

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

2020

The Catholic Church in Australia's Implementation of the
Recommendations from the Final Report of the Royal
Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

November 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Catholic Church in Australia takes full responsibility for the harm caused by the tragic history of child sexual abuse by clergy, religious and lay Church workers. The failings of Church personnel who offended grievously and the failings of Church leaders who responded wrongly – or not at all – have harmed victims, survivors¹, their families and their supporters, and have led to a loss of trust in the Church. These same failings have hurt the community of the Church and disillusioned many in society.

The Church reaffirms its sorrow for the physical, emotional and spiritual wounds, often lifelong, that victims and survivors have suffered, and renews its commitment to building a better future. The Church has learned much about how to respond to victims and survivors. It continues to learn.

In a particular way, the Church has learned from victims and survivors themselves and acknowledges with gratitude all who have come forward and disclosed or reported the abuse they have suffered. Their courage is helping the Church to respond to them in better ways and to create safer Catholic communities.

The Church is committed to continuing to work with those harmed by child sexual abuse to bring about justice, to provide healing and restore trust where possible, and to help ensure that children and vulnerable people are cared for and protected.

The Church recognises the many who have not been able to tell their stories and acknowledges with deep sadness those who took their own lives as a consequence of the harm they suffered.

¹ The word ‘survivor’ in this report refers to a person who has experienced [child] abuse, after the abuse has occurred – such as when they are an adult reporting abuse or seeking treatment, support, justice or redress. The word ‘victim’ refers to a person who has experienced [child] abuse, at the time the abuse occurred. Some people who have experienced abuse prefer ‘survivor’ due to the resilience conveyed by this word. Some people do not feel they have ‘survived’ the abuse and prefer the word ‘victim’. Others do not identify as either a ‘victim’ or a ‘survivor’.



INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

The Catholic Church is described in many ways – theologically, biblically, sociologically, organisationally. For the purposes of this report, the Church includes communities and ministries across Australia: dioceses, archdioceses, eparchies, ordinariates, religious institutes, parishes and ecclesial movements, together with many ministries such as schools, other educational institutions, hospitals, aged care services, social welfare agencies and a range of other works of service and outreach.

There are more than 200 Church authorities that operate in Australia. Many have regular contact with children, while a significant number are not currently involved in any ministry or work relating to children.

The organisational structure of the Catholic Church is complex, but the vast majority of the Church's communities and ministries are ultimately represented at the national level by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (Bishops Conference) and Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) – the signatories of this report.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) was a pivotal moment for Australian society because – for many people – it uncovered the terrible crimes committed within the community in preceding decades.

The Catholic Church, with its significant and regrettable history of offending and inadequate responses, was scrutinised closely.

The Catholic Church sees the Royal Commission as an important step along a decades-long journey of understanding, of reform and renewal, and of an ever-deepening commitment to child safety. Indeed, the Church in Australia has been developing, implementing and reviewing policies and procedures for responding to complaints and allegations of abuse since the 1980s.

In recent years, there has been a particular focus on protocols and procedures to ensure people at risk, including children, are as safe as possible.

One of the recommendations of the Royal Commission was that large organisations and

governments provide an annual report on progress responding to those recommendations.

In August 2018, the Bishops Conference and CRA [published a comprehensive response to the Royal Commission](#), considering each relevant recommendation individually.

In that response, the Bishops Conference and CRA accepted Recommendation 17.3, which called for the provision of an annual report. The two entities agree it is critically important that ongoing responses to the Royal Commission are documented and can be measured over time.

In [December 2018](#) and in [December 2019](#), the Bishops Conference and CRA submitted annual reports to the National Office for Child Safety on behalf of the Catholic Church in Australia. This is the third such report.

This report outlines some of the critical work being undertaken within the Catholic Church at all levels to respond to the Royal Commission's recommendations, but more broadly to ensure the safety of children and adults at risk in Catholic settings.

It also examines the creation and maintenance of a safeguarding culture, policies, protocols and structures that support child-safe environments and appropriate responses to allegations of child sexual abuse.

The report begins with a description of the work over recent decades, including through the Royal Commission itself. That is done to help readers understand the more recent reforms as part of a journey of continuous improvement and refinement – all directed towards creating and maintaining safe environments for all people in Catholic settings.

The report is addressed to various readerships: firstly to survivors, their families and supporters, but also to governments and government agencies, to the entire Catholic community in this country and beyond, and to the people of Australia as a whole.

To each of these groups, the Church is accountable in one way or another. Along with other documents the Catholic Church in Australia has produced on this topic, this annual report is a public document by which the Church can be held accountable for its ongoing response to child sexual abuse.



PREPARING THE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The Bishops Conference and CRA invited their members – bishops, eparchs, ordinaries and leaders of religious institutes – to provide feedback on their progress in the area of child protection and safeguarding, including (but not limited to) the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

The Bishops Conference and CRA decided that the 10 dioceses, three religious institutes and one school under the control of a ministerial public Juridic person that were the subject of Royal Commission case studies must provide an update on their practices, protocols and procedures to create and maintain child-safe environments.

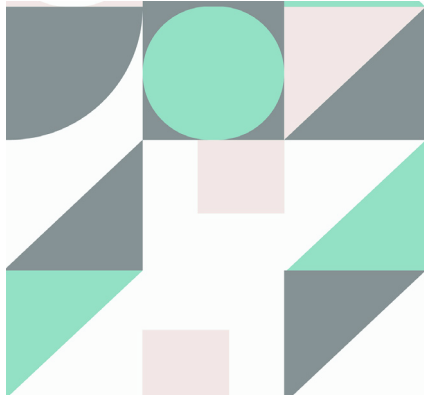
More than 80 dioceses and religious institutes submitted information for the preparation of this report. While not all entities that responded are mentioned in the report, the overwhelming response from those entities is recognition of the central importance of safeguarding in the life of the Church in Australia today.

The National Office for Child Safety contacted a number of Catholic schools directly that were named in a Royal Commission case study, inviting them to submit a report on their progress. Those schools were also able to provide their response to the Bishops Conference and CRA for inclusion in this report. Some schools took the latter option; some of their responses are outlined below.

