



PROVINCE SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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This Safeguarding Policy is based on the model prepared by Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) in March 2023 and reflects the requirements contained in the Australian National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) Edition 2 - safeguarding children and adults.

1. Introduction

The Marist Brothers were founded to witness to the Gospel message of Jesus and to work for the education and Christian formation of young people, especially the least favoured.

The Star of the Sea Province ("the Province") is committed to fostering a culture of safety and care for children and adults at risk within the Province. It nurtures the wellbeing of all in its care, respects their dignity, ensures their safety, and protects them from harm, exploitation and abuse.

This policy has been approved by the Provincial and Council.

2. Safeguarding Commitment Statement

For Champagnat Marists safeguarding is not a recent discovery, an additional task, or another compliance responsibility. It is central to our mission, and in a true sense, it is our mission.

St Marcellin Champagnat's purpose for founding the Institute was the education, care and wellbeing (though he didn't use the word, it was the intent of his actions) of young people in war ravaged France. He wanted this work to go to "all the dioceses of the world" so deliberately set his heart on an international mission.

Champagnat was a man of action. He didn't philosophise or write books or treatises. However, he did give guidance. When dealing with children he told the Brothers to never hit them or use corporal punishment. In residential settings, such as boarding school, he advised that 2 Brothers must be allocated to a Dormitory. How and why these prudent measures weren't followed more widely is unknown. Here was a man who didn't want students to be harmed.

He also gave us the Golden Rule: "to teach children you must first love them and love them all equally". Brothers were to care for children and young people as though they were their own children or their own sisters and brothers. Importantly there was to be no favouritism, none left out or counted as second class.

These simple guidelines sum up Marcellin's approach to safeguarding. Young people, and by extension, vulnerable people, were to be loved, guarded, cared for and never harmed. Strategies and guidelines were to be put in place. To guard, guide and keep young people safe was and is our mission.

For whatever reason Marists deviated from such unambiguous and definite instructions. Royal Commissions and the like in various locations have shown the tragic consequences of this.

The Star of the Sea Province commits to its moral, legal and mission-driven responsibilities to create nurturing environments where children, young people and adults, especially those at risk, are respected and supported. Their voices must be heard and their needs met. In such circumstances they will feel safe and in fact be safe.

Our Province commitment is drawn from the heart of the Gospel where inherent in the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ is love, justice and the sanctity of each human person. The Province, like the Institute of the Marist Brothers, holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk as a central and fundamental responsibility.

Despite its expanse and complexity, the Province commits to having clear expectations, guidelines, policies and processes that are well known and understood. It will not tolerate any form of mistreatment or abuse.

In each of our 11 countries the Province will respond to complaints of unprofessional conduct or criminal behaviour in ways that are just and reflect nationally established standards, applicable legislation and Church protocols. Furthermore, we will offer pastoral support to any person affected by mistreatment or abuse by Marist personnel.

The Province's approach to safeguarding is founded on the Gospel of Jesus and the vision of St Marcellin. As such it is a solemn undertaking.

3. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance about how the Star of the Sea Province will prevent, identify and respond to abuse and harm towards children and adults at risk. It is approved and endorsed by the Provincial and Council.

Every ministry in which the Province is engaged will have its own Safeguarding Policy. This will be determined by national legislation and the particular governance structure of that ministry. It shall be based on the principles of:

- Respect for the rights and dignity of each person.
- Prioritizing the safety and well-being of children and adults within a culture of prevention of harm
- A person-centered approach that is trauma informed.
- Meaningful and active participation of children, families, and communities.
- Natural justice
- Transparency and accountability
- Commitment to 'best practice'.

Where members of the Province are engaged in child-related ministry they are subject to the safeguarding policies and procedures of that ministry. Where members of the Province are engaged in child-related ministry in different countries of the Province they shall adhere to the highest standards.

The scope of this policy is situations which do not have a Safeguarding Policy (e.g. Brothers' Communities).

The Safeguarding Policy applies to all personnel, including religious brothers, sisters and clergy, employees and volunteers engaged by The Star of the Sea Province. It also includes contractors engaged by the Star of the Sea Province to provide services to children and adults at risk. It covers all aspects of service provided by the Star of the Sea Province in any location.

