

SAFE MINISTRY COMMISSION

MAKING OUR CHURCH SAFE: A PROGRESS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

MEMBERSHIP

Mr Garth Blake AM SC (Chairperson)
The Rt Rev'd Dr Gregory Anderson
The Rt Rev'd Dr Ian Coutts
The Rev'd Tracy Lauersen
Ms Nicola Lock
Ms Audrey Mills
Ms Marilyn Redlich (resigned February 2021)
The Rev'd Canon Prof Peter Sandeman
Ms Dianne Shay
with Meenal Selvaratnam (Safe Ministry and Redress Manager)

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Anglican Church of Australia (**the Church**) has an on-going challenge to ensure the protection of children and other vulnerable persons from abuse by some clergy and church workers and respond to the impact on those who have been abused, as well as on the Church community. Since the late 1990's the General Synod has initiated the development and promotion of national models, standards and benchmarks in the area of child protection, abuse complaints management and responding to survivors of abuse.

The importance of these matters to our community is evidenced by the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry Into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations (**the Victorian Inquiry**), the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (**the Royal Commission**) and the establishment of the National Office for Child Safety. The need to establish a nationally consistent approach to creating an organisational child safe culture is further demonstrated in the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (**National Principles**), as endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments. This will require ongoing leadership and commitment across the whole Church.

Activity

We have set out our activity since the 17th General Synod in this report.

We have received feedback from the Standing Committee, the Professional Standards Directors' Network, other Commissions, diocesan safe ministry authorities and survivors in relation to some bills for canons, policies and resources. This feedback together with the recommendations of the Royal Commission and the National Principles have been taken into account in our recommendations.

Safe Ministry Policies and Structures

There have been widespread efforts throughout the Church to put in place comprehensive policies and structures to make the Church safe for all.

However, both the Victorian Inquiry and Royal Commission have observed there continue to be barriers to change around attitudes and practice for safe ministry and professional standards in the Church. The Royal Commission has emphasised that a significant barrier is the lack of national consistency in policy and practice.

For the last 18 years we have advocated for, and worked towards, a nationally consistent approach to safe ministry to children that is based on minimum standards required to be observed in every diocese. We see this as integral to our identity and imperative for the future of the Church's mission in Australia.

The development of the National Principles provides a further opportunity for the Church to re-examine its policies and structures and continue to demonstrate its leadership and commitment to child safety and wellbeing. The National Principles demonstrate that a child safe organisation is one that goes further than developing and implementing policies and procedures, and is one that creates a culture that promotes child wellbeing and prevention of harm at all levels of the Church.

General Synod Action

We are submitting 10 recommendations for consideration at this session of the General Synod. Some recommendations relate to legislation and financial resources. The recommendations are grouped together in 7 notices of motion set out in the **Appendix**.

We will report to the next session of the General Synod as to the progress of the Church in the development and implementation of safe ministry policies and structures.

We have appreciated the support of the General Synod and many people throughout the Church. It has been a privilege for us to be involved in this important ministry.

2 BACKGROUND

The Professional Standards Commission was established in response to the report of the Child Protection Committee to the 2004 General Synod. This report addressed the emerging recognition of the child sexual abuse crisis in the Church.

In its report to General Synod in 2017, the Professional Standards Commission recommended that its functions should not be limited to “professional standards, safe ministry practices and training, and care and support for ordained and authorised lay ministry”, but should include “the protection of children and adults from abuse”, and that its name should be changed to the Safe Ministry Commission (**the Commission**) to better express the scope of its functions.

As recommended by the Commission in its report to General Synod in 2017 the function of the Commission is:

- (a) to examine the questions of professional standards, safe ministry practices and training, the protection of children and adults from abuse, and care and support for ordained and authorised lay ministry, referred to it by the Primate, the Standing Committee or the General Synod, and to report thereon to the referring party and the Standing Committee;
- (b) to make recommendations to the Standing Committee on matters relating to professional standards, safe ministry practices and training, the protection of children and adults from abuse, and care and support for ordained and authorised lay ministry.

