



National Response Framework

Catholic entities in Australia responding to concerns and allegations of abuse
against children and adults

Endorsed by Australian Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia and the
Association for Ministerial Public Juridic Persons

Introduction

Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. 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.

Pope Francis, Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the People of God, 20 Aug 2018

Every member of the Church, and especially its leadership, is entrusted with the imperative to foster and develop a culture of safety for everyone. Recognising the fundamental sanctity of each human person, at every level we must work together to protect children and adults from abuse or harm and work to enhance the dignity of everyone. This obligation to safeguard all those within the community is moral, legal and spiritual. Ensuring that the Church is a safe place is at the heart of our mission to serve God's People, and this involves being actively responsive to any concern or allegation that that safety has been breached.

Purpose

The National Response Framework (the Framework) is the approach that Church entities will take to ensure a consistent and appropriate response to allegations or concerns about children and adults who have or may have been abused by a person working for or engaged by a Church entity. Church entities are to establish policies and/or procedures consistent with this Framework.

The Framework and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards

The Framework is part of the commitment to safeguarding across Catholic Church entities in Australia. This commitment includes supporting the 10 National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), which are based closely on the Australian Government's National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the 10 Child Safe Standards proposed in Recommendation 6.6 of the Royal Commission.

What the Framework covers

In the Framework:

- abuse can include physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect of a child or adult
- abuse may be historical or current
- an adult can report abuse that occurred when they were under the age of 18 years
- an adult is any person aged 18 years and over. Recognising that any adult can be abused, some adults may be at increased risk of abuse, such as those who: are elderly; have a disability; suffer from mental illness; have diminished capacity; have cognitive impairment; have suffered previous abuse; are experiencing transient risks; in receiving a ministry or service are subject to a power imbalance; identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background; are of diverse sexuality; have any other impairment or adversity that makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from abuse.
- a concern or allegation of abuse is a reported suspicion or belief that a person may have or has been subject to abuse.

National Response Framework Principles

Five Principles underpin all aspects of the response of Catholic entities to concerns and allegations of abuse.



Procedural Framework

The procedural framework sets out the key procedural stages required when responding to concerns and allegations of abuse of children and adults relating to a Church entity.

