



Safeguarding Policy: The Congregation of Sisters Mary Queen of Peace

Safeguarding Policy

**THE CONGREGATION OF SISTERS OF
MARY QUEEN OF PEACE
IN AUSTRALIA**



September 2022



Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Safeguarding Commitment Statement	2
3.0 DEFINITIONS.....	3
3.1 Children.....	3
3.2 Workers.....	3
3.3 Definition of Adults at Risk.....	3
3.4 Volunteers.....	4
4. Leading and Promoting a Safeguarding Culture	4
5. Safeguarding Implementation Plan	4
6. Identifying and Managing Risks	5
7. Recruiting Safe and Suitable Volunteers.....	5
8. Complaint Handling Policy	5
9. Record Keeping and Information Sharing	6
10. Confidentiality and Privacy	6
11. Review of Safeguarding Policy and Related Documents	6
12. RELEVANT LEGISLATION & CHURCH DOCUMENTS.....	6

1. Introduction

The Congregation of Mary Queen of Peace acknowledges that we recognise people in our community who are particularly at risk and in need of care and support. We are committed to a ministry that respects and upholds the human rights and dignity of all people.

We engage with ministry in the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding areas of New South Wales contained in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Where our ministry involves us in working for or on behalf of the Agencies of the Archdiocese we work under the auspices of their safeguarding policies.

2. Safeguarding Commitment Statement

We are committed to witnessing to Gospel values contained in our Mission to proclaim Jesus Christ's Good News to people in all our apostolic work. We are committed to safeguarding the needs of all people especially the most vulnerable. We are committed to acting appropriately with all people, especially children and adults at risk, with whom we come into contact, always exercising appropriate standards of behaviour. We are committed to zero tolerance of abuse of children and adults.



We recognise the role of families and community in safeguarding children and adults at risk with whom we share a partnership of care. We are committed to ensuring that all who work or volunteer with us are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the legislative requirements of the relevant jurisdiction and our own complaints and safeguarding policies in addressing issues in a timely manner.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Children

For the purpose of this policy, children are defined as those being under the age of 18 years

3.2 Workers

This policy applies to:

- Sisters of the Congregation
- Employees employed and authorised to act on behalf of the Congregation
- Volunteers working on behalf of the Congregation
- Contractors and sub-contractors working for the Congregation

3.3 Definition of Adults at Risk

The ACT 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.

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

- a. ▪ are elderly
- b. ▪ have a disability
- c. ▪ have a mental illness
- d. ▪ have diminished capacity
- e. ▪ have cognitive impairment
- f. ▪ are experiencing transient risks eg. bereavement, relationship breakdown, domestic or family violence, homelessness
- g. ▪ 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, eg:

- a. ▪ being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- b. ▪ being a refugee or migrant
- c. ▪ diverse gender or sexuality
- d. ▪ speaking a first language other than English



- e. ▪ the existence of a power imbalance
- f. ▪ surviving sexual abuse or child abuse

3.4 Volunteers

A volunteer is considered any person engaging in activities on Congregational premises or in aspects of their work where they are likely to encounter vulnerable persons.

3.5 'Safeguarding' means protecting the welfare and human rights of people that interact with, or are affected by the Congregation, particularly those who might be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. This refers to any responsibility or measure undertaken to protect a person from harm.

3.6 'Abuse, neglect or exploitation' means all forms of physical and mental abuse, exploitation, coercion or ill-treatment. This might include, for example:

- a. Sexual harassment, bullying or abuse;
- b. Sexual criminal offences and serious sexual criminal offences;
- c. Threats of, or actual violence, verbal, emotional or social abuse;
- d. Cultural or identity abuse, such as racial, sexual or gender-based discrimination or hate crime;
- e. Coercion and exploitation;
- f. Abuse of power

4. Leading and Promoting a Safeguarding Culture

Child protection is a shared responsibility. The Congregation will seek to build an awareness of a culture that seeks to safeguard the needs of children and vulnerable people. This will be undertaken by:

- a. Understanding the nature of child abuse and reportable conduct, and putting child protection systems into practice.
- b. Adopting protection policies and procedures for children and vulnerable people that ensure all reasonable steps are taken to protect them.
- c. Adopting Practices that continually build a culture of safety, characterised by respect, fairness and the development of mutual trust and reconciliation.
- d. Current training in child protection and ongoing professional development for all workers associated with the Congregation.
- e. Promotion of open communication, tolerance and positive relationships.

