

Safe Ministry Board and Professional Standards Unit Annual Report for 2007

(A report from the Safe Ministry Board and Professional Standards Unit.)

Introduction

1. The *Safe Ministry Ordinance 2001 (cl. 17)* and the *Discipline Ordinance 2006 (Cl. 104)* provide that annual reports be made to Synod and Standing Committee respectively. This report is in response to those provisions. It covers the period July 2006 to June 2007.

2. The Diocese of Sydney has been adopting a multifaceted approach to the issue of safe ministry and child protection since the mid-1990's. Broadly speaking the policy objectives are –

- (a) Careful selection and screening of clergy and church workers;
- (b) Clear statement of requirements and expectations (Code of Conduct);
- (c) Regular and comprehensive training and support of all clergy and church workers;
- (d) Timely and caring response to all who are affected by abuse; and
- (e) Just procedures to deal with respondents and persons of risk.

Safe Ministry Board

3. The Safe Ministry Board, established under the *Safe Ministry Ordinance 2001*, has the dedicated policy task of ensuring that safe ministry and child abuse issues are dealt with comprehensively and in an ongoing way throughout the diocese.

4. Members of the Board are: Rev Keith Condie (Chair), Mr Tim Barrett, Rev Mark Charleston, Rev David Clarke, Ms Stephanie Cole, Mr Philip Gerber (CEO), Rev Andrew Heron, Dr Grant Maple (resigned December 2006), Mr Glenn Murray, Deaconess Pattie Mutton, Rev Janice Rees, Rev Janine Steele, Dr Ruth Shatford AM and Mr Tony Willis (from February 2007).

5. The Board constantly reviews all safe ministry and child protection policy and practices. In the reporting period it has –

- (a) Considered and made recommendations in relation to the draft *Discipline Ordinance 2006* before the draft went to Synod;

- (b) Approved the supporting documentation for dissemination of information about the *Discipline Ordinance 2006*;
 - (c) Commissioned a sub-group to undertake a comprehensive survey of the content of safe ministry training provided by Youthworks, Moore Theological College and Ministry Training and Development and to develop a Diocesan-wide approach to training;
 - (d) Reviewed a concern about the administration of the Care and Assistance Scheme in a particular case;
 - (e) Recommended a protocol for the relationship between the Archbishop, the Safe Ministry Board and the Professional Standards Unit.
6. The Board continues to consider the further following matters –
- (a) The implementation of the Safe Ministry policy (mandatory training for all persons in parish children's ministry positions) under *part 7A* of the *Church Administration Ordinance 1990*;
 - (b) The pre-emptive provision of care and support for clergy and paid ministry workers;
 - (c) The possible extra-legislative screening of persons in volunteer children's ministry positions.

Professional Standards Unit

7. This unit consists of a full-time Director PSU, Philip Gerber, who is a solicitor, one full-time administrative officer, Carol Newton and a part-time chaplain to victims, Jenni Woodhouse, who is a social worker. Ms Lisa Watts, who had been administering the Care and Assistance Scheme, in January 2007 resigned to take up a position with the Archbishop's Social Issues Committee.

8. The unit provides the secretarial and administrative support to the Safe Ministry Board, who has the overall responsibility throughout the diocese, to ensure that all parishes and other activities of the diocese are child protection compliant.

9. The Director administers the complaints and discipline procedure (*Discipline Ordinance 2006*) in relation to clergy and church workers and is the CEO of the Safe Ministry Board.

10. The Chaplain maintains contact with and supports persons who have disclosed abuse by a member of the clergy or a church worker and co-ordinates the provision of counselling as required.

11. The unit undertakes screening of all clergy appointments on behalf of the Archbishop. It provides ongoing support and advice to office holders, parishes and organisations.

Website

12. In June 2007 a safe ministry website www.psu.anglican.asn.au came on line which enables ready access to all current policies and documents related to safe ministry, child protection and professional standards. The website is cross linked to other important relevant resources such as the NSW Commission for Children and Young Persons working with Children Check and the Department of Community Services, counselling services, other dioceses and other denominations.

Review of PSU

13. A review group consisting of Ms Kay Dowling (Anglicare Regional Manager), Rev Keith Condie (Chair Safe Ministry Board) and Acting Judge Peter Grogan (Diocesan Chancellor), has been appointed by the Archbishop to review and report on the structure and operation of the Professional Standards Unit.