This report has a particular focus on the period from October 2019 to October 2020, but the work during that period is, in many ways, a refinement and consolidation of the efforts in the preceding years and decades.

Church entities that provided responses for the annual report were invited to consider their progress in a number of areas, including: the adoption of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards in their setting; training in best practice approaches to child protection; collaboration with other organisations within and beyond the Church; and recognition of the need to incorporate the voices of children and survivors in their work responding to historical and contemporary concerns and allegations.

Aspects of responses received that relate to broader Church initiatives are incorporated into the relevant sections in shaded boxes. Other approaches are contained in the "Initiatives" section of the report. Where similar approaches have been adopted by multiple Church entities, not every entity is named.



CATHOLIC RESPONSES BEFORE 2012

1987

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference dedicated part of its biannual meeting in late 1987 to the topic of child sexual abuse. The Bishops Conference the next year established the Special Issues Committee, whose role included developing protocols if an allegation of criminal behaviour was made against a priest or religious.

1989

In 1989, the Special Issues Committee drafted the *Protocol for Dealing with Allegations of Criminal Behaviour (The Initial Protocol)*. It was the first official document to provide guidance for dealing with allegations of sexual abuse. It was mainly directed at disciplining priests and religious. It stressed any Church process must not interfere with any criminal justice process. It envisaged canonical consequences for the accused, including possible dismissal from the priesthood or religious institute.

1991

The Special Issues Committee proposed amendments to *The Initial Protocol* to make it more victim-focused and less concerned with the reputation of the Church. *The 1992 Protocol* applied to all dioceses and religious congregations.

1992-93

The Bishops Conference and CRA issued *A Pastoral Statement on Child Protection and Child Sexual Abuse*, which acknowledged Church failures in responding to sexual abuse, including too readily accepting offenders' promises that such behaviour would not be repeated.

The Bishops Conference and CRA also issued *Sexual Offences and the Church*, acknowledging the serious and long-lasting harm caused by abuse and betrayal of trust. It pledged to give first consideration to victims and survivors and their families. Bishops and congregational leaders again promised to work with others “to bring healing to those who have been hurt”.

1993

In November 1993, the Special Issues Committee drafted *The Catholic Church’s Principles in Relation to Sexual Abuse and Professional Misconduct*. A precursor to *Towards Healing*, it was intended to be a victim-centred response. The public document announced the Church’s view: it would not tolerate sexual abuse and would cooperate with police and victims.

1996-97

The Bishops Committee for Professional Standards presented a draft of *Towards Healing* to the Bishops Conference’s plenary meeting in April 1996. *Towards Healing* departed from *The 1992 Protocol* in several significant ways, including: opening with an apology; being victim-orientated; simplifying the document’s language; simplifying the process of receiving and responding to complaints; encouraging victims to go to the police; and providing for a facilitated meeting between a victim and the Church authority. The Conference approved *Towards Healing* in November 1996, to come into operation on March 31, 1997. CRA had also approved the document in principle. The first review of *Towards Healing* took place in 1999 and, by 2001, a revised version of *Towards Healing* was in operation. A second revision of *Towards Healing* was published in 2010.

In October 1996, the Archdiocese of Melbourne announced the establishment of a new initiative, which became known as *The Melbourne Response*, to respond to complaints of abuse committed by a priest of the Archdiocese or by any religious or lay person working within the Archdiocese. *The Melbourne Response* had three separate components: independent commissioners; a compensation panel; and Carelink, which provides uncapped, ongoing professional support for needs arising in relation to the abuse. As part of *The Melbourne Response*, spiritual support and guidance is also available at parish level.

The Bishops Conference replaced the Bishops Committee with the National Committee for Professional Standards (NCPS). The NCPS was set up as a joint committee of the Bishops Conference and CRA, equally responsible to both, charged with general oversight and policy development of professional standards in the Church.

1997

State-based professional standards offices began to emerge from 1997. After *Towards Healing*, a national network of contact persons, assessors, facilitators and reviewers was developed. Local professional standards reference groups advised Church leaders on changes to complaints handling procedures and pastoral responses to victims and survivors.

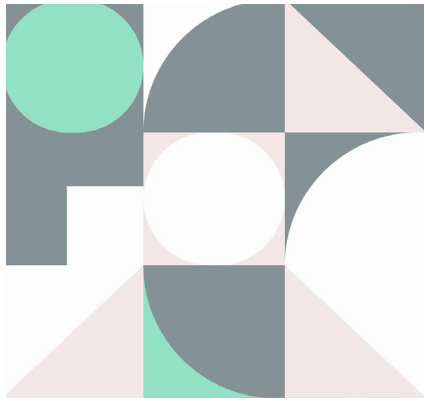
1999

The Church released the document *Integrity in Ministry*, which outlined expectations of appropriate behaviour for priests and religious. It was reviewed in 2004. *Integrity in Ministry* was compiled “as a resource for those preparing for ministry in the Catholic Church and as a code of conduct and guide for reflection for those already involved in ministry”. It sets out behaviour for clergy and religious to integrate into their day-to-day ministry and serves as a checklist against which they can review the quality of the ministerial activities in which they engage.

2011

Integrity in the Service of the Church, for lay employees and volunteers within the Church, was developed by the NCPS. The document was created as the “parallel” to *Integrity in Ministry*, and “outlines principles of conduct for any lay person who performs paid or unpaid work in the service of the Church”. The document is a resource for reviewing organisations’ guidelines and processes.





THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ROYAL COMMISSION

TRUTH, JUSTICE AND HEALING COUNCIL

In February 2013, the Bishops Conference and CRA jointly established the Truth, Justice and Healing Council (the Council) to lead and coordinate the Catholic Church's response to and appearances at hearings of the Royal Commission. The Council was comprised of people with expertise across specialised fields of child sexual abuse, trauma, mental illness, suicide, psycho-sexual disorders, education, public administration, law and governance.

