



INITIAL POLICY DATE	25 February 2020
REVIEWED VERSION EFFECTIVE DATE	1 January 2025
REVIEW DATE	1 July 2027
POLICY OWNER	Chancery
APPLIES TO	This Policy applies to clergy, members of religious institutions, employees, board members, contractors (as defined and in relation to WHS and Children's Guardian legislation and a one member corporation), volunteers, work experience students and trainees (Workers) of the Diocese.
EXCLUSIONS	Where an agency or entity of the Diocese has its own policy, the relevant agency or entity policy will apply to Workers engaged by those agencies or entities. In the event of conflict between the policies of agencies or entities and the Diocesan policy, the Diocesan policy prevails.
RELATED POLICIES, GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES	Code of Conduct Inappropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy Mandatory Reporting Policy Reportable Conduct Policy Social Networking Policy Commitment to Safeguarding Statement
REFERENCE	<i>Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)</i> <i>Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013 (NSW)</i> <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)</i> <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012 (NSW)</i> <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) (Child Employment) Regulation 2015 (NSW)</i> <i>Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)</i> <i>Children's Guardian (Transitional) Regulation 2020 (NSW)</i> <i>Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)</i> <i>Integrity in Our Common Mission</i> <i>Child Safe Standards</i> <i>National Principals for Child Safe Organisations</i> <i>National Catholic Safeguarding Standards</i> <i>The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>
RELATED FORMS	N/A

HEADINGS	Safeguarding Commitment Gospel Values Introduction and Purpose Scope Definitions Core Principles – see below Responsibilities and Obligations 1. Duty of Care 2. Appropriate relationships and boundaries 3. Working With Children Compliance in Parishes Child Safe Culture Relevant Standards Relevant legislation, Standards & references Breaches of this Policy Revision/ Modification History Approval Date/ Revision History
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COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

The Diocese is committed to fostering communities of safety and care. We acknowledge our legal, moral, and spiritual responsibilities to care for and uphold the dignity and rights of children, young people, and adults at risk.

The Diocese has:

1. a zero tolerance to the abuse or neglect of children, young people or adults at risk and commits to acting in their best interests at all times;
2. established a policy and developed a range of procedures that work together to protect, and, where required, to respond immediately and compassionately to any harm, or risk of harm;
3. safeguarding procedures and practices underpinned by legislation – ensuring ongoing compliance, accountability and transparency in all ministries undertaken by the Church; and
4. acknowledged the experiences of those who have survived child sexual abuse. The effects of abuse are long lasting and serious. The Diocese wishes to prevent future abuse and encourage everyone to champion child safety and commits to preventing future abuse whether it is sexual, physical, emotional or neglect

Creating safe environments is a dynamic process that involves active participation and responsibility by parishes, schools, families and communities. Safe environments are marked by collaboration, vigilance and a proactive approach to safeguarding. Workers have a responsibility to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable through promoting their welfare, health and development in a safe and caring environment. All workers including clergy, employees and volunteers are to be taught what is required to undertake their roles in a way that enhances a safe and caring environment.

GOSPEL VALUES

The values of love, dignity, and justice as demonstrated by Jesus underpin this policy. Jesus especially showed care for the poor, powerless, and vulnerable. He particularly loved children in their purity and innocence: “...for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs...” (Mark 10:14). All people are called to cherish and safeguard children, young people and those at risk from anyone who would harm them.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Children and young people have a fundamental right to grow, develop and feel safe in environments that are free from violence, exploitation and harm. The Diocese of Lismore has clear expectations that all children and young people will be protected from all forms of harm including sexual, physical and psychological harm as well as ill-treatment and neglect.

Consistent with its mission and values, and in compliance with its legislative obligations, the Diocese of Lismore strives to ensure children in its care are safe and secure. Our strategy for building child safe communities includes regular and comprehensive assessment of risk and providing a safe and supportive environment for children and workers.

The purpose of this policy is to contribute to a framework for creating safe and supportive environments throughout the Diocese, particularly for Children and Young People. This policy identifies the way in which the Bishop, Safeguarding Office, Parish Priests and Workers, as defined by the Act, are to work together to act upon concerns about possible abuse or neglect of Children and Young People, in compliance with reporting obligations under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) (**Children's Guardian Act**) and the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (**Care Act**).