(s 12A of the *Strategic Issues, Commissions, Task Forces and Networks Canon 1998*)

The Safe Ministry Commission has guided the development of a consistent, national approach to matters relating to child safety and complaints handling through its recommendations to the General Synod and the General Synod Standing Committee and has oversight of the Church’s response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Membership

On 23 November 2018, the Primate appointed The Rt Rev’d Dr Ian Coutts as a member of the Commission to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of The Rev’d Canon Tim Spencer. On 1 June 2019, the Primate extended the appointment terms of The Rev’d Peter Sandeman and the Rev’d Tracy Lauersen as members of the Commission to end on the first full Standing Committee meeting after the eighteenth session of General Synod. On 16 April 2021, the Primate extended the appointment terms of Mr Garth Blake AM SC (Chairperson), The Right Rev’d Dr Gregory Anderson, Ms Nicola Lock, Ms Audrey Mills, and Ms Dianne Shay as

members of the Commission to end on the first full Standing Committee meeting after the Eighteenth Session of General Synod.

On February 2021, Ms Marilyn Redlich resigned from the Commission. Since April 2018, we have been grateful to have received the invaluable assistance of Ms Meenal Selvaratnam, the Safe Ministry and Redress Manager.

3 REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The work of the Commission arises from references from the General Synod and the Standing Committee. For the last 5 years our focus has been:

- updating *Faithfulness in Service and Being Together*;
- responding to the recommendations of the Royal Commission;
- updating and providing dioceses with advice on the application of the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017*;
- responding to the external audit of diocesan and General Synod performance against the national standards contained in the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017*;
- revising the policy regarding Persons of Concern and developing an audio-visual resource for use in dioceses that provides information about the implementation of the policy;
- developing a *Pastoral Support Guidance* resource for use in dioceses for providing support to people affected by sexual abuse;
- conducting a national consultation and developing national policy and guidelines regarding minimum national standards for professional supervision, professional development and performance appraisals.

Meetings and conferences

We have met for a minimum of 8 days each year and by occasional teleconference. Since 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions we have met via videoconference on 11 occasions. Prior to the pandemic, we have sought to meet in as many dioceses as practicable and have greatly appreciated their hospitality. Where possible, we have met with the local professional standards bodies and bishops. We have met with the directors of professional standards, and have consulted with Australian experts in relevant fields.

Some members of the Commission have attended and presented at various conferences related to its work.

Recommendations

Our recommendations and supporting reasons are set out in this report. These recommendations complement and reinforce previous recommendations of the Child Protection Committee, Professional Standards Commission, and the Commission.

Implementation of our recommendations requires ongoing change of culture and commitment to consistency within the Church. This will require financial and human resources. Our prayer is that the Church will become a safer place for everyone through implementation of these recommendations. Everyone in our communities deserves nothing less.

4 SAFE MINISTRY POLICIES AND STRUCTURES

A national approach to child protection

The Church has been intentionally addressing safe ministry and professional standards issues at a national level since the late 1990's. While there has been considerable progress in the development and implementation of policies and procedures, it has not been possible to achieve a nationally consistent approach to child protection.

The Royal Commission specifically recommended that the Church should adopt national minimum standards for professional supervision, professional development, and performance appraisals. In the interest of achieving national consistency, the Commission has developed national policies, guidelines and resources in lieu of a canon. Consideration will need to be given as to whether, once the policy and guidelines have been implemented by dioceses, the recommendation for mandatory national standards should be given effect through a canon.

Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017 Audit

In September 2017, the General Synod passed the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* which provides national standards in areas of church worker screening and training, the adoption of a consistent code of conduct and risk management strategies for persons of concern. The Canon includes provisions for an external audit of performance against the national standards. As at February 2022, 21 of 23 dioceses had adopted the Canon. The Diocese of Rockhampton is considering adoption of the Canon. The Diocese of North West Australia is considering its own Safe Ministry Bill which will be developed in light of the Canon and the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The Diocese of Sydney has adopted the Canon but has not yet brought into effect. The Diocese of Sydney is operating within the standards and guidelines of its Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2018 which are substantially consistent with the Canon.

All dioceses which have adopted the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* will be audited to measure compliance with the prescribed code of conduct, and prescribed screening, training and persons of concern standards contained in the Canon. The first group of audits commenced in December 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused delays for some audits as site visits could not be conducted in the time allocated. Alternative arrangements were made for quality assurance checks however diocesan engagement with the audit was further impacted by resourcing issues and working from home arrangements. The first two diocesan audit reports are published on the Church's website and can be downloaded here: <https://anglican.org.au/our-work/professional-standards-commission/safeministryaudits/>

Recently there have been developments in child protection regulatory requirements across state and territory jurisdictions and the compliance requirements for Anglican entities. All states and territories have introduced, or are in the process of introducing, a regulatory framework which applies to faith organisations. Some of these require compliance and reporting by Anglican institutions. The General Synod considered it important to introduce national safe ministry standards as soon as possible after the Royal Commission. The national standards established in the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* were developed in response to the Royal Commission recommendations in the absence of any government regulatory standards at that time. It is expected that the Canon's standards will meet or exceed most government standards but this analysis has not yet been undertaken as many government standards are still in development.

