

Clergy Assistance Program – 12 month review

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Key Points

- The Clergy Assistance Program (“CAP”) has now been running for 12 months and in that time 63 parish clergy have accessed the program.
- Indications are that it is continuing to meet a need and the feedback received to date has been very positive.
- A number of refinements have been made to the program, principally to give spouses of parish clergy access to the program.

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Synod with a review of the first full year of operations of the Clergy Assistance Program.

Recommendation

2. Synod receive this report.

Background

3. On 14 November 2015 Standing Committee requested that Sydney Diocesan Secretariat (“SDS”), in consultation with the Archbishop, his Episcopal team and the Director of Ministry Training and Development –

- (a) put in place suitable arrangements to make professional counselling available to parish clergy licensed in the Diocese as a first step in establishing a Clergy Assistance Program (“CAP”), and
- (b) bring to a future meeting recommendations to extend the assistance that might be provided under the Program, both in terms of the type of assistance provided and the categories of person to whom assistance is provided.

4. At that meeting Standing Committee also approved an additional amount of \$133 per minister being added to the Stipend Continuance Insurance component of the ministry costs recovered from all parishes in 2016 pursuant to the *Parochial Cost Recoveries and Church Land Acquisitions Levy Ordinance 2015* as a contribution to the expected cost of a CAP.

5. On 11 April 2016 the Archbishop officially launched the CAP which offers a program of professional, confidential Christian counselling together with support from other mental health professionals where required. The program is run by Anglicare and offers clergy licensed to parishes up to 6 sessions with counsellors or other appropriate mental health professionals on an anonymous basis.

6. In November 2016 Standing Committee received a report reviewing the effectiveness and cost of the CAP after the first 6 months of its operation and approved –

- (a) the continuation of the CAP for at least another year,
- (b) an extension of the eligibility under the CAP to include the spouse of clergy licensed to parishes in the Diocese, with effect from 1 December 2016, and
- (c) the Ministry Costs component of the PCR charge for 2017 continuing to include an amount of \$133 to cover the expected cost of the counselling offered to parish clergy and their spouse under the CAP.

7. This report provides a review of the first full year of the operations of the CAP.

Review of program

8. After the first 12 months of operation the level of take up indicates the CAP is continuing to meet a need. The number of attendees at CAP counselling sessions has been as follows –

Apr-Jun 2016	28
Jul-Sep 2016	33
Oct-Dec 2016	20
Jan-Mar 2017	21

9. A total of 63 cases (clergy and/or spouse) have accessed the program, 12 of whom attended with their spouse giving 75 clients in total.
10. In 20 of those 63 cases the clergy had requested to see a counsellor or other mental health professional of their choice (either to continue a previous relationship, or because Anglicare did not have a counsellor available in their area, or to see another mental health professional such as a psychologist or psychiatrist).
11. In total the CAP has provided 131 counselling sessions in its first 12 months. A significant number of clergy have required less than the maximum of 6 counselling sessions to reach a satisfactory conclusion. Others have preferred to have a few sessions then request a break to reflect, so these cases remain open waiting for clergy to reconnect. Only 1 clergy person has transferred to work with an Anglicare-funded counsellor following completion of their 6 sessions in the calendar year.
12. Only 3 cases have been referred to an external medical professional at intake, although all counsellors recommend clients also keep in contact with their GP and take their GP's advice in relation seeing other mental health professionals if and when that is recommended.
13. Very few calls were received outside of normal working hours and so after a review of this facility the after-hours on call telephone service was discontinued from 1 December 2016. The CAP website information and the voicemail and messaging facility were updated to reflect the new CAP operational times of Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm with the continued provision of the Lifeline crisis counselling telephone number.
14. Only 2 formal enquiries have been received from lay ministry staff, one of whom was about to be ordained. However, in the first 6 months of the CAP a number of wives of clergy have also enquired. In each of these cases Anglicare offered, and the person accepted, counselling but without CAP underwriting the funding. In November 2016 Standing Committee agreed to extend eligibility under the CAP to the spouse of clergy licensed to a parish and the website information and the voicemail and messaging facility were updated to reflect this change.
15. The most frequent presenting issues have remained fairly consistent throughout the first 12 months of the CAP –

ISSUE	FREQUENCY
Stress (either self-stated or medically diagnosed)	48%
Employment related (how the person is managing their role in the parish and the demands of ministry life, including burnout)	35%
Anxiety (either self-stated or medically diagnosed)	25%
Depression (either self-stated or medically diagnosed)	19%
Relationships (includes marital, other personal, or parish relationships not involving specific conflict)	16%
Parish conflict (with staff, office holders or parishioners)	11%
Resilience (capacity to manage and bounce back from disappointments)	10%

Feedback

16. No feedback forms have yet been received from clients who have engaged with an external counsellor or other medical professional, possibly because the counselling is still ongoing or simply that the client has not responded to requests for feedback. However, the written feedback received to date from 15 clergy who have seen Anglicare counsellors is summarised in the following table –

PROPOSAL	DISAGREE	TEND TO DISAGREE	TEND TO AGREE	AGREE
The counsellor listened to me and understood my issues			2	7
I am satisfied overall with the services I have received at Anglicare			2	7
I am better able to deal with issues for which I sought help			4	5
I would recommend this service to other clergy	1		1	12

17. The following comments have been provided by clergy of their spouse who have completed a series of sessions with Anglicare counsellors –

