



SAFEGUARDING POLICY FOR PARISHES, COMMUNITIES & MINISTRIES

Safeguarding is grounded in the inherent dignity of every person created in the image of God, the Church's preferential option for the vulnerable, and Christ's explicit command to protect children. Safeguarding is therefore a moral, theological, and pastoral responsibility flowing directly from the Gospel. It seeks to honour human dignity, protect the vulnerable, prevent harm, promote accountability, and restore trust, recognising that abuse is both a grave injustice against individuals, a serious wound to the Body of Christ, and undermines the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to give effect to the Archdiocese of Brisbane's Safeguarding Charter and Safeguarding Policy, and to embed safeguarding into the everyday life, practice and decision-making of Archdiocesan parishes, communities and ministries.

This policy provides clear expectations and guidance to create safe environments, ensuring that safeguarding is lived as a shared pastoral responsibility and an expression of the Gospel call to protect the dignity of every person.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Charter, the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Policy, and the Safeguarding Handbook.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- all parishes, communities and ministries under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Brisbane; and
- all Archdiocesan workers; and
- third-party service providers, organisations and entities.

This policy applies whether on or off Archdiocese of Brisbane premises, and to online environments.

All workers are expected to understand, uphold and act in accordance with the commitments and requirements set out in this policy.

This policy does not apply to Brisbane Catholic Education, Centacare Brisbane or Archdiocesan Ministries, each of which has a discrete safeguarding policy that addresses the specific contexts of those agencies and their programs and services.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

The Archdiocese of Brisbane has zero tolerance for all forms of abuse and is committed to safeguarding all who participate in the life of the Church, especially children and adults-at-risk.

To this end, all Archdiocesan parishes, communities, ministries, services and agencies will implement and comply with the Queensland Child Safe Standards, the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, and other laws relevant to safeguarding and the protection of children and adults-at-risk.

All abuse concerns, allegations and incidents will be taken seriously and responded to promptly, sensitively, justly, and in accordance with legal and Church requirements, including legal reporting obligations.

The safety and wellbeing of children and adults-at-risk is paramount.

4. SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

The Archdiocesan approach to safeguarding is guided by the following core principles:

The dignity of the human person: Every person is created in the image of God and has an inherent right to be treated with dignity, respect and care.

Shared responsibility and leadership: Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, supported by strong leadership, effective governance, and continuous improvement.

Prevention: The primary aim of safeguarding is to proactively eliminate or mitigate the risks of abuse and harm.

Risk Management: Risks of abuse and harm in interactions, and physical and online environments are actively identified and managed.

Zero tolerance for abuse: Abuse is never acceptable. All concerns, allegations and incidents are taken seriously and responded to promptly and in accordance with Church and legal requirements.

The best interests of children and adults at risk: Safety and wellbeing are paramount considerations in all decisions and actions, particularly in relation to children and adults-at-risk.

People-centred: A pastoral and trauma-informed approach is adopted in all interactions with individual affected by abuse and harm.

Listening and participation: Children, families, carers, parishioners and communities are given a voice in safeguarding and in shaping safer environments and safeguarding practices.

Cultural safety: Culturally safe environments are fostered where all feel respected, valued and free from discrimination.

Transparency and accountability: Workers act with honesty and integrity, are accountable for their actions, and cooperate fully with statutory authorities.

5. SAFEGUARDING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility. Everyone has a role to play in creating and maintaining safe environments and activities, ministries and services where everyone is respected, protected, and supported, especially children and adults-at-risk.

Parish Priest, Community Leader and Ministry Leader

Provides overall leadership and accountability for safeguarding within the parish, community or ministry. Ensures safeguarding is embedded within the life of the parish, community or ministry, that policies and procedures are implemented, and that abuse concerns, allegations and incidents are responded to appropriately and reported in line with legal and Archdiocesan requirements.

Parish/Community/Ministry Leadership Group

Supports the Parish Priest, Community Leader or Ministry Leader in oversight and governance of safeguarding. Promotes a culture of safeguarding, ensures risks are identified and managed, and monitors the effective implementation of safeguarding practices across activities, ministries and services.

Local Safeguarding Representative

Acts as a local point of contact for safeguarding matters. Promotes safeguarding practices, supports workers and the congregation/community to understand their safeguarding responsibilities, assists with the implementation of safeguarding requirements (including risk assessments and compliance reviews), and helps facilitate appropriate reporting and record-keeping.