Throughout the life of the Council, four of its members were either survivors of clerical abuse within the Church or had immediate family members who have been abused. The majority of Council members were lay people; two of its members were bishops, and one was a former international leader of a female religious congregation.

Thirty-one dioceses and 97 religious institutes, commonly referred to as congregations and orders, had the Council represent and act for them during the Royal Commission process. The Council particularly worked with the three religious institutes, 10 dioceses and one school under the governance of a public juridic person that were involved in case studies during the life of the Royal Commission.

The Truth, Justice and Healing Council ceased following the conclusion of the Royal Commission, its final work being [a four-volume Final Report](#).

In preparation for the Royal Commission's final hearing into the Catholic Church, a voluntary questionnaire was sent to religious institutes and dioceses seeking information on the initiatives and protocols undertaken in recent decades to improve child safety and respond to allegations of child sexual abuse.

While the purpose of the questionnaires was to compile a response to the Royal Commission rather than for publication, the responses have been published in Volume 4 of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council's Final Report (with some minor redactions to remove personal identifiers such as contact details). The volume, which runs to more than 400 pages, considers: Ongoing formation matters for priests and religious; Structures, policies and procedures; Governance and personnel management; Litigation, settlements and policies for dealing with perpetrators. Some of that information is contained in the preceding and following pages.



BEYOND THE ROYAL COMMISSION

In recent years, where practical and possible, the Bishops Conference and CRA have been working together to respond to and implement the Royal Commission’s recommendations through a “whole-of-Church” approach. It is considered beneficial for Church authorities at national and regional levels to work together with local Church authorities to ensure a harmonised response to the recommendations.

The implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission requires ongoing engagement, collaboration and coordination. The cultural change required needs transparency, accountability and collaboration now and in the long term. That collaboration helps groups within the Church to respond more effectively than they could if working in isolation.

CATHOLIC PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS LTD (CPSL)

The Bishops Conference and CRA established Catholic Professional Standards Ltd in late 2016 as an independent company limited by guarantee to develop, audit and report on compliance with professional standards to protect children and people at risk.

CPSL’s Constitution identifies five Objects : Develop and publish the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards; Audit compliance of Catholic Church entities against the Standards; Publicly report audit findings by publishing audit reports; Provide training, support, tools and resources to assist with implementation of the Standards; Provide advice on policy and other matters to Church authorities.

There are no bishops, priests or religious brothers or sisters on the CPSL board. CPSL board directors are lay people with professional expertise in the fields of law, education, human services, safeguarding and regulation.

More information on the work of CPSL, including its development of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and the auditing process, is contained later in this report.

IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY GROUP (IAG)

Following the Royal Commission, the Truth, Justice and Healing Council provided its Final Report to the Bishops Conference and CRA. As planned, that concluded the work of the Council.

The Church moved quickly to establish an advisory body to influence and monitor the Church's response to the Royal Commission and its recommendations. The Implementation Advisory Group was established in May 2018 and concluded its work in September 2020.

The independent seven-person group (later expanded) was made up mostly of lay people, with one bishop and one religious sister on the IAG.

The work of the IAG focused on governance and Church culture and the handling of abuse complaints.

More information on the work of the IAG, including the review of Church governance and work on establishing a new national response protocol, is contained later in this report.

THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS (ACCPS)

The Bishops Conference established the ACCPS in November 2018 for a trial period of one year, with the body extended for a second year in late 2019. The ACCPS took over the residual functions of the National Committee for Professional Standards on a temporary basis.

Its functions include: the operations of the national database (managed through Australian Catholic Redress Ltd); the Australian Catholic Ministry Register; review of *Towards Healing* findings; handling complaints about a Church authority; the development of national policy and best practice; relevant professional development initiatives; and promoting collaboration between directors of state Professional Standards Offices.

More information about the future of a national office for professional standards is outlined below.

NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME AND AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC REDRESS LIMITED

The Royal Commission's Final Report includes 84 recommendations that deal with redress. The Australian Government created the National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse. The Scheme is a way of acknowledging and recognising the harm that occurred and providing help to those victims and survivors. That help can be a redress

payment, access to counselling and psychological services, and a direct personal response, if requested.

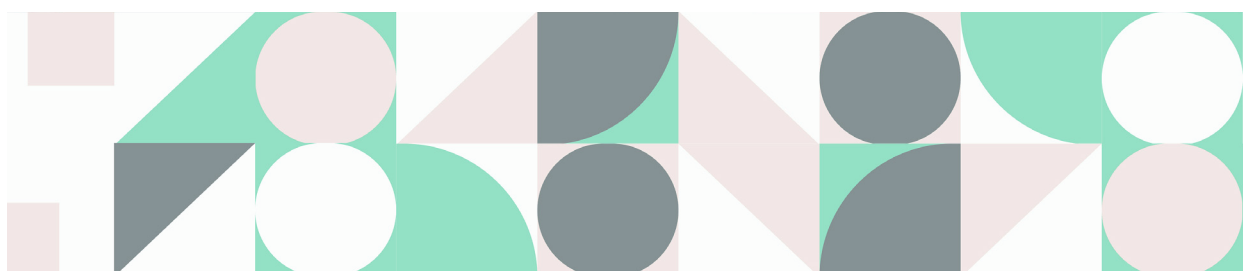
Australian Catholic Redress Ltd is the coordinating entity for members of the Bishops Conference and participate in the National Redress Scheme. Almost all archdioceses and dioceses were declared to be in the Scheme in December 2018 and January 2019, with over 5,000 parishes and churches, schools and other Church agencies listed on the Scheme website.

All major religious institutes have joined the Scheme. Fifty-seven Catholic religious institutes were named in the Royal Commission’s 2017 Analysis of Claims. Of the 34 named in part 1, all have committed to join the Scheme and 82 per cent have been declared. The remaining six are in process. Of the 23 named in part 2 (those Institutions that had received one to three claims), 43 per cent have been declared. The remainder are at various stages of joining.

