

# ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF RIVERINA



---

## SAFE MINISTRY & CHILD SAFE REPORTING POLICY

---

Approved by Diocesan Council 8<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Review Date 8<sup>th</sup> April 2029

# Contents

1. Purpose and Scope .....	3
2. Our Commitment.....	3
3. Principles that guide this policy .....	4
4. Types of complaints .....	4
5. Implementation of the policy.....	4
6. Possible Trauma from Exposure to Disclosures of Abuse .....	7
7. Procedural fairness, including privacy and confidentiality.....	7
8. Terminology and definitions of harm and abuse .....	7
9. Legislation and documents used to support this policy.....	10
10. Review .....	10
Appendix.....	11

# 1. Purpose and Scope

This policy in the first instance sets out the policy of the Anglican Diocese of Riverina on Safe Ministry and Child Safe reporting and handling.

## Everyone in our diocese must:

- Know **what** to report, **who** to report to and **how** to report.
- Report any concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, young or vulnerable person immediately.
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child or vulnerable person is paramount when responding to a disclosure or allegation about a child or vulnerable person being harmed or at risk.

This policy also 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 or vulnerability.
- 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 Policy 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 Parishes or Mission Districts who have a concern or receive a disclosure.

Church workers in the Diocese have particular obligations under the legislation of NSW (e.g. failure to report NSW, and Failure to Protect NSW, Mandatory reporting NSW, Reportable Conduct Schemes NSW). The Diocese of Riverina also have obligations under the Professional Standards Ordinance, Safe Ministry and Child Safe Policy, the Code of Good Practice (Faithfulness in Service) and this policy to report all concerns of abuse and misconduct to the Director of Professional Standards. The Professional Standards Reference Group shall ensure that all Diocesan agencies have and are implementing suitable equivalent processes

**Our Professional Standards Director can be contacted at  
0491 109 479 or [psd@anglicanriverina.com](mailto:psd@anglicanriverina.com)**

**IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 000**

# 2. Our Commitment

Our Diocese is committed to **Safe Ministry**. We are committed to Parishes and Mission Districts 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 centred and focused in our responses, acting in the best interests of the child.

### 3. Principles that guide this policy

- a. **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 (centred on the needs of the child) and informed.
- b. **Trauma informed** – we will make every effort to respond in a trauma informed manner, seeking not to re-traumatise and to be compassionate and caring in our responses.
- c. **Duty of Care** – we must do all that is reasonably practical to ensure people are safe and respond appropriately and compassionately to all concerns of abuse and misconduct.
- d. **Partnership** – we work together across the Diocese to ensure we support and learn from each other in implementing best practice in safe ministry.
- e. **Continuous Review and Improvement** – we regularly review and improve our practice in this area to ensure that it remains current and effective.

### 4. Types of complaints

**All** complaints should be reported. In summary this includes

- Criminal conduct
- Disclosures or reports of abuse
- Risk of significant harm
- Reportable allegations (an allegation that an employee has engaged in conduct that may be reportable conduct). The Anglican Diocese of Riverina is under the NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Unacceptable behaviour around children and young people that breaches our Code of Conduct.

### 5. Implementation of the policy

If you have a concern or receive a disclosure of abuse or misconduct in a Parish or Mission District, you are required to report your concern.

#### *a. 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 Parish or Mission District 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 Parish or Mission District in responding in line with legislation, regulation, Ordinance and Policies.***

## *b. 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 Parish or Mission District, e.g. Rector/Priest-in-Charge, Parish Warden or 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 Professional Standards Director on 0491 109 479.

If you are alone with the child or person at immediate risk, call 000 immediately. Do not put yourself in foreseeable danger.

- b) When you have a non-life-threatening concern/disclosure you can report to;
  - i. The Professional Standards Director on 0491 909 479 or via email at [psd@anglicanriverina.com](mailto:psd@anglicanriverina.com), who will provide you with advice an appropriate response; or
  - ii. The Parish or Mission District, e.g. Rector/Priest-in-Charge, Parish Warden, Ministry Team leader, who is then required to speak to the Professional Standards Director.

### **Resources available to make a report**

Everyone engaged in work or volunteer in the Anglican Diocese of Riverina must make an internal report about any child abuse or misconduct concerns they either observe, experience or are told about. The person making the internal report will not be penalised.

