



Diocese of Cairns Policy

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Diocesan Safeguarding Policy

1. Purpose

The Roman Catholic Trust Corporation for the Diocese of Cairns (the “Diocese”), encompassing all of its entities, is committed to safeguarding everyone involved in its ministries, activities, and services and has zero tolerance for all forms of abuse. The safety and wellbeing of children and adults-at-risk is paramount.

2. Application

This Diocesan-wide policy applies to all parishes, divisions, departments and any other activities established under the authority of the Bishop of Cairns. It applies to all our employees, clergy, pastoral associates, volunteers, office holders and board members who serve in any capacity in a paid or voluntary capacity for the Diocese.

Consistent with this policy, there are separate division-specific policies and procedures for Diocese-operating divisions, such as Catholic Education, Centacare FNQ and Catholic Early Learning and Care. This Policy recognises that some agencies and ministries of the Diocese may be required by Statute to develop their own policies for the safeguarding of children and adults-at-risk. These policies will be consistent with the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy.

3. Safeguarding Principles

- Safeguarding is a shared responsibility.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Prioritise the protection and best interests of children and adults-at-risk.
- Provide safe physical and online environments.
- Actively identify and manage safeguarding and abuse risks.
- Monitor compliance with safeguarding standards, policies, and procedures.

- Respond promptly and effectively to abuse concerns, suspicions, disclosures, complaints, reports, and incidents.
- Comply with all legal obligations to report suspected abuse and harm.

4. Definitions

Child:	Refers to those under the age of 18
(Adult at Risk)	An individual aged over 18 years who due to their diverse circumstances and experiences may place them at increased risk of abuse or exploitation. These may include, but are not limited to, age, illness, disability, mental illness, cognitive impairment. which makes it difficult for that person to protect themselves from abuse or exploitation.
ABUSE:	
Physical abuse	When a child or vulnerable adult suffers physical trauma or injury that is not accidental. It does not always leave visible marks or injuries. What matters most is the act itself that caused it. Physical abuse can include without limitations: hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, biting, poisoning.
Emotional / Psychological Abuse	When a child or adult’s social, intellectual or emotional development is damaged or threatened. It can include but is not limited to: rejection, bullying, yelling, criticism or exposure to violence.
Cultural Abuse	Abuse received primarily because of a person’s cultural background and often resulting in discrimination and harassment.
Sexual Abuse	Sexual assault, sexual harassment or any conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional. It includes sexual behaviour involving the relevant person and another person in the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The other person bribes, coerces, exploits, threatens or is violent toward the relevant person; • The relevant person has less power than the other person; • There is a significant disparity between the relevant person and the other person in intellectual capacity or maturity; or
Child Sexual Offence	Any kind of sexual contact with a child under 16 years - rape, incest, sexual relations, talking in a sexually explicit way, sending obscene messages or emails to a child, persistently intruding on a child’s privacy, child prostitution, showing pornographic material to a child or forcing them to watch a sexual act.
Blue Card	Issued by Blue Card services, the Blue Card check is to see if a person is eligible to engage with child-related work. If a person is eligible, they are issued a positive notice letter and a blue card. The Blue Card system applies in Queensland only.

Child in need of protection

A child who has suffered significant harm, is suffering significant harm or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm and does not have a parent / carer able and willing to protect the child.

Family (or Domestic) Violence

When one person in a relationship uses violence or abuse to control the other person. It is usually an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear.

Harm

Harm is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the person's physical, Psychological or emotional wellbeing. How the harm is caused is immaterial. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; sexual abuse or exploitation. It may be caused by a single act, omission, circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions and circumstances.

Neglect

When a child's or adult at risk health and development are affected as a result of their basic needs not being met. These basic needs include: food, housing, health care, adequate clothing, personal hygiene, hygienic living conditions, medical treatment and adequate supervision.

Pastoral care

The work involved, or the situation which exists when one person has responsibility for the wellbeing of another, or for a faith community of which the complainant is, or was, a part. It includes the provision of spiritual advice and support, education, counselling, medical care, and assistance in times of need. All work involving the supervision or education of children and young people is a work of pastoral care.

