

Catholic Diocese of Sale



Safeguarding Handbook

**June 2024
Version 1.3**

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Abbreviations

ACSL	Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited
CDS	Catholic Diocese of Sale
COC	Code of Conduct
DOSCEL	Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited
DSPSO	Diocesan Safeguarding & Professional Standards Officer
NCSS	National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Version 2
PSO	Parish Safeguarding Officer
VIT	Victorian Institute of Teaching
WWCC	Working with Children Check
WWCCV	Working with Children Check Victoria

History of Updates

V 1.0	21 st Oct 2021	Safeguarding Handbook written by the DSPSO presented to Parish Safeguarding Officers at their online workshop. Possible updates following FAQ during workshop.
V1.1	30 Nov 2021	Update to include a revision to frequency of signing Code of Conduct (p13) & definition of volunteer (p6).
V1.2	24 Feb 2022	Incorporation of Bishop's Pastoral visit

V1.3	8 Apr 2022	Changes to section 7.4 by Maria Kirkwood, as a result of a review via the Professional Standards Committee.
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Definitions

Adults at risk: This is the new term for ‘vulnerable adults’ which is recommended by the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Version 2 as the focus is on risk factors rather than on the individual. These are adults with diverse circumstances and experiences that increase the risk of abuse which include being elderly, having a disability, having mental illness, having cognitive impairment, having diminished capacity, being culturally and linguistically diverse, experiencing transient risks such as bereavement or relationship breakdown or having an impairment that makes it difficult for that person to protect themselves from abuse or exploitation.

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years. Throughout this document any reference to either ‘child’ or ‘children’ is a reference to a person or persons under the age of 18.

Church personnel: Clergy, Members of Religious congregations, Diocesan and Parish employees (or contractors) and **Parish volunteers** (see definition below) including the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Complaints: These are grievances or accusations that manifest as any allegation, suspicion, concern, incident or report of abuse or breach of the Diocese of Sale’s Code of Conduct. It also includes disclosures made to the Diocese that may be about, or relate to, abuse of children or adults at risk conducted by Church personnel.

Diocesan Safeguarding and Professional Standards Officer

(DSPSO): This officer is tasked to ensure the ethical and safe practices of pastoral ministry in the Diocese of Sale. This includes delivering the activities to meet the strategies and actions in the Diocesan Strategic Plan for Safeguarding.

Integrity in Ministry: A document that has been produced by a committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes which covers the [Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious.](#)

Integrity in the Service of the Church: A resource document that has been produced by a committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes which covers the [Principles and Standards for Lay Workers in the Catholic Church in Australia.](#)

Mandatory Reporting: This is the legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect by mandated persons. In terms of Church personnel, these are people in religious ministry which has been defined (in conjunction with the other Dioceses in Victoria) and presented (in Jan 2020) to the DFFH (formerly DHHS) as comprising the Bishop, Priests, Deacons and Religious Brothers and Sisters.

Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO): A person of high integrity appointed by the Parish to work collaboratively with the parish priest and the Diocese to ensure a safe and supportive environment for people of all ages. A Position Description can be obtained from the Diocesan Safeguarding and Professional Standards Office.

Parish volunteers: These are people who volunteer and whose Parish ministry includes:

- a. Directly involving children or adults at risk. Children's ministries such as Altar Server training, Sacramental Training, RCIC and Children's Liturgy. Adult ministries including parish outreach ministries such as Soup Kitchens.
- b. Leaders or coordinators. The leaders or coordinators of all Parish Ministries including all members of the Parish Finance Committee and Parish Pastoral Council.
- c. Volunteers in published lists. Those listed by name in published parish rosters or bulletins/newsletters in ministries such as Special Ministers of the Eucharist, Readers, Lectors, Welcomers, Sacristans, Choir or Collectors.

1.INTRODUCTION

The safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk, is a collective responsibility incumbent on all who are part of the Catholic Diocese of Sale (CDS).

Purpose

The Safeguarding Handbook has been written exclusively for Parish Safeguarding Officers and is to be used as reference guide for them.

