



DIOCESE OF TOWNSVILLE

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

1. OBJECTIVE

- 1.1 The Catholic Church is called by Jesus to give priority of place to the welfare and well-being of children and vulnerable adults.

Jesus said, "In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who welcomes one little child like this in my name welcomes me. But anyone who is the downfall of one of these little ones who have faith in me would be better drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone round his neck." (Matthew 18:3-6, NJB)

Jesus said, "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10, NJB)

- 1.2 The Catholic Diocese of Townsville (the Diocese) believes that children and vulnerable adults are a gift from God with an intrinsic right to dignity of life, respect and security from physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological harm.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy recognises that some agencies and ministries of the Diocese may be required, by statute or best practice, to develop their own policies for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. Their policies will be consistent with this overarching *Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy*.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Child:
Refers to those under the age of 18

- 3.2 Vulnerable Adult (Adults at risk):
Refers to any person aged 18 years and over who is at increased risk of experiencing abuse, such as people who are elderly, with a disability, who suffer from mental illness, who have diminished capacity or cognitive impairment, who have previously suffered abuse, who may be subject to a power imbalance, who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, who have diverse sexuality, or experience any impairment that makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from abuse.



3.3 Church personnel:

Refers to any cleric, member of a religious institute, lay person, other persons who are employed by the Church, or appointed by the Church to voluntary positions.

3.4 Harm:

Refers to any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by sexual, physical, psychological/emotional abuse; spiritual abuse, elder abuse or financial abuse; or neglect. It may be caused by a single act, omission or circumstance; or a series or combination of acts, omission or circumstances.

3.5 Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy:

Refers to the eight key procedures which this policy authorises, pursuant to Commonwealth and Queensland legislative requirements. This strategy applies the *National Framework for Protection Australia's Children - Safe & Supported*.

3.6 National Catholic Safeguarding Standards:

Refers to the ten *Standards* developed by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited (ACSL) which provides the framework for Catholic Church entities to build a culture of safety and to advance the safety of all vulnerable persons across the Catholic Church in Australia.

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards take into account the guidance of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations adopted by the Council of Australian Governments (Feb 2019).

4. POLICY STATEMENT

- 4.1 The Catholic Diocese of Townsville will do everything within its power to provide a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults to minimise the possibility of any harm. This includes an environment that is safe for people of all ethnicities and cultural identities. The Diocese commits to a zero tolerance approach to any forms of abuse and reflects this commitment in its procedures.

5. APPLICABILITY

- 5.1 This policy applies to all Church personnel working or residing within the Diocese. Safeguarding inductions and training will include all relevant personnel in leadership positions and paid staff and volunteers working directly with children and vulnerable adults. Access to this policy and its procedures will be provided to all personnel to emphasise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.



6. QUALITY CONTROL

6.1 This policy underpins the *Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy* and includes the following procedures:

- 6.1.1 [Statement of Commitment;](#)
- 6.1.2 [Safe Conduct Standards;](#)
- 6.1.3 [Safe People, Safe Practices & Safe Places;](#)
- 6.1.4 [Handling disclosures or suspicions of harm;](#)
- 6.1.5 [Managing breaches of the risk management strategy;](#)
- 6.1.6 [Risk management for settings, activities and physical environments;](#)
- 6.1.7 [Compliance with the requirements of the Blue Card system;](#)
- 6.1.8 [Communication and Support](#)

7. COMMUNICATION & IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 The *Diocesan Manager Safeguarding Culture and Practice* is responsible for developing appropriate communication and support processes to effectively implement this policy.

8. COMPLIANCE, MONITORING & REVIEW

8.1 This policy underpins the *Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy*, through authorised procedures pursuant to legislative requirements and the *National Catholic Safeguarding Standards*. It will inform work that is undertaken to protect children and vulnerable adults.

8.2 This policy will be reviewed at least annually or more frequently pursuant to reforms or significant events. This includes the reform agenda of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2013-2017*; audit findings undertaken by *Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd* or other legislated or authorised reviews.

9. REPORTING

9.1 The *Diocesan Manager, Safeguarding Culture and Practice* is responsible for reporting to the *Bishop* on the implementation, compliance and review of this policy.

10. DATE OF NEXT REVIEW

October 2024



11. RELATED POLICIES AND/OR PROCEDURES

11.1 This policy and its procedures are governed by current legislation including:

- 11.1.1 *The Child Protection Act 1999*;
- 11.1.2 *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*;
- 11.1.3 *Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020*;
- 11.1.4 *Public Guardian Act 2014*;
- 11.1.5 *Disability Services Act 2006*;
- 11.1.6 *Queensland Family and Child Commission Act 2014*; and
- 11.1.7 *United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991*.

11.2 This policy and its procedures uphold the principles and standards set out in:

- 11.2.1 *Integrity in Our Common Mission*; and
- 11.2.2 *The National Response Protocol*.

12. VERSION HISTORY

Version Date	Enacted Date	Comments
October 2023	February 2024	This version replacing previous version

Policy Owner: Diocesan Manager, Safeguarding Culture and Practice

Consultation with Key Stakeholders: Council of Priests, Agency Executives, Diocesan and Parish ministry groups and personnel. External consultant engaged.

Authorised By:

Signed: 

Date: 14/2/2024

Most Rev Timothy Harris DD
Bishop of Townsville