The Commission recently consulted with Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited (ACSL) which has a mandate to conduct publicly available audits of approximately 300 Catholic Dioceses, religious institutions, and agencies. It was instructive to hear of their response to the

implementation of child safe standards by state and territory jurisdictions, and the ACSL approach to audits with an emphasis on capacity building.

In 2022 the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* will have been in effect for five years. Given the changes to government regulatory frameworks it would be worthwhile reviewing the reporting, audit and compliance obligations of Anglican institutions to ensure there is no conflict or unnecessary burden in meeting the Church's national standards and local jurisdictional requirements. Further, there should be an exemption from compliance with the obligations provided in the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* where there are equivalent statutory requirements within a jurisdiction.

Recommendation 1

The General Synod in the light of developing child safety regulatory requirements of States and Territories, requests the Standing Committee to establish a group to:

- (a) review the compliance, audit and reporting obligations of dioceses under the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* in light of the child safety regulatory requirements imposed on those dioceses by the laws of State and Territories applicable to them;
- (b) provide recommendations as to whether and if so how the requirements of the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* might be changed for dioceses now subject to a regime imposed by a State or Territory with requirements covering the same subject matter;
- (c) provide recommendations as to whether and if so how to exempt from compliance with the obligations in the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* to dioceses subject to equivalent statutory requirements imposed by a State or Territory;
- (d) report to the Standing Committee at least twelve months prior to the Nineteenth Session of General Synod;
- (e) present for the approval of the Standing Committee instructions for any legislation to be drafted by the Church Law Commission for consideration at the nineteenth session of General Synod.

The group will consist of the follow persons appointed by the Standing Committee in consultation with the Safe Ministry Commission:

- (a) a chair;
- (b) two representing dioceses in jurisdictions where there are statutory regulatory frameworks relating to child safe standards;
- (c) one from another Christian denomination with experience in undertaking child safety audit processes;
- (d) one from the wider community with experience in child safety audit processes and who is not currently providing services as an employee or contractors to the Anglican Church of Australia or its dioceses;
- (e) four members of the Safe Ministry Commission.

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The National Principles reflect the ten child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission, with a broader scope that goes beyond sexual abuse to cover other forms of potential harm. In February 2019, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the National Principles.

The National Principles demonstrate that a child safe organisation is one that goes further than developing and implementing policies and procedures, and is one that creates a culture that promotes child wellbeing and prevention of harm at all levels of the Church. The Safer Churches conference of National Council of Churches in Australia (**NCCA**) held in 2019 identified that the greatest challenge faced by religious organisations seeking to become safe for children is to transform the organisational cultures that enabled children and young people to be abused, and then denied the abuse, and shamed and ignored them.

We consider that it is important to measure and review the Church's progress towards being a child safe institution in light of the National Principles. At present, the National Principles are not mandatory in most jurisdictions; however, each State and Territory is considering the extent to which these principles will apply, whether in the form of legislation or policy.

Recommendation 2

The General Synod requests the Safe Ministry Commission to measure and review the Church's progress towards being a child safe institution in light of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

General Synod Legislation

The Commission has recommended amendments to safe ministry legislation which give effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission, respond to feedback received from members of the Church community, and promote a nationally consistent response to child safety.

At its meeting on 31 May – 1 June 2019, the Standing Committee received recommendations from the Commission on amendments to legislation and requested the General Secretary to consult with dioceses on these proposed amendments. Consultation papers were circulated to diocesan safe ministry authorities in July 2019 and the issues presented at meetings held in Melbourne, Perth and at the Rural Ministry Conference.

At its meeting on 8 – 9 November 2019, the Standing Committee considered the final recommendations of the Commission and requested the Commission to collaborate with the Church Law Commission to prepare the relevant bills for the eighteenth session of General Synod.

