

## Appendix 1

### *Preparing for a Professional Supervision Session*

**Reflective Practice** is the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. Reflective practice involves paying critical attention to the values and theories that inform work, by systematically examining professional behaviours. This leads to developmental insight. Reflection is an important activity where clergy recapture their experiences, mull them over, and evaluate them.

**To do:** Each week, review your **calendar, diary, journal, appointment book, case notes or files**. Reflect on your *challenging* professional encounters by **describing** what happened, **examining** your feelings experienced, **analysing** what went on, **evaluating** the outcomes, and **drawing** conclusions about the encounters. Make some brief notes.

A few days before your professional supervision session, review the accumulated notes of your reflections, and **arrive prepared to present a case or explore a theme.**

*Consider the following questions and jot down what comes to mind:*

1. What **surfaces** for you immediately?
2. What experiences were you **pleased** with?
3. What has been **difficult** for you?
4. What were you, or are you, **uncertain** about?
5. What interactions or times have you **enjoyed** most?

What were the **feelings**?

6. Note any **anxieties** about **relationships** or **progress** with any individuals, i.e., **parishioners** or **peers**.
7. What are other **doubts** or **anxieties** (*general or specific*)?

Identify the **feelings**.

8. What are you **looking for**, and **forward to**, in your professional supervision session?

What are your **goals**?

What would be a good **outcome** from your session?

## Appendix 2

### *Guidelines for Clergy Peer Consultation Groups*

#### Peer Consultation

**PEER CONSULTATION** refers to *the process of clergy talking with each other in a non-hierarchical fashion to explore their experience of pastoral work*. This involves the practice of qualified and often highly experienced clergy working with peers to access and share information, discuss opinions, receive support, monitor best practice and obtain feedback on their ministry activities within a safe context.

Peer consultation can occur in a number of ways. These may include, but are not limited to: case presentations, individual peer review, regular group meetings between clergy of differing levels of experience (to talk about specific experiences), and consultations with experienced professionals external to the group.

#### Functions of Peer Consultation

Peer consultation is part of responsible professional and ethical practice. It can **help in the protection of parishioners** and provides support to clergy by providing feedback regarding best practices. Peer consultation may also highlight the need for clergy to undertake additional education, individual supervision, or therapy. Furthermore, peer consultation is important for risk management.

For these reasons, the church supports their clergy in undertaking peer consultation. Peer consultation helps build a **culture of accountability**, and a **culture of continuing (personal and professional) development**.

#### Guidelines

The five specific aspects for the conduct of clergy peer consultation groups are:

- the organisation of the group;
- ethical considerations;
- the group processes;
- the conduct of peer support;
- review of group's functioning.

These guidelines are recommendations. They are provided to assist clergy in the development and conduct of peer consultation groups. It is assumed that individual groups may choose to adopt only those particular guidelines that are relevant to the activities of their group. However groups should give careful consideration to each of the guidelines, as they constitute what is considered best practice.

## Organisation

### 1. Membership

Membership of groups should be open to clergy at all levels of experience from newly-ordained through to very experienced clergy. When newly-ordained and newly-arrived are included, the group should consider the proportion of experienced versus less experienced members. This will ensure that all members benefit from participation. Peer consultation may not be a substitute for individual supervision, given that peer consultation may not satisfy mandated supervision requirements for the newly-ordained.

### 2. Size

The following principles are proposed:

The group size, composition and functioning must allow active participation by all members.

3 to 6 members are needed to ensure a viable group. There will, occasionally, be absences. Groups should ensure that all members present have ample opportunity to contribute and benefit from the meetings.

The group needs to make a decision early on as to whether it wishes to be an open or closed group. An open group may be flexible and more dynamic, while a closed group may provide consistency, predictability, and tends to provide greater trust and openness to disclose.

### 3. Coordination

It is recommended that:

the group appoints a coordinator or facilitator who ensures that the agreed processes occur, and who may provide liaison with external bodies as needed;

the coordinator/facilitator role may be rotated;

the group considers the benefits of additional training in group process, ethical guidelines, dealing with difference or conflict resolution (some of this material may be provided by an external facilitator);

the group encourages, in its educational style, the principles of active and participatory learning, building on each clergy's experience, and dealing with their issues.

### 4. Funding

Members will not be required to pay any joining or membership fees, but may need to contribute to costs for catering, room hire, professional development activities, or materials on a cost-recovery basis. Most groups demonstrate that peer consultation functions well without the need for funding.

## **5. Venue**

The group should give careful consideration to its meeting place and take into account such factors as confidentiality and privacy, and the appropriateness of facilities for the purpose of uninterrupted group process. For those groups using homes or offices, the home or office owner should check the public liability insurance to ensure coverage.

## **6. Resources**

Groups need to consider the equipment (e.g., data-projector) and other resources (e.g., whiteboard) that may be required.

