

The Safeguarding Program



The Safeguarding Program is child focused and informed by a fundamental belief that children and vulnerable members of the Church have a right to physical and psychological safety at all times and that we, the Catholic Diocese of Bunbury, must play our part in protecting all children and vulnerable adults.

Introduction

Over recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the existence of child abuse and a growing acceptance of the potential risks to children from individuals working in positions of trust. Greater attention, therefore, has been paid to how Church organisations ensure that the children with whom they are in contact are kept safe from harm.

A Safeguarding Coordinator role has been introduced in the Bunbury Diocese to assist with the implementation of policies and procedures which reflect the 10 National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.

Church Organisations need to develop a common understanding of how to safeguard children, develop good practice across the diverse and complex areas in which they operate and increase accountability in this crucial aspect of their work. The standards contained in the program are designed to help parishes and Church organisations keep children safe.

The Program will provide practical guidance, tools and support materials to assist parishes in overcoming a host of challenges that confront them in tackling the safeguarding and protection of children and vulnerable individuals.

The Safeguarding Program Aim

The aim of the Safeguarding Program is to raise awareness of our collective responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable individuals within the Catholic Diocese of Bunbury. Recognising that there is no fool-proof system for the complete prevention of all forms of abuse, the program will work towards increasing the safety of all children and vulnerable individuals through proactive and reactive measures and strategies.

Diocese's Commitment

The Bunbury Catholic Diocese is committed to providing safe and secure environments for all its members, leaders and especially its children, young people and vulnerable individuals. To this end, the duties of the Safeguarding Office will be centred on putting the needs of children first.

The rights of children to be safe are paramount and will drive the operations of this program and guide the development of robust policies, procedures and frameworks that relate to child protection.

The Safeguarding Program is committed to **strengthening the capacity of Church workers (paid and unpaid), individuals, parents and parish communities to protect children** from all forms of abuse. Our programs will be designed to equip individuals with the knowledge and tools to shield children from harm.

All staff, clergy, Church workers and volunteers (paid and unpaid) are responsible for the care, safety and protection of children within the Bunbury Catholic Diocese. This responsibility will extend to the identification and the timely response to concerns regarding possible sexual and physical abuse and/or neglect of a child.

The Diocese recognises that all children are vulnerable. The core belief of the Catholic Church challenges us to care for all those who are in need of protection.

Establishing Safeguarding Officers in Every Parish

One of the main activities of the Safeguarding Program will be the establishment of Safeguarding Officers within each parish. These officers will be provided with ongoing support and training and will be responsible for the implementation of policies and procedures, together with proactive measures within their individual parishes.

Furthermore, there will be a **notable person within the parish to whom clergy, Church workers, children, parents and parishioners can approach** and speak with if they are not feeling safe or have something they wish to disclose that relates to an individual's safety.

Parish Safeguarding Officers will be supported and mentored by the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator. A wide range of proactive activities will be coordinated that will work towards keeping children safe.

A key responsibility of the Safeguarding Coordinator will be to assist the parish-based officers in implementing the safeguarding policies and procedures within their parish and to ensure that **best practice is maintained at all times**.

Those suitable for the role of Church Safeguarding Officers

The person appointed to this role should

- be a regular member of the parish who can demonstrate a commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults from all cultural backgrounds and abilities
- have a good awareness of the civil safeguarding policies and procedures, statutory legislation and guidance

Full training in safeguarding and child protection will be provided. A background or prior experience in this field would be advantageous but not necessary. The role will require the applicant to apply for – or to already possess and maintain – a current Working with Children Card.

Roles and Responsibilities of Parish Safeguarding Officers

The role of Parish Safeguarding Officers is key to ensuring that parishes meet the Diocese of Bunbury's safeguarding responsibilities in all aspects of service that they undertake.

They will be required to:

- be a source of support, advice and information on all matters of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in the parish
- be the first point of contact for children, vulnerable adults and other members of the parish community regarding suspicions of abuse and other safeguarding concerns
- respond to all safeguarding concerns in line with the Diocese's Safeguarding Policy and Procedure Handbook, reporting these concerns to the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator and/or other authorities, as needed
- keep the parish priest informed of all concerns, responses and activities relating to safeguarding children and other members of the parish community
- raise the profile of safeguarding in the parish, ensuring that it remains a high priority, and report on any issues of concerns with the implementation of the safeguarding policy and procedures
- assist with proactive measures with parishes to safeguard children
- ensure that all statutory requirements are met within parishes in respect to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

This program is fully endorsed and supported by the Bishop of Bunbury, the Most Rev Gerard Holohan.

All enquiries regarding the Safeguarding Program or parish safeguarding positions can be directed to:

Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator

Catholic Diocese of Bunbury

11 Money Street Bunbury WA 6230

T: 9721 0524

F: 9721 0588

E: safeguarding@bunburycatholic.org.au