



SAFEGUARDING POLICY: Chaplains, Staff, and Volunteers

The Catholic Military Ordinariate's unwavering dedication to upholding the integrity, dignity, and self-worth of children, adolescents, vulnerable and all adults is at the heart of its mission.

Our Role

The Australian Military Services' Catholic Diocese is dedicated to creating a secure and encouraging environments for all members of the ADF, as well as for our communities and society at large. This includes everyone who is at risk in our society.

Living up to the principle of protecting children, vulnerable and all adults is our duty as citizens of our communities as well as Catholics in the spirit of Christ's teachings. It is our responsibility as members of the Catholic Diocese of the Australian Military Services to uphold the professional standards established by the Church and our country. Uniformed personnel also have a duty to carry out their duties in compliance with defence policies and regulations.

Purpose

Protecting children, adolescents, and vulnerable adults from sexual, physical, psychological, verbal, and emotional abuse or neglect is a key component of our safeguarding policy. Its purpose is to supplement the Safeguarding Policy for working with children as well as the numerous government-based child protection laws.

It is expected of all chaplains, staff, volunteers, contractors, and visiting clergy to actively support a culture that upholds the dignity of its members and reaffirms the love and respect found in the gospel. All volunteers, visiting clergy, staff, and chaplains must sign this code of conduct attesting to their understanding of the diocesan policy.

Definitions

1. **Child:** is a person under the age of 18 years or a student of any age attending a diocesan event, building, chapel, educational or social activity.
2. **Staff/Workers:** Is a:
 - Chaplains and members of religious congregations
 - Paid employees working in catholic diocese, and individuals or groups authorised to act in the diocese
 - Volunteers working in catholic diocese, organisations, groups, councils and committees
 - Students (e.g. work experience)
 - Contractors and sub-contractors working for the diocese

"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him." — Psalm 127:3



Definitions cont'd

3. **Vulnerable Persons:** a vulnerable person is - but not restricted to; 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.
4. **Safeguarding:** means protecting the welfare and human rights of people that interact with, or are affected by our Military Diocese, particularly those who might be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. This refers to any responsibility or measure undertaken to protect a person from harm.
5. **Abuse, neglect or exploitation** means all forms of physical and mental abuse, exploitation, coercion or ill-treatment.
6. **Grooming:** When a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity later. It can include communication, and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their partner/carer.
7. **Mandatory Reporting:** The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Chaplains have a duty to mandatory report including to the Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO) on post.
8. **Reasonable belief:** A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.
9. Catholic Military Ordinariate of Australia (CMOA)
10. Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO)

Policy

1. **National Catholic Safeguarding Standards** – Edition 2, 2022 Reference:
https://www.acsltd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/National-Catholic-Safeguarding-Standards-Edition-2_FINAL_December2022.pdf
2. CMOA Code of Conduct & Safeguarding Policy: November 2025
3. CMOA Privacy Policy: November 2025
4. **ADF Youth Policy Manual.** This Manual provides the policy and procedures that govern and inform Defence's engagement with youth – including the Australian Defence Force Cadets (ADF Cadets).
5. **Working with Children Check and National Police Check Policy.** As determined by the local civilian State or Territory government.

"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him." — Psalm 127:3



Principles

That we create supportive settings where children, youth, and vulnerable adults are valued, their opinions heard, and they feel safe is a moral and legal obligation of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Military Ordinate community is understood in accordance with the following principles:

- Our community has a zero tolerance of child abuse
- All children are entitled to be safe and protected from all forms of abuse and neglect
- Our community will conform to Military procedures for protection of the vulnerable
- All adults in our community, including Chaplains, visiting clergy, volunteers, parishioners, visiting military members, have a responsibility to care for children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Everyone should feel free to raise any concerns about children safety knowing these will be taken seriously by the Chaplains and the Military Ordinate
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

Policy Commitment

1. All Children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to feel safe and be safe. We aim to create a safe and friendly environment where our military members and their families can enjoy the support of Catholic Chaplaincy without any concern for their safety. These include:
 - ✓ *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*
 - ✓ *Individuals who are elderly, are living with a disability, are suffering from an illness, or are 'at risk.'*
 - ✓ *Individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.*
 - ✓ *Children in out of home care, or those who are homeless, and*
 - ✓ *Children and adults of diverse sexuality*
2. Underpinning this Policy are the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards as developed by Catholic Professional Standards Limited. These 10 Standards are:
 - **Committed leadership, governance and culture**

The leadership and governance arrangements of Church entities promote an inclusive, welcoming environment for children and provide the foundation for transparent, accountable and risk-based approaches to ensure child safety.
 - **Children are safe, informed and participate**

Children are informed about their rights, are given the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect them, and their views are taken seriously.

