

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS



Professional Standards
Catholic Diocese of Ballarat

CONTENTS

Introduction

Caring for and safeguarding the vulnerable is central to the Church's gospel message.

When a vulnerable person, whether a child or an adult, is abused the effects of that abuse on the victim can be devastating and may last for a lifetime. The abuse of a vulnerable person also tears at the fabric of community as a whole.

The sexual abuse of a child has a devastating, deep and ongoing impact on the lives of the victims and their families.

The Diocese of Ballarat is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. This policy applies to everyone who is engaged in pastoral work within the Diocese.

This policy is intended to provide the framework for a uniform standard of best practice in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. It highlights core principles, key church documents and legislation in this area. The safeguarding procedures are built around the following basic elements, namely, safe recruiting and selection processes, safe activities and environments and child-focused programs to reduce vulnerability.

The document applies to all clergy, religious, employees and volunteers in the parishes and Catholic agencies in the Diocese.

Policy Statement

Bishop Paul Bird has released a statement of policy relating to Professional Standards in the Diocese. The statement is a reaffirmation of the commitment of the Diocese to provide a safe and supportive environment for all. The statement is as follows:

"The Catholic Diocese of Ballarat is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for people of all ages, with special concern for children, young people and vulnerable adults. This commitment is made in the spirit of Christ's teachings on behalf the bishop, clergy, staff and volunteers who serve in parishes, schools, Centacare and other Catholic organisations in the diocese. The diocese will respond to complaints of unprofessional conduct in ways that reflect nationally established standards and protocols and ensure adherence to applicable legislation. We are committed to providing ongoing pastoral support to any person affected by physical, emotional or sexual abuse by church personnel."

This policy is for mandatory implementation by the Church and its agencies throughout the Diocese of Ballarat. The Diocese aims to ensure that none of its personnel or volunteers engages in behaviour that could allow abuse to occur or actions that could be misinterpreted by children, their families or other adults as constituting or leading to abuse. We make every possible effort to safeguard against abuse and harm.

Core Principles

Children, young people and vulnerable adults have a fundamental right to be respected, nurtured and safeguarded by all.

The Diocese of Ballarat is committed to taking necessary steps to:

- Implement a behavioural code of conduct which sets out clear guidelines regarding ethical behaviour as an essential part of keeping children safe.
- Implement and maintain safe recruitment practices for all paid and volunteer Church personnel.
- Have clear role descriptions for all Church personnel including volunteers.
- Provide training and education to assist all ministerial, paid and volunteer church personnel to develop and maintain the knowledge and skills required to implement and maintain child safe environments.
- Provide support and supervision for all staff and volunteers who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Have risk management plans for all activities with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Promote protective behaviours programs for children, especially in schools.
- Have clear policies for identifying and reporting disclosures or suspicions of harm/abuse.
- Ensure that all clergy, religious, employees and volunteers comply with applicable legislative requirements.

Definitions

1. Vulnerable people include:

- Children.
- The frail and elderly.
- Refugees.
- An adult who has suffered bereavement, marriage or relationship breakdown or other adversity which puts them in particular need of pastoral support.

- A person who has an intellectual disability, mental illness or other impairment that makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from abuse or exploitation.
 - A person under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
 - A person who speaks little or no English.
2. Abuse can come in many forms including:
- Physical abuse.
 - Sexual abuse.
 - Psychological abuse.
 - Harassment.
 - Discrimination based on age, race, sex or disability.
3. A child is a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Applicable Victorian and Commonwealth Legislation

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005.
- Working with Children Act 2005.
- Crimes Act 1958.
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006.
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010.
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

National Committee for Professional Standards, *Integrity in Ministry. A document of principles and standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia.* June 2004

National Committee for Professional Standards, *Integrity in the service of the Church. A resource document of principles and standards for lay workers in the Catholic Church in Australia.* September 2011.

National Committee for Professional Standards, *Towards Healing. Principles and Procedures in responding to complaints of abuse against personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia.* January 2010.

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