

Making a Disclosure

If you, or someone you know, has been abused by Church personnel you should **report the incident directly to the police**. Alternatively, you can contact your local Church Authority or the Queensland Professional Standards Office who will assist you to report the matter to the police.

If you choose not to report the matter to the police, you may wish to consider resolving the matter via the Church's Towards Healing process.

The Queensland Professional Standards Office is responsible for managing the Towards Healing process. The Office is independent of Church Authorities, and a neutral party, which ensures that proper processes are followed and the matter is resolved as quickly as is possible in the circumstances. The Professional Standards Office is committed to making balanced and well-informed decisions and will manage the process fairly and impartially.

You Can Contact the Queensland Professional Standards Office By:

Email

psoid@catholic.net.au

Phone

1800 337 928 (free call)

Post

PO Box 3264
Brisbane Qld 4001

Office hours 9.00am to 4.00pm
Monday to Friday (excepting public holidays).

You may also contact your local Church representative who is required to refer the matter to his or her Church Authority and/or the Professional Standards Office.

Website

For more information on the Towards Healing process, go to the Queensland Professional Standards website at www.psoqld.catholic.net.au

The Church strongly encourages victims of abuse by Church personnel to report the incident directly to the police for investigation.



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Towards Healing

A protocol for addressing incidents of abuse against Catholic Church Personnel

Towards Healing was established in 1996 and is a process offered by the Catholic Church to those who have been abused by a priest, religious or other Church personnel including employees and volunteers appointed to positions of pastoral care on behalf of the Church. Towards Healing also formalises the Church's principles and procedures for responding to incidents of abuse.

The goal of Towards Healing is to address the needs and concerns of those abused by Church personnel. It offers those who have been abused the opportunity to tell their story, personally and directly, to someone in authority in the Church, who will accept responsibility for what happened to him or her, acknowledge the damage he or she has suffered, give a sincere apology and offer pastoral care.



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Key Principles

Towards Healing sets out a number of principles relating to the management of abuse incidents including:

- Any attempt to sexualise a pastoral relationship is a breach of trust, an abuse of authority and professional misconduct.
- Any form of sexual behaviour with a child or young person (under 18yrs), is always sexual abuse. It is both immoral and criminal.
- Physical and emotional cruelty constitute an abuse of power.

What is Abuse?

Under Towards Healing 'abuse' is defined as:

- Sexual assault of another person.
- Sexual harassment of another person.
- Any conduct of a sexual nature with another person which is inconsistent with the integrity of the pastoral relationship.
- An intentional act on a child or young person (under 18yrs) causing significant physical injury.
- Other behaviour towards a child or young person (under 18yrs) causing serious physical pain or mental anguish.

Process

Disclosure Received

Disclosures may be received by telephone, mail or email:
Ph: 1800 337 928 (Free call)
Email: psoidd@catholic.net.au
GPO Box 3264 Brisbane Qld 4001



Disclosure Report

- An independent report writer is appointed
- The person who suffered abuse is interviewed
- A report is prepared
- The Towards Healing process is commenced



Assessment

- Independent investigators are appointed
- An investigation is conducted
- A report with findings is prepared



Facilitation

- An independent mediator is appointed
- A meeting between parties is held
- Agreed outcomes are reached

Not a Compensation Scheme

Towards Healing is not a scheme for providing "compensation" to victims for damages. Rather, its aim is to provide pastoral care. However, in many cases, some financial assistance is offered.

Not a Criminal Investigation

Towards Healing is not a substitute for a criminal investigation.

The Church strongly encourages those who have been abused to report the abuse to police.

Not a Disciplinary Scheme

Towards Healing is not a disciplinary scheme for Church personnel accused of abuse. However, if concerning conduct is substantiated some form of disciplinary action may be taken. The relevant Church Authority will decide what action to take with respect to the perpetrator.



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