An additional 13 religious institutes, which were not named, have also joined the Scheme. The religious institutes in the Scheme represent hundreds of Catholic schools, hospitals, aged care facilities and social services. The religious institutes also take responsibility for many now-defunct institutions.

The Church understands that redress for survivors on the part of Church authorities is much broader than merely the management of matters via the National Redress Scheme or other redress process. The National Redress Scheme is one approach, but there are others.

It is critical that all victims and survivors receive a compassionate and just response and that, in addition to any monetary payment, they are offered appropriate pastoral care, therapeutic care and support.





NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

In May 2019, the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (the Standards) were adopted by the Bishops Conference and CRA. The Standards have been designed so that they can be implemented by all Catholic entities across Australia.

The Standards constitute a framework that articulates the requirements for Catholic entities to promote the safety of children through the implementation of policies and activities to prevent, respond to and report concerns regarding child abuse².

They are designed to drive cultural and behavioural change and promote accountability and transparency of Church leaders and their ministries and entities. The Standards are broad enough to permit some flexibility in the way in which they are implemented (though compliance with the Standards must still be demonstrated under audit).

HOW THE STANDARDS WERE DEVELOPED

The Royal Commission identified 10 key elements of child-safe organisations. The Australian Government tasked the Australian Human Rights Commission and the National Children's Commissioner to craft these elements into national principles that could be adopted by any organisation working with children.

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards align with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, taking the 10 National Principles and adapting them to address the specific structures, relationships and processes within the Church in Australia. The 10 National Catholic Safeguarding Standards are thus drawn from Volume 6 of the Royal Commission's Final Report.

² 'Abuse' incorporates the NCSS definition of child abuse which includes physical abuse; sexual abuse; neglect; psychological abuse; exposure to family violence; and grooming.

WHAT THE STANDARDS COVER

The 10 National Catholic Safeguarding Standards are broken down into criteria that articulate critical elements required for the realisation of the individual standard. Each criterion is further broken down into a number of indicators that provide more detailed actions required to demonstrate compliance.

Of the 49 criteria that make up the 10 Standards, 42 mirror “elements” of the National Principles; four have been added specific to the Catholic context, covering clergy and religious formation and management of overseas clergy and religious; two have been adopted from the Irish equivalent of the Standards that cover care and response to adult complainants and care and response to respondents; and one additional criterion relating to championing children’s rights and abuse prevention has been included as a result of consultations with Church personnel during the development stage of the Standards.

Where a Church entity is subject to other statutory or regulatory requirements, these requirements will be maintained and the entity will need to demonstrate that it has current accreditation or compliance with these requirements.

The Standards ensure each entity, ministry and organisation across the Church places child safety at the core of how it plans, thinks and acts.

The first edition of the Standards focuses on safeguarding practices for the protection of children. The Standards are in the process of incorporating safeguarding practices relating to adults at risk and institutions have begun attending to this evolution.

Church authorities across Australia have been developing local policy based on the Standards.

AUDITING COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

Audits are aimed at assessing the design and operation of safeguarding practices at a diocesan or congregational level, as well as within and across individual ministries. The audit process provides each Church authority with an understanding of how mature their safeguarding processes are across all 10 Standards.

The results will be used to identify gaps or weaknesses in safeguarding systems, with a view to building capacity and providing tools and resources to Church authorities to refine and improve their processes. The audits also aim to identify and share good practice, in order to build consistency across safeguarding practices nationally.

The initial phase of the CPSL audit program has focused on the unregulated ministries of the Catholic Church such as parish ministry, youth ministry, family and social activities, pastoral

ministries and other diocesan and congregational ministries. These ministries of the Church are subject to a full and detailed safeguarding audit by CPSL, examining and assessing the application of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards' indicators in detail.

As of October 2020, audits of 12 Church entities have been completed. This number represents many ministries within those Church entities. Reports have been made publicly available on these audits of an archdiocese, three dioceses and eight religious institutes. A number of additional entities are due to participate in audits in the remainder of 2020, and 16 entities are confirming arrangements for audits in 2021.

CPSL has developed an audit plan for all Australian dioceses and religious institutes involved in child-related ministries. Audit reports are publicly available and can be found on the CPSL website [here](#).

EDUCATION AND DRIVING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Eighteen months since the publication of the first edition of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards have now passed. In this time, several thousand people have accessed training and development activities, more than a dozen Church entities have participated in the CPSL audit program and more than 200 support materials have been made available. That activity demonstrates the commitment and effort of Church entities to make their ministries safe for all.

Training sessions provided by CPSL include:

- Introduction to Grooming Awareness
- How to facilitate a Grooming Awareness Activity
- Introduction to Unwanted Contact and Grooming Online
- Introduction to Managing High Risk Individuals
- Managing High-Risk Individuals – Advanced
- The critical role of Codes of Conduct in Safeguarding Children
- Direct Personal Response Immersion Training (National Redress Scheme).



DIOCESAN AND PARISH GOVERNANCE

THE LIGHT FROM THE SOUTHERN CROSS

One of the recommendations of the Royal Commission was that the Catholic Church in Australia conduct a review of diocesan and parish governance and management. The Bishops Conference and CRA accepted that recommendation and the Implementation Advisory Group was tasked with conducting and presenting that review.

The Implementation Advisory Group established the Governance Review Project Team (GRPT) to lead the review. The GRPT presented a draft version of the report to the Bishops Conference and CRA in May 2020.

The final version of the report, entitled [*The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*](#), was presented to the Bishops Conference and CRA in August 2020. The report was published online on August 21, 2020, along with [*an accompanying Reading Guide*](#).

Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge said *The Light from the Southern Cross* “makes an important and substantial contribution to the life and mission of the Church in Australia”.

CRA president Br Peter Carroll FMS said he was “hopeful that *The Light from the Southern Cross* will illumine a future path of contemporary good governance for the Church in Australia, and possibly beyond”.

It was noted that many of the report’s recommendations would be considered at the local level, rather than nationally, but that the Bishops Conference and CRA would continue to reflect upon the recommendations with a national focus.

