

St Bernard's Parish, Bacchus Marsh

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation on whose lands we gather. Their spirit is forever written in the landscape.

Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People



This Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People is subject to review prior to the review date as a result of relevant feedback from stakeholders, changes in legislation and review of critical incidents.

Date of policy: 1st February 2022

Date of next major review: 1st February 2025

Date of review: 22nd July 2024

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St Bernard's Parish Safeguarding Children and Young people policy

Policy Administration Schedule

The initial policy with all associated documentation was prepared by Margaret Love, Parish Safeguarding officer under authority delegated by Fr Fabian Smith, Parish Priest, St Bernard's Parish, Bacchus Marsh. This policy, along with all paperwork was endorsed and approved at the Safeguarding Committee meeting attended by Fr Fabian on 31.08.2022

Preparation date: February 1st 2022

Review date: February 1st 2025. This Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People may be subject to amendment prior to the review date as a result of relevant feedback from stakeholders, changes in legislation and review of critical incidents to promote continuous improvement.

Review: July 22nd 2024. The policy has been reviewed and updated because of revision to the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne Policy. Revision was to include new government standard relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Related documents and policies

Our St Bernard's Way of Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Appendix A: Children are safe, informed and participate

Appendix B: Code of Conduct

Code of conduct Declaration (Over 18)

Code of Conduct for Youth of our Parish (16-25)

Code of Conduct for Youth of our Parish Declaration (16-25)

Children's Code of Conduct

Children's Code of Conduct for Signing (Under 16)

Appendix C: Selection, Recruitment and Screening

Working With Children Check

Letter 1 (new employees)

Letter 2 (continuing volunteers)

Letter 3 (new volunteers)

Appendix D: Risk Management- Providing a safe environment for children and young people

Risk Survey Request and Risk Assessment 2022

Risk Assessment Parish Events – CAM statement

Risk Assessment Checklist for Parish Events and Activities

Risk and Hazard Assessment for Parish Events and Activities

Attendance Sheet for Under 18 Parish Events and Activities

Appendix E: Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse

Reporting Abuse or Safety-Related Misconduct – CAM diagram

Feel Safe and Be Safe at Our Church – CAM poster

Appendix F: Special Statement for our St Bernard's Children and Young People

Appendix G: Safeguarding Policy Summary

Appendix H: St Bernard's Safeguarding Committee Position Description

Appendix I: Glossary

Appendix J: Material which underpins our policy

The following government policies influence safeguarding responsibilities-

National Police Check Policy see CAM site

Workplace Bullying Policy see CAM site

Sexual Harassment Policy see CAM site

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (CAM) Safeguarding documentation, advice from Pope Francis and information from the Royal Commission into the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse findings and recommendations have been used as the basis for St Bernard's Parish documents.

Preamble

The material in this preamble forms part of our strategy to have safeguarding information educate parishioners.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne is deeply committed to the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a key responsibility of the Church. This commitment is founded in the teachings and mission of Jesus Christ and lived out with love and justice to ensure the dignity of each human person.

When the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse commenced, it had three tasks: to bear witness to what had happened; to provide just responses to those who had experienced and suffered abuse; and to recommend ways to ensure that institutions were child- safe. This period opened a great wound for many, but also became the catalyst to the intentional building of practices and behaviours that would centre always on the safety and care of the most vulnerable.

Our St Bernard's Parish, Bacchus Marsh fully embraces the *Commitment of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne*

We are committed to upholding the safety and dignity of each child and young person, and to ensure that they are able to grow and develop in a caring and supportive environment in our Church.

The Catholic Church proclaims that all human life is sacred, and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation and hope for the flourishing of humanity and society—a message that is at the heart of the Gospel. As such, all in the Catholic Church have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing environments where children are respected, where their voices are heard and where they are safe and feel safe.

We acknowledge that preventing child abuse requires proactive approaches across policies, procedures and practices consistent with the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards. Through these policies, procedures and practices, we strive to prevent abuse in the first instance and to respond effectively and pastorally if abuse does occur.

We are committed to creating a child-safe culture across the Archdiocese that safeguards children and young people from all forms of abuse.

We are resolutely committed to ensuring that all those engaged in the Church are aware of the inherent vulnerability of children and young people, and that they acknowledge their own responsibility to promote the dignity of children and young people and their fundamental right to be respected and nurtured in a safe environment.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Every person involved in the Catholic Church has an obligation to understand the important and specific role they play, individually and collectively. Together we ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people are at the forefront of everything we do and every decision we make.