The policy is based on and complies with the *Universal Guidelines Framework* (Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors – 2024), the *Child Safeguarding Standards and Protocols* (2021) of the Institute of the Marist Brothers, the Australian *National Catholic Safeguarding Standards* Edition2 (2022), the *Standards for Creating and Maintaining a Safeguarding Culture* (NZCBC 2020), and similar documents from Bishops' Conferences of the region. These outline requirements for Catholic entities to promote the safety of children and adults at risk through implementing policies and activities to prevent, respond to and report concerns regarding abuse and harm. The policy also reflects relevant safeguarding legislation in jurisdictions where the Province is present.

The Safeguarding Policy is supported by and should be read together with the following related documents, which provide additional guidance, including procedural checklists and templates:

- Province Safeguarding Commitment Statement
- Province Code of Conduct
- Province Risk Management Strategy and Plan
- Province Managing Workplace Complaints Policy

Nothing in this policy affects the expectations outlined in other relevant Church documents or in civil law.

Definition of Children

Children are people under the age of 18, unless otherwise defined in national legislation.

Definition of Adults at Risk

Adults at risk are people aged 18 and over who are at increased risk of abuse, including those who:

- are elderly
- have a disability
- have a mental illness
- have diminished capacity
- have cognitive impairment
- are experiencing transient risks eg bereavement, relationship breakdown, domestic or family violence, homelessness
- have any other impairment that makes it difficult for that person to protect themselves from abuse or exploitation.

Whilst taking care to not make assumptions or generalisations about individuals, we recognise that other aspects of a person's identity or life experiences may also increase their risk of vulnerability to abuse or harm, e.g.:

- being of a minority culture.
- being a refugee or migrant
- diverse gender or sexuality
- speaking a first language other than English
- the existence of a power imbalance
- experience of living in out-of-home care
- surviving sexual abuse or child abuse

The Star of the Sea Province has contact with adults at risk through its pastoral ministries.

Where a Province ministry delivers direct services to adults at risk, that ministry has its own safeguarding policies and procedures.

4. Leading and Promoting a Safeguarding Culture

The Provincial is ultimately responsible for ensuring the Star of the Sea Province is a safe environment for children and adults at risk.

The Provincial has delegated the authority for handling child protection and adult safeguarding matters to the boards of governance of the ministries of the Province. In situations apart from that of a ministry, the delegation has been made to the Delegated Regional Safeguarding Co-ordinator. Collaboration across the Star of the Sea Province and information sharing will be encouraged for consistent promotion and standardisation of best practice approaches to safeguarding.

All agencies and ministries remain directly accountable to the Provincial for their implementation of national safeguarding standards, both civil and church, in their country.

The Provincial has established a Safeguarding Commission in accordance with the requirements of the Standards, comprising experts in best practice in safeguarding in other organisational settings. The Commission is responsible for overseeing the effective ongoing implementation of safeguarding practices, policies and procedures.¹

The day-to-day safeguarding work of the Star of the Sea Province is led and managed by Safeguarding Delegates in the national regions of the Province: Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinators. This role also acts as the 'Safeguarding Coordinator' as required by the Standards.²

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinators, and ministry Boards of Governance, and ministry heads, will lead and promote a safeguarding culture by:

- personally upholding and modelling a standard of behavior consistent with relevant Church documents and civil law
- promoting their national safeguarding standards
- prominently publishing and displaying the Safeguarding Commitment Statement and making sure the Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaint Handling Policy are readily available to personnel and the broader community
- identifying and taking opportunities to promote whole of community awareness of the dignity and rights of children and adults at risk, and to champion and model safeguarding within the Star of the Sea Province, community and more broadly (where appropriate)
- promoting an inclusive, respectful and responsive approach to the diverse needs of children and adults at risk
- paying particular attention to the needs of children and adults who may be at increased risk of abuse, discrimination or exploitation
- taking all possible steps to ensure that only people who are safe and suitable to have contact with children and adults at risk are engaged by the Star of the Sea Province.

¹ NCSS, Edition 2, December 2022, at 1.2.2.

² NCSS, Edition 2, December 2022, at 1.2.3.

