



# Archdiocese of Brisbane

## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & VULNERABLE ADULTS

## PREVENTION AND PROTECTION POLICY



**It takes a whole  
community.**

## POLICY FOREWORD

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As Archbishop I am committed to the protection of children and vulnerable adults from preventable harm and I wholeheartedly support the many clergy, religious, employees and volunteers of the Archdiocese of Brisbane who daily demonstrate this same commitment.

I am delighted to approve this Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults policy. Superseding our previous child safety policy, it prescribes best practice in prevention of harm to, and protection of children and vulnerable adults. I commend it to you as a valuable tool for your work.

The *Code of Ethical Behaviour for employees and volunteers who work in service of the Church* within this policy underlines your responsibility to report incidents should you receive a disclosure of abuse. Training for the implementation of the policy, monitoring and regular auditing for compliance are important practices. You are required to do everything possible to ensure our success in these aspects of the Church's work.

I am grateful for the ways in which you dedicate yourself to the service of the church in Brisbane and assure you of my continued prayers for your work.

May the God of peace bless you and those entrusted to your care.



**Most Rev Mark Coleridge**  
**Archbishop of Brisbane**

April 2014

## POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Materials developed by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church, Ireland: *Safeguarding Children* and the Diocese of Austin: *Ethics and Integrity in Ministry* have been used with permission in this document. The Archdiocese of Brisbane is deeply grateful for the generosity of these colleagues.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Archdiocese of Brisbane is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. This policy, procedures and tools document is the next step in refining our long held practices of providing a safe environment and activities which respect and acknowledge the inherent dignity of each human being.

The policy applies to everyone who works in the pastoral structure of the Archdiocese. Nothing in the policy affects the expectations of *Integrity in Ministry – a document of principles and standards for Catholic Clergy & Religious in Australia. (June 2004)*.

This document applies to clergy, religious, employees, students on placement and volunteers in parishes and agencies of the Archdiocese.

It is intended to provide a uniform standard of best practice in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. It contains our policy statement which articulates the core principles, church documents and legislation upon which it is based. The safeguarding procedures are built around three key standards – safe recruiting and selection practices; code of ethical behaviour; and safe activities and environments. The suite of tools which follows offers practical examples of administrative materials which will assist parishes and agencies in adhering to this policy and meeting their obligations for best practice and compliance.

## POLICY STATEMENT

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*...for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.*

Mark 10:14

***Children, young people and vulnerable adults are a gift from God with an intrinsic right to dignity of life, respect and security from physical and emotional harm. They are to be treasured, nurtured and safeguarded.***

This means that everyone in the church must ensure that the fundamental rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults are respected. This will be achieved through the development of respectful relationships and a commitment to safety embracing appropriate boundaries, behaviours and practices, in accordance with the Archdiocese of Brisbane *Code of Ethical Behaviour for employees and volunteers who work in service of the Church* as well as adherence to the legislative imperatives of the State.

This policy statement is approved by Archbishop Mark Coleridge for mandatory implementation by the Church and its agencies throughout the Archdiocese of Brisbane. It covers the measures needed to safeguard against abuse. The Archdiocese aims to ensure that none of its personnel or volunteers engages in behaviour that could allow abuse to occur or actions that could be misinterpreted by children, their families or other adults as constituting, or leading to abuse. We take every possible effort to safeguard against abuse and harm.

## CORE PRINCIPLES

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

The Archdiocese of Brisbane is committed to taking the necessary steps to:

- ⇒ demonstrate that the right to protection from harm for all people is paramount;
- ⇒ safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- ⇒ foster best practice;
- ⇒ demonstrate accountability through establishing effective structures and practices;
- ⇒ support Archdiocesan organisations and personnel in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults;
- ⇒ uphold safe recruitment and selection practices for all Church personnel including volunteers because the Archdiocese is committed to employing people who will keep children and vulnerable adults safe from harm;
- ⇒ uphold and maintain standards of conduct which set out clear guidelines regarding ethical behaviour as an essential part of reducing the risk of harm for all people;
- ⇒ operate a safe play, learning and pastoral environments that ensure safety.