"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him." — Psalm 127:3



Policy commitment cont'd

- Partnering with families, carers and communities
Families, carers and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety.
- Equity is promoted and diversity is respected
Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.
- Robust human resource management
Church personnel are suitable and supported to implement safeguarding in practice.
- Effective complaints management
Processes for raising concerns and complaints are responsive, understood, accessible and used by children, families, carers, communities and Church personnel.
- Ongoing education and training
Church personnel are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through information, ongoing education and training.
- Safe physical and online environments
Physical and online environments promote safety and contain appropriate safeguards to minimise the opportunity for children to be harmed.
- Policies and procedures support child safety
Policies and procedures document how the Church entity is safe for children.
- Regular improvement
Church entities regularly review and improve implementation of their systems for keeping children safe.

Our Commitment to our People

Our Commitment to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults in our community or visitors to it.
- We commit to providing positive examples and empowerment to take their views seriously.
- We commit to taking action to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse or harm.

"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him." — Psalm 127:3



Our Commitment to Parents and Guardians

- We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and guardians about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and guardians where it will not compromise the safety of our children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- We commit to reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

Our Commitment to the Australian Defence Force

- We commit to upholding the Values of the Defence Force.
- We commit to support our Military Families, their Children, young people and our vulnerable adults.
- We commit to conforming to Working with Children responsibilities and training.

Responsibilities and Organisation Arrangements

1. Every Catholic Chaplain, staff, or volunteer has a responsibility to understand the important and significant role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.
2. Catholic Chaplains and staff have the responsibility to ensure that a culture of openness, awareness, and shared responsibility for child safety is maintained.
3. **Responsibilities include:**
 - ✓ creating an environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults to be safe and to feel safe
 - ✓ upholding high principles and standards for all other Catholic Chaplains and visiting Clergy
 - ✓ promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
 - ✓ ensuring that members of the Chaplaincy team have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of openness to and ability to address child safety matters
 - ✓ seeking regular feedback on the effectiveness of our policy
 - ✓ responding promptly to concerns of possible abuse or harm when reported
 - ✓ ensuring full and transparent communications with parents and guardians
 - ✓ providing regular opportunities to confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing
 - ✓ ensuring the Catholic Chaplain(s) meets the specific requirements of the Child Safety Standards as established by the local civil Government authority.
4. **Organisational Arrangements** are put in place to ensure that the diocesan Policy can be constantly audited and that clear lines of reporting and follow-up accountability can be achieved. These include:
 - The appointment of the Director of Safeguarding in the Chancery to advise, review, develop and record matters concerning this Safeguarding Policy.

"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him." — Psalm 127:3



Child Safety —Education and Training

1. CMOA provides appropriate opportunities to develop chaplain, employees and volunteers' knowledge of, openness to, and ability to address child safety matters. This includes ongoing training and professional learning through the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and external contracted short course training to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.
2. All Catholic Chaplains will do annual ADF short course training requirements, as will all senior personnel, with employees expected to complete this short training every two years.

Risk Management

1. Catholic Chaplains, CMOA employees, and volunteers are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to child and vulnerable people safety across our whole Military Catholic ministry environment (physical and online) and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. *(Refer to our Risk Management Policy)*

Relevant Legislation

1. Within the ADF specifically the provisions of the ADF Youth Policy Manual will be understood, accepted and strictly adhered to.
2. The Commonwealth and each State have enacted legislation relating to Child Safety, Mandatory Reporting, and related matters. It is the Catholic Chaplains' responsibility to ensure that these legislated acts are identified, studied, understood and obeyed. The local Chapel Community will list the relevant Government Acts and Civil Legislation in their local Child Protection Policy document. The list will include
 - **Failure to disclose offence:** Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 18 or a vulnerable person has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.
 - **Failure to protect offence:** The offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that children under the age of 18 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk but negligently fail to reduce or remove it.
 - **Grooming offence:** This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child or any vulnerable person. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.



Imbalances Recognised by the CMOA when Working with Young and Vulnerable

People

Chaplains and employees of the Catholic Military Ordinariate of Australia (CMOA) will encounter imbalances of power between themselves and the youth and vulnerable they serve.

