



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF
CANBERRA & GOULBURN

Diocesan Protocol for
Responding to
Concerns about
Abuse and Harm from Misconduct

October 2019



Protocol for Responding to Concerns about Abuse and Harm from Misconduct

A. Purpose and Scope:

This Protocol relates to the implementation of the following Safe Ministry statements:

- We acknowledge that all people at church have a right to feel and be safe, and to experience life-giving, harm-free interactions at our church and in our programs.
- We acknowledge the need for sensitivity and consideration of all people of aboriginal, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as any person with a disability.
- We commit to the welfare of all people through the implementation and ongoing improvement of our Safe Ministry Framework which includes: Appropriate and timely responses to all incidents, accidents, child protection and/or safe ministry (misconduct and abuse) concerns.
- In relation to children, we acknowledge the shared responsibility of the whole community for child safety and welfare, including caregivers and our workers, and as such we will actively promote the role of parents and caregivers and the wider community in the shared responsibility of child safety.

This Protocol applies to all information, concerns or disclosures in relation to current and /or historical abuse or misconduct related, whether about a child or adult.

It applies to all persons in Ministry Units who have a concern or receive a disclosure.

Church workers in the Diocese have particular obligations under the legislation of NSW & ACT (e.g. failure to report ACT & NSW, and Failure to Protect NSW, Mandatory reporting ACT and NSW, Reportable Conduct schemes NSW & ACT), Professional Standards Ordinance, Safe Ministry Policy, the Code of Good Practice and this Protocol to report all concerns of abuse and misconduct to the Director of Professional Standards.

All Diocesan agencies and the Company Schools shall have an equivalent protocol or procedures for responding to abuse and harm from misconduct. The Professional Standards Reference Group shall ensure that all Diocesan agencies have and are implementing suitable equivalent processes.

B. Our Commitment:

Our Diocese is committed to **Safe Ministry**. We are committed to all Ministry Units and agencies being person-valuing and respectful spaces free from abuse and harm, to God's glory. This means that we commit to our pastoral, duty of care, legal and governance obligations; with the goal that all ministries are spiritually, emotionally and physically safe.

Our Diocese does not tolerate abuse of any kind and seeks to act with diligence and expedience in addressing concerns and disclosures of abuse and misconduct. In relation to Child Protection concerns (risk of harm) we will be child centered and focused in our responses, acting in the best interests of the child.

C. Principles that guide this Protocol

1. **Best interest of the child** – our responses to reported concerns or disclosures of child abuse or a child at risk of harm will be child focused (centered on the needs of the child) and informed.
2. **Trauma informed** – we will make every effort to respond in a trauma informed manner, seeking not to re-traumatize and to be compassionate and caring in our responses.
3. **Duty of care** – we must do all that is reasonably practical to ensure people are safe, and respond appropriately to all concerns of abuse and misconduct and compassionately.
4. **Partnership** – we work together across the Diocese to ensure we support and learn from each other in implementing best practice in safe ministry.
5. **Continuous Review and Improvement** – we regularly review and improve our practice in this area to ensure that it remains current and effective.

D. Implementation of the protocol

If you have a concern or receive a disclosure of abuse or misconduct in a Ministry Unit, you are required to report your concern.

1. When to report

Report when you have a reasonable concern to report abuse or misconduct.

That is if:

- A person tells you they have been, or are at risk of being, harmed or abused.
- Someone else tells you that they know of someone who has been, or is at risk of being, abused.
- You have concerns that someone in your Ministry Unit may have been, or is at risk of being, abused based on their physical appearance or behaviour.
- If you are aware of a Church worker who has breached a standard in a code of conduct of the Diocese or has engaged in sexual abuse, sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual behaviour.

You are **not required** to establish the facts or investigate, rather the Diocese will partner with the Ministry Unit in responding in line with legislation, regulation, Ordinance, Policy and Protocol.

2. How to report

When you have a concern or receive a disclosure of abuse or misconduct:

- a. If the person you are concerned about is at **immediate risk of serious harm**, speak immediately to a senior leader in the Ministry Unit, e.g. Rector (or Chaplain), Parish Warden, Ministry Team leader.