Many recommendations are also expected to be considered by the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, which will hold assemblies in October 2021 and July 2022.



CHILD PROTECTION SUNDAY

The Catholic Church in Australia marks Child Protection Sunday on the second Sunday of September – at the conclusion of National Child Protection Week. Child Protection Sunday seeks to acknowledge the significant damage caused by the sexual abuse of children, including by priests, religious and lay people within Catholic contexts. It makes a commitment to practices and protocols that create and maintain safe environments for all people, especially children and other people who are at risk. It invites people to pray for those harmed by abuse directly and indirectly.

A number of resources, including material to support local Masses and other liturgical celebrations, are provided each year to encourage the commemoration of Child Protection Sunday. Child Protection Sunday will be renamed Safeguarding Sunday starting from 2021.

NATIONAL DAY OF SORROW AND PROMISE

Catholic Religious Australia has organised National Days of Sorrow and Promise in December 2018, October 2019 and October 2020. The day was established to recognise the profound impact that institutional sexual abuse has had on thousands of lives over many decades in Australia.

The National Day of Sorrow and Promise offers a national response from Catholic religious across the country to recognise all who have been harmed by abuse in the Church and to make a commitment to a safer future. Others, including dioceses, are welcome to participate.

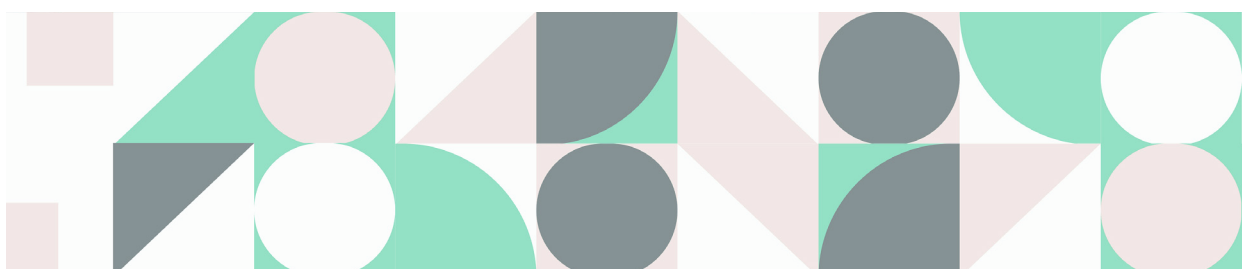
OTHER RESPONSES

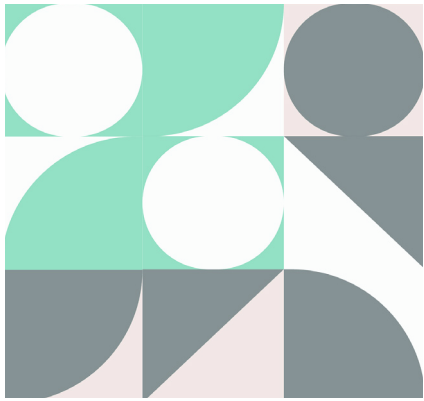
A number of schools, dioceses, religious institutes and other Catholic ministries have created statues or monuments in recognition of those who have been affected by child sexual abuse. St Stephen's Cathedral in Brisbane and a former Marist Brothers school in the Hunter region, which collaborated with survivor groups, are two examples of such initiatives.

Many Catholic organisations have also reviewed their policies regarding the naming of buildings and other structures, recognising that the use of names of people connected to abuse and/or its cover-up is damaging to victims, survivors and others.

LOCAL RESPONSES

- In a regional diocese, the decision was made to schedule meetings with victims and survivors that did not have any time limit imposed.
- In the Diocese of Broken Bay, a survivor was invited to share their story in the context of a public liturgy of lament which began a month of focus on safeguarding. There was a trained counsellor on hand to provide support to any victim survivors.





INITIATIVES

Throughout the dozens of responses provided to assist with the preparation of this report, a consistency of approach and effort was observed across many critical areas. This section outlines some of those similarities across Church ministries, but also highlights specific initiatives or approaches that dioceses, religious institutes or schools have adopted.

COLLABORATION WITHIN THE CHURCH

As outlined above, the Catholic Church understands the benefits of a “whole-of-Church” approach to child protection and safeguarding, where that is possible and appropriate.

As well as the national entities, provincial and other cooperation in this area, including smaller dioceses working with one another and/or with a larger diocese or archdiocese.

Within religious institutes, CRA has helped to provide and support networking and resource groups of religious institutes.

COLLABORATION BEYOND THE CHURCH

LOCAL RESPONSES

- The Catholic Church’s safeguarding experts played a significant role in developing the NSW Ombudsman’s Survivor and Faith Group Safe Standing Committee document *Engaging sensitively with survivors of abuse – A guide for faith-based organisations*. It provides guidelines for faith communities to respond to survivors of abuse and a guide for faith-based communities to implement the National Child Safe Standards.
- A number of religious institutes also work with external consultants and organisations such as Child Wise and the Australian Childhood Foundation to develop improvement plans and participate in workshops.

- The Diocese of Townsville has established a partnership with the local Historical Sexual Abuse Investigations Unit with the aim of easing the investigative process and also providing support to complainants, victims and survivors.

EMPLOYMENT AND RECRUITMENT

There are robust practices in place with appropriate screening, including through Working with Children Checks and police checks, reference checking and induction processes that have a focus on safeguarding and child protection.

In addition to established offices for dioceses and religious institutes, individual ministries appoint and train volunteers for child safety roles, e.g. parish safeguarding “champions”, child safe contact persons. They are supported and trained by specialised safeguarding staff in the local area of ministry peak body. That includes in the understanding and implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.

Job advertisements, position descriptions and performance reviews have incorporated sections on safeguarding and child protection.