## DEFINITIONS

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### Agencies

- ⇒ Archdiocesan Committees
- ⇒ Archdiocesan Development Fund
- ⇒ Archdiocesan Services – Resource Development, Finance and Accounting, Human Resources, ICT, Property and Building;
- ⇒ Brisbane Catholic Education
- ⇒ Centacare – Child Care Services, Community Services, Family Relationships, Pastoral Ministries and Centacare corporate services;
- ⇒ Episcopal Office – Archbishop, Auxiliary Bishops, Vicar General, Vicar for Clergy, Clergy Life and Ministry;
- ⇒ Evangelisation Brisbane – ministry support services to parishes and deaneries; and
- ⇒ Financial Administrator’s Office.

### Abuse

**Physical Abuse** is when a child 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, poisoning.

**Emotional/Psychological Abuse** happens when a child’s social, emotional or intellectual development is damaged or threatened. It can include constant: rejection, teasing or bullying, yelling, criticism, exposure to domestic or family violence.

**Family (or Domestic) Violence** happens when one person in a relationship uses violence or abuse to control the other person. It is usually an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear. Abuse in this context can include: emotional abuse (criticizing), verbal abuse (yelling shouting swearing), stalking and harassment, financial abuse (withholding money), damaging property to frighten you, social abuse (isolating), spiritual abuse (forcing you into or stopping you from spiritual practice), sexual abuse, depriving you of the necessities of life such as food, shelter medical care)

**Neglect** is when a child'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, adequate supervision.

**Cultural Abuse** is that abuse received primarily because of a person's cultural background. It can be an outcome of discrimination and harassment and can take different forms including emotional, psychological or social abuse.

**Sexual Abuse** is sexual assault, sexual harassment or any other conduct of a sexual nature that is inconsistent with the integrity of the relationship between Church personnel and those who are in their pastoral care.

Sexual abuse includes sexual behaviour involving the person and another person in the following circumstances:

- ⇒ The other person bribes, coerces, exploits, threatens or is violent toward the relevant person;
- ⇒ The relevant person has less power than the other person;
- ⇒ There is a significant disparity between the relevant person and the other person in intellectual capacity or maturity.

Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional and can include: having any kind of sexual contact with a child, rape, incest, having sexual relations with a child under 16 years, talking in a sexually explicit way that is not suitable for a child's age,

Sending obscene mobile messages or emails to a child, persistently intruding on a child's privacy, showing pornographic material to a child or forcing them to watch a sexual act, child prostitution.

**Child in need of protection** a child, who has suffered significant harm, is suffering significant harm or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm; and does not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from harm. This may include detrimental effects on the child's body or the psychological or emotional state that are evident or are considered to be likely to become evident in the future.

**Harm** is 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, omissions or circumstances.

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

**Standards** Those expectations and behaviours of clergy/religious and lay Archdiocesan workers/volunteers as articulated in the National Committee for Professional Standards publications: [Integrity in Ministry](#), [Integrity in the Service of the Church](#) and the Archdiocese of Brisbane Code of Ethical Behaviour.

**Vulnerable Adults** Those aged 18 or over, who may be in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability; or who may be unable to take care of him/herself or protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

## **GOSPEL VALUES**

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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 vulnerable adults from anyone who would harm them.

## **ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

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National Committee for Professional Standards, [Towards Healing](#). Principles and procedures in responding to complaints of abuse against personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia. January 2010.

National Committee for Professional Standards, [Integrity in Ministry](#). A document of principles and standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia. June 2004.

National Committee for Professional Standards, [Integrity in the Service of the Church](#). A resource document of principles and standards for lay workers in the Catholic Church in Australia. September 2011.

## LEGISLATION

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[Child Protection Act \(QLD\) 1999](#)

[Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2014](#)

[Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening\) Regulation 2011](#)

[Privacy Law](#)

[Public Health Act \(Qld\) 2005](#)

[Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006](#)

## REFERENCES

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Truth Justice and Healing Council. Child Safe Institutions. [Issues Paper 3](#)

[Safeguarding Children](#). Standards and guidance document for the Catholic Church in Ireland. September 2008

South Australian Catholic Church [Child Protection Council Policy for the Care, Wellbeing and Protection of Children and Young People](#).

Archdiocese of Brisbane [Privacy Policy](#)

Archdiocese of Brisbane Catholic Education Council. [Student Protection Policy September 2011](#)

Carmody Report [www.justice.qld.gov.au](http://www.justice.qld.gov.au)

Child Wise <https://www.childwise.net>

**REVIEW**      **To be reviewed annually.**  
                    **Next review January, 2017**

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This document is subject to amendment at certain times.

The current version can be found at: <http://brisbanecatholic.org.au/support/safeguard/> and the Archdiocesan Intranet.