This Policy identifies the need to:

- Ensure that everyone within the Diocese understands what they are required to do when reporting concerns that a Child is at Risk of Significant Harm.
- Recognise the importance of reporting concerns about Children at Risk of Significant Harm to the Department of Communities and Justice in promoting the safety and wellbeing of Children and Young People.
- Understand the importance of providing support to Children and Young People at risk in accordance with the Diocesan commitment to Safeguarding.
- Ensure that everyone within the Diocese understands what they are required to do in order to protect children from harm by reporting Reportable Allegations and Reportable Convictions.
- Recognise the role of Workers reporting Reportable Allegations and Reportable Convictions to the Safeguarding Office as an important strategy for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Recognise the role of the Safeguarding Office in receiving reports from Workers regarding Reportable Allegations and Reportable Convictions and making appropriate reports to the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (**Children's Guardian**) as an important strategy for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

SCOPE

This policy aims to:

- Clarify the expectations of Workers who work in child related employment;
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for children and workers; and
- Build and maintain a contemporary Catholic workplace that is safe, respectful, professional and legally compliant.

DEFINITIONS

Abuse means the improper use of something that causes harm or has the potential to cause harm. There are different forms of abuse including emotional (psychological), neglect, physical and sexual

Adult at Risk means those aged 18 years or over who are, or may be, unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason. They may include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults, adults from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, adults with disability, the very old, those who have experienced prior trauma, those who have gender differences, or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or questioning, and those who live in remote locations. Not every adult in these categories should be considered vulnerable. Like all adults, they have the capacity for strength and resilience.

Child or Children means for the purpose of this policy refers to all children and young people under the age of 18. Children with Vulnerabilities means children who may be exposed to greater risk because of their experience, ability, location or background. They may include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, children with disability, the very young, those who have experienced prior trauma, those who have gender differences, or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or questioning, and those who live in remote locations. Not every child in these categories should be considered vulnerable. Like all children they have the capacity for strength and resilience.

Contractor means contractor as referred to in WHS legislation and/or a company when one main person through the personal skills or efforts as an individual of that person is contracted to the Diocese, and/or a one shareholder/member company.

Diocese means the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lismore and includes without limitation any Diocesan agencies, corporations, entities, parishes, parish corporations and parish entities where the Worker is employed or otherwise engaged.

Emotional (Psychological) abuse happens when a child's, or adult at risk's, social, emotional or intellectual development is damaged or threatened. It can include constant: rejection, teasing or bullying, yelling, withholding of affection, criticism or exposure to domestic or family violence;

Harm: means 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 physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect; or sexual abuse or exploitation. It may be caused by a single act, omission or circumstance; or a series or combination of acts, omission or circumstances.

Neglect: is when a child's, or adult at risk's, health and development are affected because their basic needs are not met. These needs include: food, housing, health care, adequate clothing, personal hygiene, hygienic living conditions, medical treatment and adequate supervision;

Physical abuse is when a child, or adult at risk, suffers physical trauma or injury that is not accidental. It doesn't always leave visible marks or injuries. What matters most is the act itself that caused the trauma or injury. Physical abuse can include: hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, biting and poisoning;

Sexual abuse occurs when a person involves a child or adult at risk in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child or adult at risk in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age development. Considering the child or adult at risk to have consented to the activity is irrelevant.

Volunteer means a person who provides services or occupies a role/s in the Diocese without being paid for those services.

Worker means clergy, employees, board members, religious, volunteers, contractors, work experience students and trainees of the Diocese.

Young Person means a person who is aged 16 years or above but who is under the age of 18 years.

CORE PRINCIPLES

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

The Diocese is committed to taking the necessary steps to:

- comply with the Office of the Children's Guardian Child Safe Standards, the National Principals for Child Safe Organisations and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS);
- demonstrate that the right to protection from harm for all people is paramount;
- safeguard children, young people and the vulnerable;
- foster known best practice that contributes to a safe environment;

- demonstrate accountability through establishing effective structures and practices;
- ensure prompt responses to any concerns raised;
- uphold safe recruitment and selection practices as a means to protecting children, young people and adults at risk from harm;
- uphold and maintain standards of conduct which set our clear guidelines regarding ethical behaviour as an essential part of reducing risk of harm for all people; and
- operate safe environments.

