

I am very grateful for the sharing of ideas at our last meeting regarding the reasons behind the national movement in Australia to appoint a Parish Safeguarding Volunteer in each parish. I have spent some time seeking answers to the important points raised by our Parish councillors and I hope the following information will help to clarify issues of concern.

Following our last meeting there was a very interesting article in news feeds regarding changes in Catholic parishes in response to the recommendations of the Papal Summit on the Protection of Minors in the Church 12 months ago. The article can be read here:

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/one-year-on-from-papal-summit-on-sex-abuse-australian-survivors-say-little-has-been-achieved>

The article explains that:

*Catholic Professional Standards Limited was set up after the child abuse royal commission with the aim of fostering a culture of safety and care for children and vulnerable adults by developing and implementing what are called the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.*

*The standards were introduced in May last year and are designed to be implemented in all Catholic entities, ministries and organisations across Australia. (Dyett, G. Conte, S. SBS: 2020)*

**Why should our parish participate in the safeguarding process?** We know we have a great parish with good people and we have been blessed with wonderful Parish Priests. However, in acknowledgement of the suffering of all those who have been affected by abuse, regardless of their parish and to demonstrate our commitment to providing safe, nurturing environments for all our young and vulnerable parish members, training for our leadership teams and the appointment of a Parish Safeguarding Volunteer need to be seriously considered.

#### **Why should the Parish Council have to do the training?**

The Parish Council is one of the leadership teams in the parish and it is important that they show they support the safeguarding process so that others will also embrace it. Our names are on the bulletin every week and we are trusted members of the parish so we may be approached for advice about safeguarding issues. The training will help you to be prepared for this.

The more leaders who are aware of the safeguarding measures, the more effectively we will be able to implement them in the parish so it would be wonderful if as many parishioners as possible undertook the training inspired by our leadership in this area.

#### **What does the training entail?**

The Parish Safeguarding training is designed to assist members of the Parish Pastoral Council and volunteers who work with children and vulnerable adults in the Parish, to understand their civil and moral responsibilities when it comes to safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults. The training will focus on safe practices, safe people and safe places. Maria Hicks and Brenda will come to deliver training at a time that suits us. The training generally takes around one and a half hours depending on questions.

**What does the training cover?**

- NSW Mandatory Reporting Legislation
- Safe practices: how to recognise harm to a child (including harm that may occur outside of parish activities), what to do if it's disclosed, and how do you report it.
- Safe people: why employee and volunteer screening (including Working With Children checks) is so important, appropriate and inappropriate behaviours around children (as per our Child Protection Code of Conduct). How to recognise grooming and other inappropriate behaviours.
- Safe places: how we keep our children safe through all parish activities (both online and within the physical environment). Includes information for grandparents for talking to grandchildren about social media.

There is absolutely no presumption in the training that our children in our parishes are not safe! A lot of the information that is delivered mirrors that provided for teachers.

The training is intended to be interactive and allow for discussion. A handbook will be provided.

Thanks everyone. It looks like we will have a fair bit of time to consider this so I am keen to hear your feedback. Perhaps sending it "reply all" is best to engender discussion.

Many thanks

Sarah