

Compensation Panel

A Compensation Panel is being established to provide ex gratia compensation to persons complaining of sexual abuse by priests, religious and lay people who are or were under the control of the Archbishop of Melbourne.

To the maximum extent possible, the Panel will operate independently of the Archbishop and the Archdiocese.

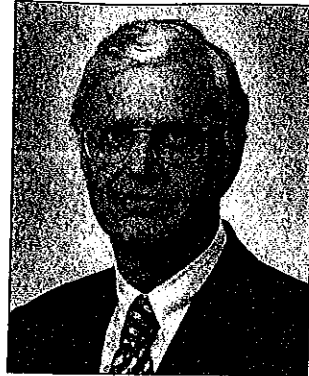
The Panel will be Chaired by Mr Alex Chernov QC and will include a psychiatrist and some lay persons.

The establishment of this Panel and the offer to pay compensation is not an admission of legal liability. The Archbishop, the Archdiocese and the Church do not accept that they have any legal obligation to make payments to people making complaints.

Rather, the Panel will provide people making complaints with an alternative to legal proceedings against the Archbishop or Archdiocese. It is hoped that it will provide an informal rather than legalistic approach and a forum for a fair, just and speedy settlement of claims.

To be eligible for an ex gratia payment, anyone making a complaint will need to establish the factual basis of the claim. In order to thoroughly examine every claim, the Panel will consult and liaise exhaustively with the Independent Commissioner.

Compensation payments, binding on the Archdiocese, will be recommended at the discretion of the Panel, up to a maximum of \$50,000 per person. If the person making a complaint accepts the recommended payment, the amount will be paid in full settlement of all legal claims against the Archbishop and



the Archdiocese. CARELINK services will, however, remain available.

If the recommended payment is not accepted, a person making a complaint remains free to use the normal court processes.

Compensation will not be paid for complaints relating to alleged offenders who are or were not priests of the Archdiocese, as they are outside the Archbishop's control.

Nor will it be paid in relation to complaints about religious or lay people unless they are or were working within the Archdiocese and are or were employed by, or subject to the control of, the Archbishop.

Mr Alex Chernov QC was admitted as a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Victoria in 1968.

He specialises in commercial and administrative law and has appeared in major cases throughout Australia and before courts, Royal Commissions and administrative tribunals.

Since 1971, he has been a member/chairman of various committees of the Victorian Bar and is a past President of the Law Council of Australia (1990-91).

Parish Pastoral Response

In addition to the services outlined above, there will be an up-grading of the existing Pastoral Response Team, which operates at parish level.

Members of the Team will continue to offer spiritual support and counselling and to provide a forum for pastoral healing.

The parish pastoral response is an essential part of the healing process for the wider Church community.

Counselling and Support for Priests

Counselling and support for priests and others accused of sexual assault will be provided by the Vicar-General's office.

Nothing within this Plan is intended to pre-judge the guilt or innocence of any particular priest, religious or lay person.

It should be remembered that these allegations concern only a tiny percentage of the priests, religious and lay people serving the community on behalf of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

How the Plan will Operate

The first point of call for people wishing to lodge complaints or seek assistance is the office of the Independent Commissioner.

He can be contacted by calling 03 9221 6190.

The Offices of the Independent Commissioner are located at Level 25, Suite 36, 367 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000.

Callers can then be referred immediately to CARELINK for professional support services and they can be provided with information about compensation.

CARELINK is located at 163 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, 3002. Phone: 03 9221 6190.

Archbishop Pell welcomes comments from anyone in the community about the initiatives covered in this Plan.

Sexual Abuse



The Melbourne Archdiocese
Response

OCTOBER 1996