- empowering all personnel to take responsibility for safeguarding and providing opportunities for them to have input into improving safeguarding practices
- encouraging people to bring forward concerns or complaints about the safety of children or adults at risk (including disclosures of current or historical abuse) and providing appropriate processes by which to do so, including processes that are suitable for children and people with diminished capacity and/or cognitive impairment
- responding to disclosures and complaints in a manner that is transparent, respectful, fair and accountable
- working with survivor advocacy and support groups, where appropriate, to recognise past wrongs where these have occurred and build a safe, inclusive and supportive faith environment
- welcoming and facilitating dialogue with and feedback from the Star of the Sea Province community, including children, adults at risk and outside experts, about our safeguarding approach, including when reviewing safeguarding policies and procedures
- ensuring the Star of the Sea Province complies with all relevant statutory and legislative requirements
- actively monitoring compliance with the Safeguarding Policy and national safeguarding standards, undertaking annual local self-assessment checks and making publicly available the findings of any audits or reviews undertaken or validated by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited, or similar national body.

The Safeguarding Commitment Statement, Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaint Handling Policy will be published on the Star of the Sea Province website. At least once a year, the documents will be proactively communicated to all personnel involved in the Star of the Sea community [eg via an email reminder]. Safeguarding policies and procedures will be regularly reviewed and the findings of the reviews will be reported to stakeholders.

The Star of the Sea Province supports and encourages the reporting of concerns about children and adults at risk to the appropriate authorities. Such reporting will be according to legislation in each jurisdiction. Where the jurisdiction does not mandate reporting, the Province will continue to advocate for it

The Province is committed to supporting those who bring forth concerns and those the subject of concerns. It is understood that pastoral care needs to be provided during the complaint handling procedure and subsequently.

Safeguarding Implementation Plan

The Star of the Sea Province will monitor compliance with the Safeguarding Policy and continual improvement of its safeguarding practices through the Safeguarding Implementation Plan³ constituted by the following:

³ NCSS, second edition – The safeguarding implementation plans means a documented plan which articulates actions to be taken across the entity to ensure safeguarding practices are in place. It includes actions, strategies, responsibilities and delegations and tracks review and progress. It is overseen by the Safeguarding Committee.

- Safeguarding will be a standing agenda item of the Provincial Council, governance and management bodies of the Province to ensure regular discussion of the following:
 - opportunities to promote safeguarding within the organization
 - relevant legislative or statutory changes
 - reviewing/updating the Safeguarding Policy and/or related documents
 - safeguarding training and support for personnel
 - trends in complaints about the safety of children or adults at risk (without breaching privacy or jeopardising ongoing complaints), and
 - any other relevant matters related to safeguarding.
- The safeguarding responsibilities below are delegated to the Regional Safeguarding Coordinator:
 - maintaining knowledge of current legislation, statutory and other guidance in relation to safeguarding and ensuring these are reflected in the Safeguarding Policy and related documents
 - acting as a contact person for anyone in the Star of the Sea Province community who has questions about safeguarding or concerns about the safety of children or adults at risk
 - ensuring the Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct, Risk Management Strategy and Complaint Handling Procedures are regularly reviewed by the Star of the Sea Province according to the specified timeframes in each document
 - monitoring the currency of Working with Children Checks and other relevant background checks held by personnel
 - monitoring participation by personnel in safeguarding training according to the designated schedule
 - regularly reviewing complaints to identify systemic issues related to safeguarding, and improving policies and practices as needed, and
 - engaging with other relevant organisations and seeking specialist advice about safeguarding good practice, as necessary.

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator's contact details will be provided to families, carers and the broader Star of the Sea Province community.

The Provincial retains overall responsibility for the Safeguarding Implementation Plan.

5. Identifying and Managing Risks

The Star of the Sea Province has appropriate processes in place to identify and manage risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk. These processes are documented in the Province's Risk Management Strategy and Plan.

As part of their initial safeguarding induction and refresher training, personnel will be familiarised with the Risk Management Strategy and their related responsibilities. The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator have overall responsibility for ensuring implementation and compliance with the Risk Management Strategy in their country or region.

6. Recruiting Safe and Suitable People

The Star of the Sea Province is committed to recruiting and engaging people who are safe and suitable to have contact with children and adults at risk. The Star of the Sea Province is also committed to ensuring that existing personnel understand their safeguarding responsibilities and are safe and suitable to have contact with children and adults at risk.