We are committed to zero tolerance of all forms of child abuse and discrimination, and will always act to safeguard children and young people and report suspected abuse promptly to the appropriate authorities.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne sets clear behavioural expectations and has an overarching commitment to the protection of children and young people from all forms of abuse. All child safety concerns and allegations will be treated seriously and reported in line with our moral and legal obligations as articulated in the Safeguarding and Wellbeing of Children and Young People Policy and other Safeguarding of Children and Young People Framework documents.

We are committed to ensuring that all people who have, or may be expected to have, contact with children and young people acknowledge their responsibility to safeguard children and young people from abuse and discrimination.

We acknowledge and welcome diversity in our Church community. We recognise that cultural safety and inclusion serve as protective factors in relation to child safety—particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with a disability, and children and young people of diverse sexuality—and are sensitive to the impact these factors may have on child safety.

Pope Francis reminds us in his encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (2020) that through the light of the Gospel, Christians are compelled to recognise Christ in each of our brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable: 'Faith has untold power to inspire and sustain our respect for others, for believers come to know that God loves every man and woman with infinite love and "thereby confers infinite dignity" upon all humanity' (§85).

Our young people are our present and our future. How we value them today will nurture a generation confident in the knowledge that each individual person matters and is cared for, and will prepare them to carry this legacy forward for their own children and beyond. May our commitment today, as followers of Christ, be the shared responsibility that celebrates, empowers and protects our young people always.



Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne

Introduction

The Catholic Church has a mission-driven moral and legal responsibility to create nurturing environments where children and young people are respected, where their voices are heard, and where they feel safe and are safe.

St Bernard's Parish, Bacchus Marsh understands safeguarding to be the action taken to promote the welfare of children and young people and protect them from harm. St Bernard's Parish aims to be, wants to be and will be a safe, welcoming and inclusive faith community.

All clergy, employees and volunteers belonging to, working with and for St Bernard's Parish, Bacchus Marsh, regardless of their role or level of responsibility endorse, accept and embrace Archbishop Comensoli's deep commitment to the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a key responsibility of the Church. Further we extend that commitment to vulnerable adults and indeed to all who wish to be part of our parish or to avail themselves of its liturgical celebrations and facilities.

St Bernard's Parish, Bacchus Marsh acknowledges the deep hurt that abuse has caused children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families. Our parish supports the letter issued by Pope Francis in 2018 in which he denounces 'the clerical sexual abuse and the ecclesial cover-up' which inflicted deep wounds. He quoted 'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it' and stated 'The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults.' In continuing, Pope Francis wrote, **"To say 'no' to abuse is to say an emphatic 'no' to all forms of clericalism."**

Our parish acknowledges the Royal Commission finding that clericalism was a contributing factor to child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church and, while our parish respects differing views, it does not support the unhealthy clericalism that is attributed to such abhorrent abuse.

The real threat to child safety emanating from clericalism is explained in the report from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse from 2014 to 2018. The full text is at <http://catalystforrenewal.org.au/slider/royal-commission-into-institutional-responses-to-childsexual-abuse-lessons-and-learnings-for-the-people-of-god/>

Shorter extracts have been written by Robert Fitzgerald AM who served as a Commissioner on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse from 2014 to 2018.

The Pope's Letter to the People of God makes clear that the Church's response at the highest level begins with the acknowledgement of grave sin and failure by bishops, religious leaders and laity. These same bishops, religious leaders and all people of our Church must acknowledge and address the ramifications of the thousands of grave crimes and change the damaging culture which has been proven to be a contributing factor. Our response in Australia gives local shape to the action required to address such failure and the need for cultural change. The future will judge the St Bernard's community by the veracity and moral courage it displays in providing the type of parish culture advocated by Pope Francis, by the Royal Commission report and by resulting government legislation.

Our parish understands and accepts the child-connected work definition from the CAM policy as *work authorised by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne or any parish, agency or entity where work is performed by an adult in any Archdiocesan environment while children are present or are reasonably expected to be present.*

Duty of Care

Our parish holds the care, safety and well-being of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility. Our commitment is drawn from, and inherent in, the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each and every human person at the heart of the gospel.

Parish commitment to right to safety within full participation in parish life

An actively promoted culture of safety for all within the Church and our parish specifically will ensure children, young people (defined as under eighteen years of age) and vulnerable adults can actively and fully participate in the life of the Church and realise their potential in our faith community.

Our parish has a zero tolerance of all forms of child abuse and maltreatment and is committed to protecting children, young people, vulnerable adults and all parishioners from harm and any form of abuse. Diversity is welcomed and discrimination will not be tolerated. Discrimination may be based on a child or young person's age, disability, race, colour, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

The parish safeguarding policy and the associated procedures ensure:

- the safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families
- the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families
- children with a disability and their families will be welcomed and their participation promoted
- that, without discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, intersex status and gender identity, these children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families will be welcomed and included.