To assist in making an informed choice to report, please refer to:

- Schedule 1 – Reporting Flow Chart
- Schedule 2 – Form for reporting complaints and allegations
- The website at [Safe Ministry and Child Safe Policies and Forms - Anglican Riverina](#) for access to the safe ministry and child safe documentation.

The form can be used by the person making the report, or the member of the Parish or Mission District that has been approached by an employee or volunteer wanting to disclose information. This form should be submitted directly to the Professional Standards Director. Where information has been disclosed to a ministry leader, the ministry leader should inform the Bishop.

## *c. What will happen when you report?*

The Professional Standards Director will then assist the informant with a response 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 Parish or Mission District as required.

Once a complaint has been made, this step-step process should be used to make sure it is appropriately followed up:

1. Steps are taken to identify and address any risks.
2. The incident is recorded.
3. Reporting obligations are met, if necessary (see below).
4. An investigation is conducted, keeping everyone involved up to date with what is happening.
5. Ongoing support is offered to the child, young or vulnerable person involved.
6. The incident is reviewed and our Safe Ministry and Child Safe documents are updated, if necessary.

### **Obligation to make an external complaint or report**

It can be a criminal offence for adults not to report to police if they know, believe or ought reasonably believe that a child abuse offence has been committed against another person. In addition, it can be a criminal offence for people employed in an organisation that provides child-related services if they fail to reduce or remove the risk of a child becoming a victim of child abuse.

The Anglican Diocese of Riverina is included in the NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme as from the 1st of March 2020, mandatory reporter groups in NSW expanded to also include *a person in **religious ministry** or a person providing religion based activities to children (e.g. minister of religion, priest, deacon, pastor, rabbi, Salvation Army officer, church elder, religious brother or sister)*.

Accordingly, mandatory reporting is a requirement of the Diocese. The Professional Standards Director holds a mandatory reporter role in the first instance.

#### *d. 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 Director of Professional Standards (0491 109 479). If the Principal is the alleged abuser, contact the Professional Standards Director in the first instance.

##### **Allegations against church workers**

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

#### *e. Responding to disclosures<sup>1</sup>*

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 or vulnerable person is saying, but close down the conversation as soon as possible.
- Reassuring the child, young or vulnerable person that disclosing was the right thing to do.

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Keeping Child & Young People Safe*, 2011, Office for Children, Youth & Family Support Canberra.

- Indicating what you will do, i.e. that you will contact the Director of Professional Standards for assistance.

Please **do not**:

- Start an investigation, i.e. Do not seek further details beyond those that the child, young or vulnerable 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 or vulnerable person will need guidance and help in overcoming the effects of the abuse.

## 6. 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 Director of Professional Standards (0491 109 479) 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.

## 7. Procedural fairness, including privacy and confidentiality

Any allegation of abuse or misconduct must be treated in a fair, transparent and timely manner.

All reporting forms, including but limited to, our form for complaints and allegations (Schedule 2) are stored securely and only accessed by those in the organisation with responsibility for oversight of the investigation.

Information may be exchanged under Chapter 16A of the *Child and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, with other agencies who have responsibilities relating to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children or young people.

Our organisation maintains the privacy of those involved in accordance with our obligations under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*

If an incident is found to be substantiated, likely outcomes or responses will be determined from advice given by relevant authorities (NSW Police, Department of Communities and Justice, or Office of Children's Guardian).

## 8. Terminology and definitions of harm and abuse

*General definitions*

**Psychological abuse (also known as emotional abuse)**

This includes bullying, threatening and abusive language, intimidation, shaming and name calling, ignoring and isolating a child, and exposure to domestic and family violence.

### **Physical abuse**

This includes behaviours such as pushing, shoving, punching, slapping, kicking and unauthorised use of restraint.

### **Sexual abuse**

This includes the sexual touching or sexual assault of a child, grooming, and production, distribution or possession of child abuse material.

### **Grooming**

This is a process where a person manipulates a child or group of children and sometimes those looking after them, including parents, carers, teachers and leaders. They do this to establish a position of 'trust' so they can then later sexually abuse the child.

### **Misconduct**

This is inappropriate behaviour that may not be as severe as abuse but could indicate that abuse is occurring and would often be in breach of an organisation's Child Safe Code of Conduct. This could include showing a child something inappropriate on a phone, having inappropriate conversations with a child or an adult sitting with a child on their lap.