Young people may look to chaplains to provide support and care as well as CMOA employees who may provide or refer extra help and care. We are how vital it is to be aware of this so that as a Military Diocese we can do our best to minimise possible disempowerment or contribute to unpleasant experiences that a young or vulnerable person may have had in the past.

Navigate and Reduce Power Imbalances in Chaplaincy and for Employees

One of the most important aspects of chaplaincy and working in our Diocese is facilitating the empowerment of young and vulnerable persons. Sharing our power in pastoral care strengthens your relationships and increases the possibility of positive outcomes.

- ✓ Encourage young or vulnerable people to own the areas they occupy by launching programmes or encouraging them to take the initiative.
- ✓ Recognise and value young people's contributions by incorporating their ideas to foster a feeling of community.
- ✓ Mentor young individuals and help them develop their skills so that they feel comfortable and capable.
- ✓ Create spaces for young people to participate in internal procedures and policies. Advocate for their inclusion.
- ✓ Create opportunities for young individuals to take on leadership roles, such as management teams or governance boards.

We use Trauma-informed practice to address power dynamics in Chaplaincy

This method uses a person-centered and strengths-based approach to develop a care system that focuses on creating trust, safety, and collaboration with young people while being sensitive to the effects of traumatic experiences.

Responding to cultural, historical, and gender issues

- ✓ Being aware of many types of prejudice and oppression and how they can cause trauma for young people, as well as the effects of intergenerational trauma.
- ✓ Self-reflection is essential for avoiding reproducing unequal and unjust power relations in practice.



This perspective evaluates how trauma has influenced young people's present coping strategies and sees them as strong and resilient in the face of adversity.

Trauma-informed practice is typically defined by six principles: cooperation and mutuality, empowerment, voice and choice, safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, and responsiveness to cultural, historical, and gender concerns.

Security, trustworthiness, and transparency

- ✓ Emphasises the significance of a chaplain or employee co-creating a space for the young or vulnerable person to feel safe emotionally, relationally, and physically.
- ✓ Creating a warm, inviting, and friendly environment and communication while also maintaining stability and predictability in the relationship and surroundings. One crucial part of this is the trust that has grown over time.
- ✓ Being honest helps to remove ambiguity in service delivery and fosters confidence between the young person and the worker.
- ✓ Transparency guarantees that the young person has access to information about themselves, as well as being informed about confidentiality and the processes involved in the service they are using.

Peer assistance

- ✓ Involving people who have comparable lived experiences as the young person you're working with.
- ✓ Peer support workers, also known as lived experience workers, offer unique and vital insight and compassion to those who have been through comparable traumas.
- ✓ This sense of solidarity helps a young person's healing or processing path.
- ✓ To avoid personal re-traumatisation or burnout, lived experience and peer support workers should be adequately trained and supported in their job.

Voice and Choice

- ✓ Young and vulnerable persons in our military diocese have access to information about their alternatives, allowing them to make educated choices.
- ✓ It can also refer to a chaplain or employee asking a young person for personal preferences and feedback on how they want to collaborate during sessions. For example, we would choose which goals they would like to prioritise and where they would like to meet.
- ✓ Being given a choice gives young or vulnerable people a sense of control and authority, which can help them feel safer and secure.



Empowerment

- ✓ The CMOA wants to create chances where young people feel capable of attaining their goals and overcoming obstacles.
- ✓ Developing a sense of self-efficacy is critical in helping a young or vulnerable individual believe in themselves. One example would be to reframe their current trauma responses as reasonable and valuable, which can then be used to develop more sustainable and comfortable coping strategies in the future.

Collaboration and mutuality

- ✓ Giving too much advise is discouraged since it might lead to an uneven power dynamic by elevating the chaplain's or employee's expertise.
- ✓ Chaplains and employees should provide an environment where young or vulnerable people feel comfortable asking questions and making decisions about their own care.

CMOA Behaviour Standards

Acceptable Behaviour

All Chaplains, employees, volunteers, and visiting clergy are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- Adhering to the Ordinariate's Child Safe Policy and always upholding the Statement of Commitment to child safety.
- Adhering to and upholding the policy and standards contained in the ADF Youth Policy Manual.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and harm.
- Treating everyone within the community with respect and modelling this behaviour to promote respectful relationships.
- Listening and responding to views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they have, or another child has, been abused or they fear for their safety.
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse to the appropriate civilian and military authorities and to the police.
- Understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting.



