



**Dominican Province of the Assumption**  
*Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands*

# Safeguarding Policy 2025

## Introduction

*'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it' – 1 Cor 12:26.*

*'A population that does not take care of the elderly, and of children and the young has no future, because it abuses both its memory and its promise' – Pope Francis.*

1. This Safeguarding Policy of the Dominican Friars of the Province of the Assumption (the Province) is directed towards the mission of preaching and upholding the dignity of every human person.
2. The Friars acknowledge that they hold a privileged position of trust in the community. They are committed to providing an environment which respects and upholds the human rights and dignity of all people, and has a zero tolerance approach to abuse of children, young people, or adults at risk.

## Purpose

3. The purpose of this Safeguarding Policy (the Policy) is to provide information and guidance about how the Province will prevent, identify and respond to abuse and harm towards children, young people, and adults at risk. For definitions of Safeguarding and other terms please see the Glossary.
4. The purpose of the Policy is to:
  - a) help safeguard people that interact with or are ministered to by the Province.
  - b) define the key terms used when talking about Safeguarding.
  - c) set out and develop the way the Province manages Safeguarding risks.
  - d) set out the specific roles and responsibilities of Friars and Personnel of the Province.
  - e) facilitate the responsible management of incidents.
  - f) facilitate a positive and effective internal culture towards Safeguarding.

## Application

5. The Policy applies in all four countries of the Province: Australia, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea.
6. The Policy applies to all Friars of the Province, to all those employed by the Province or any of its priories or houses, as well as those assisting the Province as volunteers in any location. It covers all aspects of services provided by the Province, in any location.

7. The Policy applies to contractors engaged by the Province of the Assumption to provide services to children, young people, and adults at risk.

## **Safeguarding Policy Statement and Commitment**

8. The Province is committed to promoting and protecting the welfare and human rights of people that its Friars and Personnel interact with, in the course of their ministry or work, particularly those that may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
9. The Province is actively committed to developing communities of safeguarding that recognise the inherent rights and dignity of all people.
10. The Province is committed to creating and maintaining environments, both real and online, which promote the safety and support of all children, young people, and adults at risk. All people have equal rights to protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation. Respect for the dignity of the human person, which is at the heart of the Gospel, shapes our relationship with children, adults at risk, their families, and the community.
11. With its zero tolerance approach for abuse and misconduct, the Province commits to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk from all forms of abuse and neglect. In keeping with its Constitutions, and Church protocols such as the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and the National Response Protocol, it strives to maintain the safety of all children, young people and adults at risk with whom its Friars and Personnel come into contact.
12. We recognise that across the Province, there are different needs and vulnerabilities among people that may make them particularly at risk of abuse, for example the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia, those living with disability, those from cultural and linguistic minorities, children and adults who are unable to live at home, and sexual minorities.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

13. The Provincial is ultimately responsible for ensuring the Ministry of the Province is a safe environment for all, including children, young people, and adults at risk.
14. The Province has a Safeguarding Committee in accordance with the requirements of the Standards, comprising experts in Safeguarding, policy development, and education, which is responsible for providing advice on the effective ongoing implementation of Safeguarding practices, policies and procedures.

15. The Province welcomes the participation of children, young people, adults at risk, families, and communities in providing feedback on and input into decision making about safety.
16. All Friars and Personnel of the Province share responsibility for Safeguarding. Beyond this, particular Friars and Personnel have specific responsibilities, and they must carry out their duties without exception.
17. While the responsibility to protect children, young people and adults at risk is shared by all who work at or with the Province some individuals have specific obligations with which they must comply.
18. The Provincial is ultimately responsible for ensuring the Ministry of the Province is a safe environment for all, including children, young people, and adults at risk.
19. The Provincial and the Provincial Council of the Province are responsible for:
  - a) ensuring Safeguarding is a standing agenda item of the Provincial Council.
  - b) ensuring the appropriate and effective Safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk who interact with, or are affected by Friars and Personnel.
  - c) ensuring that the Province observes all relevant laws relating to Safeguarding.
  - d) promoting the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards of Australia, and relevant standards in the other countries of the Province.
  - e) personally upholding and modelling a standard of behaviour consistent with relevant Church documents and civil law, and championing Safeguarding and the dignity and rights of children and adults at risk within the Province.
  - f) ensuring the Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaint Handling procedures are regularly reviewed by the Province according to the specified timeframes in each document.
20. The Safeguarding Committee is responsible for:
  - a) managing reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
  - b) ensuring that all Friars and Personnel are aware of relevant laws, policies, procedures, and sign the Code of Conduct.
  - c) ensuring that all Personnel are aware of their obligations to report suspected incidents of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
  - d) managing reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
  - e) providing support for Personnel in undertaking their responsibilities.