LOCAL RESPONSES

- All volunteers in the Diocese of Rockhampton must provide two referees, which are checked, and a signed declaration regarding safeguarding requirements is required. All volunteers must also undertake safeguarding training.
- In the Diocese of Townsville, a specialised safeguarding handbook has been developed for volunteers.
- Within the Syro-Malabar Eparchy, it has been mandated that parish safeguarding officers are members of parish committees.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC MINISTRY REGISTER

The Australian Catholic Ministry Register facilitates compliance with professional standards requirements, presently set out in *Towards Healing*, for clergy and religious who wish to exercise public ministry or pastoral work in another diocese. The chief purpose of the Register is to make compliance in this area more streamlined while ensuring the integrity and safety of the procedures

used. The rollout of the Register began in 2015 and has accelerated over the past 18 months. A large majority of clergy and male religious are now covered, while significant enrolment of women religious is anticipated.

MODEL LITIGANT GUIDELINES

During the Royal Commission, the Church's Truth, Justice and Healing Council devised the "Model Litigant Guidelines". A number of Church entities wrote of how the guidelines direct their engagement with victims and survivors.

The Guidelines call for Church authorities to be "fair, reasonable and honest" in their dealings with victims of child sexual abuse. They say respect and dignity will be afforded to victims, their families and other third parties affected by the abuse. Every effort will be made to ensure victims feel safe and secure, both in the telling of their stories and in the pursuit of justice. The guidelines are not intended to prevent Church authorities from acting properly to defend claims that they consider should be defended.

Church authorities recognise that they cannot remove the pain and suffering of victims of abuse but they will strive, through kindness, understanding and hope, to support victims emotionally, spiritually and financially in their rightful quest to live a full life.

LISTENING TO AND ENGAGEMENT WITH SURVIVORS

There was a clear understanding of the need to engage with and listen to the voices of victims and survivors, their supporters and others affected by abuse. A number of Church entities have made significant progress in enhancing the level of engagement.

LOCAL RESPONSES

- The Diocese of Parramatta is expanding its "Healing and Support" service with the launch of Guarire House. Guarire House is a support and referral place of comfort for survivors of abuse which will provide trauma-informed professional support to victims. It will also increasingly take on responsibility for advocating for survivors, with the intent that their voices and concerns will be magnified.
- The Diocese of Wollongong is working in partnership with Bravehearts and Survivors and Mates Support Network (SAMSN), two key survivor advocacy and support groups.

- The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart are working with survivors of abuse to understand their experiences through what they have shared together with their suggestions for improvement to enable constant improvement of existing policies and procedures and responsiveness.
- The Missionaries of God's Love are holding training programs in which survivors share their story to deepen members' understanding of the impact of abuse and to assist in understanding signs of abuse.
- The Professional Standards Office of South Australia and the Northern Territory builds in feedback and evaluation opportunities for victim survivors and other opportunities for them to have their views considered.

ENGAGEMENT WITH AND SUPPORTING CHILDREN

A number of Church entities spoke about the importance of creating material specifically for children. These included child-friendly codes of conduct and complaint-handling systems.

Many Church entities have significant participation in National Child Protection Week and other national commemorations of children and their place within the community, which includes liturgies and other prayer opportunities.

LOCAL RESPONSES

- During 2020, the Archdiocese of Adelaide created and distributed an 18-piece puzzle featuring the rights of children. In light of the positive feedback received, it has been decided that this will be continued.
- The Archdiocese of Perth in 2017 published *Protecting God's Children: A Catholic Parent's Guide to Keeping Their Kids Safe*. It was developed for Catholic parents to help increase children's personal safety and their ability to be resilient. During 2020, the Archdiocese of Melbourne adapted the resource and launched their adaptation.
- *My Voice* is a creative project that the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn launched in 2020 to focus on the voices of children and young people. While the focus extends beyond child protection and safeguarding, the program responds to the understanding that children are safer when organisations teach them about their right to be heard, listened to and believed.

- *Empowerment and participation* is a Diocese of Lismore resource for organisations within the diocese aimed to make sure that children are listened to and participate fully.
- The Carmelites have established a one-day retreat bringing students together to strengthen their social networks and develop life skills, including a deeper understanding of the use of images – for example in the viewing and sharing of harmful material.
- The Benedictines in New Norcia installed safeguarding information stations containing adult and child-friendly brochures, booklets and feedback forms in every venue across the congregation. They also ran a safeguarding competition during Child Protection Week, inviting media clips from students on the theme of “Putting children’s needs first”.
- *God gave Elizabeth Grace the right to feel safe* is a collaboration between the creators, Catholic Education Western Australia and Perth Archdiocese. It is a resource for helping children to know their rights and to approach safe adults for help.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

All Church ministries understand the importance of identifying, assessing and managing risk in Church settings. An important part of that process is in the development of a risk profile for a diocese or congregation as a whole and each particular ministry.

There has been an increased focus on “environmental” risk management. This includes visibility checks, standardisation of rules around the way in which the sacrament of Confession is administered and the modification of presbyteries and other accommodation for clergy.

LOCAL RESPONSES

- The Archdiocese of Sydney has developed a clear set of guidelines for handling persons of concern, and made it public on their website.
- The Diocese of Parramatta has developed a “High-Risk Personnel Framework”, which is at the draft stage and ready for review before implementation.

ADMISSION TO SEMINARIES AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES

With the Royal Commission and a number of other inquiries speaking to the importance of enhanced screening of candidates for the priesthood and religious life, many changes have been made to support additional assessment before and during formation. Those changes have included the broadening of membership of screening panels for those wishing to enter the seminary or religious formation, especially greater involvement of lay people on those panels. There has also been an expansion in the number of assessment tools, with psychosexual assessment having become increasingly common in recent decades and now a necessary step in the discernment of any person's priestly or religious vocation. It is important to note that many of the assessments that take place for such candidates are similar to those needed to lay employees and volunteers.

COMMUNICATION

It was noted consistently in responses received that while there is an obvious need for there to be policies and procedure in place to create and maintain child-safe environments, it is also important for those policies and procedures to be communicated to the local and wider community. That included the prominent publication of information related to child protection and safeguarding on websites, and the placement of posters in various Church ministry contexts. Contact details for relevant safeguarding officers (or similar) are included in those materials.