Context and Importance of the Parish Safeguarding Officer

The Diocese of Sale's Strategic Plan for Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk, articulates the approach taken to create and maintain safe environments. There are four components:

- **Safe People** is about changing culture through training, skills and staffing.
- **Safe Practices** is about policies, practice and the operational model.
- **Safe Places** is about managing risks both physical and online.
- **Safe Data and Information** is about information management.

Parishes in the Diocese have accountability to be in compliance with the Diocese Strategic Plan for Safeguarding.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer's role is integral to fulfilling the accountability of Parishes.

The Position Description of a Parish Safeguarding Officer can be obtained from their Parish or the DSPSO.

2. CALENDAR OF SAFEGUARDING EVENTS

Mar/Apr	May/Jun	Jul/Aug	Sep/Oct	Nov/Dec
PSO Wkshp			PSO Wkshp	
		Child Safety		EVIDENCE OF RECORDS SENT TO DIOCESE
WWCC				
CODE OF CONDUCT –Updated every 3 years - Signed annually				
RISK & ISSUE REGISTERS; RISK ASSESSMENTS				
ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING TRAINING FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS				
NCSS PARISH AUDIT PREPARATION				

3. SAFEGUARDING (PREVENTATIVE) STRATEGIES

Accountability of Parishes

There is an accountability of Parishes to ensure that they are compliant with Diocesan Policies and directions of the Diocese.

The following are to be **conducted annually** and **evidence submitted** to DSPSO:

- Working with Children Check (WWC) registers (current and verified)
- Code of Conduct to be signed by volunteers
- Issue registers, Risk registers and Risk assessments (completed)
- Safeguarding training for volunteers.

In addition, Parishes are required to:

- complete and work towards meeting the recommended standards as provided by NCSS (Parish Audit).
- ensure that the Parish bulletin contains a Commitment to Safeguarding and the name and contact details of the Parish Safeguarding Officer
- ensure that posters are displayed prominently in the Parish on:
 - Statement of Commitment
 - Reporting Abuse
 - Name of Parish Safeguarding Officer(s)
 - National Redress Scheme.
 - Any other posters provided such as Child Safety Week.
- ensure that the Parish Code of Conduct is current
- work towards writing a Parish Policy to include specificities for example the use of Parish premises by third parties, sacramental preparation in a pandemic, online ministry and many other evolving matters.

Evidence that the above has been carried out has to be sent to the DSPSO annually. This will be archived and readily retrieved for future purposes.

3.1 Working with Children Check

One of the ways a child or young person is protected in Australia is to ensure that workers and volunteers that they may come across have a Working with Children Check (WWCC). Australia lacks a national Working with Children Check (WWCC) scheme. Therefore, in each jurisdiction, the state agencies are responsible for verifying worker and volunteer registrations. In Victoria, this is the Working with Children Check Victoria (WWCCV).

Legal responsibility

There is an Act passed by the Victorian parliament known as the WWC Act that prohibits employment of anyone in child related work unless they have a valid WWCC.

The Catholic Diocese of Sale (CDS) has a **WWC Act protocol** which is a policy that sets out how CDS will apply the requirements of this Act.

The CDS has a **blanket approach** across the whole Diocese where it is a requirement for all Church personnel, regardless of whether they engage in child-related work, to possess a WWCC.

If a person declines to have a WWCC on grounds that it is not required by the Act, the PSO is to contact the DSPSO.

Note that the definition of child-related work in the Act is difficult to interpret with any degree of certainty. Therefore, it is more practical and safer in its implementation to have a blanket approach.

This means that **ALL Church personnel** are required to have this. Please see definition on page 3 and 4 of the definition of Church personnel.

A WWCC is required for all the following people in the Diocese:

- A minister of religion (clergy and deacon)
- A teacher
- Employee or contractor
- Church volunteer.

Exemptions for not having a WWCC apply to:

- Those under the age of 18 years
- A sworn police officer who has not been suspended from duty
- A teacher who has a current registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). The teacher needs to notify WWCCV of the name of the parish that they are involved with.