PRINCIPLES

Within the Diocese of Lismore, the procedures to be followed in handling allegations of child protection concerns are based on the following principles:

- Jesus Christ, through the Scriptures, instructs us about the dignity and infinite value of every human being, especially children and young persons;
- The care and protection of children and young people is paramount;
- The value of the family unit is respected but not to the detriment of the well-being of the child;
- Persons involved in child protection concerns should be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect;
- In any preventative and/or protective action, the total well-being of the child is the primary concern;
- All Workers have an obligation to promptly inform the head of relevant entity of serious matters concerning the welfare, care and protection of children;
- Information regarding allegations of child protection shall be made available only to those Workers who have a genuine and/or legislative need to be informed. Workers who have access to such information have the obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality in relation to this information.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS

1. Duty of Care

A worker has a legal obligation to take reasonable care for their own safety and the safety of children and others with whom they come into contact with as part of their engagement with the Diocese.

These obligations arise from the specific role and responsibilities of the worker including (but are not limited to) the following:

- providing adequate supervision;
- following procedures relating to child safety, behaviour management, welfare and wellbeing (for example, reporting procedures);
- demonstrating personal behaviours that promote the safety, welfare and well-being of children;
- providing medical assistance (if competent to do so), or seeking assistance from a medically trained person to aid a child who is injured or becomes sick;
- protecting a child from hazards that pose a risk of harm and which can be reasonably predicted; and
- taking appropriate action where a child's safety, welfare or well-being is at risk.

The extent of the duty is impacted by various factors, such as a child's maturity, ability and circumstances.

The duty applies during all activities and functions conducted or arranged by the Diocese where children are in the care of workers. Workers must assess and manage the risk associated with any activity before undertaking the activity.

Actual harm to a child, or potential to cause significant harm to a child, caused by:

- a. a single serious failure to discharge their duty; or
- b. repeated less serious failures to discharge their duty

may constitute misconduct, neglect or negligence and/or a breach of this policy.

2. Appropriate relationships and boundaries

Workers must act professionally and appropriately when dealing with children and others they come into contact with as part of their engagement with the Diocese. This obligation also extends to relationships workers have with children outside of work. Workers must maintain appropriate professional boundaries and levels of professional conduct with children. A single serious or repeated less serious breaches of the Diocesan Code of Conduct may constitute misconduct, sexual misconduct and/or a breach of this policy.

3 Working with Children

Workers who are required to have a working with children check and do not have a current clearance, or are barred from working with children, cannot continue to be engaged in child related work. Consequently, their employment or engagement with the Diocese may be terminated.

COMPLIANCE IN PARISHES

The primary person with responsibility for dealing with child, and vulnerable, protection issues in the Diocese is the Bishop in his relevant capacity, or his delegate. However, safeguarding is a shared responsibility and all persons within the parishes and agencies who have contact with children, young people and adults at risk are accountable for helping ensure the safety, well-being and dignity of those children, young people and adults at risk.

Key responsibilities of all workers to which this policy applies include:

- Being caring, respectful and compassionate towards children, young people and adults at risk;
- Complying with all legal requirements relating to protection of children, young people and adults at risk; including;
 - Complying with relevant screening obligations; and
 - Reporting matters of concern relating to the safety, well-being and dignity of children, young people and adults at risk to the appropriate person, including the NSW Police, where appropriate;
- Complying with the Diocese's *Child Protection Policy* and procedures;
- Cooperating with any internal or external investigation regarding the safety, well-being and dignity of a child, young person or adults at risk; and
- Complying with the Diocese' *Code of Conduct and other relevant policies*.

CHILD SAFE CULTURE

The Diocese is committed to a child safe culture that guides the attitudes and behaviours of its Workers. Diocesan leaders are required to champion values and practices that guide these attitudes and behaviours. The following values are at the heart of the Diocese' approach to prioritising children's safety:

- The best interests of children and their protection from harm are paramount;
- Child abuse is not tolerated and policies and procedures are put in place to ensure it does not happen;
- Children's rights are understood and respected;
- Concerns about child safety raised by children and their parents and carers are acted on;
- Reporting abuse is not obstructed or prevented.

RELEVANT STANDARDS

The National Office for Child Safety released the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) in 2018. The Child Safe Standards in NSW and the National Principles together address each of the forms of abuse. The Diocese is committed to and supports each of the following standards:

Standard 1 Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

The Diocese is committed to child safety. This is demonstrated in its leadership, in the way the Diocese is managed and by the day-to-day activities it carries out. As a child safe organisation, the Diocese drives the way things are done and how issues and risks are managed.

