops and Congregational Leaders
relating to allegations of sexual assault**

has been distributed prior to this meeting with a view to raising any further questions to be explored before there is more detailed discussion.

A day for the Bishops and Congregational Leaders focussing on Post-custodial, post-admission, post-denial issues is to be planned and implemented in 2002 by the National Committee for Professional Standards.

7. REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENTS FROM ROME

A letter has been received from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, concerning 'the more serious crimes'. It includes a crime 'against the sixth commandment committed by a cleric with a person under the age of eighteen years'. It says that the hearing of these cases is reserved to the Congregation and any appeal must be to the Tribunal of the Congregation. There is a ten-year statute of limitations, this time beginning to run when the victim turns eighteen. It applies only to crimes committed by clerics, not religious.

The matter has been taken up with Roman Authorities during the Synod of Bishops and an interim verbal report will be provided to the Bishops at the Meeting.

8. RE-VISITING THE ORIGINAL 9 POINT PLAN AND PLANNING FOR 2002

The National Committee for Professional Standards is currently reviewing the original 9-point plan and looking to the needs as they appear at this time. The proposed plan has not been completed but at this stage some of the major areas to be addressed are emerging as: -

- i) Support for victims after the *Towards Healing* process
- ii) Support for other people and for communities affected by abuse.
- iii) Post custodial, post admission, post denial issues and liabilities
- iv) Code of Conduct issues relating to employees and volunteers
- v) A study of the ways in which power is used in the Catholic Church

- How does the Church reach out spiritually to victims, to young people and to the communities?
- Each victim and each individual in a Parish is affected in a different way. Moving towards healing is a slow process and involves much one-to-one work.
- There may be some good that can be done through support groups for the victims. This would be difficult for the NCPS to implement.
- The RCIA and the New Beginnings concept of 'a person who walks with', a 'companion' may be appropriate when a victim or a member of an affected community is ready.

9. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRIVACY LEGISLATION

Information is being sought from lawyers about the implications of this legislation for the Professional Standards Resource Groups and the keeping of records. There would be some potential for the same advice to apply to the records of Bishops and Congregational Leaders in this area. When it has been prepared the information will be made available.

+E. Collins
Secretary
27 November 2001