### **Lack of appropriate care**

This includes not providing adequate and proper supervision, nourishment, clothing, shelter, education or medical care.

For further definitions, please refer to our Safe Ministry and Child Safe Policy.

### *Reportable conduct definitions*

The definitions of harm and abuse listed below are based on those in [part 4, section 20](#) of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.

*Children's Guardian Act 2019* defines reportable conduct as:

- a sexual offence
- sexual misconduct
- ill-treatment of a child
- neglect of a child
- an assault against a child
- an offence under s 43B (failure to protect) or s 316A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

### **Sexual offence**

A sexual offence is an offence of a sexual nature under a law of NSW, another state/territory, or the Commonwealth committed against, with or in the presence of a child, such as:

- sexual touching of a child
- a child grooming offence
- production, dissemination or possession of child abuse material.

An alleged sexual offence does not have to be the subject of criminal investigation or charges for it to be categorised as a reportable allegation of a sexual offence.

### **Sexual misconduct**

Sexual misconduct of a child means any conduct with, towards or in the presence of a child that is sexual in nature (but is not a sexual offence). The following are examples of sexual misconduct:

- descriptions of sexual acts without a legitimate reason to provide the descriptions
- sexual comments, conversations or communications
- comments to a child that express a desire to act in a sexual manner towards the child, or another child.

### **Ill-treatment**

Ill treatment of a child means conduct towards a child that is:

- unreasonable, and
- seriously inappropriate, improper, inhumane or cruel.

Ill-treatment can include a range of conduct such as making excessive or degrading demands of a child; a pattern of hostile or degrading comments or behaviour towards a child; and using inappropriate forms of behaviour management towards a child.

### **Neglect**

Neglect of a child means a significant failure to provide adequate and proper food, supervision, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging for the child that causes or is likely to cause harm to the child, by:

- a person with parental responsibility for the child
- an authorised carer or an employee if the child is in the employee's care.

Neglect can be an ongoing situation of repeated failure by a caregiver to meet a child's physical or psychological needs, or a single significant incident where a caregiver fails to fulfil a duty or obligation, resulting in actual harm to a child or where there is the potential for significant harm to a child.

Examples of neglect include failing to protect a child from abuse or exposing a child to a harmful environment.

### **Assault**

An assault can occur when a person intentionally or recklessly:

- applies physical force against a child without lawful justification or excuse - such as hitting, striking, kicking, punching or dragging a child, or
- causes a child to apprehend the immediate and unlawful use of physical force against them, such as threatening to physically harm a child through words and/or gestures.

### **Behaviour that causes emotional or psychological harm to a child**

Behaviour that causes significant psychological or emotional harm is conduct that is intentional or reckless (without reasonable excuse), obviously or very clearly unreasonable and which results in significant emotional harm or trauma to a child.

For a reportable allegation involving psychological harm, the following elements must be present:

- an obviously or very clearly unreasonable or serious act or series of acts that the employee knew or ought to have known was unacceptable, and
- evidence of psychological harm to the child that is more than transient, including displaying patterns of 'out of character behaviour', regression in behaviour, distress, anxiety, physical symptoms or self-harm, and
- an alleged causal link between the employee's conduct and the significant emotional or psychological harm to the child.

Many of these behaviours may not meet the threshold of 'reportable allegations' under the Reportable Conduct Scheme but may indicate a pattern of concerning behaviour.

## 9. Legislation and documents used to support this policy

- Crimes Act 1900
- Child and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Children’s Guardian Act 2019
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
- Safe Ministry and Child Safe Policy 2026
- Code of Conduct – Faithfulness in Service, Standards for Ministry (extracts)
- Safe Ministry Training – Creating Safer Communities (online or face-to-face) or Diocesan approved equivalent
- Professional Standards Ordinance and Protocol 2022
- Diocesan Discipline Ordinance and Protocol 2022
- Diocesan Due Diligence Protocol 2023
- Child Safe Risk Management Plan 2026

## 10. Review

Diocesan Council shall review this policy either by 8<sup>th</sup> April 2029, or in response to an incident, whichever occurs first, and update as required for good practice and changes to relevant legislation.

## Appendix

- Form for recording complaints and allegations
- Safe Ministry and Child Safe Reporting Flowchart



# Form for recording complaints and allegations relating to:

A CHILD 0-17 YEARS       OTHER

---

This form should be used to record a suspicion, allegation or disclosure of child abuse, or a complaint of unacceptable behaviour.