The processes in place to support safe recruitment and engagement forms part of the Star of the Sea Province's overall Risk Management Strategy

7. Providing Safeguarding Training and Support

Personnel will participate in the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders, or another suitable course delivered by an individual with relevant expertise, as soon as possible after commencement.

As part of their induction, and as soon as possible after commencement, all personnel will be provided with training that empowers them to understand and implement their safeguarding responsibilities. At a minimum, the training will cover:

- Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct
- providing a culturally safe environment in which diverse circumstances and experiences are respected
- the nature, factors and impact of institutional abuse of children and adults, including abuse of power, exploitation and grooming
- understanding risk factors and managing risks to children and adults
- understanding abusive behaviours by a child towards another child
- e-safety
- responding to disclosures of abuse
- civil (national, state and or territory) and Canonical reporting obligations
- complaint handling, and
- information sharing and record keeping.

Refresher safeguarding training will be provided to personnel at least every two years.

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator is responsible for keeping records of participation in initial and refresher safeguarding training.

For further details about ongoing professional development for leaders and members of religious institutes in active ministry, and suitability screening in relation to candidates for religious life during times of initial formation prior to professions of vows, together with related training and mentoring – see the Risk Management Strategy and Plan.

8. Requiring and Upholding Appropriate Standards of Behaviour

The Star of the Sea Province expects all personnel to uphold the human rights, dignity and well-being of all people and safeguard children and adults at risk from abuse and harm.

Personnel will be provided with ongoing supervision and support to meet their safeguarding responsibilities.

Code of Conduct

All personnel must comply with the Star of the Sea Province's Code of Conduct. The Code provides clear information about the kinds of conduct towards children and adults at risk that are not acceptable, ranging from concerning behaviour that may be a breach of the Code, to behaviour that may also amount to a criminal offence if proven.

9. Identifying and Responding to Safety Concerns

The Star of the Sea Province strives to effectively identify and respond to concerns about the safety of children or adults at risk at the earliest opportunity. While the Provincial has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Star of the Sea Province identifies and responds to safety concerns, at a practical level this responsibility is shared across the Province.

During initial and refresher safeguarding training, personnel will be provided with information and equipped with skills to identify safety concerns and potential indicators of abuse or harm; support children and adults at risk to express safety concerns; handle disclosures and meet their internal and external reporting obligations.

The Star of the Sea Province's response to concerns about the safety of children or adults at risk will be decisive, timely and consistent with policy and legislative obligations. The safety and care of children and adults at risk will be the primary consideration. The principles of procedural fairness and natural justice will also be adhered to at all times.

Concerns About Children

Concerns about the safety of children may involve the following:⁴

- **Sexual abuse:** an offence of a sexual nature (under any state, territory or national law) committed against, with or in the presence of a child.
- **Physical abuse:** a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child or young person. It includes but is not limited to injuries which are caused by excessive discipline, severe beatings or shakings,

⁴ Adapted from <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/reporting-child-at-risk/harm-and-neglect> and https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/1021/Identifying_reportable_allegations.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y

cigarette burns, attempted strangulation and female genital mutilation. Injuries include bruising, lacerations or welts, burns, fractures or dislocation of joints.

- **Emotional abuse or psychological harm:** behaviour (such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour) that damages the confidence and self-esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional disturbance or psychological trauma. In general, it is the frequency, persistence and duration of the behaviour that is instrumental in defining the consequences for the child or young person.
- **Neglect:** when a parent or caregiver cannot regularly give a child the basic things needed for his or her growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care, adequate supervision, and enough parenting and care.
- **Ill-treatment:** when a parent or caregiver engages in conduct towards a child that is unreasonable and seriously inappropriate, improper, inhumane or cruel, eg making excessive or degrading demands, engaging in a pattern of hostile or degrading comments or behaviour, or using inappropriate forms of behaviour management.

Concerns About Adults

Identifying risks to the safety of adults can be challenging. An adult's vulnerability may not always be readily apparent, and indicators of abuse or harm towards adults at risk may be more difficult to recognise. The right of adults to make their own choices and decisions, and the circumstances in which they may have diminished capacity to do so, are also relevant considerations.