Employees and Volunteers

Comply with all safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices. Participate in required screening processes and training, remain vigilant to risks of abuse and harm, and promptly report any concerns, allegations, or incidents. Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and adults-at-risk.

Parishioners/Community Members

Contribute to creating safe and respectful parish, community or ministry environments. Raise any safeguarding concerns with leaders or the Local Safeguarding Representative.

Parents and Guardians

Support safeguarding practices by engaging with parish, community or ministry processes, supervising and guiding their children and dependents appropriately, and raising any concerns about safety or wellbeing.

Children and Adults-at-Risk

Are encouraged to abide by safeguarding practices, avoid putting themselves at risk, and speak up about anything that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Abuse and harm are critical risks that must be proactively managed within all parishes, communities and ministries. Safeguarding risk management involves the identification, assessment, elimination or mitigation, monitoring, and review of risks to ensure safe physical and online environments, and safe activities and ministries.

Parishes, communities and ministries must assess all regular activities and ministries for abuse risks before commencement.

High-risk Activities or Special Events

High-risk activities or special events, due to their nature, require comprehensive assessment and planning. The following factors (individually or in combination) are likely to increase the level of risk associated with an activity or event to high-risk:

- the involvement of external people
- the involvement of external organisations/entities (including religious entities)
- the involvement of a large number of people
- the involvement of people with diminished capacity or a disability (particularly children)
- accommodating people overnight or for longer periods of time (particularly children)

- using an external venue or destination
- transporting people (particularly children and at-risk adults)
- one-to-one interactions between adults and children
- physical contact activities/interactions
- online activities/interactions
- hazards presented by the physical environment
- physically hazardous activities
- emotionally/psychologically hazardous activities

* Not an exhaustive list of factors.

Parishes, communities and ministries must undertake comprehensive risk assessments and prepare detailed risk management plans for high-risk activities and special events.

All risk assessments are to be overviewed by the relevant parish, community or ministry leadership group and approved by the Parish Priest, Community Leader or Ministry Leader. Assessments should be reviewed annually, or when substantial changes to the activity or ministry occur, or after concerns or incidents arise.

7. WORKER SCREENING AND SUITABILITY CHECKS

All parish, community and ministry workers must undergo screening checks as required by law and Archdiocesan policy. These checks are designed to assess a worker's suitability to work with children and adults-at-risk, and in other roles, and to help maintain a safe environment. Screening checks include (but may not be limited to):

- Working with Children Blue Cards or Exemption Cards (Working with Children Check Act 2000)
- Restricted Person Declarations (Working with Children Check Act 2000)
- National criminal history screening checks
- Prior Conduct Declarations

Screening checks must be completed prior to commencing duties and renewed at intervals as required by law and as specified by the Archdiocese.

Failure to satisfy statutory screening checks may constitute an offence under Queensland law.

8. SAFE BEHAVIOUR CODE

The Archdiocese has established a Safe Behaviour Code which sets out the expected standards of conduct by workers when interacting with children and adults-at-risk. All parish, community and ministry workers are required to read, formally agree to or acknowledge, and abide by the Code as a condition of their role.

The Code sets clear expectations for safe, respectful, and professional behaviour and must be followed at all times when carrying out parish, community or ministry duties. It must be read and applied in conjunction with the following documents:

- Code of Conduct for employees and volunteers
- Our Common Mission Code of Conduct for people in pastoral ministry

All workers are responsible for ensuring their behaviour aligns with these standards.

9. SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

All parish, community and ministry workers must complete safeguarding training. This training ensures that workers understand their responsibilities, are able to recognise indicators of abuse and harm, and know how to respond appropriately and in accordance with legal and Archdiocesan requirements.

Safeguarding training must be completed prior to commencing duties, and refresher training must be undertaken at intervals specified by the Archdiocese. Completion of required training is a condition of ongoing employment or volunteer engagement within the parish, community or ministry.

10. VOLUNTEER LOCAL SAFEGUARDING REPRESENTATIVES

Parishes, communities and ministries that conduct activities, ministries and services for, or that involve, children and adults-at-risk should appoint a volunteer Local Safeguarding Representative.

11. COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT ON SAFEGUARDING

Parishes, communities and ministries are expected to actively communicate and engage with children, adults-at-risk, parents/carers, parishioners and community members on safeguarding. Effective communication and engagement lift awareness and foster a culture of trust and transparency.

Parishes, communities and ministries are also expected to promote and support participation in safeguarding engagement processes implemented by the Office for Safeguarding, using the results to inform continuous improvement.

Key safeguarding information, including how to raise concerns and access support, must be clearly displayed in prominent locations within parish, community or ministry facilities, published on websites (where available), and regularly included in relevant parish, community and ministry communications (including online) to ensure it is visible and easily accessible.

12. RESPONDING TO ABUSE CONCERNS, ALLEGATIONS AND INCIDENTS

Parish, community and ministry, and workers have both moral and legal obligations to respond to any concerns, allegations, or incidents of abuse that come to their attention. This includes responding to current matters as well as those relating to past (historical) abuse.

All concerns, allegations, and incidents must be taken seriously and responded to promptly and sensitively. The safety, dignity and wellbeing of any child or adult-at-risk is the highest priority at all times. All responses must be guided by a trauma-informed approach. This means recognising the potential impact of trauma, responding with sensitivity, respect and compassion. Workers are expected to listen without judgement and avoid actions that may cause further harm.

If a child or adult-at-risk is in immediate danger or at risk of serious harm, workers must take urgent protective action and contact the police by calling Triple Zero (000).

Failure to protect a child from a known risk of sexual abuse within an institutional setting may constitute a criminal offence under Queensland law.

13. REPORTING

All concerns, allegations, or incidents of abuse must be reported as soon as practicable, in compliance with legal and Archdiocesan requirements.

Parish, community and ministry workers must promptly report concerns, allegations, or incidents to the Archdiocese and, where required, to relevant statutory authorities. This includes situations where there is a reasonable suspicion that a child or adult-at-risk has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

Some types of abuse – such as child sexual abuse or grooming - must be reported to police and/or other statutory authorities.

Failure to report may constitute a criminal offence under Queensland law.

14. SAFEGUARDING GOVERNANCE

Effective governance embeds safeguarding into parish, community and ministry leadership, decision-making, and everyday practice.

Parishes, communities and ministries must establish and maintain governance arrangements that ensure regular oversight of safeguarding compliance, risks and improvement actions, all of which are to be recorded and appropriately acted upon. At a minimum, parishes, communities and ministries are expected to embed safeguarding into regular leadership group meetings (e.g. Parish Councils or similar) as a standing agenda item. Leadership groups are expected to monitor safeguarding performance to support continuous improvement locally.

15. ASSURANCE AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Safeguarding effectiveness is supported through ongoing compliance monitoring, assurance, and continuous improvement.

Parishes, communities and ministries must participate in, and undertake safeguarding assessments, internal and external safeguarding audits, and safeguarding reviews to strengthen local safeguarding practices, and ensure environments and activities, ministries and services remain safe.

Parishes, communities and ministries must also develop annual safeguarding actions plans to address gaps in safeguarding practices identified through assessments, audits and reviews, and feedback.

16. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this policy is mandatory.

Parish Priests, Community Leaders and Ministry Leaders are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented within their area of responsibility and that workers are supported to understand and fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities and associated legal obligations.

17. COMPLIANCE

Compliance with this policy is mandatory.

Parish Priests, Community Leaders and Ministry Leaders are responsible for ensuring ongoing compliance with this policy within their area of responsibility. Parish, community and ministry workers are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy and applying it in their roles.

18. COMMUNICATION

Parish Priests, Community Leaders and Ministry Leaders are responsible for ensuring that this policy is clearly communicated and made readily accessible to all workers, parishioners, partner organisations and entities, and the wider community.

This policy will also be published on the Archdiocesan intranet and public website.

19. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Name	Type	No.
Code of Conduct Policy	Policy	SS PCPL27
Complaint Management Policy	Policy	AD26
Complaints Management Procedure Clergy (Non-Sexual)	Internal Procedure	N/A
Compliance Policy	Policy	AD07
Criminal History Screening Policy	Policy	SS PCPL05
Criminal History Screening Procedure	Procedure	SS PCPL05 PR01
e-Learning Policy	Policy	HR/005/4.0
Handling of Abuse Complaints and Allegations	Internal Standard	N/A
Modern Slavery Policy	Policy	AD21
Organisation Development and Training Policy	Policy	HR/004/001
Police and Government Agencies Co-operation Policy	Policy	HR/013/1.0
Privacy Management Policy	Policy	AD13
Risk Management Policy	Policy	AD11
Safe Behaviour Code	Standard	AD16 ST01
Safeguarding Charter	Standard	AD16 ST01
Safeguarding Handbook	Handbook	AD16 HB01
Safeguarding Policy	Policy	AD16
Social Media Use by Employees Policy	Policy	SS PCPL11
Use of Communication Mediums Policy	Policy	SS PCPL17
Volunteer Compliance Matrix (Feb, 2026)	Doc	REV 1.1
Whistleblower Policy	Policy	AD09
WHS Risk Management Standard	Standard	AD14 P03
Work Health & Safety Policy	Policy	AD14

20. RELATED CANON LAW, LEGISLATION, STANDARDS, REFERENCES

Canon Law/Legislation/Standards/References
Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)
Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld)
Child Safe Standards (Qld)
Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld)
General Decree – Clergy Screening Checks 004/2024
Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)
Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)
Limitations of Actions (Child Sexual Abuse) & Other Legislation Amendment Act 2016 (Qld)
National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Edition 2 (December, 2022)
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
National Response Protocol for Responding to concerns and allegations of abuse against children and vulnerable adults (May, 2020)
Our Common Mission Code of Conduct (November, 2023)
Papal Decree - Vos estis lux mundi Art 3 (2019)
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
Work Health and Safety Act 2011(Qld)
Working with Children Check Act 2000 (Qld)

21. VERSION CONTROL AND APPROVAL HISTORY

Version Control

Version	Author	Date reviewed
Final	Office for Safeguarding Services	August 2026

Approval History

Version	Approver	Date approved
Final	Vicar General	August 2026

22. POLICY OWNER AND POLICY MANAGER

The Policy Owner of this policy is the Vicar General.

The Policy Manager of this policy is the Director, Office for Safeguarding Services.

23. REVIEW DATE

The next review date for this policy is July 2029 or sooner as required to ensure ongoing alignment with relevant operational, strategic or legislative developments.

APPROVED BY:



.....

13 / 08 / 2026

**Very Reverend Peter Dillon
Vicar-General**

DATE

DEFINITIONS	
Abuse	Abuse is any act or failure to act that results in harm, or the likelihood of harm, to a person. Abuse may be deliberate, or it may occur through carelessness, recklessness, negligence, or a lack of appropriate action. It can arise from a single act, a series of acts, or from a pattern of behaviour over time. Abuse may take different forms, including: • sexual abuse; • physical abuse; • psychological or emotional abuse; or • neglect. In the context of the Catholic Church, abuse may also include spiritual abuse, which occurs when a person uses their position of authority, trust, or religious influence to control, coerce, or exploit another person.
Adult-at-risk	An adult-at-risk is a person aged 18 years or older who may be at increased risk of abuse and harm, and who may have difficulty protecting themselves due to personal, social or situational factors. In a parish or ministry context, this may include people: • who are elderly or frail • living with disability, cognitive impairment, or diminished decision-making capacity • experiencing mental ill-health • who have experienced prior abuse or trauma • who are socially isolated or dependent on others for care or support

DEFINITIONS	
	• who are experiencing temporary or situational vulnerability (for example, grief, crisis, or significant life change) • who, in receiving pastoral care, ministry or services, may be affected by a power imbalance • who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander • who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds • who identify as having diverse sexuality or gender • or who have any other circumstance or adversity that may limit their ability to safeguard themselves. Being an adult-at-risk may be a permanent or temporary condition and can vary depending on the circumstances.
Agencies	For the purposes of this document, the Agencies of the Archdiocese of Brisbane refers to: Agencies: • Archdiocesan Development Fund • Archdiocesan Services • Brisbane Catholic Education • Centacare • Archdiocesan Ministries Offices: • Office of the Financial Administrator • Episcopal & Corporate
Assurance	‘Assurance’ is the systematic process of evaluating and verifying that controls, policies, and practices are operating effectively and in line with legal, regulatory, and organisational requirements, providing confidence to leadership that risks are being appropriately managed.
Canon Law	The Code of Canon Law is the codified body of general laws governing the Catholic Church.
Child/Children	A ‘child’ is any person under 18 years of age. (Section 8, Child Protection Act 1999) The terms ‘young people’ or ‘youth’ are sometimes used to refer to children 13-17 years of age (i.e. teenagers). Legally, and, for the purposes of this policy, these people are considered children.
Community	For the purposes of this policy, a ‘Community’ is an association of the lay faithful united by a common identity, culture, ethnicity, language, liturgical expression, or mission, who gather for worship, pastoral care, and participation in the mission of the Church, including cultural communities and ecclesial