They will work in the first instance to ensure the person subject of the concern is made safe, including where necessary calling the police or ambulance (000). In such instances reporting to the Diocese will follow, through the Safe Ministry Helpline 1800 070 511.

- b. When you have a **non-life threatening concern/ disclosure** you can report to;

- i. The Safe Ministry Helpline on 1800 070 511 (business hours, Monday - Friday, except public holidays). The Helpline will report to the Director of Professional Standards and provide you with advice on appropriate response.

- ii. The Ministry Unit, e.g. Rector (or Chaplain), Parish Warden, Ministry Team leader, who is required to speak to the Director of Professional Standards.

3. What will happen when you report?

The Safe Ministry Unit and Office of Professional Standards will then assist the Ministry Unit in appropriate pastoral, legal and Diocesan responses, dependent upon the nature of the concern/disclosure.

Responses include: reporting to police, the Child Protection Hotline (NSW) or Care & Protection Services (ACT), reporting to other government authorities such as Ombudsman (ACT) and Office of the Children's Guardian (NSW). They will also advise the Rector/Priest in Charge (if appropriate) and instigate support mechanisms for the Ministry Unit as required.

4. Special cases:

School-based Ministry

SRE teachers in NSW forming concerns or receiving a disclosure should inform the Principal, unless the Principal is the alleged abuser, and request from the Principal the reference number given by the statutory body as proof of the reporting. SRE teachers are also required to advise the Safe Ministry Helpline (**1800 070 511**).

Allegations against church workers

Where an allegation of child abuse / neglect is made against a church worker¹, the Diocesan Professional Standards Director will commence the relevant response processes, including mandatory reporting, Reportable Conduct legislation (ACT & NSW), Diocesan Professional Standards Ordinance process, and where necessary the Policy to Safe Ministry with Persons of Concern.

5. Responding to disclosures²

If you find yourself in a situation where a person tells you they are being, or have been abused show your care and concern by:

- Listening carefully to what the child/young person is saying, but close down the conversation as soon as possible.
- Reassuring the child/young person that disclosing was the right thing to do.
- Indicating what you will do, i.e. that you will contact the Reporting Abuse Hotline for assistance.

Please do **not**:

- Start an investigation, i.e. Do not seek further details beyond those that the child/young person freely wants to discuss.
- Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone or stop the abuse happening.
- Tell anyone that does not need to know.

Understanding your role:

- Your role is to listen, care and inform, not to engage in discussions around the abuse or investigations.
- Even if abuse is no longer happening it is still important to report the matter, as the adult may be abusing other children/young people. Also it may be that the child/young person will need guidance and help in overcoming the effects of the abuse.

¹ A church worker is a member of clergy or a lay person (*paid or volunteer*) appointed or elected to a position of responsibility in the Diocese.

² Adapted from *Keeping Children & Young People Safe*, 2011, Office for Children, Youth & Family Support, Canberra.

Possible Trauma from Exposure to Disclosures of Abuse

Each person has a unique response to receiving a disclosure of abuse.

There may be some common reactions such as: shock, anger, sympathy for the victim and frustration. However, there may also be more severe reactions which may in some cases have a more invasive impact on a person's ability to function effectively within their ministry and life in general.

In these situations, it may be helpful for them to seek additional counselling support.

The Safe Ministry Helpline 1800 070 511 may also be accessed:

- If you need to arrange or access counselling due to exposure to trauma from responding to an abuse or misconduct situation in the Diocese.
- If someone is a victim of abuse and would like support.
- If someone is a family member of a victim of abuse and would like support.

E. Terminology

The terms and definitions relevant to this protocol are those found in the Safe Ministry Policy.

F. Documents & Programs Used to Support this Protocol

- Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017
- Anglican National Register Canon 2007
- Professional Standards Ordinance
- Safe Ministry Policy 2019
- The Diocesan Code of Good Practice
- Faithfulness in Service (section 5) - Standards and Guidelines for ministry to children
- Creating Safe Ministries training (online or face to face) or Diocesan approved equivalent.
- Policy for Safe Ministry to Persons of Concern 2019

G. Review

This Protocol was endorsed by Bishop-in-Council on 18 October 2019 and will be reviewed in 2021.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE SAFE MINISTRY UNIT

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