

1. **Title:** **Protocol for Reporting on Standards for Child Care, Safety and Protection**
2. **Applies to:** All of the Christian Brothers Oceania Province Personnel.
3. **Geographical Application:** Province wide unless otherwise stated
4. **Legislation/Regulation:** All applicable legislation/regulations
5. **Guideline Statement:**

The *Protocol for Reporting on Standards for Child Care, Safety and Protection* has been developed to respond to the particular service needs of the Oceania Province Mission Directorate. Since a considerable proportion of ministry engagement within the Directorate involves the provision of services to children, there is a need to be particularly vigilant and responsive to the care, safety and protection needs of these children. The Oceania Leadership Team has recognised this in clear statements contained within various Child Protection policy related documents previously endorsed by its delegated Policy Coordinating Group, namely:

- 1 Code of Conduct – Interacting with Children and Young People Guideline
- 2 Standards for Child Care, Safety & Protecting Reporting within Edmund Rice Ministries *[this is the other document I wrote which is amended and attached – it is now consistent with this document]*
- 3 Resource Document re Child Protection Policy and Guidelines for the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers *[I need to check what this document is and see it lines up with the Reporting Protocol]*

The document, *Protocol for Reporting on Standards for Child Care, Safety and Protection*, emerges as a response to the principles articulated within these policies. The document applies these policy principles to expected operational practices concerned with the provision of services and activities for children.

Statutory authorities in countries throughout the Oceania Province require all service providers to be capable of demonstrating a professional and organisationally appropriate response when child protection concerns or allegations arise. Organizational child protection reporting best practice demonstrates:

- Independence in professional child protection decision making.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Independence in this context is understood as professional independence i.e. the person is first and foremost guided and informed by a professional code of ethics and the theoretical and research knowledge base required within that profession, whilst remaining attuned to the organisational context of their work.

<sup>2</sup> Refer Definitions

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- Application of professional competency expertise in responding to child protection concerns or allegations.

Significantly, these best practice principles are equally relevant for an organisation in establishing clear systems and protocols to enable it to respond in the most professional manner prior to engagement with the relevant statutory child protection bodies.

This *Protocol for Reporting on Standards for Child Care, Safety and Protection* recognise at all times the organisation's professional service responsibility **does not** preclude or take priority over the individual mandatory reporting responsibilities, as stated under relevant statutory legislation. Every person is reminded of this individual responsibility via the Protocol Standards document itself and during associated training.<sup>2</sup>

## 6. Introduction

The Oceania Province Mission Directorate is committed to ensuring the care, safety and protection of all children and young people who are in Ministry service programmes. As a reflection of this commitment the Oceania Province has several strategies, which work together to ensure children's safety and well-being. These strategic components include policies and protocols, Ministry based Codes of Conduct, recruiting and training requirements and various related service procedural manuals.

*Protocol for Reporting on Standards for Child Care, Safety and Protection* (hereafter referred to as *Reporting Standards*) applies to all Edmund Rice Province Ministries under the governance of the Oceania Province. The *Reporting Standards* outline the required responsibilities of staff and volunteers, when, through either observing, over-hearing, or through direct conversation, there is awareness of a 'concern' or an 'allegation' relating to possible breaches to a child's care, safety and protection.

The *Reporting Standards*<sup>3</sup> provide Ministry staff, volunteers, service users and other key stakeholders with clarity and direction in responding to issues around children's care, safety and protection. They exist to ensure when a staff member or volunteer operating within an Edmund Province Rice Ministry becomes aware of a concern(s) or allegation(s) in relation to the well-being of a child in receipt of a Ministry service, or associated with an adult or child in receipt of a Ministry service, they will respond in a professional and timely manner according to the *Reporting Standards* requirements.

The *Reporting Standards* recognises in certain countries within the Oceania Province there may be required responsibility of each adult volunteer or staff member [as specified by the legislation requirements] to report to the Statutory agency concerns or allegations relating to reasonable suspicion of possible maltreatment of a child (abuse or neglect). The *Reporting Standards* seek to capacity build and professionally support individuals to be attentive to the care, safety and protection needs of children and

<sup>3</sup> The complete package *Protocol Standards for Child Care, Safety and Protection Reporting within Edmund Rice Ministries (Australia)* is the basis for operational implementation of the Reporting Standards at ministry level.

