



MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST PAUL SAFEGUARDING POLICY

This Safeguarding Policy reflects the requirements contained in the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) Edition 2, Self-Report Pathway.

December 2024

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1. 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
Policy Application	MSSP Provincial and Council (Australian Province)
Approval Date	September 2024 All Safeguarding policies now replaces 2020 Safeguarding Documents
Next Review Date	September 2027 Version 1 may be subject to amendment prior to the annual review date of September 2027 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSSP <i>Safeguarding People and Young People</i> (Australian Province) document prepared in April 2018 for presentation at the General Chapter in Peru • Missionary Society of Saint Paul, <i>Safeguarding Policy and Standards, Creating a safe environment for children and adults at risk</i>, 2021 • National Catholic Safeguarding Standards available at https://www.acsltd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/National-Catholic-Safeguarding-Standards-Edition-2_FINAL_December2022.pdf • <i>Vos Estis Lux Mundi</i>: issued 07 May 2019 by Pope Francis • <i>Integrity in our Common Mission: National Code of Conduct for those exercising pastoral ministry in the dioceses of the Catholic Church in Australia</i>, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2023

2. Introduction

If one member suffers, all suffer together with it' – 1 Cor 12:26.

'A population that does not take care of the elderly, and of children and the young has no future, because it abuses both its memory and its promise' – Pope Francis.¹

The Missionary Society of St Paul (MSSP) understands that we hold a privileged position of trust in the community. We are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment which respects and upholds the human rights and dignity of all people, and we have a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of children or adults at risk.²

This policy has been approved by Fr John Taliana mssp – Provincial Leader.

3. Safeguarding Commitment Statement

The MSSP upholds the dignity of all and is committed to promoting and maintaining safe and supportive environments, particularly for children and adults at risk. All people have the right to be protected from abuse. Inclusivity, which is at the heart of the Gospel, and therefore, our values, shapes our relationship with children, adults at risk, their families, and the community.

We encourage environments that empower children and adults at risk to speak up and to be heard. We recognise the role of families and community in safeguarding children and adults at risk and welcome their input on how to improve the way we relate to them. We are building a culture of care, accountability and transparency upheld in our policies and processes including recruitment, induction, and daily operations. We are actively committed to building prevention and safeguarding practices into everyday practice and implementing governance reforms throughout our Church.

We act appropriately with children and adults at risk with whom we come into contact, including maintaining boundaries and exercising acceptable standards of behaviour at all times. All staff, volunteers and contractors are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the legislative requirements of relevant jurisdictions and our own complaints and safeguarding policies. Any concerns that are identified or brought forward in any way are acted on appropriately, sensitively and in a timely manner.³

We deeply apologise for the harm caused by the abuse of vulnerable individuals, and we are committed to supporting those affected, ensuring their safety, and fostering healing within our community.

¹ <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=10334>

² National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) 1.1 There is a public commitment to safeguarding that takes a zero tolerance approach to abuse.

³ NCSS 1.1 There is a public commitment to safeguarding that takes a zero tolerance approach to abuse.

4. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance about how the MSSP will prevent, identify and respond to abuse⁴ and harm towards children and adults at risk.⁵ The Safeguarding Policy applies to all personnel, including religious brothers, sisters and clergy, employees and volunteers engaged by the MSSP. It also includes contractors engaged by the MSSP to provide services to children and adults at risk. It covers all aspects of services provided by the MSSP in any location.

It is approved and endorsed by Fr John Taliana, Provincial Leader.⁶

The policy complies with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (the Standards), which outline requirements for Catholic entities across Australia 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.⁷ The policy also reflects relevant safeguarding legislation.

The Safeguarding Policy is supported by and should be read together with the following related documents:

- Safeguarding Commitment Statement
- Code of Conduct
- Complaint Handling Policy

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

5. Leading and implementing a Safeguarding Culture

The Provincial Leader and his Council is ultimately responsible for ensuring the MSSP is a safe environment for all, including children and adults at risk.⁸

The Provincial Leader has established a Safeguarding Committee in accordance with the requirements of the Standards, comprising experts in safeguarding and organisational culture and structure, which is responsible for providing advice on the effective ongoing implementation of safeguarding practices, policies and procedures.⁹

⁴ This policy adopts the definitions for 'child abuse' and 'adult abuse' used in the Glossary on page 7 of this document.

⁵ This policy adopts the definitions for 'children' and 'adults at risk' used in the Glossary on page 7 of this document.

⁶ NCSS 1.1.1 The Safeguarding Policy is approved and endorsed by the Church Authority and/or relevant leadership body and is publicly available

⁷ The Standards are based on the child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse but include additional 'core components'

⁸ NCSS 10.4.1 The Church Authority and leaders promote the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and enact all policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding

⁹ NCSS 1.3.1 Governance arrangements are transparent and include safeguarding roles and responsibilities to ensure that accountability for the safeguarding of children and adults is clear.

