



CATHOLIC MILITARY ORDINARIATE OF AUSTRALIA

Catholic Diocese of the Australian Military Services

National Child Protection Week | 6 –12 September 2026

A Message from the Catholic Bishop of the Military Ordinariate

During National Child Protection Week, I invite the Catholic community of the Australian Defence Force to reflect on one of our most sacred responsibilities: protecting the dignity, safety and wellbeing of every child.

As Catholics, we believe that every child is created in the image and likeness of God. Jesus placed children at the heart of His teaching and reminded us of their particular dignity and vulnerability. Safeguarding is therefore more than a policy or procedure; it is an expression of our faith and our responsibility to one another.

Our Defence families are at the heart of our community. Whether children are at home, in residential settings, schools, parish communities or participating in chaplaincy activities, they have a right to be safe, respected, heard and protected.

That responsibility belongs to every adult. If we have a concern about a child, or become aware of possible abuse, neglect or inappropriate behaviour, **we must act. We should listen carefully, take the concern seriously, record what we have been told or observed, seek appropriate safeguarding advice, and report the concern through the proper Defence, Church or civil authorities.** Where a child may be in immediate danger, appropriate Police or emergency assistance should be sought without delay.

Speaking up can be difficult, but it can also be an act of profound care and courage. We must never assume that someone else will act.

May we continue to build a **Catholic community within the Defence Force where our children are protected, our families are supported, concerns are heard and acted upon, and every child is able to grow in safety, dignity and hope.**

May Christ, who welcomed and blessed the little ones, keep our children safe, strengthen our families, and give us the wisdom, courage and compassion to protect those entrusted to our care.

May God bless you and your families: **the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Hall'.

+ Most Reverend Stuart Hall

Bishop of the Catholic Military Ordinariate