

SAFE MINISTRY AUTHORITY (SMA)

What is it?

The Gippsland SMA was set up at the end of 2018 in response to the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017*. All Australian Dioceses who have adopted the Canon have (or will) set up a SMA.

Why is it needed?

The SMA is one direct result of the *Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*. It is part of a range of measures designed to ensure that abuse of young people, and vulnerable people, never again happens in the Anglican Church. It will ensure that we

change culture and practice

in our church – and in the wider community.

What does it do?

The Constitution of the SMA sets out the following functions:

- to ensure that standards of screening and standards of training as set out in the *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017* (SMCCA) are met.
- to ensure that screening is carried out by the relevant screening authority in accordance with the SMCCA
- to ensure that safe ministry to children is provided to children in the Diocese in accordance with the SMCCA.
- to ensure that every Parish in the Diocese implements and maintains a *Code of Conduct for Child Safety* in accordance with the *Child Wellbeing and safety Act 2005* of the Victorian Parliament.
- to appoint accredited trainers to deliver safe ministry training for Parishes and Church bodies in the Diocese.
- to ensure that, in accordance with the *Working With Children Act 2005* of the Victorian Parliament, persons working with children in the Diocese hold current *Working With Children Checks* issued by the Department of Justice & Regulation, Victoria.
- to determine in what circumstances Church workers must have a Victorian Police Check.

Which people are members?

The Gippsland SMA comprises:

- Ms Val Jones (Chair)
- The Rev'd Tracy Lauersen (Deputy Chair)
- The Rev'd David Perryman (Minutes)
- Mrs Cheryl Russell
- Ms Jill Wood
- The Rev'd Brian Norris
- The Rev'd Jenny Ramage
- The Rev'd Brenda Burney

What has the SMA achieved so far?

We have been meeting monthly since January this year. Much of our work has been in preparation for SMOOnline (a digital record of all screening documents, licences, training etc within the Diocese – which eventually will flag when Clergy and Lay People are due to update their screening documentation,

licences and training.) Firstly we have to establish which people in our Diocese require which screening documentation and licences. Our initial plan is to check and input data – by Synod this year -for all:

Clergy with *Permission to Officiate* (PTOs)
Lay Readers
Pastoral Leaders

Following Synod we will be checking and inputting data for all

Children & Youth Workers
Eucharistic Assistants
Liturgical Assistants
Parish Council Members
Church Workers*

* By definition within the Constitution, a **Church Worker** means *a lay person undertaking any ministry to children who is licensed or authorised by the Bishop to undertake ministry to children or holds a position or performs a function with the actual or apparent authority of a Church authority or Church body.* The SMA takes this to mean all lay people within the church.

We have been working on the development of an over-arching Child & Youth Ministry policy with procedures and application documents. We are also developing generic *Codes of Conduct* for Parishes.

We report directly to the Bishop and to *Bishop in Council*. We also have close ties with the Professional Standards Committee.

What does this mean for me and my Parish?

While many Parishes are already well on the way to meeting all Safe Ministry requirements - other Parishes will need to plan for these changes. Wherever possible, the SMA will be providing support and advice for Parishes.

We will be asking all Parishes to nominate a Safe Ministry Officer (SMO) to assist in the process of gathering information and documentation. There will be more information about this after Synod.

It is incumbent on all of us to keep Safe Ministry on our agendas and in our minds as we work within the Church. *Faithfulness In Service* continues to be our guide – and should be readily available to all.

Old ways of thinking and behaving have brought us to this time when we know something of the extent of abuse within our Church. We know we need to

change culture and practice

in order that all people are safe.