	• Reporting any child safety concerns to the Vicar General of the Military Diocese. • If any allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child or children are safe.
Unacceptable Behaviours Chaplains, employees, volunteers and visiting clergy must not: Unacceptable Behaviours cont'd Chaplains, employees, volunteers and visiting clergy must not:	• Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse. • Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (e.g. offering gifts or special treatment for a specific child). • Exhibit behaviours with children that may be construed as unnecessarily physical (e.g. inappropriate sitting on laps). • Put children at danger of abuse, (e.g. by closing doors or spending time alone with a child without parental or guardian knowledge) • Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children. • Discriminate against any child because of age, gender, race, culture, sexuality, ethnicity or disability. • Have direct contact outside of pastoral duties associated with the person's position in the community with a child or their family who is not socially related. • Have direct contact with a child via telephone, text, or any form of social media – including making or accepting a 'friend-request'. • Photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardian. • Photograph or video a child without the child's consent. • Work with children while under the influence of alcohol, tobacco or drugs.



Managing incidents

Serious misbehaviour includes harassment, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The Military Diocese maintains the right to:

- Take disciplinary action, including termination, against anyone it deems to be at fault.
- Engage in civil litigation.
- Inform law enforcement of the situation.

Reporting suspected incidents

All Chaplains, staff, volunteers and third parties must, as soon as practicable, report any suspicion that an incident has taken place, may be taking place, or could take place.

They may do this through direct reporting to:

- Any member of the Safeguard Advisory Panel.
- Bishop/Apostolic Administrator
- The Director of Safeguarding
- Their manager, supervisor, or SADFO.

If a person wants to report confidentially, including with anonymity, they may do so confidentially to the bishop/delegate.

If a person believes that another person is at risk of immediate harm or the victim of a criminal offence, they must **dial 000**. Responding to suspected incidents

Responding to suspected incidents

All suspected, perceived, potential or actual incidents will be managed through the incident response plan. These are provided to all chaplains or will be obtainable through the Chancery Office and the Safeguarding Advisory Panel.

External reporting

The Military diocese will:

1. Report any suspicion of a criminal offence to the police or the relevant criminal judicial body.
2. Meet all canonical requirements regarding the reporting of incidents; and
3. Report any qualifying matter to the SADFO

"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him." — Psalm 127:3



All staff must:

1. Encourage a healthy culture around safeguarding.
2. Implement this policy in their area of responsibility; and make sure that incident risks have been considered.
3. To prevent, identify, and respond to problems, making sure that the right controls are in place by:
 - Familiarising themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, policies and procedures for safeguarding.
 - Comply with all requirements.
 - Report any incident to the appropriate authority when it is reasonable to suspect that a person's safety or welfare is at risk.
 - Report any suspicion that a person's safety or welfare may be at risk to the appropriate authority; and
 - Provide an environment that is supportive of everyone's emotional and physical safety.
4. All partners and contractors who work with or for the Military Diocese must:
 - In their interactions with our diocese, adhere to the guidelines in this policy and the Military Diocese's protocols.
 - Report any suspicion that an event has occurred, is occurring, or may occur.

Australian Defence Force / single service requirements

- All Catholic Chaplains will observe strictly the policies, standards of behaviour and processes regarding professional standards matters established by the relevant Service.
- Navy Directive published November 2023 attached: [Navy Directive 08 of 2023 – Navy Chaplain and MSWO Code of Conduct](#)

Privacy and data protection

Unless there is a risk to someone's safety, all personal information that is taken into consideration or recorded will respect the privacy of the parties involved. Personal data will be protected by this diocese. The Military Diocese's privacy policy is applicable. Making sure that the right controls are in place to stop, identify, and handle issues. (*Please refer to our Privacy Policy*)



Compliance

Infractions of this policy that pose a substantial risk to the safety and well-being of others may result in disciplinary action, termination of employment, and reporting to the appropriate authorities.

Disciplinary action may be taken against a Catholic Chaplain who are accused of violating any duty, obligation, or responsibility outlined in this policy. The person in question should get in touch with the SADFO and the Vicar General /Apostolic Administrative Delegate of the Military Ordinariate if they believe the Chaplain is violating the policy. The relevant local Church Professional Standards Office and the SADFO must be notified if someone who is not an ADF member is suspected of violating the policy. The person in question is encouraged and recommended to call the authorities if there is any plausible suspicion that a criminal conduct has been committed.

Inclusion of All

We will ensure families and children can contribute.

'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me' (Mark 9.37).

Document Number	MO01PS01
Document Owner – Record File	Military Diocese - Professional Standards
Document Version	Two (2)
Review Date (every 2 years)	November 2027
Date	November 2025

"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him." — Psalm 127:3