Self-harm

Deliberate and voluntary physical self-injury (that is not life-threatening and is without any conscious suicidal intent) in an attempt to cope with strong feelings, such as anger, despair and self-hatred.

Standards

Those expectations and staff behaviours as articulated in the National Committee for Professional Standards publications as well as legislation, policies and procedures as listed in Section 8 below.

5. Protection and Prevention

This policy commits the Diocese to align our policy and procedure with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. The Catholic Church in Australia is fully committed to strategies that promote safe faith communities, where children and adults at risk are nurtured and protected whilst participating in the many and varied activities of our Church.

Pope Francis has highlighted our responsibility for the 'little ones': *"We want every activity and every place in the church to be completely safe for minors. The best results and the most effective resolution, will occur when the church commits itself to assisting and protecting the most vulnerable"* (Closing address at global summit on child protection in the Catholic Church, Vatican, February 2019)

6. Organisational Commitment

- 3.1. All staff, including volunteers, will sign and abide by the Diocesan Code of Conduct.
- 3.2. Recruitment procedures will include checks on suitability for work with children and young people, in addition to Blue Card regulations and National Police Checks where required.
- 3.3. In the first instance, all staff wishing to work with children and/or vulnerable adults in the Diocese will complete a Safeguarding Declaration Form.
- 3.4. The Diocese will provide all of its staff with, or advise how its staff can obtain, the current information about safeguarding legislation and government initiatives.
- 3.5. The Diocese will evaluate its current practices and develop an action plan for implementing changes to meet legislative requirements.
- 3.6. Staff induction will include training on child and young people protection and the Diocese will provide ongoing child protection training.
- 3.7. All Diocesan workplaces will display contact details for reporting possible child abuse and all volunteers will have contact details for reporting.

7. Obligations and responsibilities

All staff have the responsibility to comply with this policy and must take reasonable care safeguarding children and valuable adults. All staff contribute to the creation of a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults. Staff must behave towards others and those in our care with respect and courtesy at all times, report incidents of unacceptable behaviour to their line manager or parish priest and treat information in relation to allegations of safeguarding incidents with appropriate confidentiality.

The Manager of Professional Standards and Safeguarding Office is responsible for overseeing the implementation of training to staff in relation to this policy, monitoring patterns of disclosure or suspicion of harm.

All Leaders and Managers have an obligation to model appropriate behaviour relating to child safety, promote this policy, treat all complaints and disclosures seriously, award procedural fairness, offer support and intervene actively to prevent harmful incidents.

The Bishop has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy and its implementation complies with relevant Catholic social teachings, and our legal and ethical obligations in relation to child protection and safeguarding adults at risk.

8. Related Legislation and Policies

- a. This policy and its procedures are governed by current legislation including:
 - *Working with children (Risk Management and Screening) Act (Qld) 2000*
 - *The Child Protection Act (Qld) 1999*
 - *Public Guardian Act (Qld) 2014*
 - *Disability Services Act (Qld) 2006*
 - *Family and Child Commission Act (Qld) 2014*
 - *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991 (UNCRC)*
 - *Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offence Reform) and other Legislation Amendment Act (Qld) (2000)*

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

- *Integrity in the Service of the Church: A Resource Document of Principles and Standards for Lay Diocesan staff in the Catholic Church in Australia* (2011)
- *Integrity in Ministry: A Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy & Religious in Australia* (2004).
- Diocesan Code of Conduct
- The National Response Protocol
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards
- Vos Estis Lux Mundi

9. Enquiries

Professional Standards and Safeguarding Office

Ph: 4050 9705

Email Safeguarding@cns.catholic.edu.au

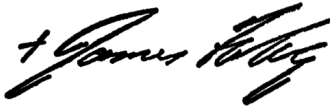
Anonymous complaints contact

STOPline - 1300 30 45 50

Diocesan Human Resources Department

Ph: 4046 5647

10. Approval



Most Rev. James Foley
Bishop
Diocese of Cairns
April 2022