An inclusive, compassionate approach to adults at risk can provide valuable opportunities not only to provide care and support, but also observe and identify any safety or other concerns and connect them with relevant professional services. Personnel will not be dissuaded from seeking to identify, engage and build connections with adults at risk, nor be too 'quick to judge' others who do so. However, personnel should be alert to risks and seek advice as required.

Concerns about the safety of adults at risk may relate to the following:⁵

- **Financial abuse**
 - threatening or coercing re: assets or wills
 - taking control of the person's finances against their wishes and denying access to their own money
 - abusing Powers of Attorney
 - stealing goods, eg. jewelry, credit cards, cash, food, and other possessions
 - unauthorised use of banking and financial documents
 - the recent addition of a signature on a bank account
- **Psychological abuse**
 - pressuring, intimidating or bullying

⁵ NSW Ageing and Disability Commission <https://www.ageingdisabilitycommission.nsw.gov.au/tools-and-resources>

- name calling, and verbal abuse
- treating the adult person like a child
- threatening to harm the person, other people or pets
- threatening to exclude a person from an environment or a practice without just cause
- engaging in emotional blackmail such as threatening to withdraw access to grandchildren, family, friends, services, telephone or placement in an aged care facility
- preventing contact with family and friends, or denying access to the phone or computer
- withholding mail
- preventing a person from engaging in religious or cultural practices
- moving the person far away from family or friends.
- **Neglect**
 - failure to provide basic needs, ie. food, adequate or clean clothing, heating, medicines
 - under- or over-medicating
 - exposure to danger or lack of supervision, such as leaving the person in an unsafe place or in isolation
 - refusal to permit others to provide appropriate care.
- **Physical abuse**
 - pushing, shoving, or rough handling
 - kicking, hitting, punching, slapping, biting, and/or burning
 - restraining: physical or medical
 - locking the person in a room or home or tying to a chair or bed
 - intentional injury with a weapon or object
 - overuse or misuse of medications.
- **Sexual abuse**
 - an offence of a sexual nature (under any state, territory or national law) committed against an adult.

Concerns about adults at risk may also relate to 'transient risks' due to life circumstances or experiences such as:

- relationship breakdown
- bereavement
- experience of domestic or family violence
- homelessness
- mental illness

- unemployment
- dependency on alcohol or other substance
- pregnancy/early parenthood

Safeguarding training for personnel will include the identification of ‘transient risks’ and additional support needs.

Handling Disclosures

Disclosures of abuse or harm may be received directly or indirectly. A direct disclosure is one by a child or adult who discloses current or previous abuse or harm (including historical abuse experienced as a child). An indirect disclosure is when a third person (child or adult) discloses that a child or adult has experienced current or previous abuse or harm (including historical abuse experienced a child).

The Star of the Sea Province will ensure that all personnel are advised what they should do if they receive a disclosure of abuse.

The majority of personnel such as a receptionist, administrative or financial staff, should write down the person’s name and contact details and advise them that a person will contact them shortly, providing a name if possible. The person then needs to contact the relevant person with, provide the information collected and ask them to contact the person who disclosed as soon as possible.

All personnel engaged to work directly with children or in leadership or in safeguarding of professional standards receives a disclosure of abuse or harm, they should:

- listen calmly, patiently and supportively, letting the person use their own words
- let the person know they are doing the right thing by speaking up
- address any concerns the person has about their safety, especially if they are worried about the consequences of disclosing
- explain what the next steps will be, including that they may need to tell certain other people about the disclosure to keep the person and others safe, but that the information will otherwise be treated confidentially, and
- ask the person what they need to feel safe and involved in the process for responding to their disclosure.⁶

Reporting Obligations

Any person engaged by the Star of the Sea Province who becomes aware of a concern about the safety of a child or adult at risk, whether by a direct or indirect disclosure or any other means, must report it as soon as practical to the Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator.

If the concern relates to the Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator, it must be reported to the Provincial.

⁶ Adapted from *Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people*, p40, National Office for Child Safety.

The report should include all known information such as the nature of the allegation; when and where it occurred; the subject of the allegation and the alleged victim.

It is not the reporter's role to interview any person or investigate the concern. Under no circumstances should the reporter ask a person for further details or ask leading questions – this has the potential to interfere with the disclosure and may jeopardise any future criminal proceedings that may arise as a result of an investigation. However, the reporter should obtain basic details to assess the person's immediate safety.

