



Catholic Archdiocese
of Perth

GUIDELINES



GUIDELINE: Safeguarding – Responding and Reporting Abuse

Approved: [insert date]

Policy Category: Governance

Sub-category: Safety of Children and Adults at Risk



Our guidelines provide additional guidance on best practice relating to policy and procedure

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Name of Guideline:	Safeguarding – Responding and Reporting Abuse
Governing Policy	Safeguarding
Description:	Guideline to ensure adults, especially adults at risk are informed about their rights, empowered to participate in decisions affecting them and are provided appropriate support.
Guideline supports:	All members of the Church Community
Guideline Status:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Guideline, or <input type="checkbox"/> Revision of Existing Guideline
Related Policy Category:	Governance
Related Policy Sub-category:	Safety of Children and Adults at Risk
Approval Authority:	Senior Operations Officer
Governing Authority:	N/A
Responsible Officer:	Director, Safeguarding
Approval Date:	
Date of Guideline review¹:	1 December 2026

Assistance:

Questions related to the *Guideline: Safeguarding Responding and Reporting Abuse* can be directed to Director of Safeguarding by email to: director.safeguarding@perthcatholic.org.au

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, this Guideline will still apply beyond the review date.



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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of the Responding and Reporting Abuse guideline is to provide a consistent approach to responding to allegations and complaints of abuse and misconduct including unethical behaviour towards children and adults by a clergy, religious, employee, church worker (paid or unpaid) or volunteer in the Church Community within the Archdiocese.
- 1.2. The Archdiocese has a responsibility to report concerns to State authorities and to comply with statutory processes in reporting and responding to abuse.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This guideline applies to:
 - 2.1.1. Clergy, Religious Brothers and Sisters, Seminarians, Employees, Church Workers, Volunteers; and
 - 2.1.2. Contractors and Third-Party Users of Church Property, where necessary.

3. PRINCIPLES

- 3.1. The guiding and essential belief that is at the heart and foundation of the social teaching of the Church is the sacredness and dignity of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1:27).
- 3.2. Safeguarding the rights and integrity of the most vulnerable in society is guided by the Gospel command of Jesus to love our neighbour (Mark 12:31), to promote the common good and to lead all to the fullness of human life (John 10:10).
- 3.3. The Archdiocese takes a zero tolerance to abuse and values the voice of children and adults on matters of safety.
- 3.4. All concerns or allegations will be taken seriously and responded to promptly with integrity, accountability, impartiality, and procedural fairness in line with the National Response Protocol and Archdiocesan Policy.



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- 3.5. Empowering children and adults in good faith to raise concerns and allegations should be without barriers that prevent disclosure and responses should be supportive and trauma informed and that are in the best interest of the child or adult at risk.

4. STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE

Archdiocesan Agencies, Offices, Organisations, Ministries and Parishes are encouraged to understand approaches, roles and responsibilities to deal with different types of complaints and obligations to act and report.

Practices when responding and reporting abuse or misconduct may include, but are not limited to:

4.1 RESPONDING

When responding to disclosures, concerns, observations or allegations of abuse, all matters should:

- Prioritise the immediate safety of the child or adult. If necessary, call 000.
- Be enacted with integrity, accountability, impartiality, and procedural fairness.
- Acknowledge and address the issue in a consistent and timely manner.
- Ensure no imbalance of power and or abuse of power is used to take advantage or exploit another.
- Declare any conflict of interest to the Safeguarding Office and your Parish Priest, Director, or Manager and follow the Archdiocese Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedure.

Victim/Complainant Response

- Listen to and reassure the victim.
- Stay calm and give the individual the time to talk.
- Refrain from having the victim repeat the disclosure unnecessarily.
- Refrain from asking leading questions or making suggestions.
- Encourage them to use their own words.
- Reassure them they have done the right thing and that the disclosure will need to be reported.
- Explain what you will do next - who will be made aware of the information given and be responsible for handling the concern.



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- If a disclosure occurs in a group setting apply protective interrupting to prevent someone from fully disclosing in a group setting. Ensure to speak privately with the person about the disclosure outside of the group setting.
- The role of the person who receives or responds to a concern, allegation, observation, or disclosure of abuse is not to investigate or determine if the concern is evidenced or not but to report using the **Safeguarding Concern Report** and adhere to statutory or canonical reporting obligations where necessary.
- Provide trauma-informed and victim-centred support by way of a referral pathway.

Respondent/Alleged Perpetrator Response

- Do not confront the alleged perpetrator.
- Report abuse or concerns of misconduct to the Safeguarding Office and adhere to statutory or canonical reporting obligations where necessary.
- Provide a trauma-informed approach when dealing with a respondent or alleged perpetrator.

4.2 REPORTING

Refer to the **RESPONDING AND REPORTING GUIDE** (Annexure 1)

Who can report? ANYONE

- Any child, young person or their parent or carer can report.
- Any adult or their carer can report.
- Any Clergy, Religious, Employee, Church worker (paid or unpaid), Volunteer or member of the public.
- Any witness or third-party person.