NCSS 1.2.2 A Safeguarding Committee is appointed at the highest level of leadership to oversee the effective ongoing implementation of safeguarding practices, policies and procedures.

The day-to-day safeguarding work of the MSSP is led and managed by the Leader of the MSSP. He is assisted in this role by the Safeguarding Officer who was appointed by the Council. This role also acts as the 'Safeguarding Coordinator' as required by the Standards.^{10,11}

The Provincial Leader, his Council, and the Safeguarding Officer will lead and promote a safeguarding culture, and will monitor compliance with the Safeguarding Policy and continual improvement of its safeguarding practices, through:¹²

- Personally upholding and modelling a standard of behaviour consistent with relevant Church documents and civil law, and championing safeguarding and the dignity and rights of children and adults at risk within the MSSPs community
- Promoting the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards
- Prominently publishing and displaying the Safeguarding Commitment Statement¹³ and making sure the Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaint Handling Policy are readily available to personnel and the broader community¹⁴
- 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 MSSP.
- 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
- The Provincial Leader will ensure that MSSP reports any safety concerns about children or adults at risk to the appropriate civil authorities as required by legislation.
- Ensuring Safeguarding is a standing agenda item of the Council meetings and in those parishes which are under the pastoral care of the MSSP.¹⁵
- Ensuring the Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaint Handling Procedures are regularly reviewed by the MSSP according to the specified timeframes in each document

¹⁰ NCSS 1.2.3 A Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) is appointed with clearly defined safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

¹¹ NCSS 1.3.1 Governance arrangements are transparent and include safeguarding roles and responsibilities to ensure that accountability for the safeguarding of children and adults is clear.

¹² NCSS 1.2.1 A strong safeguarding culture is created and maintained by the Church Authority and leaders by: promoting safeguarding, and the dignity and rights of everyone; emphasising that safeguarding children and adults is everyone's responsibility; and, actively monitoring safeguarding compliance and risk management.

¹³ NCSS 1.1.2 The Safeguarding Commitment Statement is published, is widely displayed and made publicly available.

¹⁴ NCSS 10.2.1 The policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding are readily available and accessible to all personnel.

¹⁵ NCSS 10.4.1 The Church Authority and leaders promote the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and enact all policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding. In Australia, the MSSP currently has the pastoral care of two parishes, both within the Archdiocese of Melbourne: St James the Apostle Parish, Hoppers Crossing North, and St Bernadette's in West Sunshine.

- Monitoring and recording the currency of Working with Children Checks and other relevant background checks held by personnel¹⁶
- Providing safeguarding training and support for personnel, including initial/induction¹⁷ and refresher safeguarding training (at least every three years) for all personnel,¹⁸ and participation in the 'National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders' for the leadership team.¹⁹ Training will include the MSSP's safeguarding policies and procedures, Code of Conduct, reporting obligations, e-safety, factors that may place children and adults at risk of abuse, cultural safety and diversity²⁰
- Providing at least 6 hours of annual professional/pastoral supervision and/or reflective practices/mentoring for relevant personnel which include a focus on safeguarding responsibilities.²¹
- Maintaining up-to-date participation records to ensure personnel complete safeguarding training and supervision as required²²
- Requiring all personnel to sign an acknowledgement of their agreement to comply with the MSSPs Code of Conduct.
- Regular assessment, monitoring and management of safety risks for physical and online environments²³
- Managing and resolving complaints, including direct or indirect concerns, disclosures or allegations of current or historical abuse towards children or adults, as per the Complaint Handling Policy
- Creating, maintaining and securely storing records for all incidents, complaints (including disclosures/allegations), responses and decisions that relate to safeguarding matters, with regard to legislative obligations to both maintain confidentiality and pro-actively share risk-related information with other entities

¹⁶ NCSS 5.2.1 All personnel are required to have a background check and clearance (as relevant to their role).

NCSS 5.2.2 As required by legislation, personnel must have a current working with children check (or working with vulnerable people check) and/or NDIS Worker Screening Check prior to working with children or adults at risk; NCSS 5.2.3 Records of all checks are maintained and monitored in accordance with legislation, for all personnel.

¹⁷ NCSS 5.3.1 All personnel participate in a safeguarding induction program, which occurs as soon as possible after commencement

¹⁸ NCSS 7.1.1 Personnel are provided regular education and training on safeguarding policies and procedures.

¹⁹ NCSS 5.3.2 Church Authorities and their leadership team undertake the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders.

