

MSSP SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE
DATE OF POLICY: SEPTEMBER 2020
DATE OF LAST REVIEW: APRIL 2018
DATE OF NEXT MAJOR REVIEW: SEPTEMBER 2023



**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY**
MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST PAUL

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Rejoice therefore and strive to respond to your vocation and your dignity. Give yourself willingly to work in the Lord's vineyard. "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few" (Lk 10:2) Always be a good example to the people; in your thoughts, in your affectivity, in your words, in your ministry and in all your life so that it may be said of you: "Here is a servant pleasing to God."

– Joseph De Piro

Founder

Missionary Society of St Paul

Policy Administration Schedule

Policy Owner	Missionary Society of St Paul (MSSP), Australian Province
Policy Application	All religious, employees and volunteers working under the auspice of the MSSP
Approval Authority	MSSP Provincial and Council (Australian Province)
Inaugural Approval Date	September 30 2020 All safeguarding policies now replace the MSSP Safeguarding People and Young People (Australian Province) document prepared in April, 2018 for presentation at the General Chapter in Peru.
Next Review Date	Version 1 may be subject to amendment prior to the annual review date of September 2023 as a result of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relevant feedback from stakeholders - legislative changes - a review of critical incidents to promote continuous improvement.
Related documents and Policies	MSSP Code of Conduct <i>Vos Estis Lux Mundi</i> : issued 07 May 2019 by Pope Francis National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (Australia): CPSL Ltd 2019 Integrity in the Service of the Church (Australia): A resource Document of Principles and Standards for Lay Workers in the Catholic Church in Australia. September 2011 Integrity in Ministry (Australia): A document of principles and standards for Catholic clergy and religious in Australia. 2004 Towards Healing (Australia)

1. Rationale

The Missionary Society of St Paul (MSSP) holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a fundamental responsibility of the Church. This commitment is drawn from, and inherent to, the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the dignity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel. As stated in our internal document prepared for by the Australian province for presentation at the General Chapter in Peru in 2018, *Safeguarding People and Young People (Australian Province)*¹, we believe:

- in the primacy of a safe and nurturing environment for all children and young people
- that all MSSP religious, paid staff and volunteers have a duty of care to provide a child-safe environment in our Paulist ministries and communities
- in thorough and rigorous appointment, employment and formation practices

¹ See Appendix 1

- all incidents/concerns of abuse or harm including disclosures must be reported to relevant authorities
- in the primacy ongoing training for MSSP religious, staff and volunteers in child safety in accordance with best practice principles
- offering just, effective and ongoing support and compassion to victims of abuse.

This policy endorses and works alongside ACBC documents such as *Integrity in Ministry: A Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia, June 1999* and *Integrity in the Service of the Church: A Resource Document of Principles and Standards for Lay Workers in the Catholic Church in Australia, September 2011*. This policy should also be read alongside our wider internal document developed in April 2018, *Safeguarding People and Young People (Australian Province)* which was prepared as a presentation for the General Chapter in Peru in 2018.

The MSSP is responsible for limited ministry within the Church of Australia. We have pastoral responsibility for two parishes within the Archdiocese of Melbourne² and operate limited migrant chaplaincy services in Melbourne and Sydney. In these capacities, they conform to the requirements of those entities in relation to the safety and protection of children and young people.

2. Purpose and Commitments

This policy articulates the core principles, Church documents and legislation which provide the basis for a standard of best practice in safeguarding children and young people. Our safeguarding values are built around the following principles:

- A primary responsibility is to create safe environments for children and young people and to protect them from any form of harm or abuse.
- All MSSP religious, staff and volunteers have a duty of care to support and protect children and young people.
- The safeguarding of children and the prevention of abuse require thorough education and training of all engaged in working with children and young people, either directly or indirectly.
- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation. Culture or other reasons notwithstanding, we must intervene on behalf of any child suspected of being abused.
- Any complainant should be listened to attentively and offered a compassionate, prompt and just response when making an allegation of abuse.
- A responsibility of care extends not only to the young person who may have suffered harm but also to his or her family. Any person accused of abuse also deserves to be treated with justice and compassion.
- Truth and transparency should characterise all actions.

The MSSP has a zero tolerance for all forms of child abuse and maltreatment and is committed to protecting children and young people from harm.

² The two parishes that are under the pastoral ministry of the MSSP are St Bernadette's Parish in Sunshine North and St James the Apostle Parish, Hoppers Crossing North.

3. 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 (e.g. bruising). Neglect is 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 result in signs or indicators in the child's behaviour, for example social withdrawal and depression.

All children and young people are vulnerable but there are some children and young people 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 or homelessness or out of home care. Similarly, the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are more acute due to a history of racism, marginalisation and dispossession.

4. Dignity of children and young people

The MSSP values 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. The MSSP recognises that 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.

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

The MSSP acknowledges that effective child safety within our congregation, parishes, and ministries 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.

6. Safeguarding children and young people

The MSSP acknowledges that preventing child abuse requires proactive approaches across policies, procedures and practices consistent with the requirements of the:

- Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Australian Human Rights Commission)
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (Catholic Professional Standards Limited)

In fulfilling this responsibility, the MSSP has developed a comprehensive framework to guide the implementation of child safety policies, procedures and practices within all activities of the MSSP (Australia) including within the Archdiocesan parishes that are under the pastoral care of the MSSP, and responding to concerns, disclosures or allegations of child abuse or child-related misconduct.