Apology

14. On 24 February 2002 Archbishop Peter Jensen publicly reaffirmed the Church's abhorrence of child abuse and sexual misconduct by clergy and church workers in a letter read in all parishes. He committed himself and the diocese to giving these issues a high priority. He reaffirmed this commitment in his 2002 Synod charge, noting that *such issues, unless dealt with properly, will remain a barrier to mission by alienating people from the good news of Jesus Christ*. Throughout 2006-07 the Archbishop has continued to make himself available to listen to complainants and relate to them pastorally. This usually includes the making of an appropriate personal apology on behalf of the Church.

Screening of Lay Workers

15. Parishes obtain prohibited employment declarations for all child related workers (including unpaid volunteers) and undertake working with children screening checks for those who are paid. They are also advised to seek full disclosure of any relevant history and to undertake reference checks. In addition to secular legislative requirements, prohibited persons under the NSW State legislation (those convicted of serious sexual offences) cannot be appointed or elected as churchwardens, parish councilors or Synod representatives, and since February 2007, parish nominators. As mentioned above, the Safe Ministry Board is considering the possible extra-legislative screening of persons in volunteer children's ministry positions by the administering of comprehensive screening and disclosure questionnaires as recommended by the General Synod in 2004.

Screening of Ministry/Ordination Candidates, Clergy and Paid Lay Ministers

16. All candidates for ordination, all clergy being authorised or licensed in Sydney for the first time and all paid lay ministers being licensed by the Archbishop continue to be required to complete a comprehensive screening and disclosure questionnaire based on the document recommended by the General Synod. This is administered by the Archdeacons and Regional Bishops.

17. Ordination/ministry candidates also continue to undergo extensive assessment and screening by way of reference-checking, general psychological testing, interviews, chaplaincy supervision reports and college reports. The *Discipline Ordinance 2006* provides a mechanism for pre-ordination disclosure and consideration of prior sexual misconduct or child abuse.

Code of Conduct

18. The national code of personal conduct for clergy and church workers *Faithfulness in Service* was adopted by the Sydney Diocesan Synod in October 2004. Further clarifying amendments have been recommended by the Standing Committee of General Synod. These amendments are yet to be considered by the Sydney Synod as the resolution to adopt them was not reached at the 2006 Synod.

Training of Volunteer Lay Children's and Youth Workers – Safe Ministry Essentials

19. This training resource kit, produced by Anglican Youthworks and used by a network of regional Youthworks advisors has been significantly revised. This course remains the mandated safe ministry training for the diocese. The advisors have trained in excess of 7000 volunteers in children's ministry positions in 2006. The longer term intention is to train and validate local trainers who in turn can train others in parishes using the kit.

Training of Ministry/Ordination Candidates and Clergy

20. Training in *Faithfulness in Service* has provided professional development to all clergy and paid lay ministers throughout the diocese. Further mandatory training for this group is planned for 2008.

21. Moore Theological College includes some training in safe ministry and sexual abuse issues in their curriculum. All new students must undergo Safe Ministry Training before entering college. Similar training has been integrated in the curriculum of the courses at Youthworks College.

22. Ministry Training and Development includes safe ministry and child protection issues in the Sydney candidate training conferences/retreats and the after college training syllabus for recently ordained ministers. All candidates are required to read the Code of

Conduct *Faithfulness in Service*. Ministry chaplains are required to discuss the Code with each candidate during their candidacy before they are ordained.

23. As mentioned above the Safe Ministry Board has commissioned a sub-group to undertake a comprehensive survey of the content of all safe ministry training and to develop a diocesan-wide approach to such training.

Safe Ministry Compliance

24. 132 parishes have been notified of the appointment of a safe ministry representative as required under *Part 7A* of the *Church Administration Ordinance 1990*. The extent of compliance with the requirement for all persons in children's ministry positions to undergo compulsory training in safe ministry every three years is not known exactly. The numbers who have undertaken training with Youthworks would indicate a high level of compliance. An additional person is being recruited to work in the Professional Standards Unit to provide support for Parish Safe Ministry Representatives. In addition, as mentioned above, the Safe Ministry Board is reviewing the implementation of and compliance with the Safe Ministry training policy (mandatory training for all persons in parish children's ministry positions) under *part 7A* of the *Church Administration Ordinance 1990*.