Except for the purpose of meeting their reporting obligations, the reporter will treat the matter in strict confidence.

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator will provide advice and guidance on how the matter should be handled, including whether the conduct is 'reportable' and external authorities need to be notified (see below).

Concerns About Children

Reporting obligations will be outlined in the Safeguarding Policy of each ministry in accordance with legislation in that jurisdiction.

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinators have the role and responsibility to be conversant with legislation in their jurisdiction (s) and are responsible for compliance.

Criminal Offences

Criminal offences are specified by each jurisdiction. Legislation may include the following:

- **An offence of a sexual nature** (under any state, territory or national law) committed against, with or in the presence of a child, eg:
 - sexual touching
 - sexual assault
 - aggravated sexual assault sexual intercourse and attempted sexual intercourse
 - production/dissemination/possession of child pornography using children to produce pornography
 - filming the private parts of a person without their knowledge
 - grooming or procuring children under the age of 16yrs for unlawful sexual activity
 - sexual activity deemed non-consensual on the basis of special care relationships
- **Assault:**
 - the intentional or reckless application of physical force without lawful justification or excuse, or
 - any act which intentionally or recklessly causes another to apprehend immediate and unlawful violence.

- **Neglect:** Failure by a person with a legal duty of care to provide the necessities of life that causes death, serious injury or the likelihood of serious injury.
- **Failing to protect a child from abuse:** An adult working in an organisation doing child-related work will commit an offence if they know another adult working there poses a serious risk of abusing a child (under 18 years), and they have the power to reduce or remove the risk, and they negligently fail to do so.
- **Concealing a child abuse offence:** All adults are required to report information to the Police if they know, believe or reasonably ought to know that a child (under 18 years) has been abused, unless they have a 'reasonable excuse'. A 'reasonable excuse' is defined by the relevant criminal legislation.

Reporting Children at Risk of Harm:

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or young person or a 'class of children' is at 'risk of harm' a report will be made to the relevant statutory child protection authority.

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator is responsible for determining if a child protection report is required and if so, ensuring that the report is made. However, this responsibility does not prevent personnel from immediately making a child protection report.

In some jurisdictions legislation identifies those whose role requires mandatory reporting.

A mandatory reporter has a duty to report, as soon as practicable, the name, or a description, of the child and the grounds for suspecting that the child is at risk of harm. Mandatory reporters are generally legally protected against retribution for making or proposing to make a report.

Notifying Reportable Conduct:

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator is responsible for determining if a notification of reportable conduct is required and if so, ensuring the notification is made.

Definition of Reportable Allegation/Reportable Conviction

A reportable allegation is an allegation that a worker has engaged in conduct that may be reportable conduct as per legislation in that jurisdiction.

Examples of reportable conduct are

- a sexual offence
- sexual misconduct
- ill-treatment of a child
- neglect of a child
- an assault against a child
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.⁷

⁷ Part 4, *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.

NB: Reportable conduct covers the conduct of personnel towards children both in their personal and professional life

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator must conduct an investigation or arrange for an investigation to be conducted.

The investigation report must [if mandated by legislation] include information about the facts and circumstances of the reportable allegation, the findings made, and an analysis of the evidence and the rationale for the findings.

Historical Child Abuse

An allegation of historical child abuse is one where abuse was experienced by a child who is now an adult. Concerns can arise

- If the Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator knows or believes that a child under 18 years has been abused (sexual abuse, serious physical abuse or extreme neglect of a child) or knows or believes that they have information that might materially assist in securing the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of the offender, unless there is a 'reasonable excuse' for not reporting to Police.
- If the Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator knows that an adult working in the Province poses a serious risk of abusing a child (sexual or serious physical abuse), because, for example, an alleged offender has current access to children.

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that a child protection/risk of harm and/or Police report is made, if required, in response to a historical child abuse matter in accordance with legislative requirements.

Concerns About Adults at Risk

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator is responsible for assessing if a concern about the safety of an adult at risk should be reported to an external agency such as Police, a health service or adult safeguarding agency. The assessment will have regard to:

- legislative requirements
- whether an alleged offender is employed or engaged by the Province.
- the views and wishes of the involved adult
- any diminished capacity on the part of the involved adult to make an informed decision
- the seriousness of the concerns, and
- any potential or actual risks to other children or adults.

