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Continuing Professional Development for Priests

1. Rationale:

This paper outlines **Continuing Professional Development** for priests working within the *Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton*. Accountability and quality are key fundamentals that the broader community has been demanding of the Church, and which we are committed to promoting.

All professionals (e.g., Accountants, Doctors, Lawyers, Psychologists, Teachers) are required by their respective registration/certification authorities (and/or professional associations, employers) to undertake regular **professional development** and **professional supervision** to maintain registration and their right to practice in their profession.

The concept of priests' ongoing professional development and supervision is one that received attention at the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* (see Recommendation 16.25).

Meetings of clergy will continue to provide excellent opportunities for priests to discuss how these requirements can be satisfied, and to provide valuable input into conceptual structure. Continuing professional development is a shared responsibility between the Church and the priest.

2. Requirement for Professional Development:

Priests are to undertake **professional development** activities in some of these areas:

- (a) Human
- (b) Spiritual
- (c) Intellectual (incl. philosophy, theology)
- (d) Pastoral (incl. leadership).

Activities undertaken might include:

- (a) Retreats (other than Diocesan retreats and meetings, unless there is a specific focus on developing knowledge and/or skills)
- (b) Seminars or conferences
- (c) Studying books/journals
- (d) Mentoring or coaching.

Professional development is to be at least **20 hours** annually.

3. Requirement for *Professional Supervision*:

Professional supervision, sometimes called pastoral or clinical supervision, is a challenging initiative for many priests. Professional supervision involves meeting with an individual or with a peer consultation group every four to six weeks. The process of professional supervision allows a priest to dialogue with others to debrief their experience of priestly ministry so as to enhance quality and accountability. Although socialising (e.g., shared meals, playing golf) is encouraged, it is not professional supervision.

The individual who provides professional supervision could come from the following areas:

- (a) Psychology/Psychiatry
- (b) Education
- (c) Leadership
- (d) Clergy (Diocesan and Religious Orders).

Professional supervision is to be at least **10 hours** annually.

4. Accountability and Monitoring:

Each priest is required to maintain a record of their professional development and professional supervision (via a logbook), noting the date, what activity was attended and where, who was involved, hours engaged, and a very brief overview of the outcomes.

This record keeping, which is not onerous, helps in the case of an audit by the Episcopal leadership, Clergy Life and Ministry personnel, or a duly authorised person.

An audit simply asks the priest to describe how he has taken responsibility for his ongoing formation.

5. Performance Appraisal:

Effective ongoing formation and development requires annual review of a priest's strengths and areas for growth. A review might also be required when moving to another parish, or going on sabbatical. In addition to an annual review, and to assist in the appraisal process, a priest

may at times choose to also undertake:

- (a) a self-reflection review of performance
- (b) a survey completed by parishioners or parish committee members
- (c) a formal appraisal with Episcopal leadership, deans, or chairs of the finance or pastoral council
- (d) an agreement on future performance indicators.

The Office of the Australian Council for Clergy Life and Ministry has processes to facilitate performance appraisals, and such appraisals may be guided by the Clergy Life and Ministry Director or someone who is competent and agreed to by the Director and the person being appraised.

Most Reverend Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton

*Prepared in conjunction with Dr John Barletta
Psychologist & Consultant*

Appendices

1. Preparing for a Professional Supervision Session
2. Guidelines for Clergy Peer Consultation Groups