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to equip them to appropriately respond as indicated in the Reporting Protocol and where individually assessed as appropriate, to undertake their mandatory reporting responsibilities as required.

## 7. Reporting Expectations

All staff and volunteers need to pay immediate attention when there appears to exist risk indicators in a child's or other's behaviours, conversations, emotions and perceptions, which may suggest a child is being harmed or is at-risk of harm. There are three key expectations upon all Ministry staff and volunteers in responding to concerns/allegations relating to the well-being of children.

1. *Awareness* – to be *aware* when children's right to a harm-free care, safety and protection environment may be violated or is at-risk of violation.
2. *Responsive* – to undertake *action* to report in a timely manner to designated persons.
3. *Compliance* – to *comply* with reporting protocols and procedures requirements.

## 8. Reporting Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers have child care, safety and protection responsibilities, namely:

- All staff and volunteers retain individual responsibility, where statutory requirements are present, whenever there is 'reasonable suspicion' of harm to a child due to abuse and/or neglect, to undertake a mandatory report, where indicated by statutory legislation, to the designated authority within the jurisdiction. The responsibility for such mandatory reporting resides with the person who receives the first point of contact.
- All staff and volunteers also have an organisational responsibility to report child care, safety and protection concerns and allegations to a designated on-site Reporting Officer [or a named equivalent], who will subsequently report this concern/allegation to the Children's Services Standards Coordinator [CSSC] or another professional nominee.
- All staff and volunteers are required to complete training to capacity build their children's care needs and child maltreatment attentiveness, assessment, decision making and reporting requirements competencies.
- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to utilise the professional expert competencies made available via the organisation to support them in their reporting responsibilities.

## 9. Procedure

The *Reporting Standards* divides reporting responsibilities into nine sequentially dependent stages.

It outlines the steps required for a volunteer or staff member to undertake if concerns (particularly immediate danger concerns) arise relating to a child's care, safety and protection, whilst the volunteer or staff member is participating in a Ministry related activity.

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Presence  
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*Stage 1 – Awareness and attentiveness to a child care, safety and protection concern or allegation*

An individual staff and/or volunteer will identify in one's own mind what has been seen, heard or felt that has raised a level of concern.

*All staff and volunteers*

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*Stage 2 – Initial assessment and decision to report the concern or allegation*

All staff and volunteers will be appropriately trained and will have developed the capacity to assess information to determine presence of a child care concern or allegation and to make a decision to report this concern or allegation to the designated Reporting Officer.<sup>4</sup> All staff and volunteers

*Stage 3 – Receipt of information*

Receive information from the volunteer or staff member and ensure information follows the information collection guidelines. Where there is an assessed emergency situation immediate assistance of the ambulance or police as required. All staff, volunteers and Reporting Officer

*Stage 4 – Transfer of information*

Convey information to the Children's Services Standards Coordinator (CSSC) in a timely manner. -

All staff, volunteers and Reporting Officer

*Stage 4 – Further information obtained*

Determine whether further information is required to assess the concern or allegation. Where further information is required contact appropriate services or other persons.

Children's Services Standards Coordinator

*Stage 5 Professional assessment*

Information is assessed to determine whether there are concerns relating to a child's care, safety & protection, what organisational action may then be required and the scope of follow up actions required.

Children's Services Standards Coordinator, Programme Leader

*Stage 5 – Organisational decision to undertake required action(s)*

Professional intervention action plan is prepared based on professional expertise.

Children's Services Standards Coordinator, Programme Leader

*Stage 6 – Organisational action*

Implementation of the required actions, to enable the best possible level of care, safety and protection of a child.

Children's Services Standards Coordinator, Programme Leader

<sup>4</sup> Note at this point the incident notifier can move directly to Stage 7 as an individual determination.

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#### *Stage 7 – Accountability and Reporting Compliance*

In cases where mandatory reporting is required as per statutory requirements, the individual of first contact makes immediate and direct contact with the Statutory Child Welfare/ Protection Office to report the matter. The Reporting Officer and the Children’s Services Standards Coordinator or the professional nominee provides support for such an action.