The Commission recommends that General Synod passes the following Bills to give effect to recommendations of the Royal Commission:

- (a) Safe Ministry Legislation Amendments Bill 2022;
- (b) Bill for a Rule to Amend Rule II – Standing Committee (Conflict of Interest) 2022;
- (c) Bill for the Constitution Amendment (Mandatory Deposition) Canon 2022;
- (d) Bill for the Constitution Amendment (Mandatory Suspension) Canon 2022.

References from the 17th General Synod

The 17th General Synod in 2017 referred the following matters to the Commission:

- (a) to measure and review the Church's progress towards being a child safe institution in the light of the elements identified in the report entitled *Creating Child Safe Institutions* of the Royal Commission issued in July 2016;
- (b) to analyse the final report of the Royal Commission and make recommendations as to actions to be taken;
- (c) to develop an audio visual resource for use in dioceses that provides information to ministers, churchwardens and parish councils about the implementation of the Policy for safe ministry in a parish where there is a risk of sexual abuse by a Person of Concern and the issues raised by the participation of a Person of Concern in the life of a parish;
- (d) to develop a resource for use in dioceses for providing care for families who have experienced premature death of a family member due to child sexual abuse;
- (e) to identify and recommend resources for use in dioceses for responding to family and domestic violence;
- (f) to report to the 18th General Synod as to the progress of the Church in the development and implementation of safe ministry policies and structures.

With respect to **item (a)** of these references, we have deferred the preparation of a report as the Child Safe Standards developed by the Royal Commission have been superseded by the National Principles. This work has been put on hold in light of developing child safety regulatory requirements of the States and Territories.

With respect to **item (b)** of these references, the Commission completed and submitted its recommendations to Standing Committee in May 2018. Following this, the Commission has comprehensively consulted with dioceses and other commissions to develop amendments to safe ministry policies and legislation in response to the Royal Commission recommendations. It appears that the National Principles will be included in the statutory framework for the protection of children in the states and territories. At present the National Principles are not mandatory in most jurisdictions; however, each State and Territory has progressed their implementation in some form. All States and Territories have introduced, or are in the process of introducing, a regulatory framework which applies to faith organisations. The Commission will continue to monitor these legislative changes and determine in due course whether any action is required to implement the National Principles. The Commission, in conjunction with the General Synod Office, has submitted an annual report on the Church's response to the Royal Commission recommendations to dioceses and to the National Office for Child Safety. The 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 reports are available on the National Office for Child Safety's website at <https://www.childabuseroyalcommissionresponse.gov.au/annual-progress-reporting/institution-reports>.

With respect to **item (c)** of these references, the Commission has produced an audio visual resource concerning the implementation of the Policy for safe ministry in a parish where there is a risk of sexual abuse by a Person of Concern. The resource, titled *Considering Persons of Concern*, includes interviews with directors of professional standards, a clinical psychologist, and parish representatives. The participation of persons of concern in a parish raises difficult issues which are dealt with in the Persons of Concern video. The Standing Committee has

recommended the resource to dioceses and the General Synod Office has securely distributed the resource to all bishops, registrars and professional standards directors (SC2021/2/3).

With respect to **item (d)** and **(e)** of these references, the Commission has not commenced work on these matters. While the work required to implement **item (e)** is likely to be undertaken by the Family Violence Working Group, the Commission considers it necessary to review *Faithfulness in Service* to examine whether amendments should be made to respond to family and domestic violence as well as to safeguard adults at risk.

Recommendation 3

The General Synod requests the Safe Ministry Commission to review *Faithfulness in Service*:

- (a) in consultation with the Family Violence Working Group to examine whether amendments should be made to respond to family and domestic violence; and
 - (b) to examine whether amendments should be made to safeguard adults at risk;
 - (c) in light of the statutory regulatory frameworks relating to child safe standards;
- and report to the Standing Committee with any proposed amendments;

Recommendation 4

The General Synod requests the Safe Ministry Commission to continue to report to the Standing Committee on the Church's progress towards responding to the recommendations of the Royal Commission and make recommendations to the Standing Committee as to any further actions to be taken.

Recommendation 5

The General Synod:

- (a) notes the endorsement of the Persons of Concern video by the Standing Committee; and
- (b) requests the Safe Ministry Commission to consult with dioceses to seek feedback regarding the usage and usefulness of the resource.