<b>Your name and position</b>	
<b>Name of the child or person involved</b>	
<b>Name of person making complaint</b>	
<b>Name of person who the complaint was made against</b>	

1. Nature of the complaint: please include time, date, location, what happened and who was involved (this can include observations of the child's behaviour).

2. Details of any injuries and if the child/person received medical attention.

3. Accurately record what the child/person said when describing what happened – use their exact words – or record why you suspect abuse due to an indirect disclosure, such as a drawing or observed behaviour.

*(In the case of an allegation of abuse, formal investigations and interviews will be carried out by the Department of Communities and Justice and/or NSW Police. You must record what the child has said but unless it is your role to investigate, you should not interview the child.)*

4. Details of anyone who saw what happened.

5. Does this complaint indicate the possibility of child abuse, such as physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect?

Yes  No

6. Who did you make a report to?

Professional Standards Director (Anglican Diocese of Riverina)

NSW Police

Department of Communities and Justice via ChildStory

Department of Communities and Justice via 132 111

Office of the Children's Guardian Reportable Conduct Directorate

Internal reporting obligations (name the relevant department or person)

Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (please name them)

*Please record any reference numbers you have been given and/or other details.*

7. People spoken to in relation to the matter (describe who was spoken to and why they were spoken to about the matter – include clergy, police officers, Department of Communities and Justice staff, the Office of the Children's Guardian, school staff and anyone else you spoke to).

*Please include dates when discussions were had if possible*

# ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF RIVERINA – SAFE MINISTRY REPORTING PROTOCOL

## Reasonable concern is:

A person has told you: **THEY OR SOMEONE ELSE** is being, or is at risk of being, harmed or abused;  
**OR**  
 You have concerns of harm or risk of abuse based on the physical appearance or behaviour of someone in your Parish or Mission District;  
**OR**  
 You are aware of a Church worker breaching a Code of Conduct Standard or is engaged in abuse, harassment or inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature.

Has the abuse happened to you or someone else?

TO ME

Speak to a leader in your Parish or Mission District  
 OR  
 Call the PSD for help  
 OR  
 Call 000  
**You are not alone and need to be safe**

## When responding to disclosures

### ✔ DO:

Listen carefully but close down the conversation ASAP. Reassure the victim that disclosing is the right thing to do. Indicate what you will do (i.e. Contact the PSD for help).

### ✘ DON'T:

Start an investigation by asking for more details than what is being volunteered. Make promises you can't keep. Tell anyone that does not need to know.

SOMEONE ELSE

Do you have a reasonable concern to report an abuse?

YES

Is the person in **IMMEDIATE** danger?

YES

**IMMEDIATELY** speak to a senior leader in your Parish or Ministry District to make ensure the person is made safe. This may include calling police or ambulance on 000.

The senior leader will then report to the Professional Standards Director.

If your Senior Leader is unavailable, call 000 in the first instance.

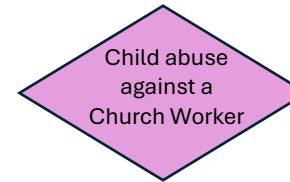
Once your senior leader has been informed, you are not required to report

NO

SELECT CATEGORY



Inform the Principal of the school that you have formed concerns or received disclosure.  
**Request from the Principal the reference number given by the statutory body as proof of reporting. Inform the PSD.**  
 If the Principal is the abuser, contact the PSD and report.



Report to the Professional Standards Director.  
 The PSD will commence the relevant response process including what is required under mandatory reporting, Reportable Conduct legislation (NSW), the Diocesan Professional Standards Ordinance, and where necessary, the Diocesan Policy to Safe Ministry with Persons of Concern.



When you have a non-life-threatening concern/disclosure you can report to:  
 1. The Professional Standards Director on 0491 109 479. They will provide you with advice on an appropriate response.  
 OR  
 2. The Parish or Mission District (for e.g. Rector, Parish Warden or Ministry Team Leader) who will be required to talk to the PSD.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DIRECTOR (“PSD”) – ☎ 0491 109 479 ✉ [psd@anglicanriverina.com](mailto:psd@anglicanriverina.com)

**If you feel any trauma from exposure to disclosures of abuse seek support - contact the PSD**