Children’ Services Standards Coordinator (CSSC), Reporting Officer

#### *Stage 8 – Review*

The professional responsiveness to the concern is assessed to ensure appropriate processes have been enacted.

Children’s Services Standards Coordinator,  
Reporting Officer, Regional Mission Coordinator, Program Leader

#### *Stage 9 – Reporting and Filing Arrangements*

Reporting Data is provided to the OLT on a monthly basis with mandatory reports provided in detail to the OLT. All Reporting Notification case reports filed within appropriate Province record systems.

Children’s Services Standards Coordinator (CSSC)

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## 10. Implications

### 10.1 Training

All staff and volunteers are required to undertake 3 hours of child protection reporting training and assessment [known as *Foundational Reporting Training*]. This training will provide staff and volunteers with skills to make an assessment of the physical and behavioural indicators, in order to arrive at a decision to report or not report. Where a decision is made to report, all staff and volunteers are made aware of the need to report immediately or as soon as practicable and assisted where required to undertake the reporting.

Staff or volunteers who undertake the role of *Reporting Officer* are required to undertake 2 hours of reporting officer training and assessment to equip them with the knowledge and skills to undertake the role of Reporting officer.

Staff or volunteers who undertake the role of *Train the Trainer [TOT]* are required to undertake 2 hours of training to equip them with the knowledge and skills to provide training in Foundational Reporting.

### 10.2 Professional Independence

It is important there is separation of a child protection concern or allegation reporting, assessment, decision-making and response from any implied or real managerial authority to ensure individual staff, volunteers, clients and community members are not dissuaded from reporting due to the power of management, so as to safeguard from 'conflict of interest' risk.

### 10.3 Conditional Confidentiality

It is important to contain information dissemination (number of people who know) about a reported incident only to those who are required to be informed to provide a service response or to meet the responsibilities under statutory reporting requirements and/or the requirements of the present Oceania Province Policies.

## 11. Step by Step

1. The person notified or aware of a child protection matter makes a decision to report or not by addressing the questions "Does what I have seen or heard suggest there may be a child care, safety or protection concern or allegation?" "What is the basis for my decision?".
2. If a decision is made to report - convey the concern or allegation to the Reporting Officer.
3. The notifier writes what was observed or heard utilising the Initial Notification Recording Format.
4. The Reporting Officer receives a report from a staff member, volunteer or other person in a timely manner and obtains relevant information relating to the matter. The Reporting Officer, through questioning may obtain basic socio-demographic information relating to the child *but is not to undertake child protection investigative questioning*.

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5. The Reporting Officer informs the Oceania Province Children's Services Standards Coordinator (CSSC) of the Notification. Where the Children's Services Standards Coordinator or a nominated professional cannot be contacted, the RO contacts the Regional Mission Coordinator. The Children's Services Standards Coordinator or the professional nominee will determine whether further information is required to be obtained by the Reporting Officer. The Children's Services Standards Coordinator or the professional nominee undertakes a professional assessment of the alleged concern or allegation to determine whether the Notification is a 'concern' or 'allegation'.
6. The Children's Services Standards Coordinator or the professional nominee supports the notification process at the local level, in professional partnership with the Programme Coordinator and the Reporting Officer.
7. Where, a Board governs the Ministry, the Programme Leader is responsible for informing the Chair of the Board about the receipt of the notification.
8. Where there exists mandatory reporting legislative requirements, the responsibility for meeting mandatory reporting requirements resides with the person who received the first point of contact. That is, the person who spoke to the child or adult or who observed the child or adult.
9. The Children's Services Standards Coordinator or the professional nominee determine the required professional actions to be undertaken to appropriately respond to the child care, safety and protection concern or allegation notification. The recommended professional actions are based upon the professional assessment of the concern or allegation notification.
10. The Children's Services Standards Coordinator or the professional nominee, in consultation and partnership with the Ministry Programme leader and where appropriate other service agencies, implements the decision response service requirements of the Children's Services Standards Coordinator or the professional nominee in a professional and timely manner.
11. The Children's Services Standards Coordinator or the professional nominee prepares documentation of the report and compiles data as part of the Province records policy. Records on child protection notifications are maintained according to the Oceania Province Records Policy and the Record Keeping & Storage & Access Protocol. The Children's Services Standards Coordinator submits monthly tabulated child protection report data tables to the Leadership Team, Director of Mission and Regional Coordinators [these tables are non-identify of children and families].
12. The Children's Services Standards Coordinator prepares an annual report on child protection notifications.