References from the Standing Committee since the 17th General Synod

Recommendations of the Final Report of the Royal Commission

At its meeting on 24 March 2018, the Standing Committee requested the Safe Ministry Commission to develop an implementation plan setting out the timeframe for the proposed actions to be taken in response to the recommendations in the final report of the Royal Commission (SC2018/02/03). At its meeting on 11-12 May 2018, the Standing Committee considered the Commission's implementation plan and requested the Commission to collaborate with dioceses and Anglican bodies to prepare:

- (a) a policy relating to the management of actual or perceived conflicts of interest (and required amendments to relevant legislation) (SC2018/02/30);
- (b) a policy as to the circumstances in which a member of the clergy
 - a. who is the subject of a complaint of child sexual abuse which is substantiated should be permanently removed from ministry; and

- b. who is convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse should be permanently removed from ministry and deposed from holy orders. (SC2018/02/31);
- (c) an amendment of *Being Together* to expressly refer to the importance of child safety (SC2018/02/32);
- (d) amendments to *Faithfulness in Service* and the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* to give effect to the policy in the Bishops' Protocol in relation to private confession by children (SC2018/02/33);
- (e) a policy in relation to a national approach for the selection of candidates for ordination with regard to safe ministry (and any required amendments to the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* or another proposed canon) (SC2018/02/34);
- (f) a policy in relation to minimum training on child safety and the provision of opportunities for external training on best practice approaches to child safety (SC2018/02/35);
- (g) a policy in relation to whether the scope of the *National Register Canon 2007* should be extended to cover officers, employees and volunteers of all Anglican Church of Australia institutions (and any required amendments to the *National Register Canon 2007*) (SC2018/02/36);
- (h) a policy in relation to mandatory national standards for clergy and church workers for professional development, professional/pastoral supervision and performance appraisals (and any required amendments of the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* or another proposed canon) (SC2018/02/37);
- (i) a policy for accredited leadership training for bishops including in relation to the promotion of child safety (and any required amendments to the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017*) (SC2018/02/38);
- (j) a policy for accredited age-appropriate prevention education for children in institutions of the Anglican Church of Australia that have children in their care other than Church bodies specified in section 9(2) of the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* (and any required amendments to the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017*) (SC2018/02/39);
- (k) a national repository of people with relevant professional expertise to provide advice on matters relating to child sexual abuse and child safety including advice to mandatory reporters on reporting obligations (SC2018/02/40);
- (l) a policy for the accountability of diocesan bishops for the decisions they make with respect to child safety that are not covered by the *Episcopal Standards (Child Protection) Canon 2017* (and required amendments to relevant legislation) (SC2018/02/41);
- (m) a policy regarding the retention, for at least 45 years, of records relating to child sexual abuse that has occurred or is alleged to have occurred and was perpetrated or alleged to have been perpetrated by their clergy or church workers (SC2018/02/43);
- (n) a policy regarding the implementation of records and recordkeeping principles specified in recommendation 8.4 of the Final Report of the Royal Commission (SC2018/02/44);
- (o) a policy on whether professional standards and disciplinary ordinances and other complaint handling policies of these bodies and their affiliates should require that:

- a. upon receiving a complaint of child sexual abuse, an initial risk assessment is conducted to identify and minimise and risks to children; and
 - b. if a complaint of child sexual abuse against a member of the clergy or church worker is plausible, and there is a risk that person may come into contact with children in the course of their ministry, the person be stood down from ministry while the complaint is investigated. (SC2018/02/45);
- (p) a clear, accessible and child-focused complaint handling policy and procedure for institutions of the Anglican Church of Australia that sets out how the institution should respond to complaints of child sexual abuse (SC2018/02/46);
- (q) amendments of *Faithfulness in Service* and the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* to require that clergy and church workers who know or suspect that a child is being or has been sexually abused in an institutional context should report the abuse to police (SC2018/02/47).

Items (a), (b), (l) and (o) have been addressed in the Bill for the Safe Ministry Legislation Amendments Canon 2022, Bill for a Rule to amend Rule II – Standing Committee (Conflict of Interest) 2022, Bill for the Constitution Amendment (Mandatory Deposition) Canon 2022 and Bill for the Constitution Amendment (Mandatory Suspension) Canon 2022.