NB: For information about how concerns are handled relating to the protection of adults at risk which are covered by independent oversight and regulatory arrangements, see the relevant agency's safeguarding procedures.

Criminal Offences

Where the concerns involve a potential criminal offence by any person, especially a person engaged by the Province, the Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator will offer to source the support for the alleged victim to report the matter to Police. In circumstances where we identify that the alleged victim has diminished capacity to make an informed decision about whether to report the matter to Police, the Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator will do so on their behalf.

Safety Concerns about Older People or People with Disability

Several cohorts of adults at risk are covered by legislative schemes and regulatory/oversight bodies.

The Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that a report about the safety of an older person or person with a disability is made, if required.

Concern that an Adult at Risk May Harm Themselves or Any Other Person

In an emergency, the appropriate Province employee will contact Police if there is concern that an adult at risk may harm themselves or another person.

Other Concerns About Adults at Risk

Where appropriate, the Province may seek specialist advice and/or provide referrals to other agencies that can provide support to adults at risk. To facilitate this, we will ensure that we have access to community-based services, government agencies or other organisations that can offer information, advice and/or receive referrals.

10. Responding to Complaints

The Star of the Sea Province seeks to empower people to communicate their concerns and complaints without fear of retribution. The Star of the Sea Province understands that speaking up requires courage and will respond with respect and compassion. The Star of the Sea Province will try to resolve concerns and complaints as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Complaint Handling Policy

The Star of the Sea Province has a robust system for receiving, recording, managing, resolving and monitoring complaints, including disclosures or allegations of current or historical abuse towards children or adults. These processes are documented in the Complaint Handling Policy.

The Star of the Sea Province will ensure that the processes are communicated in ways that are appropriate and accessible to the diverse needs of our community, including children and adults with diminished capacity/cognitive impairment.

Complaints will be dealt with in a trauma-informed and victim-centred manner that is respectful to both complainant and respondent; prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk; and observes the principles of procedural fairness. Where necessary and appropriate, the Star of the Sea Province will cooperate with other relevant organisations and seeks specialist advice in resolving

complaints, including but not limited to Police, child protection authorities, and authorities responsible for safeguarding people with disability and/or older people.

As part of their initial and refresher safeguarding training, personnel will be familiarised with the Complaint Handling Policy and their related responsibilities.

11. Record Keeping and Information Sharing

The Star of the Sea Province is committed to appropriate and lawful record keeping, storage and sharing of information related to children and adults at risk. We recognise that record-keeping and information sharing is a key risk management strategy.

12. Confidentiality and Privacy

The Star of the Sea Province will maintain current knowledge of, and comply with, our legislative obligations to maintain confidentiality and protect personal information and privacy.

Information and records relating to incidents, complaints, responses and decisions will be treated as confidential except where the sharing or distribution of information and/or records is mandated by statutory requirements or principles of natural justice. In this regard, if the complaint involves conduct that is serious and/or potentially criminal, any legal obligations to report relevant information to bodies such as the Police or child protection services will over-ride confidentiality.

In addition, in certain circumstances the obligation to be fair to the subject of a complaint may completely or partially override confidentiality. The Star of the Sea will seek to balance fairness and confidentiality requirements and, as far as possible, safeguard the interests of all parties.

When determining what information to release relating to a complaint record, the Star of the Sea Province will be mindful of privacy and confidentiality obligations concerning the release of personal information about other individuals, such as a subject of the complaint.

13. Review of Safeguarding Policy and Related Documents

The Safeguarding Policy and related documents will be updated as required and reviewed at least every three years. The Star of the Sea Province will consult stakeholders as part of reviewing the Safeguarding Policy and related documents. The outcomes of each review will be documented.

The content of the Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed whenever a breach is identified and at least every three years. The Chair of the Province Safeguarding Commission is responsible for ensuring the review is completed.

