



Catholic Diocese of Darwin

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Prevention and Protection Policy

Introduction and Purpose

The Diocese of Darwin is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. This policy continues our long held practice of providing safe environments and activities which acknowledge the inherent dignity and rights of each person. Children and young people have the right to grow and to develop their full potential physically, emotionally and spiritually. All vulnerable people have a right to safety and freedom from abuse.

Policy Statement

The Catholic Diocese of Darwin, consistent with gospel values and its Mission Statement, follows the example of Jesus in respecting the dignity of each child, young person and vulnerable adult. The Diocese of Darwin has zero tolerance to abuse or exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those with culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability and/or particular vulnerabilities. All members of the diocesan family will work together for the protection of these people and for the prevention of any form of abuse, neglect or exploitation – physical, sexual, emotional or spiritual – within our church communities and organisations.

Scope

This document applies to all clergy, religious, employees and volunteers who work in the diocese and complements the documents *Integrity in Ministry (Reprinted 2010)* and *Integrity in the Service of the Church (2011)*.

This policy applies to all aspects of church work, including, but not limited to activity within the church buildings and accompanying spaces, community work, pilgrimages, camps, home visiting, trips and holidays.

Catholic Education and CatholicCare NT have their specific requirements regarding safeguarding children and these too must meet Diocesan demands.

Definitions

Abuse: occurs when an adult harms or exploits a child. Harm is any significant detrimental effect caused by any act, omission or circumstance that affects the well-being or development of a child¹.

- **Physical harm** may result in bruising, swellings, welts, broken bones as a result of any action like punching, hitting, beating, shaking, biting or burning.
- **Sexual harm** refers to a person who uses power, force or authority to involve a child or young person under 18 years of age in any form of unwanted or illegal sexual activity. This can involve touching or no contact at all. This may take the form of taking sexually explicit photographs or videos of children, forcing children to watch or take part in sexual acts and forcing or coercing children to have sex or engage in sexual acts with other children or adults.

¹ [Care and Protection of Children Act \(NT\)](#)

- **Grooming** refers to a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child as a precursor to sexual abuse. It includes establishing a 'special' friendship/ relationship with the child. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents and other adults to think that the relationship with the child is 'normal' and positive. The process can take as little as a few days or as long as months or even years.
- **Exploitation** of a child includes sexual or any other forms of exploitation. For example, enticing a child to be involved in a sexual activity or be photographed for money or other reward.
- **Emotional harm** causes the child to feel frightened, ashamed, upset, alone and have low self-worth. It may result from repeated criticising, teasing, belittling or 'putting down' a child constantly shouting and screaming at a child ignoring and refusing to help or accept a child, calling a child by degrading names, shaming the child in front of others, threatening to physically punish a child or abandon them, exposing a child to domestic violence, encouraging a child to engage in criminal activities, constantly ignoring a child and refusing to show affection and withdrawing love or threatening to do so.
- **Neglect** refers to a failure by a caregiver to provide the basic requirements for meeting the physical and emotional developmental needs of a child. Physically neglectful behaviours include a failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention.
- **exposure to family violence** is generally considered to be a form of psychologically abusive behaviour, where a child is present (hearing or seeing) while a parent or sibling is subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological maltreatment, or is visually exposed to the damage caused to persons or property by a family member's violent behaviour.

Child: a person under the age of 18 years

Vulnerable Adult: an individual aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.²

Core Principles

The Catholic Diocese of Darwin will:

- Work in partnership with families to promote the well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- Provide safe and nurturing environments for children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- Implement safe recruitment and selection practices for church personnel including volunteers;
- Demonstrate accountability through provision of protective systems and practices;
- Maintain standards of conduct which show clear guidelines for ethical behaviour which reduce risk of harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults;

² Australian Government, 2014, Vulnerable Persons, Police Checks and Criminal Offences: Working with Vulnerable Persons. Retrieved from <https://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/doing-business-with-dss/vulnerable-persons-police-checks-and-criminal-offences>

- Respond appropriately to disclosures of harm and abuse, and concerns of inappropriate behaviour toward children, young people and vulnerable adults and those experiencing or being exposed to family or domestic violence.

Breaches

For disciplinary action regarding breaches, please refer to the:

- Diocese of Darwin Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- Code of Conduct section in the Diocese of Darwin Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy

Related Legislation, Policies and Documents

- i. The Care and Protection of Children Act (Northern Territory)
- ii. Information Sharing Guidelines (1 July 2012) (Northern Territory)
- iii. Disability Services Act (Northern Territory)
- iv. Adult Guardianship Act (Northern Territory)
- v. Domestic and Family Violence Act (Northern Territory)
- vi. Criminal Code Act (Northern Territory)
- vii. Integrity in Ministry (Reprinted 2010) Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia
- viii. Integrity in the Service of the Church (2011) Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia
- ix. Making use of Integrity in the Service of the Church: Support Materials, a Document of the National Committee for Professional Standards, 2011.
- x. Diocese of Darwin Safeguarding Commitment Statement
- xi. Diocese of Darwin Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- xii. Diocese of Darwin Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy
- xiii. Diocese of Darwin Recruitment and Screening Policy
- xiv. Diocese of Darwin Complaints Regarding Children and Youth Policy
- xv. Diocese of Darwin Mandatory Reporting Harm to a Child or Young Person form