

PARISH OF PORT MELBOURNE AND MIDDLE PARK

Parish Safeguarding Responsibilities



The Parish Priest of the Parish of Port Melbourne and Middle Park is responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and relevant procedures and practices to promote the safety of children and young people consistent with the:

- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Specifically, within this parish, the Parish Priest has a legal obligation under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) to ensure that safeguarding measures are in place to keep children and young people safe from abuse and harm.

THE ROLE OF THE SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

Under the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, this parish has established a Safeguarding Committee to which provides advice to, and works with, the leadership of the parish to ensure policies, processes and practices are in place to protect children and young people.

The Safeguarding Committee is an advisory committee only. This means that committee members are not themselves subject to the legal obligations under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 or the Child Safety Standards made under it by virtue of them being a member of the Committee – the legal obligation remains with the leadership of the Parish Priest¹.

The Safeguarding Committee will meet four or more times per year and report progress to the Parish Advisory Committee on a quarterly basis.

¹ Please note – Any adult (aged 18 years and over) in Victoria is subject to obligations under Section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 that require those who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child (aged under 16) disclose that information to Victoria Police.

The Parish of Port Melbourne and Middle Park is committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all children, young people and vulnerable adults.

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The Committee's role is to assist the Parish Leadership so that the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is embedded across the Parish and compliance requirements are met by:

- Promoting child safety within our community and fostering an understanding of the importance of child safety.
- Working collaboratively with our Parish Leadership to promote the safety of children and young people.
- Implementing, maintaining and/or reviewing child safety processes and procedures to support the wellbeing and safety of children and young people with input from relevant stakeholders e.g. Parish Priest, parish administration, parents, children young people, program leaders, pastoral associates.
- Engaging in and/or reviewing risk management processes to promote the safe participation of children and young people in programs, activities and events.
- Involving children and young people (and their families) in decision-making and planning to promote child safety.
- Ensuring that reporting processes for concerns and/or allegations are well communicated across the parish, and act as a first point of contact in relation to child safety concerns, reports or allegations and comply with reporting protocols for child abuse reports and allegations in a sensitive and supportive manner.
- Participating in and/or delivering child safety information and training.
- Monitor ongoing compliance with the CAM Safeguarding Children and Young People Framework which encompasses the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Documentation (e.g. meeting minutes, correspondence, risk assessments, communication) in relation to the Safeguarding Committee is to be kept by our Parish and stored securely. These records will form part of the evidence base for the Parish to safeguard children and young people.

The Parish Leadership, working with its Safeguarding Committee, will summarise its compliance with the requirements of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Framework on an annual basis (self-assessment/audit process) and present it to the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (CAM).

SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Committee must include parish, agency or entity leadership representatives and other relevant stakeholders including:

- program coordinators, who may be employees or volunteers involved in child and youth related work and ministry
- volunteers with child safety expertise (e.g. lawyer, human resources professional, teacher or school principal, early childhood education worker, police officer, social worker, youth worker) and/or commitment to safeguard children and young people

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- parent representatives.

Members of the Committee are in effect 'Safeguarding Officers' for this Parish. Safeguarding Officers are an important asset within the Parish and can act as points of contact for advice, support and direction in relation to child safety matters.

CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE (CAM) PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS UNIT

Across CAM, the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) is responsible for:

- Assisting parishes, agencies and entities to implement the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.
- Providing support, advice and training to Archdiocesan parishes, agencies and entities to strengthen their efforts in relation to child safety.
- Assisting Archdiocesan parishes, agencies and entities to comply with the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and relevant standards.
- Managing concerns, allegations and reports of child abuse and breaches of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy in accordance with moral, legal and ethical obligations to safeguard children and young people and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- Guiding improvements in relation to our approach to child safety across the Archdiocese (e.g. Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Code of Conduct, compliance, risk management, training) to meet legislative requirements at the state and federal level, and best practice expectations proposed by Catholic Professional Standards Limited.
- Undertaking annual child safety audits

PSU will receive and coordinate the response to allegations and reports of child abuse in relation to parish clergy, employees and volunteers across CAM, consistent with our moral, legal and ethical responsibility to safeguard children and young people and our reporting obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Version 1: 1 December 2020
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