Our parish, in all its works, ministries and activities will respond to the call of the Gospel to protect those who are vulnerable by fostering culture, education, systems, processes and environments where the safety of children, young people and vulnerable people is paramount.

Child Abuse

Child abuse or maltreatment is defined as an act (or series of acts) that endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development and/or a failure to provide conditions to the extent that the health and development of the child or young person is significantly impaired or placed at risk. Categories of abuse and maltreatment include:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse including grooming
- emotional abuse including spiritual abuse
- family violence
- neglect
- discrimination
- bullying



Signs and indicators of child abuse or maltreatment are not always obvious. Physical abuse may be more visible than other forms of abuse. Sexual abuse signs are well-covered in the Australian parenting website. Neglect can be harder to identify as it consists of a failure to provide adequate care and attention. Likewise, you may not witness discrimination or bullying in relation to disability, mental illness, family violence, skin colour or race, gender identity or sexual orientation. However, it may manifest itself in signs or indicators in the child's behaviour, for example social withdrawal and depression and exclusion from full participation in appropriate parish activities.

All children and young people are vulnerable but there are some who have an even higher risk of abuse than the general population. They are children who have experienced abuse before or who have a disability, are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those experiencing poverty, homelessness or out of home care. Similarly, the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people may be more acute due to a history of racism, marginalisation and dispossession.



Purpose

The purpose of this policy aligned to that published by CAM to ‘safeguard children and young people from abuse, racism, discrimination and harm so that children are safe and feel safe in all Archdiocesan environments.’

It is to promote the well-being and empowerment of children and young people with the aim of preventing abuse. The scope of the policy is broad as it cannot hope to be explicit in covering the variety of parish activities and those of its agencies and entities. It is anticipated our:

- safeguarding training (CAM and ACSL [Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd]) which provides a range of self-education opportunities – refer both websites.
- recruitment standards
- guidelines for the operation of programmes and activities involving children and young people so that those responsible may conduct the activities with confidence
- framework for clergy, seminarians, members of religious orders, employees, volunteers, contractors, parents and guardians so that they may conduct children's activities and business associated with same with utmost confidence
- supervision and reporting procedures

will enable policy provisions to be met.

The Parish expects that all persons who participate in (or could reasonably be expected to participate in) parish activities involving children and young people will read this policy and familiarise themselves with its content, appendices and associated documents and comply with its requirements.

Material advertising St Bernard's, Archdiocese and legislative safeguarding requirements will be displayed on the foyer. Any changes to requirements and procedures will be printed in the parish newsletter.

Dignity of children and young people as acknowledged by their involvement in decision-making about activities in our parish which affect them

CAM values, as does our parish of St Bernard's, the contribution and dignity of all children and young people and creates opportunities to involve children and young people in decision-making about programs, activities and events that affect them. CAM recognises the need for empowerment of all children and young people, especially those at greater risk of abuse. Their involvement in decision-making can be a significant protective factor in preventing abuse within Church organisations.

Informing and involving parents (and guardians) in promoting child safety

CAM acknowledges, as does our parish of St Bernard's, that effective child safety within parishes, agencies and entities cannot be undertaken without the involvement of parents (and guardians) and seeks to engage parents as critical partners in promoting the safety of children and young people. The involvement of parents and guardians of children and young people who are more vulnerable to experiencing abuse is particularly important. We welcome feedback from such persons.

Safeguarding Training and Education

Clergy and staff must complete training every year and volunteers every three years. The parish will offer training sessions as required. CAM online training modules are easily accessible resources.

WWCC (Working with Children Check) and Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct Declaration

The WWCC is a government requirement for all clergy, staff and volunteers. The completion of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct Declaration is a requirement of a person's engagement by a Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne parish, agency or entity. Failure to submit this declaration is a serious matter and may incur disciplinary action, pursuant to the Safeguarding and Wellbeing of Children and Young People Policy and any other relevant policies, procedures, canons and industrial instruments.

Policy Commitments

In keeping with our commitment to the care, safety and well-being of children and young people, the parish commits to a proactive approach to policy, procedures and practices as required by all government legislation and CAM requirements.

Risk management requirements will be met in all applicable situations.

The Child Safety Assessment Tool will be completed each twelve months.

Please use the following to refer to SCYP Framework Version 2.0 and associated documentation -

<https://melbournecatholic.org/safeguarding>. Our policy adopts all CAM policy documentation.

His sheep are we -

