	SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND FRAMEWORK	Document No:	SG-PRO-002
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1. Policy

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (the Conference) recognises the personal dignity and rights of children and adults at risk towards whom it has a special responsibility and duty of care and respect. This is a shared responsibility of all workers and volunteers of the Conference. All Conference workers, including contractors and volunteers, undertake to create a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults and to prevent their neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse or sexual exploitation.

The Conference aims to create a culture where safeguarding is a natural part of all planning, decisions and activities of the Conference and where all staff embrace being co-responsible for safeguarding as part of their Christian mission.

The Conference adopts a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. Conference will not tolerate any form of child abuse or sexual exploitation including the possession of or access to child pornography, as well as any other form of activity that diminishes the dignity of a child or vulnerable adult.

The Conference takes its duty of care seriously and is committed to the safeguarding of children and adults at risk from various types of harm, abuse and exploitation in the delivery of services within Australia and overseas. For this reason, the Conference has developed a framework and associated procedures which aim to protect the rights of children and adults at risk, as well as Conference workers and representatives, through outlining systems and mechanisms for raising awareness, as well as for preventing, reporting and responding to issues related to safeguarding children and adults at risk.

2. Scope

This Policy and Framework applies to all Conference operations which include the Episcopal Commissions, Advisory Bodies and Subsidiary Agencies, and at all stages within their operations.

The three agencies - Caritas Australia, Catholic Social Services Australia and the National Catholic Education Commission are excluded from the scope of this procedure. These agencies will each have their own processes for management of their safeguarding risks and how the related risk controls are determined, assigned and monitored within their own agencies. Their safeguarding function will advise their respective Episcopal Commission on matters of strategic and operational significance related to the identification and management of risk.

3. Related Documents

[Conference Code of Conduct](#)
[Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Code of Conduct](#)
[ACBC Safeguarding Committee Terms of Reference](#)
[Conference Conditions of Employment](#)
 Safeguarding Complaints Procedure
 Specific Safeguarding processes for agencies

4. Definitions

Children

For the purposes of this procedure, children (and young people) are defined as people who are under the age of 18.

Adults at risk

A vulnerable adult is a person over the age of 18 years, who is susceptible to unfair treatment, exploitation or abuse. A vulnerability can be permanent or temporary. There are many personal attributes that can make a person vulnerable. For example among adults at risk could be the frail and elderly, the physically or intellectually disabled, those with mental health issues, those who have experienced bereavement, those of lower socio-economic status, those with poor understanding of the English language, those under the influence of drugs or alcohol and many others.

Contact with Children/Adults at Risk

Contact with children/adults at risk means working on an activity or in a position that involves or may involve contact with children/adults at risk, either under the position description or due to the nature of the work environment. This includes indirect contact with children/adults at risk in the community. The risk associated with this level of contact is generally moderate.

Examples of contact are:

- Any in-country work (overseas), in particular working in remote/rural locations
- Oral and written communication (including electronic communication) relating to a child/vulnerable adult
- Visiting premises e.g. schools, health or residential facilities, that provide services to children/adults at risk
- Any community consultation (data collection, surveying, training)

Working with Children/Adults at Risk

Working with children/adults at risk means being engaged in an activity with a child/vulnerable adult where the contact would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the activity and the contact is not incidental to the activity. Working includes volunteering or other unpaid work. The risk associated with this type of work is generally high.

For example activities or services such as the following:

- Disability service: school for the deaf
- Residential care, e.g. aged care, out of home care, camps etc.
- Child protection services
- Justice facilities for children/adults at risk
- Childcare services
- Child education services:
- Health services, in particular, access to sexual & reproductive health
- Counselling and support services for children/adults at risk
- Emergency response: Humanitarian assistance to children/adults at risk and families
- Children in sports
- Working in parishes

Worker

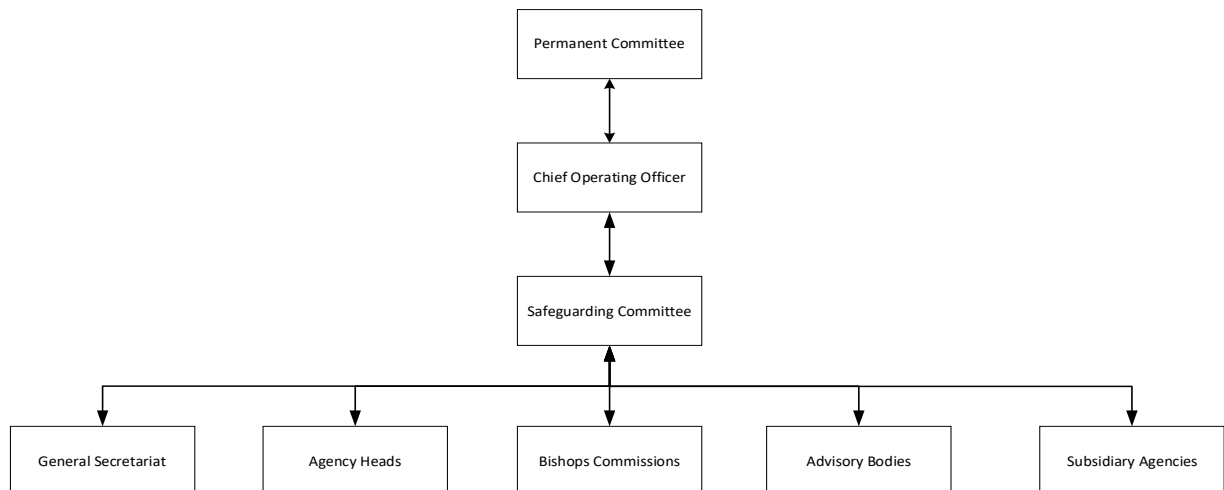
Worker refers to any person who carries out work for or on behalf of the Conference, both in Australia or overseas. This includes all paid and unpaid workers i.e. employees, contractors, consultants, volunteers, partner agencies and visitors.

