



# Diocesan Protection and Safety Council

QUARTERLY REPORT

April-June 2023

## Diocesan Protection and Safety Council Meetings

During the second quarter of 2023, the Diocesan Protection and Safety Council ('Council') met on Wednesday 31 May. The meeting lasted two and a half hours and was conducted face to face, with two voting members absent.

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

### Zimmerman Service-Healing & Support (ZSHS) - Client Updates

Five new referrals continued this quarter, bringing current client totals to 47 people with 57% of clients undertaking counselling. Clients ages range from 26 to 81 years old.

### Bishops Healing Fund

The Bishops Healing Fund continues to receive interest and applications. Equine Therapy: There have been three groups and one individual experience these sessions. All evaluations have indicated great benefit to the participants. Other Modalities: The Healing & Support Committee is discussing other types of therapy such as music and art. It would be good to be able to have a variety of modes available and promoted to survivors.

### Perpetual Day of Remembrance (PDR)

The PDR music piece is near completion and will be ready for this year's event.

### Loud Sky Installation & Exhibition

This took place on 31 March 2023 and by all measures was a huge success. Justice Peter McClellan (Royal Commission) officially opened the Exhibition. The President of CAN spoke at the event. Members of ZSHS were invited to be special professional support persons for the event. The Catholic and Anglican Bishops were in attendance along with all members of the Standing Committee and ZSHS staff.

### Field of Flowers Installation

The Field of Flowers installation of bamboo ribbons was held at both the Anglican and Catholic cathedrals. Two Catholic Colleges were involved in the ribbon making. There has been a wonderful response to this initiative.

### Parish Consultations

The Manager of ZSHS is attempting to have Parish consultations on a regular basis. This will be on strategic basis with the aim to visit one parish a month. Other possibilities include more effective communication with parishes through their parish bulletins and website update.

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

During the second quarter the Standing Committee met twice, on 02 May and 01 June, during which three matters were considered that related to sexual abuse allegedly committed by three former workers in the Diocese, one lay employee and two clerics.

All three alleged abusers were male. The claimants were male.

Instructions were obtained to settle two of the three claims with the third matter being denied on the balance of probabilities that the abuse did not occur. The claimant is able to choose to proceed with civil action in the Courts or make an application to the National Redress Scheme.

During this quarter there were three formal mediation conferences held and three matters were resolved.

During the second quarter of 2023, the Office of Safeguarding responded to seven National Redress Scheme RFI's (requests for information).

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

As noted in our last quarterly report, a review is underway in respect of staffing and related issues within the Office of Safeguarding (OoSG). Particular emphasis has been given to filling a number of vacant investigator positions which arose from the resignations of previous staff who sought similar positions within a State-based agency. Those

vacancies have been filled and new staff have been inducted into the OoSG and they are undertaking their roles in a competent manner.

The review of the OoSG is anticipated to be completed by August 2023 and will, amongst other things, look at how best the OoSG is placed for future years to fulfil its Charter of safety and wellbeing to children and vulnerable persons within the Diocese. There can be no greater responsibility than this.

As part of addressing the resourcing issues within the OoSG, action was taken in July 2023 to fill the position of Senior Investigator. The appointee will perform the critically important functions of providing support and assistance to the Operations Manager and leadership and advice and mentoring of investigators. Unfortunately, the recruitment process was unsuccessful and a further round of recruitment will be held in August-September.

The Standing Committee's membership has been under review and a number of vacancies have been filled. Fathers Gregory Barker and Matthew Muller, both recently appointed as Vicars General to the Diocese, retain their positions on the Standing Committee and we await the pending announcement of a representative of St Nicholas Early Education Centres. These appointments bring the membership of the Standing Committee to a full complement with expertise drawn from Diocesan personnel, and the broader community with qualifications in investigations, external oversight, education, community care and finance.

At the instigation of the Director of Safeguarding, Mr Sean Tynan, a review has been undertaken to address the excessive classification of roles as 'child-

related work' that are not supported by the relevant legislation, namely, the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act*. The oversubscription of working with children checks (WWCC) has been a common phenomenon in NSW since the current scheme was introduced in 2013-2017. As a consequence, changes were made to the Act in 2018, introducing a summary offence (fines) issued by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) against employers.

To address this issue, Ms Zoe Marr of the OoSG was tasked to work with the Human Resources department of the Diocese to review and correct roles deemed not to be child-related work, but that have required applicants for employment to submit a WWCC clearance number in order that the Diocese can verify that number.

When the review is completed, the Director, OoSG will consult with the Director, WWCC Division of the OCG regarding a solution for roles that are assessed as not being child-related work, and in doing so (a) produce revised position descriptions as not child-related work, (b) allow incumbents' WWCC verifications to lapse and not require their renewal, and (c) any newly appointed staff to the role will be appointed without the need to have verification of a WWCC.

The requirement for a Working with Children Clearance is an important governance and compliance tool which goes to ensure that those charged with working with children have the appropriate probity clearances. The review does not alter that situation but does seek to put balance back into an over exhaustion of the process whereby those not working with children have, to date, required such clearances.

Consistent with its established approach to work with and liaise with kindred bodies, the OoSG has been represented at a number of key interagency fora, including the Interdenominational Professional Standards Network, hosted by the Sydney Anglican Diocese and the NSW Safeguarding Community of Practice, hosted by the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay. This approach is consistent with the ongoing professional development of OoSG personnel.