

## **The Partnered Catholic Parishes of:**

### **Sacred Heart Diamond Creek, St. Mary's Greensborough & St. Thomas the Apostle Greensborough North**



## **SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE POLICY**

In Parishes within the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the Parish Priest 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 a 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.

### **SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE**

Under the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, the parish leadership is required to establish a Safeguarding Committee 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, that is, with the Parish Priest.

## **ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee's role is to assist the 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 their community and fostering an understanding of the importance of child safety.
- Working collaboratively with the 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. 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.

## **PROCEDURES**

- The Committee will meet four or more times per year and report progress to the relevant governance body within the parish (e.g. Parish Pastoral Council) on a quarterly basis.
- Documentation (e.g. meeting minutes, correspondence, risk assessments, communication) in relation to the Safeguarding Committee is to be kept by each parish and stored securely. These records will form part of the evidence base for the parish's efforts to safeguard children and young people.
- The 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 leadership representatives (e.g. parish priest, pastoral associates, parish secretary, director, manager) and other relevant stakeholders which may include:

- 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
- parent representatives.

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

## **CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE MELBOURNE (CAM) PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS UNIT**

**Across CAM, the PSU is responsible for:**

- Assisting parishes to implement the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.
- Providing support, advice and training to Archdiocesan parishes to strengthen their efforts in relation to child safety.
- Assisting Archdiocesan parishes 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 the 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