Supervisor

The Supervisor is a Bishop, an Agency Head, Director, Manager, Coordinator or Team Leader, who is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of workers.

5. Key Roles and Responsibilities

The overall risk management reporting structure is as shown below.



A summary of the roles and responsibilities for risk management at all levels of the Conference are designated as follows:

Permanent Committee

The Permanent Committee has overall responsibility for:

- Reviewing and approving Safeguarding risk management reports made by the Safeguarding Committee through the Chief Operating Officer.
- Approving any Safeguarding risk management plans.

Chief Operating Officer

The Chief Operating Officer is the executive owner of the Conference's Safeguarding Framework.

The Chief Operating Officer will advise the Permanent Committee in:

- The implementation, operation and adequacy of the Conference's Safeguarding framework
- Supporting the provision of accurate, relevant and timely information on all Safeguarding compliance matters
- Ensuring applicable compliance obligations are identified and managed in accordance with laws, internal policies and procedures

Safeguarding Committee

The Safeguarding Committee is responsible for:

- Managing the Conference's Safeguarding Risk Register
- Facilitating safeguarding risk assessments by providing processes, templates and other information required
- Facilitating training on safeguarding and safeguarding risk management
- Where appropriate liaising with experts in the field to obtain advice on safeguarding risk controls
- Monitoring the status of risk controls (treatment plans)
- Providing reports on the status of safeguarding risk management, implementation of controls to the Chief Operating Officer as required.
- Ensuring that records of safeguarding risk assessment and control are maintained in accordance with Conference records management procedures.
- Liaising with safeguarding auditors

For further information refer to the [ACBC Safeguarding Committee Terms of Reference](#)

Bishops Commissions, General Secretary, Executive Secretaries of Episcopal Commissions, Agency Heads, Chairs of Advisory Groups, Heads of Subsidiary Agencies

Bishops Commissions, General Secretary, Executive Secretaries of Episcopal Commissions, Agency Heads, Chairs of Advisory Groups, Heads of Subsidiary Agencies are responsible for

- Promoting safeguarding regularly within their agencies to the extent that it applies,
- Managing the safeguarding risks that arise from:
 - Their day-to-day activities
 - Any events that they may organize (e.g. festivals, Conferences, seminars etc.)
 - Any specific projects that they undertake
 - Any other activity or types of activity that may give rise to safeguarding risks
- Ensuring that appropriate steps are taken to mitigate the risks. i.e. that risk controls are embedded into agency procedures
- Ensuring that any complaints received are handled according to safeguarding complaints management procedures.

Workers

All workers are expected to:

- Participate in the safeguarding risk management process to the extent that it applies to them
- Attend any safeguarding training required
- Comply with any procedures implemented to mitigate safeguarding risks

6. Safeguarding Framework Principles

Key Principles for Managing Safeguarding

The key principles incorporated into this Safeguarding Framework are focused on ensuring the framework is:

- Structured and linked to the strategic objectives.
- An integral part of the overarching governance, financial assurance and compliance frameworks.
- Tailored to the needs of Conference operations and proportionate to the risks.
- Dynamic with a focus on continual improvement and maintenance of better practice.
- Managed transparently with the relevant agencies, advisory bodies and Episcopal Commission accountable for the management of safeguarding.

Safeguarding will be incorporated into the strategic and operational planning processes at all levels within the Conference operations. This includes all new activities, ventures and projects prior to commencement to ensure alignment with organisational objectives.

Safeguarding Risk Management Process

The Conference will adopt a risk management approach to safeguarding whereby the day-to-day and other specific activities of the various bodies that are part of the Conference are assessed to identify safeguarding risks that may arise and the appropriate actions that must be taken to control these risks.

The Conference will adopt the risk management methodology outlined in the Conference Risks Management Policy and Framework document to manage safeguarding risks.

7. Components of the Safeguarding Framework

The overall process of safeguarding will be captured and reported by utilising the following documents, processes and methodologies outlined below, all of these form part of the Conference's Safeguarding Framework:

Safeguarding Risk Register

The safeguarding risk register focuses on the specific areas of safeguarding risks associated with day-

to-day-operations, events and projects, and any other activity that the Conference undertakes. It incorporates detailed risk assessment ratings, control effectiveness ratings and action plans. The risk register is reviewed in conjunction with supervisors and workers and forms the basis for assessing residual areas of risks and specific risk control areas where further review, risk management action plans and internal audit may be necessary. The risk Safeguarding Risk Register will be managed by the Safeguarding Committee.

Events Risk Assessments

Events risk assessments will be used to manage the specific risks, including safeguarding risks, associated with events managed by the Conference.

Project Risk Assessments

Project risk assessments will be used to manage the specific risks, including safeguarding risks, associated with key strategic projects.

8. Records

The following records are required to be retained for a minimum of six years in accordance with the Conference's records management system:

- Safeguarding Implementation Plan
- Safeguarding Risk Register
- Safeguarding Risk Assessment
- Safeguarding reports and recommendations