²⁰ NCSS 7.1.2 The entity's induction and refresher Safeguarding of Children and Adults training must cover: Code of Conduct; Safeguarding risk management; Safeguarding Policy and procedures; Complaints Handling Policy and procedures; Reporting obligations; and e-safety training; NCSS 7.2.1 Education and training programs include materials addressing factors that may place children at risk of abuse; NCSS 7.3.1 Education and training programs include materials addressing factors that may place adults at risk of abuse; NCSS 7.5.1 Cultural safety training is provided to equip personnel to create culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; NCSS 7.5.2 Training is provided to relevant personnel to equip them with the knowledge and understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds and how to create safe environments for people from these groups.

²¹ NCSS 5.4.1 Professional supervision, mentoring, and annual performance reviews for personnel include a focus on safeguarding responsibilities; 5.5.4 All clergy and religious in full-time ministry participate in at least 6 hours, with the optimum being 10 hours of professional/pastoral supervision each year. Clergy and religious not in full-time ministry participate in 6 hours of reflective practice activities each year; 5.5.5 All clergy and religious in ministry, undertake ongoing professional development and regular appraisals.

²² NCSS 7.1.3 Records are maintained to ensure all personnel attend induction training and participate in refresher safeguarding training at least every three years.

²³ NCSS 8.1.1 Both physical and online risks are addressed within the provision of ministry and/or services; NCSS 8.2.2 8.2.2 The online environment is monitored, and breaches are managed in accordance with disciplinary procedures, or other relevant policies and reported to the leadership.

6. Requiring and Upholding Appropriate Standards of Behaviour

The MSSP 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. Annual performance reviews for personnel will include responsibilities for safeguarding children and adults at risk relevant to their role.

All personnel must comply with the MSSP Code of Conduct. The Code provides clear information about the kinds of conduct towards children and adults at risk that are not acceptable.

7. Identifying and Responding to Safety Concerns

The MSSP has a robust system for receiving, recording, responding to, managing, resolving and monitoring complaints, including direct or indirect concerns, disclosures or allegations of current or historical abuse towards children or adults. These processes are documented in the Complaint Handling Policy.

8. Record Keeping, Information Sharing, Confidentiality and Privacy

Complete, timely and accurate records will be created and maintained for all safeguarding matters. All records will be securely stored, maintained and disposed of in accordance with legislative and statutory requirements.

The MSSP 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.

9. Review of Safeguarding Policy and Related Documents

The Safeguarding Policy and related documents will be updated as required, including whenever a breach is identified, and reviewed at least every four years. The MSSP will consult stakeholders as part of reviewing the Safeguarding Policy and related documents. The outcomes of each review will be documented.²⁴

The Provincial Leader is responsible for ensuring the review is completed.

MSSP Safeguarding Policy	Approved December 2024	Next Review – December 2027
MSSP Safeguarding Commitment Statement	Approved December 2024	Next Review – December 2027
MSSP Code of Conduct	Approved December 2024	Next Review – December 2027
MSSP Complaint Handling Policy	Approved December 2024	Next Review – December 2027

²⁴ NCSS 10.3.2 There is a process in place to develop and review safeguarding policies and procedures
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10.Glossary

Adult Abuse	<p>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. Most commonly, the categories of adult abuse include financial, psychological, neglect, physical, sexual or spiritual. See the NCSS for further definitions of these categories.</p>
Adults at risk	<p>Adults at risk are people aged 18 and over who are at increased risk of abuse, including those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ are elderly▪ have a disability▪ have a mental illness▪ have diminished capacity▪ have cognitive impairment▪ exhibit signs of self-neglect▪ 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. <p>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.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander▪ being a refugee or migrant▪ diverse gender or sexuality▪ speaking a first language other than English▪ surviving sexual abuse or child abuse
Allegation	<p>A complaint, still to be verified, claiming or asserting that someone has committed an act of abuse against a child. The term is used interchangeably and in combination with "complaint".</p>
Child/ren	<p>Individuals under 18 years of age.</p>

Child abuse	There are different legal definitions of child abuse in Australia. Most commonly, the categories of child abuse include sexual, physical, psychological, neglect, ill-treatment, exploitation and exposure to family violence. See the NCSS for further definitions of these categories.
Clergy	The body of those ordained in sacred ministry in the Church. They are either deacons, priests or bishops.
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.
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 Church Authority to provide services to children and adults at risk.
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 – to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.
Safeguarding Committee	A committee established to advise and support the Church Authority on all matters relating to safeguarding, including in relation to prevention, policies and procedures and complaint handling. 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 an entity'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 National Catholic Safeguarding Standards within an entity.
Supervision	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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. There is no single national framework setting out requirements for 'working with children' checks. Each state or territory in Australia has its own name, procedures and differences in scope regarding what this type of check entails. They are one part of a Church entity's recruitment, selection and screening processes.