## 12. Other Relevant Oceania Directives:

Child Protection Policy

Resource Document re Child Protection Policy and Guidelines for the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers

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Presence Compassion Liberation	<h1>Mission</h1>	<h1>Oceania Guideline</h1> <p>OPM2.08</p>
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Code of Conduct – Interacting with Children and Young People Guideline

Overview of Child Protection Documents for Oceania Province Policy

**13. Forms:**

OPM2.08a Initial Notification Recording Form

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**14. Definitions:**

**Catholic Church Professional Standards** refers to the generic standards developed to guide religious individuals and groups and non-religious staff and volunteers, in relation to the expected values and conduct when working under the mandate of Church ministry.

**Child** means a person under the age of 18 years.

**Child Maltreatment** encompass acts which result in the abuse and neglect of children.

**Child Care Concern** is an anxious feeling and worry arising from what an individual directly observes or what is reported to an individual, that a child is being harmed or is at risk of being harmed.

**Child Protection** refers to an area of service provision, which is aware of and responsive to the risks of children being harmed and how Government or Non-Government] services respond to these risks.

**Children's Services Standards Coordinator (CSSC)** is a position within the Mission Directorate of the Oceania Province which oversees children's services standards and child protection responses within Ministry services. The position provides professional independence and expertise when responding to child protection reporting, assessment and decision making, based upon professional practice standards and the best interests of the child.

**Christian Brothers Oceania Province** is an organisational and administrative structure established by the Congregation Leadership Team to facilitate the mission and ministries of the Congregation in Australia, East Timor, New Zealand, The Philippines and Papua New Guinea, and to form and nurture those who constitute its membership.

**Duty of Care** refers to the expectation an individual will respond in a reasonable and appropriate manner to the care, safety and protection needs of another person. This principle is of particular importance in relation to vulnerable populations such as children, aged, people with a disability etc. the principle is generally upheld within civil law as well as an expectation of the Code of Conduct responsibilities of individuals.

**Initial Notifier** is the person in receipt of information of a concern or allegation.

**Professional Nominee** is a position to be developed later located in the local area of each Ministry to provide access to high-level child protection expertise.

**Mandatory Reporting** refers to the requirements placed upon either all citizens or specifically identified professionals (eg doctors, teachers) within an Australian Territory or State to report all 'reasonable suspicion' of child maltreatment or specifically identified acts of maltreatment .

**OLT** refers to the Oceania Leadership Team. The leadership team of the Oceania Province.

**Programme Coordinator** is the person responsible for the oversight of the programme – inclusive of its development, delivery, reporting and accountability.

**Regional Mission Coordinator (RMC)** refers to the Oceania Province delegate who acts as the local coordinator of province mission activities in the designated region.

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**Reporting Officer (RO)** refers to the ‘on-site’ adult who has been delegated responsibility to receive initial notification of a Child Protection concern.

**Staff** refers to paid employees of Edmund Rice Ministries in Australia, inclusive of paid religious staff.

**Statutory Child Welfare/Child Protection Department** refers to each State and Territory Government organisation mandated under child welfare/child protection laws, to provide for and respond to the care, safety and protection needs of children.

**Statutory Reporting Agency** is the legislated agency for receipt of child protection allegations.

**Statutory Requirements** refer to the laws within each State or Territory within Australia, which defines the mandate of child welfare and protection within the jurisdiction and the identified responsibilities of designated professional groups and members of the community in relation to responding to child maltreatment allegations relating to a child’s well-being.

**Volunteer** refers to all approved non-paid participants in Edmund Rice Ministries in Australia, which is inclusive of religious staff.

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