21. All Friars and Personnel must:

- a) promote a positive culture towards safeguarding.
- b) sign, acknowledge and agree to comply with the Province Code of Conduct.
- c) implement this policy in their area of responsibility for works of the Province.
- d) ensure that the risks of incidents have been considered in their area of responsibility for works of the Province.
- e) ensure that there are appropriate controls in place to prevent, detect and respond to incidents.
- f) monitor and record the currency of Working with Children Checks and other relevant background checks held by Personnel in the location they are responsible for.
- g) familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, policies and procedures for Safeguarding.
- h) fulfill all obligations as mandatory reporters.
- i) report any incident to the relevant country's appropriate authority when it is reasonable to suspect that a child or adult at risk's safety or welfare is endangered.
- j) report to the relevant country's appropriate authority any suspicion that a child or adult at risk's safety or welfare may be endangered.
- k) provide an environment that is supportive of safety.
- l) attend all ongoing training as required.

22. All partners and contractors of the Province must:

- a) implement the provisions of the Policy and the Province's procedures in their dealings with the Province.
- b) report any suspicion that an incident may have taken place, is taking place, or could take place.

## **Managing Safeguarding risk**

23. The Province will respond to complaints of abuse sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in accordance with its lawful obligations and its own policies and procedures.

24. The Province has a robust system for receiving, recording, responding to, managing, resolving and monitoring complaints, including direct or indirect concerns, disclosures or allegations of current or historical abuse towards children or adults. These processes are documented in the Complaint Handling Policy.

25. The Province will manage Safeguarding risks by:

- a) having up-to-date and documented risk assessments.
- b) maintaining a register of the Province's legal obligations for Safeguarding and workplace health and safety in all the jurisdictions in which it operates.
- c) building a culture in which barriers that may prevent a disclosure of abuse being made and that hinder personnel from recognising and responding appropriately are identified and overcome.
- d) adhering to this Safeguarding Policy and its Code of Conduct.
- e) doing due diligence checks (Working with Children checks; Vulnerable Adults and any other relevant checks) of Friars and Personnel.
- f) implementing policies, procedures and systems that introduce controls to reduce the likelihood and consequence of incidents by:
  - i. conducting awareness-raising for Friars and Personnel on risks, expectations, and individual responsibilities.
  - ii. having an incident response plan.
  - iii. monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness and proportionality of its Safeguarding approach.
- g) ensuring Friars and Personnel complete Safeguarding training and have access to Safeguarding support, including induction and refresher training at least every three years, covering the Province's safeguarding policies and procedures, Code of Conduct, reporting obligations, e-safety, factors that may place children, young people, and adults at risk of abuse.
- h) participating in the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders.
- i) providing at least 6 hours of annual professional or pastoral supervision and/or reflective practices and mentoring for relevant Personnel which include a focus on safeguarding responsibilities.
- j) maintaining records of all training and supervision that Personnel have undertaken.

## Managing incidents

26. The Province has a process for managing incidents that must be followed when one arises. All suspected, perceived, potential or actual incidents will be managed through the Complaints Management Policy.
27. The Province will take action in relation to serious misconduct including harassment, abuse, neglect and exploitation. This may include:
- a) disciplinary action against those it believes are responsible, which may include dismissal or further canonical action.
  - b) civil legal action.
  - c) reporting the matter to the law enforcement of the relevant country of Ministry.

## Internal Reporting – suspected incidents

28. All incidents or concerns will be reported as soon as practicable. This may be done through direct reporting to:
- a) any member of the Provincial Council or Safeguarding Committee;
  - b) the Provincial;
  - c) the Safeguarding Officer;
  - d) the relevant Superior.
29. If a person believes that another person is at risk of immediate harm or the victim of a criminal offence, they must contact the relevant local country's specific police or law enforcement authorities.

## External reporting – suspected incidents

30. Friars and Personnel of the Province will:
- a) fulfil their mandated reporting requirements with respect to children, young people and adults at risk as set out in the state or country that they are living/working in.
  - b) meet all canonical requirements regarding the reporting of incidents as outlined in *Vos Estis*.