“Safeguarding commitments” or “safeguarding statements”, which are public declarations of that ministry's approach to the related issues, are increasingly an important part of the suite of communications materials. Parish and other bulletins and newsletters regularly run information about safeguarding practices and protocols.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and linguistically-diverse backgrounds and children are consulted when preparing resources.

INTERNATIONAL PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

Background checks, including with Church and civil authorities in countries of origin, are an important and necessary step for any diocese or religious institute considering the engagement of someone in ministry. In addition, priests and religious arriving from overseas will participate in safeguarding training as part of their regular ministerial personal and professional development.

LOCAL RESPONSES

- The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Professional Standards and Safeguarding Office has developed a training package for overseas clergy upon arriving in Australia to take up a position in the Australian Province. Each newly arrived overseas priest upon arriving in Australia spends a week at the Provincial headquarters where they receive one-on-one information and education with respect to child protection and safeguarding in the Australian context.
- For the Missionary Society of St Paul, religious visiting Australia, including seminarians on placement, are required to attend an induction program when they arrive which specifically focuses on safeguarding issues.

INITIAL AND ONGOING FORMATION

It is well understood and embedded into current practice that men and women preparing for ministry must be trained in a range of areas, including in their understanding of safeguarding and child protection. That begins in the assessment of their suitability to enter the seminary or religious formation, but continues through that training and beyond ordination and/or profession.

Training days and retreats for clergy and religious, as well as those for lay people working or volunteering in Church ministries, regularly have sessions with local experts in safeguarding and child protection.

LOCAL RESPONSES

- A “Clergy Wellbeing Practice Model” is being developed in the Diocese of Parramatta to “ensure seminarians and clergy focus on spiritual, community, learning and self-care aspects of their ministry in order to build proactive and preventative safeguarding culture”.

UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF ABUSE

The Marist Brothers have commissioned an academic research project to understand why members of the order offended against young people. They are also undertaking work to focus on the aftermath of investigations on all stakeholders and how best to respond to the various reactions that are elicited.

EDUCATION-SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

Catholic schools are a vital part of Australia’s educational landscape. From humble beginnings almost 200 years ago, Catholic schools have grown to become the nation’s largest provider of education outside government, serving some 768,000 students and their families.

Today, Australia’s 1,751 Catholic schools educate one in five students and employ more than 98,000 staff, making Catholic education a key partner in the delivery of quality schooling with the government and independent sectors.

GOVERNANCE OF SCHOOLS

In the three years since the Final Report of the Royal Commission, the four Catholic dioceses of Victoria – Ballarat, Melbourne, Sale and Sandhurst – have all introduced new governance structures for schools under their jurisdiction. The changes are part of the Church’s adoption of recommendations 16.6, which called for the each diocese to ensure parish priests are not the employers of principals and teachers in Catholic schools.

OTHER INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

- Damascus College (Victoria) noted that the requirement to move to learning remotely in 2020 demanded an extensive response. That included ensuring child safety remained prominent in an online environment. The leadership team sought and responded to feedback from staff, student and family populations to promote the safety and wellbeing in the context of the best educational outcomes in 2020. Those responsible for student wellbeing in a face-to-face learning context shifted their support services to the online context.
- Mater Dei Camden (NSW) has implemented a 10-point plan to address the risk factors highlighted in the Royal Commission and works constantly to improve policy and procedures to ensure that the risks are minimised by diligent and conscientious care by staff. The school is also recruiting a Governance, Risk and Policy Coordinator whose responsibility is to ensure currency with policies around child protection and child safety and ensure professional development of staff is maintained at high levels of frequency and thoroughness.
- Our Lady of La Vang School (South Australia), formerly St Ann’s School, provides education and training to its teaching and support staff, who include, teachers, education support officers, bus drivers and bus support, grounds and maintenance staff and allied

health staff (occupational therapist and speech pathologist) on child protection. All staff undertake a seven-hour foundation course “Responding to Abuse and Neglect: Education and Care” prior to commencement of employment at the school. Teaching staff have completed the “Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum”. All staff who participate in intensive interaction that involves one-to-one work with a student are provided with training and information about appropriate ways to interact with students using physical touch.

- St John’s Catholic College (Northern Territory) has implemented a suite of surveys to enhance student voice into planning and decision-making. The college has formalised student leadership through the development of a position description for elected student leaders. Part of the role of student leadership is representation and advocacy for individuals and the student cohort. The college is working towards the implementation of a restorative practices framework. The residential college implemented the framework first, and this is now extending to the day school. The college has recently moved to a vertical pastoral care system, extending the mentorship and support already available to students.
- St Patrick’s College (Ballarat, Victoria) saw the Royal Commission as an opportunity to walk a path in solidarity towards healing for victims and survivors, and as a chance to implement new measures to ensure the tragedies of the past can never be repeated. Recent initiatives include: Ensuring child safety is listed as an agenda topic at all meetings of the advisory council, leadership team, the directors of schools team and operations team; a revamp of the reporting procedures to the School advisory council, including amending the principal’s report to have a more pointed focus on child safety; stricter and more structured enforcement of employment services and human resources practices; weekly meetings with an Old Collegian who is a survivor of child sexual abuse and who now helps guide College decisions around best practice in child welfare.
- During Child Protection Week, Edmund Rice Education Australia launched its Child Safeguarding Standards Framework, which have been informed by and comply with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, the Child Safe Standards, the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and the current best practice guidelines of several state jurisdictions.
- The Archdiocese of Brisbane’s “Student Voice Initiative” focused on listening to students via surveys, ongoing engagement and a 15-student consultation group renewed annually. The program was recognised at the Queensland Child Protection Awards (Youth Participation Category).
- Toowoomba Catholic Schools created the “It’s okay to speak up” video in partnership with students on the theme of seeking adult help, especially in the area of child protection.