Item (c) has been completed. The Standing Committee at its meeting held on 16-17 April 2021 approved the proposed changes to *Being Together* to respond to recommendation 16.3 of the Royal Commission (SC2021/2/27). The revised *Being Together* is published on the Anglican Church of Australia website and is available to download here: <https://anglican.org.au/our-work/professional-standards-commission/prevention/>

Item (h) has been partially completed. The Royal Commission specifically recommended that the Church should adopt national minimum standards for professional supervision, professional development, and performance appraisals. In the interest of achieving national consistency, the Safe Ministry Commission has developed a document titled *Ministry Wellbeing and Development: Policy, Guidelines and Resources*, in lieu of a canon. The Standing Committee at its meeting held on 12-13 November 2021 endorsed the document and recommended dioceses give effect to the policy and guidelines (SC2021/4/25). Consideration will need to be given as to whether once the policy and guidelines have been implemented by dioceses, the recommendation for mandatory national standards should be given effect though a canon. The Commission wishes to express its gratitude to Rob McGregor who has been responsible for the editing and layout of the resource to facilitate accessibility for its users.

The Commission has submitted proposals for the implementation of **items (d), (k) and (q)** for consideration by Standing Committee at a future meeting. The Commission will continue to collaborate with the relevant Anglican bodies to progress the work of the outstanding items.

The Commission will continue to collaborate with the Mission and Ministry Commission and the Anglican Theological Educators Network to progress the work of **items (e), (f), and (i)**, and with Anglicare Australia and Anglican Schools Australia on **items (g) and (j)**. The Commission will seek input from the Registrars Network with regards to **items (m) and (n)**.

With regard to **item (p)**, the National Office for Child Safety has developed a *Complaint Handling Guide* which provides practical advice to organisations about how to develop, implement and maintain a complaint-handling system that prioritises child safety and promotes the rights of children and young people to have a voice in decisions that affect them. The Commission considers that the guide may provide the benchmarks required for the development of national complaint handling policy and procedure for the Church.

Recommendation 6

The General Synod notes:

- a) Royal Commission recommendations 16.4, 16.44 and 16.45 for national mandatory standards for professional development, professional/pastoral supervision and performance appraisals; and
- b) the endorsement of the *Ministry, Wellbeing and Development: Policy, Guidelines and Resources* document by the Standing Committee and encourages dioceses to fully implement the policy and guidelines to enhance the wellbeing and professional development of clergy and some paid church workers.

Recommendation 7

The General Synod requests the Safe Ministry Commission in consultation with diocesan safe ministry authorities to develop a clear, accessible and child-focused complaint handling policy which addresses the guidelines provided in the National Office for Child Safety *Complaint Handling Guide*, and make recommendations to the Standing Committee.

Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017 – Screening Standards

The *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* empowers the Standing Committee by a two-thirds majority by resolution to amend the Second Schedule by prescribing amendments to the prescribed standards, and by determining the date on which the amendments to the prescribed standards shall come into force. Prior to exercising this power the Standing Committee is required to consult with the Commission and diocesan safe ministry authorities.

At the request of Standing Committee, the Commission consulted with dioceses on several proposed changes to the criminal history assessment and safe ministry assessment (SC2018/02/26, SC2018/02/48, SC2018/03/39, SC2018/03/40). At its meeting in November 2018, the Standing Committee approved the proposed changes to the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* and the relevant Safe Ministry Checks (SC2018/03/40).

The Standing Committee also requested the Commission to investigate the adequacy of the standards for church workers under the age of 18 years under the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* including whether they are appropriate to address the risk of child on child abuse (SC2018/03/45). The Commission has consulted with experts in child development and considers the screening of church workers under the age of 18 to be necessary. In response to this issue, the Commission has developed standards of supervision for church workers under the age of 16. The Standing Committee at its meeting held on April 16-17 2021 amended the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* to incorporate those standards of supervision for church workers under the age of 16 (SC2021/2/26).

The Primate referred correspondence from the Diocese of Sydney to the Commission requesting changes relating to the definition of psychological assessment in the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017*. The Commission commenced a diocesan consultation on 5 February 2021 regarding proposed changes to the definition of psychological assessment. The Standing Committee at its meeting held on 16-17 April 2021 approved the proposed changes to the definition of psychological assessment and amended the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* to incorporate those changes (SC2021/2/25).

During the course of its work the Commission identified a gap in the prescribed screening standards for occasional ministry to children for those who exercise a pastoral ministry which has direct contact with children that is not regular and not incidental. The Commission

consulted with diocesan safe ministry authorities and submitted a proposal for the standards for screening for occasional ministry for consideration by Standing Committee at a future meeting (SC2019/02/47).

Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017 – Equivalent Code of Conduct

The *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* confirms *Faithfulness in Service* as the prescribed code of conduct for a Church body subject to the Canon, unless an application is made for approval of an alternative. Section 5(3) of the Canon states:

Subject to subsection (2), the prescribed code of conduct shall apply to clergy and church workers in a Church body unless the Standing Committee by a two thirds majority, on application by a province or diocese, determines that the Church body has a code of conduct containing equivalent standards of conduct for observance, and guidelines for conduct to be followed, by its clergy and church workers as appropriately adapted to the context of the Church body that give substantial effect to the standards of conduct and the guidelines for conduct contained in the prescribed code of conduct.

To date, the Commission has reviewed and provided advice to the Standing Committee regarding the following equivalent code of conduct:

- (a) Anglican Schools and Education & Care Services (approved by Standing Committee at its meeting in November 2018 (SC2018/03/41)).

Other activities since the 17th General Synod

We have engaged in a range of other activities since the 17th General Synod in 2017.

The Commission has developed a resource titled *Providing pastoral support to people affected by sexual abuse: Guidance for clergy and church workers in the Anglican Church of Australia*. The resource seeks to assist clergy and church workers in the provision of effective pastoral support to those affected by sexual abuse. The Commission wishes to express its gratitude to Rob McGregor who has been responsible for the editing and layout of the resource to facilitate accessibility for its users. At its meeting on 4 March 2022, the Standing Committee endorsed the resource and recommended dioceses distribute the document to parishes and applicable agencies for use by clergy and church workers (SC2022/1/26).

Recommendation 8

The General Synod notes the endorsement of the *Providing pastoral support to people affected by sexual abuse: Guidance for clergy and church workers in the Anglican Church of Australia* resource developed by the Safe Ministry Commission and encourages dioceses to make this resource available to clergy and church workers providing pastoral care.

5 ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Garth Blake is the chair of the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission (**ACSCC**) and Marilyn Redlich was its facilitator until June 2021. The ACSCC's remit is to promote the safety of people within churches of the Anglican Communion – with a particular focus on children, young people and vulnerable adults.

During the first phase of its work from 2016-2019, the ACSCC identified safeguarding policies and procedures already in place within the Anglican Communion and developed new

international guidelines. The guidelines were presented at the Anglican Consultative Council held in Hong Kong from 28 April to 5 May 2019. The Anglican Consultative Council passed the following resolutions which are relevant to the work of the ACSCC:

'The Anglican Consultative Council, recognising the failures of the past, is determined that every church in the Anglican Communion is a safe place for everyone, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults, and therefore:

1. *approves the 'Guidelines to enhance the safety of all persons – especially children, young people and vulnerable adults – within the provinces of the Anglican Communion', and authorises the Standing Committee to amend the Guidelines, in consultation with the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission*
2. *requests each Member Church and each extra-provincial Church under the direct metropolitan jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury to take the following five steps:*
 - a. *adopt the Charter and implement the Protocol, where it has not done so*
 - b. *implement the Guidelines*
 - c. *report to ACC18 on the steps taken to adopt the Charter, and to implement the Protocol and Guidelines*
 - d. *appoint a representative with the responsibility of liaising with the Commission regarding the adoption of the Charter, implementation of the Protocol and the Guidelines, and the development of recommendations for the enhancement of the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults in the Anglican Communion, and*
 - e. *encourage those with safe church/safeguarding responsibilities in the province to join the Anglican Communion Safe Church Network*
3. *requests the Secretary General to reconstitute the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission with the terms of reference as approved by the Standing Committee.*

At its meeting in November 2019 and at the request of the Commission, the Standing Committee agreed to welcome the *Guidelines to enhance the safety of all persons – especially children, young people and vulnerable adults – within the provinces of the Anglican Communion* and asked the Commission to review the guidelines and report to the Standing Committee on any steps necessary to implement them (SC2019/02/53).

6 JOINT CHURCH ACTION

Some of our members attended the Safer Churches conference held on 17 and 18 September 2019 in Brisbane organised by the NCCA. This conference provided a valuable opportunity for our members to meet with representatives of other denominations dealing with professional standards issues. Garth Blake and Meenal Selvaratnam are the representatives of the Church on the NCCA Safe Church Network.