Note that possessing a WWCC does not attest to the good character of the individual. The WWCC screening process does not pick up all adverse findings against an individual.

Further information can be found from the CDS WWC Protocol.

The validity of WWCC is 5 years and there is no cost for volunteers.

There is a requirement by the CDS WWC Protocol and the WWC Act that all church personnel who carry a role or ministry in the Parish need to:

- **Be On boarded** – Before they commence, they must possess a valid WWCC.
- **Be Verified** - Each parish must continue to verify the WWCC of Church personnel every three months and VIT information every six months.
- **Have evidence with accurate record-keeping** on the part of each Parish.

Note in Victoria, if a parish continues to engage a person in child related work but the worker does not have a current WWCC, then the parish and Diocese could be charged for recklessness under the WWC Act or the Worker Screening Act 2020.

It is a requirement of the Act that the Diocese provides evidence of compliance. This means that not only are there WWCC records for all Church personnel but these are also verified. The CDS requires that records are kept both in Parish databases (or those who use PACs) and the Diocese database.

This is done through PSOs and / or Parish secretaries supplying to the Diocese the WWCC records annually. This will be requested from early November each year and saved in the Diocesan system drives under: Parish name/WWCC/Year.

There are penalties under the Act for non-compliance.

A report of compliance will be supplied to the Bishop annually.

3.2 Screening of Visitors

Refer to the Diocese of Sale’s Screening and Sign-In Policy.

3.3 Parish Code of Conduct

The PSO needs to ensure that the Parish Code of Conduct (COC) is kept current and updated to the latest suggested template released by the Diocese. COC should not be more than three years old.

This COC will need to be approved by the Parish Pastoral Council before it can be issued to volunteers to sign. Minor changes and amendments are acceptable.

The PSO send the approved COC to the DSPSO for review and filing. The DSPSO will ensure that the approved COC will be uploaded onto the Diocesan website under the particular Parish.

In addition, if the Parish has its own website, the PSO will need to ensure that the COC is also uploaded there.

The Diocese policy is for COC to be **signed every 3 years as a minimum or when there has been a change to the COC**. The PSO can arrange to do this in a number of ways:

- Organise face to face sessions going through the COC with volunteers annually, culminating in them signing the COC. Signature could be a one single document laid out as follows:

Name	Signature	Date

- Place the COC on the Parish website and have a facility where volunteers read, acknowledge and respond electronically stating that they abide with the COC, which has been done by St Patrick's Pakenham. The PSO is then able to obtain hardcopy records as evidence of volunteers signing the COC.
- Provide a hardcopy COC to each volunteer and allow them to take it home to read and return the signed copy next time they return to the Parish. Then record this. See section 4 Volunteer Register.

3.4 Risk Assessments and Risk Register

Every parish event or activity requires a **risk assessment**.

If it is an ongoing activity, such as sacramental preparation (refer to the list on parish ministries in the Risk Management Guidelines), then any risks associated with that activity (which are listed in these guidelines) need to be considered and recorded in the **Parish Risk Register**.

Recording risks is not enough. It is important that the actions associated with mitigating those risks are listed and regularly reviewed. The most important aspect of risk management is that there needs to be Risk Owner who owns managing and conducting the actions related to that risk.

The DSPSO will provide professional development opportunities for PSOs on:

- Conducting a Risk Assessments
- Populating a Risk Register.

All Risk Assessments and Risk Register will need to be sent into the DSPSO annually for scrutiny and archival purposes.

3.5 Safeguarding Training

The Diocese Training strategy targets all Church personnel providing them with opportunities for learning and increasing their awareness, knowledge and skills in safeguarding and professional standards.

Clergy

The Catholic Church in Australia has a document, *Integrity in Ministry* (page 4) which describes the principles and standards expected in Ministry for clergy. The Diocese provides training in Mandatory reporting and also in other areas of Professional standards. In addition, there is a tailored program for newly arrived and newly ordained clergy. The DSPSO looks after Professional development for clergy with respect to Professional Standards.