The Diocese is committed to:

- Leaders and staff champion a set of core values that inform the organisation's approach to child safety;
- The behaviours and practices leaders reward and challenge demonstrate they prioritise the safety of children;
- Leaders incorporate child safe risk management into decision-making and actively monitor risks to child safety;
- Leaders encourage day-to-day practices that prioritise child safety;
- Leaders set clear expectations around child safety and ensure they are followed by staff ;
- Leaders promote a culture of reporting;

Standard 2 Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Children are safer when organisations teach them about their rights to be heard, listened to and believed. The Diocese actively seeks the opinions of children and when doing so considers their age, development, maturity, understanding, abilities and how they communicate. The Diocese encourages and supports children to regularly contribute to decision that affect them.

The Diocese is committed to:

- Children's participation is embedded in organisational practice through feedback opportunities;
- Opportunities are created for children to be included in organisational decision-making;
- Children are given information on internal and external support services;
- Staff are provided with knowledge and skills to support children's participation;
- Staff encourage peer support for children;
- Adults understand what safety means to children;
- Age-appropriate information that describes how adults should behave is provided to children and consistently reinforced

Standard 3 Families and communities are informed and involved

Workers in child safe organisations understand that parents, carers and other important people in a child's life have the primary responsibility for raising their children. As a child safe organisation, the Diocese talks to, consults with and invites the participants of families, caregivers and the broader community to promote the rights of children.

The Diocese is committed to:

- Leaders and staff encourage families to take an active role in keeping children safe;
- Policies and procedures (including a child safe Code of Conduct and a child safe Risk Management Plan) are clearly communicated to parents and carers ;
- Families and community members are encouraged to provide feedback on how the Diocese keeps children safe, and this information is acted upon where necessary.

Standard 4 Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account

As a child safe organisation, the Diocese provides culturally safe and child-friendly services. It pays attention to equity by taking into account children's diverse circumstances. It recognises all children are vulnerable but some are more vulnerable to abuse than others, or find it difficult to reveal or be understood when communication they been abused. The Diocese tries to protect and support all children equitably.

The Diocese is committed to:

- Leaders and staff understand barriers that prevent children from disclosing abuse or adults from recognising children's disclosure;
- Leaders and staff identify and respect the diverse needs, abilities and backgrounds of children, and understand the value of treating them fairly;
- All staff are given information about the factors that increase a child's vulnerability to harm;
- Leaders ensure the workforce reflects the diversity of the children it provides services to, where possible;
- Leaders and staff adapt activities and services to ensure all children feel included.

Standard 5 People working with children are suitable and supported

Human resource management including screening, recruitment and performance reviews play a vital role in protecting children from harm. As a child safe organisation, the Diocese ensures that child safety is prioritised when selecting and managing staff. The Diocese recognises that a verified Working with Children Check (WWCC) is important but other screening practices need to also be used.

The Diocese is committed to:

- Leaders understand recruitment does not rely only on the WWCC, and support ongoing training opportunities for all staff;
- Hiring managers are trained in child safe recruitment practices;
- Staff recruitment includes job ads that identify your organisation as valuing child safety;
- Recruitment processes involve a range of interview questions to establish staff suitability;
- Background and reference checks are carried out and recorded;
- Supervision includes regular reviews to check whether staff are following codes of conduct and other child safe policies;
- Staff, families and the community are aware of recruitment and other child safe practices associated with managing people

Standard 6 Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse (or other concerns) are child focused

The Diocese has a child-focused complaint process that supports children who are exposed to the risk of harm and encourages them to speak up. Children, families and staff know who to tell if they want to make a complaint of child abuse. As a child safe organisations, the Diocese respond by immediately protecting children at risk. Complaints are addressed promptly, thoroughly and fairly. All adults understand their reporting obligations, including to external authorities. Diocesan child safe practices create an environment where Workers can identify and report suspected harm of children.

The Diocese is committed to:

- Leaders create a culture where complaints are taken seriously and all adults take responsibility for the safety of children;
- Leaders clearly explain that breaches to their Child Safe Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action;
- Staff are given support and information on what and how to report, including to external agencies;
- Accessible processes are provided to enable children, staff and others to report complaints;
- Procedures describe likely time frames, review processes and potential outcomes of complaints;
- Complaints are handled confidentially;
- Processes are reviewed regularly and after complaints are made;
- Complaint handling procedures are publicly available;
- Staff are offered a variety of learning strategies;
- Documents are confidential where required.