## **7. Frequency and duration**

The frequency and duration of meetings are negotiated based on objectives/agenda. A meeting should occur every 4 to 6 weeks, and go for 1.5 to 2.0 hours each session.

## **Ethics**

Peer consultation groups require the same attention to ethical codes of conduct as any other activity conducted by clergy. All members of peer groups need to be familiar with any code of ethics as found in *National Committee for Professional Standards* (NCPS) documents. General principles include:

### **1. Responsibility**

Members of peer consultation groups need to adopt equal and self-regulating responsibility for their behaviour, and adherence to professional codes of conduct.

Clergy are expected to think through consequences of their behaviour in the group (e.g., levels of self-disclosure, peer criticism, potential impact of advice).

If a member of a group feels that the group is not functioning in a manner that meets the parameters of sound professional conduct (e.g., breaching privacy: conducting meetings in a space that does not ensure privacy of conversation) then the member should raise this concern with the group and, if necessary, seek external guidance to manage these concerns.

### **2. Propriety**

Whilst peer consultation groups are developed to support clergy, it is important to keep in mind that the endpoint of this support is the public who are served by clergy.

Peer group members should be sensitive to an understanding of human diversity, including culture, gender, identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, class, religion and ethnicity.

Group members should be mindful of regulating their self-disclosure, and be supportive of setting limits on self-disclosure of others due to contextual and time constraints (e.g., groups are for consultation purposes and not personal therapy. Distressed members, however, should be appropriately supported).

### **3. Confidentiality**

Ethical guidelines concerning confidentiality must be observed at all times, and personal details that may potentially identify any person must be changed.

## **Group Processes**

### **1. Purpose and objectives**

The purpose, content and specific objectives of the group shall be clearly defined for all members. This should occur during the first meeting of the group, when a new member joins the group, and at least annually. Group objectives should relate to the goals of members for knowledge and skill development, and the meeting of other needs relating to professional practice. Groups will provide new members with an overview of the purpose, objectives and processes of the group, and that these be revisited at each review of the group's operation.

### **2. Meeting schedule and agendas**

A timetable or calendar of meetings should be agreed upon in advance, so that meetings are predictable, and a coherent program is in place. Typically, this will involve scheduling meetings at least three meetings ahead (perhaps even annually).

It is recommended that groups develop a process for deciding the agenda of meetings. A set order of business provides predictability and allows members to prepare for recurring items (such as checking-in, prior reading, reports on practice issues, or review of agreed actions after a meeting), and rosters of responsibilities relating to specific meetings may be useful. However, the group also needs to decide on issues that may be allowed to take priority over the agenda on some occasions, in order to preserve flexibility in meeting the immediate needs of members. When a guest speaker is the focus of a meeting, 30 minutes pre-presentation will be made available for any urgent business.

### **3. Group rules**

Without wanting to constrain the dynamism and flexibility of groups, it is important to establish procedural rules. These rules must address such issues as:

- group membership;
- members' responsibilities (i.e., attendance, meeting processes, structure);
- expected preparation before meetings (see **Appendix 1** for a sample);
- confidentiality and disclosure issues;
- dispute resolution processes.

### **4. Record-keeping**

Meeting attendances, activities, group decisions and actions, and issues to be resolved could be briefly noted. Recording attendance may be important because of its implications for professional development requirements (this might be carried out by using a basic form that will ensure easy audit).

## Conduct of Peer Support

### 1. Containment

One of the major benefits of the clergy peer consultation group is the support offered to its members, in respect of both professional process recommendations, and personal and emotional support. However, clarification and agreement as to how this will be managed and contained is required. An effective group encourages free expression, and promulgates a supportive, positive, culture. It is helpful to identify that the group process is not:

- therapy (other options can be identified); or
- focused on negative feedback (despite some corrective practice-related feedback sometimes needing to be tactfully given within the meeting).

### 2. Additional support options

To provide support to members, the group may develop a brief handout on:

- the purpose of the group;
- roles and responsibilities of the members;
- articulation of the limits of support;
- self-care;
- general resources available.

## Review Of Group's Functioning

Peer consultation groups should undergo review at least annually. The aim of a review is to:

- examine the group's attainment of its objectives;
- modify the purpose, objectives, and program of the group;
- provide feedback to peers/leaders on the effectiveness of the peer consultation process;
- assist with data collection that will allow a review of recommendations for peer consultation.

Experience has shown that in the early stages of a peer consultation group a session regarding group processes, group orientation, and common occurrences within groups is helpful. This gives an opportunity to discuss expectations, and to raise issues of self-disclosure and confidentiality. Some case material or examples could be useful as a resource.

**Dr John Barletta 2018**  
Psychologist & Consultant

3 Days Rd, Grange QLD 4061  
☎ 041 383 1946  
john@johnbarletta.com  
www.johnbarletta.com

*(Adapted: APS Peer Consultation Guidelines)*