Volunteers

The Catholic Church in Australia has a document, *Integrity in the Service of the Church* (page 4) which targets volunteers.

Annual training in at least one of the following is required:

A. Face to face training

In groups, facilitated by PSO or by a visiting facilitator. If conducted by the PSO, material will be supplied by the DSPSO and support given. Records of training will need to be kept by the Parish and sent to the DSPSO.

B. Online training.

Currently, the Diocese has purchased licenses for the Safeguarding Children module (Safetrac platform). In order to on-board volunteers, the PSO will need to obtain the standard Excel template from the DSPSO and complete this with names, email address and role. This is to be sent back to the DSPSO for on boarding. DSPSO is able to access Completion reports which are available to PSOs to record training undertaken by volunteers.

3.6 Issues Register

An issue is an event that has happened. It usually does not get formally documented unless the issue is a complaint, disclosure, observation of inappropriate conduct.

It is important that issues are documented in the Parish Issue Register even though the Parish Priest and other members of the Parish are aware of it. It provides for a 'one stop location' for all facts on a matter, if this is required rather than retrieving various sources of information.

An example of an issue is 'Not knowing when a volunteer turns 18'. What steps will you take to address this? It is important to document your actions and follow this through.

Training in using an Issues Register is provided by the DSPSO.

The Parish Issues Register is to be sent to the DSPSO for scrutiny and archival purposes.

3.7 Youth Ministry

Please refer to the Diocesan guidelines on Youth Ministry.

3.8 Altar Servers

Records are to be maintained of Altar servers. Consultation is to be conducted to arrive at a Diocesan Policy or Guideline on this.

3.9 Social Media and Websites

The Diocese has released a Policy on the Parish use of Social Media and Websites.

The key difference to be aware of is that with Social Media, the Parish has no control of the space which it operates in, example Facebook, You tube etc. Whereas with the Parish website, the space belongs to the Parish and the Parish has full control. Refer to the above Policy.

3.10 Parish Ministry Online

The Diocese has released Guidelines on Parish Ministry Meetings in the Online environment. Meetings include but not limited to Bible, Prayer, Rosary, RCIA, Choir, Family Groups, Youth Ministry, Sacramental Preparation, Parish Pastoral Council meetings and Parish Office meetings. There are associated Codes of Conduct to be signed by participants particularly if they are under the age of 18.

These Guidelines are principles based and are therefore universal and flexible. It applies to any online platform such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Skype etc. Guidelines on livestreaming masses have not been developed as yet.

3.11 Records Management and Storage

The Diocese is working towards a Records Management Policy.

Records Management at both the Diocese and Parish levels are integral to the ability to demonstrate accountability, transparency and sound systems and processes.

One key aspect is the Volunteer Register. Evidence of Records being managed are required for:

- Volunteers over 18 years of age
- Altar servers
- Youth and Children’s Ministry.

There are different data requirements for each of the categories. Contact the DSPSO to provide guidance of information to be conducted.

A Volunteer register will include the following data:

- Name and ‘AKA’ (Also known as)
- Email address
- Role in Parish
- WWCC Number and Expiry date
- VIT registration (if applicable)
- Code of Conduct – date(s) signed
- Training – date(s).

Records will be stored on the Parish server.

Evidence of these records: Volunteer WWCC, Signed Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Training attendance AND Risk, Issue Registers, Risk assessments will need to be supplied to the DSPSO before the end of December every year to be stored for archival purposes.

However, it is important that the PSO is careful under the Privacy Act that they are only accessing these records for the purpose of maintaining screening of volunteers and evidence as provided above. Any other purpose is deemed in breach of the Privacy Act. The demarcation between confidential records that the PSO has access to and their own personal records has to be demonstrated.

4. RAISING SAFEGUARDING AWARENESS IN THE PARISH

There are a number of ways in which the PSO can raise awareness of the safeguarding of children and adults at risk in the Parish.

