



# Diocesan Protection and Safety Council

QUARTERLY REPORT

JANUARY – MARCH 2022

## Diocesan Protection and Safety Council Meetings

During the second quarter of 2022, the Diocesan Protection and Safety Council ('Council') met on 15 March. The meeting lasted three and a half hours and was conducted face to face.

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

In January two applications to the Bishop's Healing Fund were received. One was for the first Equine Assisted Therapy group of four participants to continue their group work with an advanced program, developing skills already learned and building on coping and emotional regulation strategies. The second one was for a new group of four-six participants to start on the beginners' program. The programs include six fortnightly half-day sessions. Both were approved by the Standing Committee.

A Women's Group morning tea was held in February. This is a safe and supportive space for female survivors and family members (mothers and partners) to come and discuss the impact with people who have similar lived experience. There are currently eight participants.

Relationship building efforts with interagency and support groups are ongoing.

The Marist Brothers CAN Coordinator Caseworker finished in December. Zimmerman Service provided a contact point for unallocated matters and limited casework in the interim vacant position period. Discussions with the Marist Brothers and CAN were had regarding the best place for the Marist Brother CAN Co-ordinator position. It was agreed that going forward the position would best be located within the CAN umbrella.

The Service changed its name to **Zimmerman Service - Healing and Support** and the new website was launched [www.healingandsupport.org.au](http://www.healingandsupport.org.au). New emails established with new domain @healingandsupport.org.au. Our intake email is now [zimmermanservice@healingandsupport.org.au](mailto:zimmermanservice@healingandsupport.org.au). This marked the complete separation of the service from the Office of Safeguarding, as it now sits within CatholicCare under the management of the Therapeutic Services Manager. We have streamlined paying of invoices which has worked very well.

In March the Diocesan Protection & Safety Council decided that this Standing Committee would be taking responsibility for facilitating the Community

Memorial. Discussions have begun regarding survivors needs around a community memorial.

We farewelled Deborah Diez in late March and thanked her for 13 months of service supporting and assisting survivors and their families in that time. We are currently advertising for this important case-worker position. Caseloads remain steady. We currently have 44 active matters with various degrees of complexity and contact. There are also a further 17 clients that remain inactive, and we hope to be able to provide better outreach when our case-worker staffing vacancy is filled.

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

The Standing Committee met once during this quarter, on 16 March 2022. There were no mediations or informal settlement conferences held during this quarter.

In contrast, there were 12 RFI (Requests for Information) reports prepared and submitted during this quarter to the National Redress Scheme, in relation to seven separate individual applicants.

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

The first meeting of the year for the Standing Committee was held on 8 March 2022. Like many elements of society, Committee participation had been impacted by the Covid-19 virus throughout the latter stages of 2021, and into the new year. The Committee is currently carrying three vacancies. Nevertheless, Committee participation remained

strong with the primary objective of providing oversight of the Office of Safeguarding.

Diocesan Administrator, Rev Gregory Barker attended the meeting demonstrating the importance the most senior leader of the Diocese, places on safeguarding.

The Committee reviewed the late 2021 realignment of the internal structure of the Office of Safeguarding, establishing an ‘executive’ arm and an ‘operational’ arm. An Operations Manager and Executive Coordinator have been appointed.

January 2022 saw Office of Safeguarding staff return to the office environment after working remotely for the previous three months. In accordance with diocesan policies, Office of Safeguarding staff have adopted more flexible working practices including the ability to work remotely.

Office of Safeguarding workloads continue to rise, with increases in key indicators (intakes, investigations, risk assessments etc.), particularly in the St Nicholas Early Education and OOSH spaces. The Committee determined to express their appreciation to Office of Safeguarding staff ahead of the May 2022 meeting, by available Committee members meeting with them.

Office of Safeguarding training in schools and parishes remains a high priority, as does the Diocese’s implementation and ongoing compliance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. Currently there are consultations with ACSL (Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd) and the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian to ensure that the Diocese is also compliant with the recently legislated NSW Child Safe Standards.

The first quarter of 2022 saw several innovations launched in the Office of Safeguarding, including:

- Child friendly letters for use with primary and secondary school aged students when involved in investigations (witnesses or complainants)
- a revised and expanded Continuum of School Improvement validation tool that incorporates the NSW Child Safe Standards.

The Office of Safeguarding’s quarterly financial report for the period ended 31 March 2022 showed that the office was operating in deficit, primarily as a consequence of staff salaries and related on-costs.

