

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Diocese of Lismore is wholly committed to creating and maintaining an environment that is safe, supportive, caring and nurturing for all children, young people and vulnerable adults in its care.

In fulfilling this responsibility, the Safeguarding Office has developed a Handbook with a variety of procedures that work together to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm and respond swiftly and appropriately in the rare but regrettable circumstances in which children or vulnerable adults are harmed or at risk of being harmed. These procedures seek not only to ensure safety, well-being and dignity within the Diocese's parishes and agencies, but also outside the Church environment, in the event that a member of the Diocese learns of a matter of concern.

This Handbook, and its procedures, are governed by current legislation and ensure the Diocese complies with all legislative requirements and is accountable, and transparent, in all ministries undertaken. However, this Handbook goes beyond legal obligations and ensuring due process. It endeavours to create an environment in which our children and vulnerable adults will flourish, and will guide all in the parishes and pastoral communities to take responsibility for creating and maintaining a safer community. It is also developing a community environment where children and vulnerable adults know that their community:

- is alert to areas of risk and harm;
- is capable of applying appropriate actions of prevention;
- is confident to voice their concerns; and
- has trust that their concerns will be listened to respectfully and seriously.

These actions create a culture of safety and care, which contribute to the **ten (10) Child Safe Standards** as recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and now legislatively and administratively regulated by the Office of Children's Guardian. The Diocese of Lismore is committed to working with parishes and relevant agencies to implement the standards to fulfil our obligations of leadership, compliance and commitment to child safety and wellbeing.

The Diocese of Lismore has zero tolerance to abuse or exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults. All members of the Diocesan family will work together for the protection of these people and for the prevention of any form of abuse, neglect or exploitation – physical, sexual, emotional or spiritual – within our church communities and organisations.