[Name] was very helpful. He listened well & gave me some things to think about. We agreed that I would think about these issues over the next few months & then revisit early in 2017.
I have not followed up further with counselling as work has snowed me under. Good service but personalities didn't work.
Occasional helpful things came.
Very helpful; obviously it took more than 1 session to build up confidence, trust and rapport in the counsellor. Thanks for the counsellor, CAP and Anglicare.
Very timely and helpful service. So valuable to have this service on hand at a time of a developing issue of anxiety. The counsellor helped me explore the issues and put in place a strategy of resilience and growth. One area of improvement might be for the counsellor to be overtly Christian in discussion and perhaps pray at the end. I'm not sure how different it would have been to have a counselling session with a secular service. However, I am very thankful for everyone involved from the person who took the call to the counsellor herself.
It was a really helpful thing to do. I likely wouldn't have sought out help had it not been for the Clergy Assistance Program. It's also helped me see that there's nothing wrong with seeing a counsellor, so I'll be more likely to seek help in the future if I need to.
I was tremendously helped by my experience with [Name]. In our first session we set out goals for my sessions and by the sixth session we had accomplished them. I am surprised by how significant the progress I made was, and [Name] (and CAP) was God's kindness in equipping me to process some difficult pastoral situations and my own history. I feel better in myself and better equipped to continue serving and loving those God has entrusted to me.
I had received some helpful counselling before I sought help from Anglicare via CAP. I was in considerable need for help and solid, wise, professional, personal, helpful counsel was provided. With Anglicare's counselling, I have made demonstrable progress, especially in my ability to handle church conflict and challenges which are so integral to my problems in a growing church. I feel however that I need to capitalise on the excellent and insightful work begun, and continue the counselling with my current counsellor. It is a pivotal time in our church's life. I am eager to last the distance in ministry and this has been a God-send. Thank you. Honestly, I am deeply thankful to God for this ministry by my counsellor and Anglicare. It's another way Anglicare is making real partnerships that help gospel ministry thrive in our mission field. I feel that the diocese has cared for, and invested in, me wisely, compassionately and profoundly with this program better than anything since my college training. They need to know that. I am not ashamed to say that I need(ed) help.
The CAP program is brilliant in encouraging me and supporting me to take time to debrief and process some of my experiences in ministry and particularly what it impacts on my marriage. I really appreciate having it available.
The session was timely and helpful for us to work through some issues of that moment and provided a sounding board as we considered the future and how some matters of the past were lingering.
I found it very helpful. I have not felt the need at this stage for a further appointment, as things have been going along very well since seeing the counsellor.
Counsellor was extremely helpful.

Cost of program

18. In December 2015 Standing Committee approved an amount of \$133 per minister being added to the Stipend Continuance Insurance component of the PCR Charge for 2016 to cover the estimated cost of the CAP. The figure of \$133 per clergy licensed to a parish had been based on an estimate of \$30,000 for Anglicare's set-up costs plus \$39,000k for counselling (assuming 50 clergy x 4 sessions x \$195 per session) divided by 520 licensed clergy.

19. In November 2016 Standing Committee agreed to continue that charge unchanged for 2017 despite adding clergy spouses to the persons eligible to access CAP on the basis that the costs to that time were well below the originally estimated \$69,000 per 12 months.

20. The Agreement signed with Anglicare in April 2016 and then renewed in December 2016 for a further 12 months provides for the Diocese to pay Anglicare up to \$230 per session for a maximum of 6 sessions in a calendar year for each clergy or clergy spouse choosing to access the CAP. The cost of the CAP is therefore primarily dependent on the number of persons accessing the program; the average number of

sessions they require; and in the case of external mental health professionals, the administration fee of \$40 payable to Anglicare plus the amount of any shortfall (up to \$190) between the fee charged by the external professional and any Medicare rebate the person may be entitled to claim. For the first 12 months of the program there is a guaranteed minimum of \$40,000 payable to Anglicare to cover their fixed set-up costs such as employing the in-take officer, staff training and the manager’s supervision time.

21. In November 2015 Standing Committee agree to increase the Stipend Continuance Insurance component of the PCR charge payable by parishes by \$133 per clergy person licensed to the parish to cover the estimated cost of the CAP.

22. In fact the individual components of the actual costs have varied from the estimates in a number of ways, although the aggregate has remained within the overall total of the funding being provided through the PCR charge.

23. The actual costs invoiced by Anglicare for the first 12 months can be summarised as follows –

116 sessions conducted by Anglicare counsellors @ \$230 per session =	\$26,720
36 sessions conducted by external professionals @ various costs between \$80 and \$230 per session =	<u>\$4,857</u>
Total =	<u>\$31,577</u>

24. Under the Agreement the total cost of the CAP for the 12 months (April 2016 to March 2017) will therefore be \$40,000.

25. There are several reasons the actual cost has proved to be less than the original estimate –

- (a) the number of clergy and clergy spouses accessing the program has been higher than estimated (63 compared to 50, partly due to the inclusion since December 2016 of clergy spouses),
- (b) the average number of sessions has been less than estimated (just over 2 compared to 4, partly due to the fact that not all clients have completed their sessions; some having decided to ‘pause’ and reassess and others only beginning their engagement with the CAP towards the end of the first 12 month period),
- (c) the cost per session has been slightly higher than estimated (\$230 compared to \$195 as a result of negotiations surrounding the final Agreement with Anglicare),
- (d) the net average cost of sessions with external professionals has been lower than estimated (\$135 compared with \$195, partly because of the Medicare rebate available for sessions with some medical professionals and partly because of a delay or reluctance on behalf of some clergy in claiming any shortfall).

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee.

ROBERT WICKS
Diocesan Secretary

29 August 2017