



Catholic Archdiocese of
Canberra and Goulburn

CHILD AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE PROTECTION POLICY

Related Policies and Procedures

Working with Vulnerable People Policy
Working with Children's Check Policy
Complaints Policy

Background

The Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment to all children and vulnerable people. The Archdiocese affirms the dignity and worth of all children and vulnerable people in its care.

The community has clear expectations in matters relating to child protection and safeguarding. It is expected that children and vulnerable adults, while involved in church ministry, will be protected from all forms of harm including sexual, physical and psychological abuse as well as ill-treatment and neglect. The Archdiocese is supportive of these expectations and strives to promote the safeguarding and protection of children and vulnerable people.

With the above in mind, the Archdiocese is committed to:

- Fostering a culture of safety for children and vulnerable people.
- Best practice and **preventative** systems and processes to ensure safe and supportive environments for children in its care.
- **Responding** appropriately to disclosures of abuse and concerns of inappropriate behaviour toward children or vulnerable people.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with *Child Protection Procedures* documents. Diocesan agencies such as Catholic Education Office (CE), Marymead and CatholicCare have child protection policies and/or codes of conduct specific to the requirements of their mandates and responsibilities. It is therefore recommended that personnel working for these agencies also refer to the relevant child protection policies and codes of conduct for these agencies as part of their role.

Definitions:

Children

For the purpose of this policy, **children** are defined as those being under the age of 18 years or a student attending an Archdiocesan primary or secondary school.

Church workers

This policy applies to all **Church workers** working in the Archdiocese including:

- Archdiocesan Clergy and members of religious congregations
- Employees in catholic parishes, schools, agencies, organisations, groups, boards, councils and committees, individuals or groups authorised to act in the diocese



Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

- Volunteers working in catholic parishes, schools, agencies, organisations, groups, boards, councils and committees
- Students (e.g. work experience, professional placements)
- Contractors and sub-contractors working for the Diocese

Vulnerable Persons

The legislation defines **vulnerable persons** as any child or young person under the age of 18, or any adult experiencing disadvantage who accesses a regulated activity or service related to the disadvantage.

Volunteers

A **volunteer** is considered to be any person engaging in activities on Archdiocesan premises where they are likely to come into contact with children or vulnerable persons. This includes visiting family members of children, volunteering in religious organisations or groups as well as speakers, performers, adjudicators, and assessors.

Policy

Within the Archdiocese, our approach to creating a safe environment and our procedures for the prevention of abuse and responding to allegations and disclosures of abuse are based on the following principles:

- All children and vulnerable people have a right to safety and freedom from abuse of any kind
- All adults working with children and vulnerable people have a responsibility to care for them, to promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any form of abuse
- When any action is taken to prevent or respond to any type of abuse, the welfare and wellbeing of the child or vulnerable person are the primary concerns
- The integrity of the family unit is respected but not to the detriment of the child or vulnerable person and the right of the child or vulnerable person to be heard
- The dignity of persons involved in situations where abuse is suspected or disclosed should be respected; they should be treated with fairness, sensitivity, dignity and respect. In the interests of justice, appropriate confidentiality should be maintained, with information that relates to suspected or disclosed abuse being provided only to those who have a right or a need to be informed

Roles and Responsibilities

Under the *Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW)* the key role of responsibility for child protection systems that prevent and respond to abuse in the Archdiocese lies with the Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn who is designated as **head of agency**. This structure is adopted by policy in Archdiocesan agencies operating in the Australian Capital Territory and the Archbishop will be kept informed of all relevant child protection and vulnerable adult issues. This is in line with the understanding that the Archbishop has ultimate responsibility for these issues.

The Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding will be the point of contact for communication, professional development, and reporting safeguarding issues. The Archdiocese's **Child Protection Procedures** details in full the structure and systems in place in the Archdiocese to ensure compliance with all its obligations under the Act. The Procedures outline clearly the roles and responsibilities of all concerned.



Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

Child protection is a shared responsibility. All sectors of the Archdiocese are active in building an aware culture, understanding the nature of child abuse and reportable conduct, and putting child protection systems into practice. These responsibilities require:

- Child protection policies and procedures that ensure all reasonable steps are taken to protect children
- Practises and interventions that continually build a culture of safety, characterised by respect, fairness and the development of mutual trust and reconciliation
- Current training in child protection and ongoing professional development
- Promotion of open communication, tolerance and positive relationships
- Processes for monitoring the culture
- Mechanisms for active participation in the development of policies and processes
- Integration of policies into strategic frameworks so that practices are seen as integral to how all sectors of the Diocese operate and not legislative 'add-ons'

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND CHURCH DOCUMENTS

The Archdiocese has a duty of care and a legislated responsibility to promote the wellbeing, safety and protection of children, particularly those in its care, from all forms of harm. The Archdiocese through its Child Protection **Procedures**, this policy, and those of its various agencies and institutions, is totally committed to the care and protection of children.

Reportable conduct will be considered as conduct by a Church worker that is reportable under *Part 3A Ombudsman Act (NSW) 1974*. This definition applies to issues arising in both NSW and ACT Archdiocesan agencies and activities undertaken by those agencies.

The Archdiocese recognises the principles and its obligations under child protection legislation and Church-related documents:

- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW) and Regulation 2013*
- *Ombudsman Act 1974 and Ombudsman Regulation 2011 (NSW)*
- *Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000 (NSW)*
- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*
- *Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)*
- *Integrity in the Service of the Church* (September 2011)
- *Towards Healing* (revised January 2010)
- *Integrity in Ministry* (reprinted April 2010)

In addition, ACT Archdiocesan agencies, including Catholic Education schools, also recognise the following legislation in addition to that listed above:

The Children and Young People Act 2008 ACT

Keeping Children and Young People Safe, A Shared Community Responsibility (November 2014)



Catholic Archdiocese of
Canberra and Goulburn

The Archdiocese also continues to be attentive to reports and findings emanating from **the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse** and to the findings of other relevant inquiries.

Approved by:	Mr Victor Dunn
Issuing Group	Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding
Implementation Date:	
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Contact Officer:	Manager, Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding

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