These include:

1. The PSO to be invited to present a regular report to the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) or actually be part of the PPC.
2. Parish bulletin with statement of Safeguarding and the name and contact details of the PSO.
3. Safeguarding training for all volunteers which is mandatory annually.
4. Attending Ministries in the Parish and speaking about safeguarding.
5. Speaking at Mass near to Child Safety Week, for example, or other times when this is required.
6. Posters on Safeguarding and National Redress prominently displayed.

5. REPORTING DISCLOSURES AND CONCERNS

Refer to the Diocesan Policy on Complaints Handling and Reporting.

All PSOs should ensure that the one page 'Five Critical Actions for Church Personnel' is prominently to hand for all Parish Staff.

FIVE CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR CHURCH PERSONNEL

Responding to current abuse
(Indicators, disclosures, allegations, suspicions and concerns)

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION: This page is intended to inform you of the actions you should take if you are aware of or suspect that a person is being abused or has been abused. It is not intended to replace the Diocesan Professional Standards Office (PSO) or the Police. It is intended to provide you with a clear and concise guide to the actions you should take.

1 RESPOND TO AN EMERGENCY | **2 PROVIDE FIRST AID SUPPORT** | **3 REPORT TO AUTHORITIES** | **4 CONTACT PARISH/CATHEDRAL** | **5 PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT**

1 RESPOND TO AN EMERGENCY
If there is a risk of immediate harm, call the police (999) or the ambulance (999). If you are unsure, call 111. If you are unsure, call 111. If you are unsure, call 111.

2 PROVIDE FIRST AID SUPPORT
If you are aware of or suspect that a person is being abused or has been abused, provide first aid support. This may include providing emotional support, listening to the person, and providing information about the Diocesan Professional Standards Office (PSO).

3 REPORT TO AUTHORITIES
If you are aware of or suspect that a person is being abused or has been abused, report the matter to the appropriate authorities. This may include the Diocesan Professional Standards Office (PSO), the Police, or the Child Protection Agency (CPA).

4 CONTACT PARISH/CATHEDRAL
If you are aware of or suspect that a person is being abused or has been abused, contact your Parish Priest or Cathedral Chapter. They will provide you with further support and information.

5 PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT
If you are aware of or suspect that a person is being abused or has been abused, provide ongoing support. This may include providing emotional support, listening to the person, and providing information about the Diocesan Professional Standards Office (PSO).

CONTACT
DIOCESAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OFFICE
03 5614 5140
psosale@catholic.org.au

Volunteers can report to the PSO or directly to the Police as per posters:



6. PARISH AUDITS AND SAFEGUARDING STATUS

In the context of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) and the framework of the Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited (ACSL), each Parish and the Diocese has to be prepared for formal audits to be conducted by ACSL or any other external party.

The DSPSO will conduct both formal and informal audits of a number of parishes each year. These are in relation to ascertaining readiness for an audit conducted by external parties and planned visits of the Bishop to those parishes.

Preparation for Bishop's visit

As of 2022, the Bishop of Sale will be visiting a number of Parishes per year. In preparation for these visits, the DSPSO will provide a safeguarding status report to the Bishop before he attends the Parish. This will provide an opportunity for the Bishop to commend the Parish for activities and practices that have been carried out well and provide recommendations made by the DSPSO for improvements.

Ongoing Parish Audit Activity

All PSOs have been given the 2019 NCSS Parish Audit template to work through in order to ready themselves for a likely external audit by the ACSL. In preparation, all PSOs need to work through and complete the template document which will require considerable investment in time working together with the Parish Priest.

Once this document is completed, this is to be sent to the DSPSO. There will inevitably be 'gaps' revealed by this activity which will need to be addressed by the PSO in the parish context together with the DSPSO.

7. OTHER MATTERS

7.1 Parish Policy

PSOs need to work on developing a Parish Policy. A template will be released in 2022. This needs to include managing agreements with third parties who use Church premises.

7.2 If the Parish Safeguarding Officer is Absent.....

In circumstances where the PSO is away or cannot perform duties associated with his role, it is the responsibility of the Parish Priest to appoint a substitute PSO for the duration of the absence.

7.3 Professional Development for PSOs

PSOs come into this role with a depth and breadth of work and life experience which can be harnessed for the good of the whole Diocese, when sharing is conducted collaboratively.

