



CAPUCHIN
FRANCISCAN FRIARS
AUSTRALIA

Safeguarding Policy

Version 1 | February 2026

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 The Capuchin Friars Province of Australia (Capuchin Friars) recognises the sacred dignity of every person and is committed to fostering a culture of safety, care, and accountability. This policy outlines our safeguarding responsibilities and practices to protect children and adults at risk from abuse, harm, and neglect.

2 Scope

- 2.1 The Safeguarding Policy applies to all Capuchin Friars personnel (lay and religious) including volunteers and contractors. It should be read together with the following:

- *Code of Conduct*
- *Safeguarding Risk Management Plan*
- *Safeguarding Reporting Policy & Procedure*
- *Reportable Conduct Policy & Procedure*
- *National Catholic Safeguarding Standards*
- *National Response Protocol*
- *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*
- *Child Safe Standards (NSW, Victoria and Queensland)*

3 Introduction

- 3.1 The Capuchin Friars respect and uphold the human rights and dignity of all people. This includes safeguarding children and adults at risk from abuse and harm. We recognise that ministry and service relationships involve systems of power and are open to abuse of power. Safeguarding these relationships is the responsibility of all who work and serve within or on behalf of the Church.
- 3.2 The nature of our ministry and activities means our direct contact with children is limited and primarily occurs through their worship at Masses held in the parishes of Leichhardt and Plumpton (NSW), South Melbourne (Victoria) and Wynnum (Queensland) and in the friary church at Hawthorn (Victoria). We may also have contact with adults at risk through parish ministry and outreach activities, including in aged care, and vocation work with young adults. In addition, we may have contact with children and adults at risk who come forward to make a complaint.
- 3.3 Our Safeguarding Policy is informed by and where relevant, complies with:

- The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards – which provide the safeguarding framework for Catholic entities across Australia.
- National Response Protocol – the framework for Catholic entities across Australia to respond consistently to people raising concerns or allegations of child abuse.
- Vos Estis Lux Mundi – which sets out complaint and investigation procedures regarding crimes of sexual abuse committed by clerics and religious, and concealing crimes of sexual abuse by Bishops and their equivalents.
- Integrity in Our Common Mission– the Catholic Church’s code of safety applying to lay and religious people.
- The Child Safe Standards in NSW, Victoria and Queensland – which require certain organisations, including religious bodies, to have policies, procedures, and practices to keep children safe.
- Relevant legislation in NSW, Victoria and Queensland relating to mandatory reporting of child protection concerns; reportable conduct schemes; and criminal law obligations to report child abuse and protect children from abuse.

4 Safeguarding Commitment Statement

The Capuchin Friars Province of Australia (Capuchin Friars) is committed to fostering a culture of safety, care and respect for all people, especially children and adults at risk, and serving them with grace and humility.

Safeguarding is integral to our mission and ministry. Inspired by the Gospel and the example of St. Francis of Assisi, we strive to be instruments of peace, healing, and justice. We recognise the lifelong impact of abuse and are committed to walking with survivors in their journey of healing.

In alignment with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, Integrity in Our Common Mission, and the Child Safe Standards in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, we pledge to uphold this Safeguarding Commitment Statement in every aspect of our work to provide a safe environment for all people involved in our ministries.

Our commitments

- **Safety First:** We prioritise the physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological safety of all individuals who engage with our ministries, communities, and services.
- **Zero Tolerance for Abuse and Harm:** We have zero tolerance for any form of abuse or harm. We are committed to preventing abuse and responding promptly and compassionately to any concerns raised.
- **Inclusive Safeguarding:** Our safeguarding practices extend to all people, with particular attention to children and adults at risk, including those who may be vulnerable due to age, disability, trauma, or social disadvantage.
- **Trauma-Informed and Culturally Safe:** We adopt trauma-informed approaches and promote cultural safety, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, respecting their traditions, leadership, and healing journeys.
- **Empowerment and Participation:** We actively engage children, families, carers, and communities in safeguarding efforts, ensuring their voices are heard and respected.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** We uphold the highest standards of governance, integrity, and professionalism. We regularly review and improve our safeguarding practices and welcome external audits and feedback.
- **Education and Formation:** All friars, employees, and volunteers are trained in safeguarding principles and practices. We ensure ongoing formation to build awareness, competence, and commitment.
- **Legal and Ethical Compliance:** We comply with all relevant civil laws, Church laws, and professional standards in the jurisdictions where we have a presence.