This policy provides a broad overview of the framework and should be read in conjunction with supporting resources e.g. implementation guidelines, factsheets, templates.

The application of this policy extends to religious, employees and volunteer behaviour within the context of their role within the MSSP: within the physical boundaries of the parishes of which the MSSP have pastoral responsibility, and within the confines of any ministry in which the MSSP religious, staff and volunteers are involved. They also extend to the online or digital environments and while travelling outside the province.

7. Safeguarding responsibilities

The Safeguarding Committee established by the MSSP (Australian Province) plays a central role in assisting the MSSP provincial leader and his council of the requirements of this policy. The Safeguarding Committee consists of the Provincial, the Provincial Council and the Safeguarding Officer.

Further, as safeguarding children and young people is a collective responsibility, all persons in ministry, working or volunteering under the auspice of the MSSP acknowledge their individual responsibility to comply with clear behavioural expectations to act in manner that is caring, respectful and safe toward children and young people.

Every member of the MSSP religious, employees or volunteers has a moral, legal and ethical responsibility to care for, and promote the wellbeing of children and young people, and protect them from harm or abuse.

This applies to all those involved with the MSSP including:

- Visiting religious, priests in residence
- employees (including casual employees)
- volunteers
- seminarians
- persons residing at property owned by MSSP
- students on placement
- contractors (where applicable)

8. Safe personnel

In seeking to provide safe and enriching interactions with children and young people within the context of its ministries, the MSSP sets out selection, recruitment and screening processes that consider the suitability and appropriateness of persons to work with children and young people in ministry or in an employment or voluntary role to minimise the risk of child abuse occurring.

9. Child safety code of conduct

A specific child safety code of conduct provides guidance to religious, employees and volunteers in the context of their involvement with children and young people.

10. Induction

Induction processes incorporate safeguarding awareness to build a foundation of understanding and commitment to the safety of children and young people.

11. Safeguarding Training

In supporting religious, employees and volunteers to keep up-to-date with safeguarding issues and so that they can promote the safety of children and young people and discharge their responsibilities in line with this policy, the MSSP expects all religious, employees and volunteers to undertake a range of training and education activities that equip them with the skills and knowledge to promote the safe participation of children and young people. This may include training activities provided by external organisations such as the Catholic Professional Standards Ltd, the local church, and other organisations.

12. Supervision

It is a requirement of this policy that those whose roles involve working with children and young people are provided with supervision and support to undertake their role in a manner which promotes the safety of children and young people and enables detection of behaviour that may be detrimental to children and young people.

13. Child safety risk management

The MSSP safeguards children and young people by employing a risk management approach that systemically identifies and assesses risk associated with programs, activities and events involving children and young people to minimise opportunities for harm to occur.

14. Practice and behavioural guidelines

In addition to risk management process, the MSSP utilises guidance provided in practice and behavioural guidelines in relation to conducting programs, activities and events involving children and young people.

15. Responding to and reporting child abuse

The safety of children and young people is paramount. All concerns, allegations or complaints of child abuse will be taken seriously and acted upon consistent with the Catholic Professional Standards and with our moral, ethical and legal obligations (including local state legislation) to safeguard children and young people.

The MSSP acknowledges its moral, legal and ethical duty to effectively respond to and report concerns, allegations or complaints of child-safety related misconduct and/or child abuse to the appropriate local state authorities such as the Victoria Police or the NSW Police, Child Protection (Department of Health and Human Services in Victoria or the Department of Family and Communities Services in NSW) and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People).

Children and young people (and their families) involved in MSSP ministries have information and support to report a concern, allegation or make a complaint through processes that are accessible and respectful.

It is a requirement of this policy that religious, employees and volunteers, make a report if they have formed a reasonable belief that a child or young person has experienced abuse, is experiencing abuse or is at risk of harm in the course of their ministry or work. Not reporting child abuse or misconduct that places children and young people at risk of harm is a breach of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

Making a child abuse report involves notifying statutory authorities in a timely manner (as soon as practicable after forming a reasonable belief, unless the child or young person is in imminent danger).

The MSSP will respond appropriately to concerns, allegations or complaints in relation to safety of children and young people.

16. Reportable Conduct Scheme

The MSSP has a legal responsibility under the Reportable Conduct Scheme to notify current and historical incidents of suspected child abuse or misconduct of religious, employees and volunteers to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

Serious misconduct and/or criminal behaviour will be reported to the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People) and/or Victoria Police and be subject to internal investigation and disciplinary action (and/or administrative action subject to the requirements of Canon Law for members of the clergy).

Disciplinary action is determined by the seriousness of the misconduct.

Disciplinary action in the case of employees and volunteers may consist of:

- counselling
- training
- a verbal or written warning
- suspension (with or without pay)
- dismissal.

In the case of religious, disciplinary and/or administrative action will be considered in accordance with Canon Law and may include:

- pastoral supervision
- counselling
- suspension of faculties
- permanent removal of faculties
- recommendation to the Holy See for a penal precept or dismissal from the clerical state (laicisation)
- excommunication.

Confidentiality and privacy in relation to reports of child abuse will be maintained consistent with the principles of natural justice and our duty of care to safeguard children and young people.

The safety and support needs of all parties involved in a report will be considered and addressed as part of this process.

The MSSP and the Professional Standards Unit of the Archdiocese of Melbourne in Victoria or the Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office of the Archdiocese of Sydney will centrally record and monitor child-safety related misconduct and/or child abuse to provide the Archbishop with oversight in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

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