5. Safeguarding Implementation Plan

The Congregation will monitor compliance with the Safeguarding Policy and continual improvement of its safeguarding practices by the following:

- Safeguarding will be a standing agenda item of meetings of the Congregation to ensure regular discussion of the following:
 - a. opportunities to promote safeguarding within the congregation
 - b. relevant legislative or statutory changes
 - c. reviewing/updating this policy and/or related documents



- d. safeguarding training and support for all workers
- e. trends in complaints about the safety of children or adults at risk, as appropriate
- f. any other relevant matters related to safeguarding

The below safeguarding responsibilities are overseen by the Community Leader who takes responsibility to be the Safeguarding Coordinator:

- a. 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
- b. acting as a contact person for anyone in congregation who has questions about safeguarding or concerns about the safety of children or adults at risk
- c. ensuring this policy, Code of Conduct, Risk Management Strategy and Complaint Handling Procedures are regularly reviewed by the Congregation each year
- d. monitoring the currency of Working with Children Checks and other relevant background checks held by all workers involved in promoting the mission of the Congregation
- e. monitoring participation by workers in safeguarding training on an annual basis
- f. engaging with other relevant organisations and seeking specialist advice about safeguarding good practice, as necessary
- g. Ensuring that the Religious Delegate contact details are provided on the Congregational website.

6. Identifying and Managing Risks

The Congregation 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 Risk Management Strategy.

As part of their initial safeguarding induction and refresher training, workers will be familiarised with the Risk Management Strategy and their related responsibilities. The Religious Delegate has overall responsibility for ensuring implementation and compliance with the Risk Management Strategy

7. Recruiting Safe and Suitable Volunteers

The Congregation is committed to recruiting and engaging people and ensuring that existing worker understand their safeguarding responsibilities and are safe and suitable to have contact with children and adults at risk.

8. Complaint Handling Policy

Complaints will be dealt with in a trauma-informed 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. The Congregation will cooperate with other relevant organisations and seek specialist advice in resolving complaints, including but not limited to Police, child protection authorities, the IPSS office of the Archdiocese of



Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese and authorities responsible for safeguarding people with disability and/or older people. Personnel will be familiarised with the Complaint Handling Policy.

9. Record Keeping and Information Sharing

The Congregation is committed to appropriate and lawful record keeping, storage and sharing of information related to children and adults at risk.

10. Confidentiality and Privacy

The Congregation 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, child protection services or to other prescribed bodies will over-ride confidentiality.

11. Review of Safeguarding Policy and Related Documents

This policy and related documents will be updated as required and reviewed at least every three years. The Religious Delegate is responsible for ensuring the review is completed.

12. RELEVANT LEGISLATION & CHURCH DOCUMENTS

12.1 The Congregation is unreservedly committed to the care and protection of children and vulnerable people by adopting policies and practices that ensure their dignity and safety.

12.2 The Congregation is bound by the Commonwealth, NSW and ACT legislation pertaining to child and vulnerable person protection and various Church related documents:

- a. Child and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)
- b. Child and Young People Regulation 2009 (ACT)
- c. Crimes Act 1900 (ACT)
- d. Ombudsman Act 1989 (ACT)
- e. Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 (ACT)
- f. Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Regulation 2012 (ACT)
- g. Integrity in Ministry 2004 (updated 2010)
- h. Integrity in the Service of the Church
- i. National Response Framework - *Catholic entities in Australia responding to concerns and allegations of abuse against children and adults* – July 2022
<https://www.acsltd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/October-National-Response-Framework-Version-1.pdf>
- j. Privacy Act 1988
[Privacy Act 1988 \(legislation.gov.au\)](https://www.legislation.gov.au)



Safeguarding Policy: The Congregation of Sisters Mary Queen of Peace