5 Leadership and governance

- 5.1 The Provincial Minister has overall responsibility for championing safeguarding and ensuring that all safeguarding statutory and Church requirements, including external reporting of safeguarding concerns, are met. He is the decision-maker in relation to safeguarding matters.
- 5.2 The Provincial Minister delegates to the Provincial Delegate Professional Standards and Safeguarding the role of day-to-day safeguarding work, to ensure ongoing religious oversight of all safeguarding matters.
- 5.3 The Provincial Council members support the Provincial Minister to implement a culture of safeguarding by:

- Personally upholding and modelling a standard of behaviour consistent with the Congregation's Code of Conduct, relevant Church documents and civil law.
- Ensuring that systems are in place to promote compliance with all relevant Catholic and civil safeguarding requirements.
- Ensuring that appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are developed, maintained and accessible to religious, employees and community members.
- Identifying and taking opportunities to promote awareness of the dignity and rights of children and adults at risk, and to champion and model safeguarding across the Order.
- Promoting an inclusive, respectful and responsive approach to the diverse needs of children and adults at risk.
- Taking all possible steps to ensure that only people who are safe and suitable to have contact with children and adults at risk are engaged by the Order.
- Empowering all personnel to take responsibility for safeguarding and providing opportunities for them to have input into improving safeguarding practices.
- Encouraging people to bring forward concerns or complaints about the safety of children or adults at risk (including disclosures of current or historical abuse) and providing appropriate processes by which to do so.
- Ensuring systems and processes are in place for responding to safeguarding complaints transparently, respectfully and fairly.
- Maintaining full and accurate records of Provincial Council activities including decisions, and the reasons for its decisions, about safeguarding matters.
- Working with survivor advocacy and support groups, where appropriate, to recognise past wrongs where these have occurred and build a safe, inclusive and supportive faith environment.
- Welcoming and facilitating dialogue with and feedback from the community, including children and young people, about the Congregation's safeguarding approach, including reviewing safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Monitoring continuous improvement of safeguarding practices.

5.4 The Safeguarding Committee assists the Provincial Minister to discharge his responsibilities by providing advice on the effective ongoing implementation of safeguarding practices, policies and procedures. The Committee includes appropriately credentialed external members. Committee meetings, outcomes and decisions are recorded and reported to the Provincial Council.

5.5 Safeguarding Implementation Plan

5.5.1 Capuchin Friars monitors compliance with this Safeguarding Policy through the Safeguarding Implementation Plan constituted by the following:

- Safeguarding will be a standing agenda item of the Provincial Council to ensure regular discussion of the following:
 - opportunities to promote safeguarding within the organisation
 - relevant legislative or statutory changes
 - reviewing/updating the Safeguarding Policy and/or related documents
 - safeguarding training and support for personnel
 - trends in complaints about the safety of children or adults at risk (without breaching privacy or jeopardising ongoing complaints), and
 - any other relevant matters related to safeguarding.
- The below safeguarding responsibilities are delegated to the Professional Standards and Safeguarding Delegate:
 - maintaining knowledge of current legislation, statutory and other guidance in relation to safeguarding and ensuring these are reflected in the Safeguarding Policy and related documents
 - acting as a contact person for anyone in the Capuchin Friars community who has questions about safeguarding or concerns about the safety of children or adults at risk
 - ensuring the Safeguarding Statement of Commitment, Safeguarding Policy, Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy, Safeguarding Reporting Policy & Practice, Complaint Handling Policy & Practice, Investigations Policy & Practice, Working with Children Screening Policy & Practice and Code of Conduct, are regularly reviewed and updated as required
 - monitoring the currency of Working with Children Check/Blue Card clearances and other relevant background checks held by personnel
 - monitoring participation by personnel in safeguarding training according to the designated schedule
 - regularly reviewing complaints to identify systemic issues related to safeguarding, and improving policies and practices as needed, and
 - engaging with other relevant organisations and seeking specialist advice about safeguarding good practice, as necessary.
- Contact details for the Provincial Minister and Provincial Delegate Professional Standards and Safeguarding will be published on the Capuchin Friars website and communicated via other means.

- The Provincial Minister retains overall responsibility for the Safeguarding Implementation Plan.

5.6 External oversight

- 5.6.1 Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited (ACSL) is charged with helping Catholic entities to create and maintain safe environments. The Capuchin Friars participate in ACSL's Audit and Review Program which is designed to assess the compliance of Catholic entities with the NCSS.
- 5.6.2 We are committed to working cooperatively and constructively with the Office of the Children's Guardian in NSW, Commission for Children and Young People in Victoria, and Family and Child Commission in Queensland. These bodies have functions and powers (among others) to monitor implementation of the legislated Child Safe Standards, and regulate the reportable conduct schemes, in their respective states.