Standard 7 Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.

As a child safe organisation, the Diocese promotes continuous learning and provides regular ongoing education and training. Workers continually build their abilities to keep children safe.

The Diocese is committed to:

- Leaders provide ongoing education and training opportunities for all staff ;
- Training provides staff with the knowledge, skills and confidence to prevent and identify abuse, and to respond to complaints;
- Staff who are involved in roles and situations with higher risk, or who work with vulnerable children, are provided with opportunities for more advanced training;
- Where possible the organisation employs a child safety officer who is responsible for training;
- Training is regularly reviewed in response to emerging best practices;
- Conferences and other forums are attended to learn about improvements in child safe practices

Standard 8 Physical and online environments minimise the opportunities for abuse (or other kinds of harm) to occur.

As a child safe organisation, the Diocese adapts its physical environments to minimise opportunities for abuse to occur. It offers a balance between visibility and children's privacy. As a child safe organisation, the Diocese also addresses risk in the online environment by educating children and adults about how to avoid harm and detect signs of online grooming.

The Diocese is committed to:

- Leaders set expectations about behavioural standards for staff interacting with children in physical and online environments;
- Risk assessments identify areas where adults have opportunities to interact with children unsupervised, including for one-off events and overnight camps;
- Physical environments are altered to increase natural lines of sight while respecting a child's right to privacy;
- Higher-risk areas such as change rooms, cars, boarding facilities and offsite locations are managed using specific safety measures such as log books and audits or physical environments or doing spot checks;
- Children are provided information about online safety and regularly encouraged to tell staff about negative experiences;

- Staff and parents are provided with information about risks in the online environment, such as online grooming, cyber bullying and sexually explicit messages or images sent or receive online (sexting).

Standard 9 Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.

As a child safe organisation, the Diocese acknowledges that it takes ongoing effort to maintain a safe environment for children. Leaders embed a culture of learning and put in place systems to monitor and evaluate how they have implemented the Child Safe Standards. Workers keep up to date with emerging knowledge and trends to continuously improve practices, and can demonstrate that policies and procedures have changed over time.

The Diocese is committed to:

- Leaders maintain a culture of continuous improvement to ensure policies and procedures are implemented and routinely reviewed even though staffing may change;
- Leaders know the value of continuous monitoring, open conversations and exploring new ways to keep children safe;
- Child safe policies and practices are regularly reviewed;
- Staff refer to the Standards when creating, reviewing or evaluating child safe policies and procedures; Leaders and staff review critical incidents to identify the root cause of the problem, identify risks to the safety of children and make improvements;
- Children are supported to provide feedback and this information is acted on.

Standard 10 Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

As a child safe organisation, the Diocese has policies and procedures that describe how they maintain a safe environment for children. It knows how these documents are only effective if they are implemented. Policies and procedures should be relevant to all aspects of the Diocese and reflect the Child Safe Standards. They are championed by leaders, understood by staff, and available to the community in accessible formats and languages.

The Diocese is committed to:

- Child safe policies are specific to the Diocese and its environment, and they address local risks to the safety of children;
- Child safe policies and procedures are publicly accessible;
- Child safe policies and procedures are available in child-friendly and accessible formats that pay attention to children's diverse characteristics, cultural background and abilities;
- Staff follow child safe policies and procedures;
- Documents are saved in accordance with NSW record-keeping requirements.

BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

Breaching this Policy may result in disciplinary action, which may include the termination of employment or engagement and, notification to external agencies including without limitation professional standards associations, regulatory agencies and police.

REVISION/ MODIFICATION HISTORY

Date	Version	Current Title	Summary of Changes	Approval Date	Commencement Date
25.02.20	1	Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults policy	Initial Policy	1 October 2020	1 October 2020
April 2024	2	Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk	Revised policy to include children and adults at risk, Child Safe Standards and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations Addition of Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Policy, removed Child Protection Policy. Reworded Social Networking Policy.	4 June 2024	1 January 2025

APPROVAL DATE/ REVISION HISTORY

Approved by: Bishop Gregory Homeming

Date: 10 September 2024

To be revised: June 2027