## Record Keeping, Information Sharing, Confidentiality and Privacy

31. Complete, timely and accurate records will be created and maintained for all Safeguarding matters. All records will be securely stored, maintained and disposed of in accordance with legislative and statutory requirements.
32. The Province will maintain current knowledge of, and comply with, its legislative obligations to maintain confidentiality and protect personal information and privacy. Information and records relating to incidents, complaints, responses and decisions will be treated as confidential, except where the sharing or distribution of information and/or records is mandated by statutory requirements or principles of natural justice. The Province Privacy Policy applies.

## Compliance and Scope

33. The Policy is compliant with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards of Australia and all relevant National, State and Territory child protection and adults at risk legislation.

34. Each Ministry site of the Province is required to comply with the laws of the relevant country and state of Ministry, as well as the policies of the relevant diocese. If the country of Ministry does not have sufficiently robust laws and standards regarding the safeguarding of children and adults at risk, then Friars and Personnel will comply with the requirements as they are outlined in this policy.
35. The Policy complies with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (the Standards), which outline requirements for Catholic entities across Australia to promote the safety of children, young people, and adults at risk through implementing policies and activities to prevent, respond to and report concerns regarding abuse and harm. The Policy also reflects relevant safeguarding legislation.
36. The Policy is supported by and should be read together with the following related documents:
  - Safeguarding Commitment Statement
  - Code of Conduct
  - Complaint Handling Policy
37. Nothing in the Policy affects the expectations outlined in other relevant Church documents or in civil law.
38. This policy has been approved by Provincial and the Provincial Council of the Province.

## **Related policies and procedures**

- The Province Privacy Policy
- Staff and Volunteer Recruitment and Induction Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Risk Management Policy
- Safeguarding Commitment Statement
- Incident Response Plan
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Blackfriars Priory School – Safeguarding Policy
- John XXIII College – Safeguarding policy



## Glossary

<b>Allegation</b>	A complaint, still to be verified, claiming or asserting that someone has committed an act of abuse against a child. The term is used interchangeably and in combination with “complaint”.
<b>Adult Abuse</b>	The improper treatment of a person aged 18 or older that results in physical or emotional harm and/or the likelihood of causing it.
<b>Adult at Risk</b>	Adult at risk means any person aged 18 years and over who is at increased risk of experiencing abuse due to any impairment or adversity that makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from abuse.
<b>Child abuse</b>	Any behaviour or treatment by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that results in the physical or emotional harm to a child actual and/or the likelihood of causing it.
<b>Child/ren</b>	Person(s) under 18 years of age. To be read together with the definition of "young person".
<b>Clergy</b>	The body of those ordained in sacred ministry in the Church. They are either deacons, priests or bishops.
<b>Disability</b>	A long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder a person’s full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. ( <i>Article 2, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</i> )
<b>Friars</b>	Those men who have made profession in the Order of Preachers, or who are preparing to do so as novices or postulants, who are assigned to the Dominican Province of the Assumption.
<b>Leaders</b>	Personnel who are responsible for important governance decisions within a Church entity and/or who lead and coordinate Church improvement initiatives.
<b>Ministry</b>	Any activity within, or delivered by, an entity that is designed to carry out the good works of the Catholic Church.
<b>Personnel</b>	Employees, volunteers, contractors (and others) engaged by the Province to provide services to children, young people, and adults at risk.
<b>Reasonable Grounds to Suspect</b>	A situation where a person has some information that leads them to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation has taken place, is taking place, or may take place.

<b>Safeguarding</b>	Any responsibility or measure undertaken to protect the welfare and human rights of people that interact with, or are affected by the Province, particularly those who might be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
<b>Safeguarding Commitment Statement</b>	A commitment statement describing the Province’s commitment to keep all, especially children, young people, and adults at risk safe from harm. It informs the Province’s culture with respect to safeguarding.
<b>Safeguarding Committee</b>	A committee established to advise and support the Province on all matters relating to Safeguarding, including in relation to prevention, policies and procedures and complaint handling.
<b>Safeguarding Coordinator</b>	A member of the Province or someone engaged by the Province to promote Safeguarding and who co-ordinates the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards within the Province.
<b>Supervision</b>	An interactive forum for dialogue, reflection and learning between at least two people, one of whom is professionally trained as a supervisor.
<b>Working with Children Check</b>	Generic term used in the Standards to denote the statutory screening requirement for people who work or volunteer in child-related work.
<b>Young person</b>	A person aged 13-17 years of age. To be read together with the definition of “child” above.

## Version Control

<u>Version Control</u>			
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