Parish Safeguarding Workshops are held twice a year to enable the Professional Development of PSOs. These cover a range of areas spanning the depth and breadth of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), changing legislation and practical implementation of activities such as how to elicit the views of children on safeguarding, managing high risk offenders who attend mass and administrative matters. In addition, PSOs can be twinned with others to enable collaboration and a supportive environment.

7.4 Relationship with the DSPSO

The relationship between the Parish and the Diocese is collaborative in order to implement safeguarding practices in accordance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and state and federal legislation. This relationship is documented both in the Position Descriptions of the PSO as well as in that of the DSPSO.

The DSPSO has an open, listening and supportive approach with PSOs so as to achieve the requirements of the Diocesan Strategic Plan for Safeguarding.

If there are any concerns, feedback and recommendations, PSOs are encouraged to provide this to the DSPSO.

The DSPSO conducts one on one training as well as group workshops to support PSOs to be able to fulfil their role.

7.5 Relationship between Parishes and Schools

The Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (DOSCEL) commenced operation on the January 1 2018. The Bishop of the Diocese at the time, Bishop Patrick O'Regan, following discussion with the clergy, requested the Director of Catholic Education, Maria Kirkwood, to commence a process for a change of governance for schools in the Diocese. The process commenced during 2016.

The changed governance model removes the legal accountability, and liability of the Parish Priest for schools in the Diocese. Parish clergy maintain an important and ongoing role as faith and spiritual leaders of the schools. As of the date of the publishing of this Handbook, DOSCEL manages and operate 38 Primary and 5 Secondary schools in the Diocese of Sale. One secondary college is governed by Marist Schools Australia (Lavalla Traralgon) and another is currently co-governed by the Diocese of Sale and the Marists (Catholic College Sale)

Due to this changed governance model, PSOs need focus only on teachers who are also volunteers in the Parish. PSOs will need to ensure that they keep a track of their WWCC (although registered teachers will also have a VIT registration number) and ensure that they have undertaken Safeguarding Training and have signed the Parish Code of Conduct.

Teachers being mandatory reporters already undertake extensive safeguarding training due to the expectations of their profession and registration requirements. The Parish context is different and teachers understand this. It should be recognised however that teachers bring a depth of experience and understanding of these matters which can be drawn on in their Parish roles.

7.6 Evaluation

An ongoing evaluation of this Safeguarding Handbook will be conducted to keep up with the changing requirements of safeguarding. However, PSOs are welcome to provide feedback and provide recommendations at any time to the DSPSO.

7.7 Accessing documents listed in this Handbook

Documents can be located on the Diocesan Website, Safeguarding 'tile' labelled 'Safeguarding Resources'
DIOCESE OF SALE SAFEGUARDING WEBSITE – 'Tiles'

Home » Safeguarding

Safeguarding

Statement of Commitment We hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults as a central and fundamental responsibility. Find out more	Governance Boards In the spirit of the Gospel and the healing ministry of Jesus, the Catholic Church in Australia is committed to the care, protection and safety of children and adults at risk. Find out more	Safeguarding Standards The approach to safeguarding is underpinned by Gospel values as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church in the Diocese of Sale. Find out more
Complaints Handling and Reporting Process The Diocese is committed to a policy of zero tolerance to all forms of abuse, and will deal with all reports fairly and appropriately. Find out more	Safeguarding Resources This page provides resources for the use of Parishes in the Diocese of Sale. Find out more	Pastoral Response to Victims "My deep desire is for the Church in the Diocese of Sale to be a safe place and for all people to feel safe in the presence of God." Find out more
Child Safety Week 2021 In a first for the Catholic Diocese of Sale, parishes and schools across the region united to celebrate Child Safety Week, 5-12 September 2021. See Bishop's video message, poster, competition winners and parent resources. Find out more	Seeking Redress The Catholic Diocese of Sale recognises its responsibility in relation to the abuse of children in its care. Find out more	

Complaints Handling and Reporting

Safeguarding Resources