Safeguarding Policy approved	Provincial Council	5 February 2026
Safeguarding Policy reviewed	Province Safeguarding Commission	October 2028

Glossary

Adults at risk	Adults at risk are people aged 18 and over who are at increased risk of abuse, including those who: ▪ are elderly ▪ have a disability ▪ have a mental illness ▪ have diminished capacity ▪ have cognitive impairment ▪ are experiencing transient risks, eg. bereavement, relationship breakdown, domestic or family violence, homelessness ▪ have any other impairment that makes it difficult for that person to protect themselves from abuse or exploitation. Whilst taking care to not make assumptions or generalisations about individuals, we recognise that other aspects of a person's identity or life experiences may also increase their risk of vulnerability to abuse or harm,
Allegation	A complaint, still to be verified, claiming or asserting that someone has committed an act of abuse against a child or adult at risk. The term is used interchangeably and in combination with "complaint".
Child/ren	Individuals under 18 years of age, unless otherwise determined by national legislation.
Child abuse	There are different legal definitions of child abuse. Most commonly, the categories of child abuse include sexual, physical, psychological, neglect, ill-treatment, exploitation and exposure to family violence.
Clergy	The body of those ordained in sacred ministry in the Church. They are either deacons, priests or bishops.
Complainant	Any person who makes a complaint that may include any allegation, suspicion, concern, or report of a breach of the Province's Code of Conduct. It also includes disclosures made that may be about, or relate to, abuse in the Province's context.
Disability	Means those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (<i>Article 2, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</i>)
Diverse gender or sexuality	Diverse gender or sexuality refers to all the diversities of sex characteristics, sexual orientations and gender identities, without the need to specify each of the identities, behaviours, or characteristics that form this plurality.

Formation/formation program	A program preparing individuals for profession of vows as well as a life-long journey to the invitation of Christ to proclaim and live the Gospel message within the life of the Church (National Catholic Safeguarding Standards definition).
Leaders	Personnel who are responsible for important governance decisions within a Church entity and/or who lead and coordinate Church improvement initiatives.
Ministry	Any activity within, or delivered by, an entity that is designed to carry out the good works of the Catholic Church.
Personnel	This includes religious brothers, sisters and clergy, employees, volunteers, contractors (and others) engaged by the Province to provide services to children and adults at risk.
Provincial	The canonically appointed leader of the Star of the Sea Province.
Religious Institute	An institute of consecrated life, a secular institute or society of apostolic life, and their provinces or equivalent.
Safeguarding	Measures to protect the safety, human rights and well-being of individuals, which allow people – in this context children and adults at risk – to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.
Safeguarding Commission	A commission established to advise and support the Provincial on all matters relating to safeguarding, including the development and implementation of a Safeguarding Implementation Plan and coordination of annual self-audits at a local level. Committee members need relevant and varied professional expertise in relation to, but not limited to safeguarding, child protection, organisational culture and structure, policy development, and need to include lay women and men.
Safeguarding Commitment Statement	A commitment statement describing the Province's commitment to keep all, especially children and adults at risk, safe from harm. It informs the entity's culture with respect to safeguarding.
Safeguarding Coordinator	An individual who champions safeguarding and co-ordinates the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy of the Star of the Sea Province within a region of the Province. In the Star of the Sea Province, the title Delegated Regional Safeguarding Coordinator is used.

Safeguarding Implementation Plan	A documented plan which articulates actions to be taken across the Province to ensure safeguarding practices are in place. It includes actions, strategies, responsibilities and delegations and tracks review and progress. It is overseen by the Safeguarding Commission.
Supervision	A forum for reflection and learning, an interactive dialogue between at least two people, one of whom is professionally trained as a supervisor. The dialogue shapes a process of review, reflection, critique and replenishment for personnel. Supervision is a professional activity in which personnel are engaged regardless of experience or qualification. Supervision assists personnel in their accountabilities for professional standards (including in relation to maintenance of professional boundaries), defined competencies for their role and understanding and implementation of organisational policy and procedures. For clerics and religious, professional/pastoral supervision assists in the maintenance of boundaries of the pastoral relationship and enhances the quality of their ministry. A cleric/ religious' commitment to conscious and critical reflection on their ministry and ministry experiences is recognised as being important for the wellbeing of the cleric/religious, the people with whom they exercise ministry, the wider Church and the community.
Working with children check	Generic term used in the Standards to denote the statutory screening requirement for people who work or volunteer in child-related work. They are one part of the Province's recruitment, selection and screening processes.