6 Code of Conduct

- 6.1 The Capuchin Friars strive to foster a culture of safety, integrity, and pastoral care. All personnel must adhere to the Code of Conduct which clearly communicates behavioural expectations, including in relation to keeping children and adults at risk safe, and identifies unacceptable behaviour and the potential consequences when the Code is breached. The Code must be signed by personnel on commencement and every two years thereafter.

7 Risk management

- 7.1 We are committed to identifying and managing risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk. The Safeguarding Risk Management Plan outlines the requirements and strategies that we use to do this and is supported by practical resources for personnel.
- 7.2 Risk management incorporates all aspects of our work to safeguard children and adults at risk, including recruitment and training of personnel, ensuring physical and online environments are safe, and identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns and complaints. Personnel are supported to implement the Safeguarding Risk Management Plan through training and practical resources.
- 7.3 Physical and online environments are regularly assessed for risk and modified to ensure safety. Technology use is monitored and guided by safeguarding principles.

8 Safe recruitment, training and support

8.1 Capuchin Friars is committed to ensuring that all personnel are safe and suitable to have contact with children and adults at risk.

8.2 Recruitment

8.2.1 All personnel require a National Police Record Check. Roles are assessed for their level of contact with children and adults at risk. All personnel in child related work must hold a continuous Working with Children Check/Blue Card clearance. We maintain records of all screening checks. The Provincial Delegate reports on screening compliance to the Provincial Council on a two-monthly basis.

8.2.2 Reference checks are required for all personnel. For religious recruited internationally, verification information is sought from the relevant international church authority.

8.2.3 Professional support is sought in screening candidates for formation programs and before ordination/profession of vows. This includes external psychological and psychosexual assessments and reference checks.

8.3 Training

8.3.1 A safeguarding training strategy covers the provision of safeguarding training to personnel. Personnel are required to undertake induction and refresher safeguarding training.

8.3.2 Members of the Provincial Council and Safeguarding Committee are required to participate in the ACSL Introductory Safeguarding Training. Province leaders are also required to undertake the ACSL Safeguarding Leadership course.

8.3.3 Formation programs for religious integrate civil and canonical safeguarding knowledge and skills development.

8.3.4 We maintain records of ongoing training and professional development.

8.4 Supervision and mentoring

8.4.1 Professional supervision, mentoring, and annual performance reviews for personnel (religious and lay) include a focus on safeguarding responsibilities. Newly solemnly professed religious are supported by a dedicated mentor for the first five years.

8.4.2 Religious in full-time ministry participate in at least six hours of professional/pastoral supervision each year. Religious not in full-time ministry participate in ongoing Professional Standards training provided by the province.

9 Engagement with children, adults, families, and communities

- 9.1 Children, adults, families and communities are our partners in safeguarding. Children and adults are informed of their rights and encouraged to participate in decisions affecting them in a way that best suits their needs and circumstances.

10 Safeguarding complaints and reporting

- 10.1 Personnel are supported to identify safeguarding concerns and meet their internal and external reporting obligations. Capuchin Friars will respond to any safeguarding concerns in a way that is consistent with policy, statutory and Church obligations. The safety and care of children and adults at risk will be the primary consideration and the principle of procedural fairness will be adhered to. All parties will be treated respectfully.
- 10.2 The Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure, Safeguarding Reporting Policy & Procedure and Investigations Policy & Procedure provides more information about how safeguarding complaints will be handled.

11 Continuous improvement

- 11.1 The Safeguarding Commitment Statement, Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaint Handling Policy & Procedure will be published on the Capuchin Friars website. The policies are reviewed every three years or sooner if required.
- 11.2 Feedback from stakeholders, audits, and incidents informs policy updates.
- 11.3 Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at Provincial Council and team meetings.

12 Record keeping, privacy and confidentiality

- 12.1 Records related to safeguarding are securely stored and managed in accordance with privacy legislation. We are committed to upholding the 13 Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) established by the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) in our information management practices.
- 12.2 Confidentiality is respected and upheld, except where disclosure is required or permitted by law or necessary to protect someone from harm, for

example, reporting to police, child protection authorities, reportable conduct regulators or other organisations with safeguarding obligations.

13 Document control

The Safeguarding Policy will be formally reviewed every three years from the date of adoption or as required.

Governance use only:

Document	Safeguarding Policy	Uncontrolled Copy When Printed	
Custodian	Provincial Delegate, Professional Standards and Safeguarding	Version #	Version 1
Approved By	Provincial Minister		
Next Review Date	28 May 2027		

The below history of the document must be accurately updated. The Custodian must ensure that all previous versions have been appropriately removed from circulation.

Amended by	Changes made	Date
[Insert name]	[Describe reason for major changes]	Day Month, Year