Recommendation 9

The General Synod commends the National Council of Churches in Australia for organising the Safer Churches Conference on transforming the culture of safeguarding within Australian churches, and supports ongoing joint action by member churches and other participating Australian churches to promote the welfare and safety of all people within their communities. The General Synod requests the General Secretary to convey this resolution to the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

7 GENERAL SYNOD ACTION

It will be important for the General Synod to continue to be aware of the progress in the development and implementation of safe ministry policies and structures to ensure that the *Safe Ministry Policy Statement* adopted at the 13th General Synod in 2004 and the adoption of the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* is matched by effective action. It is recommended that the General Synod requests the Commission to report to the next session of the General Synod on the progress of the Church in the development and implementation of safe ministry policies and structures.

Recommendation 10

The General Synod requests the Safe Ministry Commission to report to the 19th General Synod as to the progress of the Church in the development and implementation of safe ministry policies and structures.

APPENDIX – MOTIONS FOR THE 18th GENERAL SYNOD**Motion 1**

The General Synod receives the report of the Safe Ministry Commission.

Motion 2

The General Synod in the light of developing child safety regulatory requirements of States and Territories, requests the Standing Committee to establish a group to:

- a) review the compliance, audit and reporting obligations of dioceses under the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* in light of the child safety regulatory requirements imposed on those dioceses by the laws of State and Territories applicable to them;
- b) provide recommendations as to whether and if so how the requirements of the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* might be changed for dioceses now subject to a regime imposed by a State or Territory with requirements covering the same subject matter;
- c) provide recommendations as to whether and if so how to exempt from compliance with the obligations in the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* to dioceses subject to equivalent statutory requirements imposed by a State or Territory;
- d) report to the Standing Committee at least twelve months prior to the Nineteenth Session of General Synod;
- e) present for the approval of the Standing Committee instructions for any legislation to be drafted by the Church Law Commission for consideration at the nineteenth session of General Synod.

The group will consist of the follow persons appointed by the Standing Committee in consultation with the Safe Ministry Commission:

- i. a chair;
- ii. two representing dioceses in jurisdictions where there are statutory regulatory frameworks relating to child safe standards;
- iii. one from another Christian denomination with experience in undertaking child safety audit processes;
- iv. one from the wider community with experience in child safety audit processes and who is not currently providing services as an employee or contractors to the Anglican Church of Australia or its dioceses;
- v. four members of the Safe Ministry Commission.

Motion 3

The General Synod requests the Safe Ministry Commission:

- a) to measure and review the Church's progress towards being a child safe institution in light of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and report to the Standing Committee;

- b) to continue to report to the Standing Committee on the Church's progress towards responding to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and make recommendations to the Standing Committee as to any further actions to be taken;
- c) in consultation with diocesan safe ministry authorities to develop a clear, accessible and child-focused complaint handling policy which addresses the guidelines provided in the National Office for Child Safety Complaint Handling Guide, and make recommendations to the Standing Committee;
- d) to report to the 19th General Synod as to the progress of the Church in the development and implementation of safe ministry policies and structures
- e) to review *Faithfulness in Service*:
 - i. in consultation with the Family & Domestic Violence Working Group to examine whether amendments should be made to respond to family and domestic violence; and
 - ii. to examine whether amendments should be made to safeguard adults at risk
 - iii. in the light of the statutory regulatory frameworks relating to child safe standardsand report to the Standing Committee with any proposed amendments.

Motion 4

The General Synod:

- a) notes the endorsement of the Persons of Concern video by the Standing Committee; and
- b) requests the Safe Ministry Commission to consult with dioceses to seek feedback regarding the usage and usefulness of the resource.

Motion 5

The General Synod notes:

- a) Royal Commission recommendations 16.4, 16.44 and 16.45 for national mandatory standards for professional development, professional/pastoral supervision and performance appraisals; and
- b) the endorsement of the *Ministry Wellbeing and Development: Policy, Guidelines and Resources* document by the Standing Committee

and encourages dioceses to fully implement the policy and guidelines to enhance the wellbeing and professional development of clergy and some paid church workers.

Motion 6

The General Synod:

- a) notes the endorsement of the *Providing pastoral support to people affected by sexual abuse: Guidance for clergy and church workers in the Anglican Church of Australia* resource by the Standing Committee; and

- b) encourages dioceses to make this resource available to clergy and church workers providing pastoral care to enhance the pastoral care of those who have been affected by sexual abuse.

Motion 7

The General Synod commends the National Council of Churches in Australia for organising the *Safer Churches Conference* on transforming the culture of safeguarding within Australian churches, and supports ongoing joint action by member churches and other participating Australian churches to promote the welfare and safety of all people within their communities. The General Synod requests the General Secretary to convey this resolution to the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Australia.