

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

STANDARDS

# **OVERVIEW**

The Catholic Diocese of Wagga Wagga commits to child safe communities. We:

1. Embed child safety in diocesan leadership, governance and culture
2. Actively encourage children to participate in decisions affecting them and ensure that these are taken seriously
3. Inform and involve families and communities
4. Promote a culture of equity and respect for diversity
5. Ensure people working with children are suitable and effectively supported
6. Ensure child focused processes respond to complaints of sexual abuse
7. Provide a range of ongoing education and training so that staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe
8. Provide safe physical and online environments which minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
9. Systematically review and improve the implementation of child safe standards
10. Ensure policies and procedures document how the diocese is child safe.

**Standards for a Child Safe Organisation**

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga acknowledges the following standards as its reference point for achieving child safe environments in all of its agencies. The Diocese commits itself to work towards a comprehensive implementation of each standard and the accompanying indicators.

## Child safety is embedded in diocesan leadership, governance and culture.

**DESCRIPTION**

The diocese’s approach and commitment to child safety encompasses the need for it to be set from the top, and embedded into all aspects of its practice and business.

**INDICATORS**

* 1. Leaders of the diocese demonstrate a public commitment to a child safe culture
	2. Child safety is a responsibility shared by everyone at all levels of the diocese
	3. Governance arrangements, to facilitate the implementation of child safe elements, are set by diocesan leaders at all levels of the diocese
	4. Risk management systems, implemented by diocesan leaders, focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risk to children
	5. Staff and volunteers comply with a code of conduct that sets clear behavioural standards towards children
	6. Staff and volunteers know and understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.

## Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

**DESCRIPTION**

Children and young people have a right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them. Including the voice of children and young people in risk assessments and program planning, where appropriate, can reduce the likelihood of abuse occurring.

**INDICATORS**

* 1. children are able to express their views and opportunities are provided to participate in decisions that affect their lives
	2. the importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, in helping children feel safe and be less isolated
	3. children can access sexual abuse prevention programs and information
	4. staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns.

## Families and communities are informed and involved.

**DESCRIPTION**

Families and communities have a significant role to play in the upbringing and development of children in their care. The diocese works in partnership with families and communities to keep them informed and involved in matters relating to the child’s safety, learning and wellbeing.

**INDICATORS**

* 1. families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child and participate in decisions affecting their child
	2. the diocese engages in open, two- way communication with families and communities about its child safety approach and relevant information is accessible
	3. families and communities have a say in the diocese’s policies and practices
	4. families and communities are informed about the diocese’s operations and governance.

## Equity is promoted and diversity respected.

**DESCRIPTION**

The diocese is committed to a fair and equitable environment for all where the individual needs of children are respected and addressed. Encouraging children to be aware of the diverse needs of those around them is a priority of staff and volunteers.

**INDICATORS**

* 1. the diocese actively anticipates children’s diverse circumstances and responds effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
	2. all children have access to information, support and complaints processes
	3. particular attention is paid to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## People working with children are suitable and supported.

**DESCRIPTION**

It is a priority of the diocese to follow stringent screening processes, to ensure that the best possible staff and volunteers are employed to work with children. This standard includes comprehensive processes for screening, recruitment, induction, supervision and support.

**INDICATORS**

* 1. recruitment, including advertising and screening, emphasises child safety
	2. relevant staff and volunteers have working with children checks
	3. all staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their child safety responsibilities, including reporting obligations
	4. supervision and people management has a child safety focus.

## Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focussed.

**DESCRIPTION**

The diocese is committed to ensuring complaints of child sexual abuse are responded to appropriately. It has clear and specific processes relating to complaints and allegations. Diocesean personnel ensures a response that is a child focused, independent and includes consultation and/or investigative partnership with external stakeholders.

**INDICATORS**

* 1. The diocese has a child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines roles and responsibilities, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints and obligations to act and report
	2. effective complaint handling processes are understood by children, staff, families and volunteers
	3. complaints are taken seriously, responded to promptly and thoroughly, and reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

## Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.

**DESCRIPTION**

The diocese is committed to the ongoing professional development of staff and volunteers on child safety matters. Ongoing interactive training modules are foundational to this commitment

**INDICATORS**

* 1. relevant staff and volunteers receive training on the nature and indicators of child maltreatment, particularly institutional child sexual abuse
	2. staff and volunteers receive training on the diocese’s child safe practices and child protection
	3. relevant staff and volunteers are supported to develop practical skills in protecting children and responding to disclosures.

## Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.

**DESCRIPTION**

The diocese is committed to a proactive approach in keeping current with the online environment and providing systems to ensure that an infrastructure exists to support a safe online environment. Policies surrounding the use of ICT for staff and young people are published and reviewed on a regular basis.

**INDICATORS**

* 1. risks in the online and physical environment are identified and mitigated without compromising a child’s right to privacy and healthy child development
	2. the online environment is used in accordance with the diocese’s code of conduct and relevant policies.

## Implementation of child safe standards is continuously reviewed and improved.

**DESCRIPTION**

The diocese is committed to a variety of regular internal and external review processes which ensure that child safety policies and processes remain current and effective.

**INDICATORS**

* 1. the diocese regularly reviews and improves child safe practices
	2. complaints and concerns are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.

## Policies and procedures document how the diocese is child safe.

**DESCRIPTION**

Whole of diocese child protection policies and procedures provide guidance, support and clear processes for the protection of children

**INDICATORS**

* 1. policies and procedures address all child safe organisation elements
	2. policies and procedures are accessible and easy to understand
	3. stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures
	4. leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures
	5. staff and volunteers understand and implement the policies and procedures.

# References

Pope Francis. (2015). *Letter to the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences and Superiors of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.*

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. (2016). *Key Elements of Child Safe Organisations.*

Sydney Catholic Schools. (2017). *Child Safe Communities Framework.*