DEFINITIONS	
	movements. See Appendix A for a list of Communities covered by this policy.
Community Leader	For the purposes of this policy, a ‘Community Leader’ is an individual who has been appointed, commissioned or employed to lead a Community, and who holds responsibility for ensuring that the Community operates in accordance with safeguarding requirements, relevant policies and applicable legal obligations. Where a chaplain is appointed to a Community, the chaplain is the Community Leader for the purposes of this policy.
Executive Director	Unless otherwise stated, refers to the Executive Director, of the stated Agency.
Grooming	Grooming is a deliberate process by which an individual builds trust, rapport, or influence with a child—and often with their family, carers, or community—with the intention of facilitating inappropriate sexual conduct or abuse, including by normalising boundary violations or isolating the person from protective supports.
Harm	‘Harm’ is any significant detrimental effect on a person’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing and/or development. Harm can be caused by abuse.
Ministry	For the purposes of this policy, a ‘ministry’ is a formally recognised Archdiocesan program, service or activity carried out in the name of the Church to support its pastoral, liturgical, or community mission, and which is led or managed by an appointed, commissioned or employed Ministry Leader.
Ministry Leader	For the purposes of this policy, a ‘Ministry Leader’ is an individual who has been formally appointed, commissioned or employed to lead, coordinate or manage a recognised Archdiocesan ministry, and who holds responsibility for ensuring that the ministry operates in accordance with safeguarding requirements, relevant policies, procedures and applicable legal obligations. See Appendix B for a list of Ministries covered by this policy
Parish Priest	A parish priest is a cleric appointed under the Code of Canon Law who has the pastoral care of a parish entrusted to him by the Archbishop, exercising this responsibility under the Archbishop’s authority and in accordance with canon law. For the purposes of this policy, this term includes a Parish Administrator, who may be appointed from time to time to assume responsibility for the pastoral care of a parish in the absence of a parish priest.
Related Documents	Documents that are related to this document and assist with its implementation.

DEFINITIONS	
Risk Management	Risk management is the process of identifying, assessing, eliminating or mitigating, monitoring, and reviewing risks to ensure safe physical and online environments, and safe activities and ministries.
Safeguarding	‘Safeguarding’ refers to the measures and actions taken to prevent, respond to and report abuse, and to protect all people involved in Archdiocesan activities, ministries and services from harm — especially children and adults-at-risk. Safeguarding is proactive and responsive. It requires vigilance, compassion, accountability and a commitment to acting in the best interests of those entrusted to the care of the Church.
Third-party service providers, organisations and entities	For the purposes of this policy, a third-party service provider, organisation or entity is any external individual, group, or organisation that is engaged by, partnered with, or delivers services on behalf of a parish, community or ministry and is therefore required to meet safeguarding expectations and applicable legal obligations when interacting with children or adults at risk.
Vicar General	The Vicar General is appointed by the Archbishop to assist him in the governance of the entire Archdiocese of Brisbane. The Vicar General oversees the work of the various Agencies.
Volunteer Local Safeguarding Representative	A Volunteer Local Safeguarding Representative is a volunteer appointed to support and promote safeguarding practices within a parish, community, or ministry including assisting with raising awareness of safeguarding practices, compliance, reporting processes, and liaison with the Office for Safeguarding Services in accordance with Archdiocesan safeguarding policies and procedures.
Worker	A ‘worker’ includes clergy, employees, contractors, volunteers, and others working for the Archdiocese and the ministries, works, or services provided by all parishes, communities, ministries, and agencies under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Brisbane.

CATHOLIC CULTURAL COMMUNITIES WITHIN SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

1. Brazilian Catholic Community
2. Chinese Catholic Community
3. Croatian Catholic Community
4. Indonesian Catholic Community
5. Italian Catholic Community
6. Korean Catholic Community
7. Latin American Catholic Community
8. Polish Catholic Community
9. Vietnamese Catholic Community