What to report? ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT

- All current or historical concerns, allegations, observations, or disclosures of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, neglect)
- Any concern about misconduct, sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), unethical behaviour or wrongdoing that may breach the Code of Conduct or *Integrity in Ministry* Code of Conduct.
- Involving a Cleric, Religious, Employee, Church Worker (paid or unpaid), Volunteer or third-party user of church property.



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How to report? **WRITTEN OR VERBAL**

- You can report by:
 - 1) Completing the *Safeguarding Concern Report* online <https://safeguarding.perthcatholic.org.au/reporting/>
 - 2) Call the Safeguarding Office PH: (08) 9221 7762
 - 3) Email the Safeguarding Office director.safeguarding@perthcatholic.org.au
 - 4) Contact your Parish or Agency Safeguarding Officer
- Report to statutory or canonical reporting obligations where necessary.
- Report even if there is fear of repercussions or disloyalty.
- Report even if perceived as trivial or if the situation improves.

There is various avenue of responding appropriately to concerns, complaints or allegations of harm through:

A. Safeguarding Concern Reporting (Policy)

- Report all concerns, complaints, or allegations.
- Involving a Cleric, Religious, Employee, Church Worker (paid or unpaid), Volunteer or third-party user of church property within the Archdiocese.

B. Mandatory Reporting Child Sexual Abuse (Legislative)

- Report all Child Sexual Abuse (under 18 years)
- If you are a Mandatory Reporter under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*.
- Report directly via the Department of Communities Mandatory Reporting Web System
- If the report implicates a Cleric, Religious, Employee, Church Worker (paid or unpaid) or third-party user of church property within the Archdiocese, notify the Safeguarding Office via the *Safeguarding Concern Report* of the Mandatory Report submission.

C. Reportable Conduct Scheme (Legislative)

- The Archdiocesan delegated representative is to report:
Reportable Conduct:
 - Sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of a child)
 - Sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of a child)
 - Physical assault (against, with or in the presence of a child)
 - Significant neglect of a child



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- Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Reportable Convictions:

- a conviction (including spent conviction) for an offence of a sexual nature (against, with or in the presence of a child).
- Involving a Cleric, Religious, Employee, Church Worker (paid or unpaid), Volunteer or third-party user of church property within the Archdiocese, irrespective of whether the alleged conduct occurred in or outside the course of employment or appointment.
- To the Ombudsman of Western Australia.

D. Vos Estis Lux Mundi (Canonical Crimes)

- Report offences against the sixth commandment of the decalogue
- Involving a Cleric or Religious
- Report using the *Canonical Crime Form* on the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Website. [Vos Estis Lux Mundi \(catholic.au\)](http://VosEstisLuxMundi.catholic.au)

4.3 COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

What happens next?

Investigation

- Reports will be made to statutory authorities in accordance with statutory obligations if they involve alleged criminal conduct, mandatory reporting or reportable conduct or convictions.
- Reports will be made to the Church Authority with canonical responsibility and/or the WA Professional Standards Office.
- Investigative processes follow the *National Response Protocol*.
- Provide a prompt response with all parties remaining informed of ongoing management of the complaint.
- All concerns, complaints or allegations will be assessed and delegated by the Safeguarding Office. Delegation may be internal and external stakeholders to:
 - WA Professional Standards Office
 - Office of the Vicar General
 - Office of the Archbishop
 - People and Culture
 - Parish Priest
 - Agency Director or Manager
 - Statutory authorities (WA Police, Department of Child Protection)



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- Support will be offered to the person(s) involved including having a support person present to address any actual or perceived power imbalance and to ensure a trauma-informed approach is undertaken.
- Based on the investigation findings and risk assessment, the course of action and or disciplinary action will be determined by the Archbishop or the responsible Church Entity.

Risk Management

- Initiate a risk assessment by internal or external stakeholders to determine any risk of potential harm to others or to identify what steps should be taken to mitigate any risks.
- Ongoing risk assessments are to be monitored throughout the investigation.
- Known people of concern or known offenders of abuse are managed by the Safeguarding Office through the Safeguarding Safety Plan, Church Attendance Agreement.
- The Office of the Vicar General manages clergy through the Clergy Wellbeing Committee, Continuing Care.
- Records retention and sharing of information will follow Archdiocesan policy and legislative requirements.

5. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (Edition 2)
- Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding Guidelines
- Code of Conduct
- Integrity in Ministry
- Responding and Reporting Guide
- National Response Protocol (March 2022)
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Vost Estis Lux Mundi (Apostolic Letter issued Motu Proprio published in Acta Apostolicae Sedis)
- *Children and Community Service Act 2004*
- *Parliamentary Commissioner Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2022*



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5. DEFINITIONS | GLOSSARY OF TERMS

For the purposes of this Guideline, the definitions contained in the Governing Policy apply. In addition, the following definitions apply to this Guideline:

7. REVISIONS MADE TO THIS GUIDELINE

Date of approval	Approved by:	Description:

These Guidelines are scheduled for review every three (3) years or more frequently, if appropriate.



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8. APPENDIX 1 - RESPONDING AND REPORTING GUIDE

RESPONDING AND REPORTING GUIDE