Safe Ministry Guidelines and Other Advice

25. All parishes have been provided with a checklist entitled *Dealing with Child Abuse Allegations in the Church* and a document called *Guidelines for dealing with offenders and persons of suspicion in parishes*. The PSU continues to provide "help-desk" assistance to clergy and church workers in parishes on child protection issues.

Care of Victims and Complainants

26. A part-time Chaplain/Counselling Coordinator, Jenni Woodhouse, cares for claimants and their families. This supplements counselling which is provided to victims from PSU funds.

Care and Assistance Scheme

27. A care and assistance scheme is in place as an alternative to litigation to provide for financial assistance to victims to meet their needs which arise from the abuse or misconduct. It includes a mechanism for external assessment if necessary. This covers the uninsured aspect of claims. When pastorally appropriate, the chaplain arranges for the Archbishop or one of his Episcopal team to see particular victims of clergy or church worker misconduct or abuse.

28. Between 1 July 2006 and 30 June 2007 there have been five payments under the scheme, two relating to ANGLICARE, two relating to the diocese and one relating to and one funded by the Anglican

Deaconess Institute, Sydney. There are six other known claimants at various stages in the scheme.

Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Complaints Protocol

29. The diocese, since 1996, has had in place a Protocol for receiving complaints and allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct by clergy or church workers. Five independent Contact Persons, all trained counselors, are available for people to contact. Through an abuse report line (**1800 77 49 45** or **reportabuse@sydney.anglican.asn.au**), the Contact Persons provide information and support enquirers as they consider their options. They can then assist in the documenting and reporting of allegations or complaints of abuse or misconduct by members of the clergy or church workers.

30. The Contact Persons meet four times a year for training and coordination in their roles.

Discipline Ordinance

31. The handling of complaints that are received under the Protocol regarding sexual misconduct or child abuse by clergy or church workers is governed by the *Discipline Ordinance 2006* which came into effect on 27 March 2007, having been passed by Synod in October 2006. Complaints are verified in writing, put to the respondent, investigated, considered at a *Pima-Facie* level by the Professional Standards Committee and if necessary considered by a Tribunal and recommendations made to the Archbishop for action. For laypersons the strongest sanction available is a Prohibition to prevent a respondent from undertaking ministry or being in a particular or any role in the Church. A member of the clergy may be deposed from Holy Orders. There are also conciliation provisions and lesser sanctions or actions available in appropriate circumstances. The Archbishop is outside of the procedure. He considers the final recommendations and implements "discipline". He is entitled to enquire as to progress of matters and the Director is obliged to keep him informed. The specific offences covered under the Discipline Ordinance are: child abuse, sexual abuse, unchastity, drunkenness, neglect of ministerial duty, non-payment of just debts, disgraceful conduct, conviction of a serious criminal offence and failure to report suspected child abuse.

32. In the period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 twenty-seven (27) new allegations or complaints of sexual misconduct or child abuse in the diocese came to the attention of the Unit. Nine (9) of these related to clergy or former clergy of the diocese and eighteen (18) related to lay church workers or former lay church workers.

Parish Consultation Teams

33. A group of nine volunteers have begun training under Rev. Tim Dyer of John-Mark Ministries and are available to advise parishes

where allegations of abuse or misconduct by clergy or church workers arise. They are able to assist parishes to deal with the complex pastoral issues that arise and aid personal and parish healing.

34. In the reporting period there have been four teams deployed to four parishes to undertake a consultation.

Co-operation with Department Of Community Services and Police

35. The diocese continues to be a signatory to a Memorandum Of Understanding between the NSW Department of Community Services and other participating Churches in relation to a Protocol for dealing with allegations of abuse involving a child or young person by a church worker. The Director PSU continues to be a member of the NSW Police Child Protection and Sex Crimes Squad Advisory Council.

Conclusion

36. After almost a decade of policy development and implementation the Diocese of Sydney has in place a range of measures to ensure that children and other vulnerable persons in the Church are safe. The challenge will be to ensure that the momentum is not lost and that there is a continuing review and improvement of our safe ministry practices and procedures.

For and on behalf of the Safe Ministry Board and Professional Standards Unit.

THE REV KEITH CONDIE
Chair
Safe Ministry Board

MR PHILIP GERBER
Director
Professional Standards Unit

26 July 2007