- Both the Diocese of Townsville and the Benedictines at New Norcia created a specialised non-school childcare (i.e. afterschool care, early learning) safeguarding training approach.
- The Marist Brothers engaged a specialist risk and compliance service to develop and maintain a child safe framework specifically suited for Marist Brothers-governed schools.
- The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) held focus groups with students to develop a child-friendly version of the Jesuits' code of conduct, with logos and wording to depict how they interpret the code.
- In April 2020, Edmund Rice Education Australia launched Empowering Student Voice and Participation, a document to assist EREA schools and educational entities in their efforts to engage children and young people in decision-making processes that have implications for their own safety and wellbeing in particular, but also in relation to other aspects to their school life.
- The Cannossians have created child-friendly resources, including awareness-raising posters, for its kindergarten that promote safeguarding. Children have also had safeguarding embedded into their curriculum at the kindergarten as they have begun to work on designing a book of their own artwork to support the children's rights and responsibilities that are displayed at the kindergarten.
- The Carmelites provided training for 38 teachers in Timor-Leste to introduce them to the order's safeguarding children policy and how to implement it in their school.

SOCIAL SERVICES INITIATIVES

Catholic social services agencies work across a wide range of areas, including financial counselling, aged care, child care, disability support, homelessness support, employment services, prison ministry and school counselling.

A number of those agencies provide support to people who themselves are victims or survivors of child sexual abuse, including the provision of pastoral care.

There are hundreds of Catholic ministries across Australia that assist more than 450,000 people annually. Catholic social services agencies employ more than 10,000 staff and are supported by thousands of volunteers.

While there are many Catholic social service agencies that fall under the jurisdiction of dioceses, often known as CatholicCare or Centacare, religious institutes and other Church organisations also run social service ministries. The policies, practices and procedures of the governing bodies of the social service agencies are often similarly applicable to those ministries.

LOCAL RESPONSES

- The Ballarat Diocese and Centacare have produced “Speak up – It’s your right!” material promoting awareness of rights and disclosure of concerns and complaints in all reception areas. It is part of a suite of resources that communicate important general messages, as well as messages more specific to certain groups, e.g. children entering care.
- CatholicCare Sandhurst has rolled out a professional development platform called Safetrac. One of the advantages of the platform is that it can ensure that all staff and board members participate in safeguarding training.
- CatholicCare Wollongong has developed feedback tools for clients, including one tailored for children and young people in care called “My Say”, to ensure that they are able to give feedback on their experiences.

SAFEGUARDING AND COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the ways in which all organisations have connected with members of their communities. Those new connections have brought with them some additional risks to be identified and addressed, including in Catholic school settings (as outlined above).

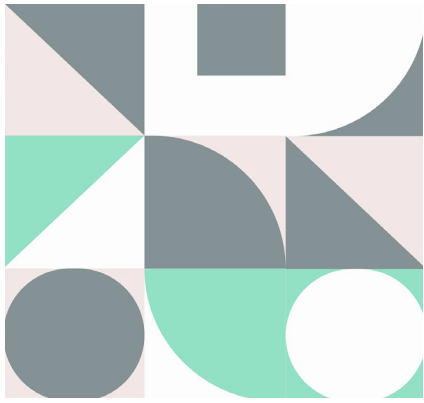
An important indicator of the progress made in safeguarding, at both an institutional and cultural level, was the way that it was taken into account as dioceses and religious institutes moved to respond to the challenges of COVID-19. Where safeguarding could have been an afterthought when handling something as dynamic and sudden as COVID-19, this was not the case.

The safeguarding bodies in place and the greater awareness of this dimension of ministry at all levels ensured that the issues and risks arising from this crisis were considered proactively, in depth and with careful focus on risk assessment and management. These processes helped to shape responses to the unfolding situation, including through policies, training and the creation and distribution resources for children, families, staff and clergy. These were all established quickly and in real time, and there is no doubt that this readiness and consciousness helped to minimise the risk to children.

LOCAL RESPONSES

- The Diocese of Sale offers a particular case study, having created specialised training for online ministry applicable to every group looking to engage in that environment. The training was specifically designed in light of the stories of victims and survivors.





THE HOLY SEE

HOLY SEE OBSERVATIONS REGARDING ROYAL COMMISSION

Of the 49 recommendations of the Royal Commission's Final Report that were addressed to the Catholic Church, 12 necessitated referral to or consultation with the Holy See. In early 2020, the Holy See provided its observations regarding these recommendations to the Bishops Conference. In August 2020, the Bishops Conference provided the observations to the Attorney-General of Australia and soon after [published the Holy's See's observations](#) on the Bishops Conference website.

HOLY SEE INITIATIVES

MEETING OF PRESIDENTS OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES

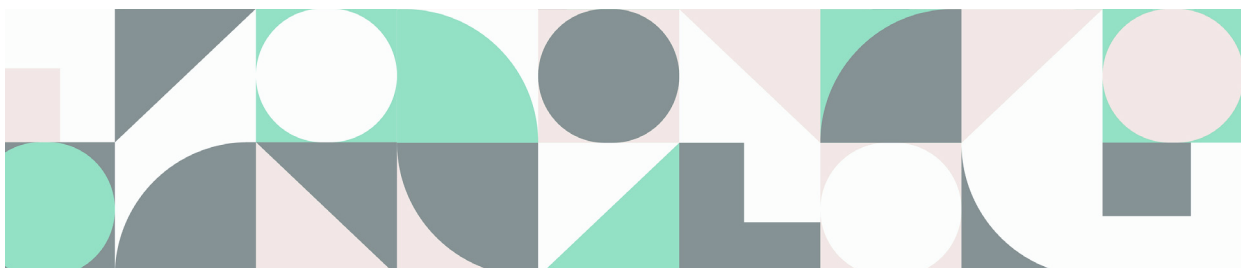
In February 2019, Pope Francis convened a meeting of the presidents of the more than 100 episcopal conferences around the world. The highly unusual step reflects the Church's concern to better deal with complaints and to respond to victims and survivors, as well as to ensure that the commitment to addressing child sexual abuse within Catholic settings is consistent globally, starting with the responsibility of the bishops.

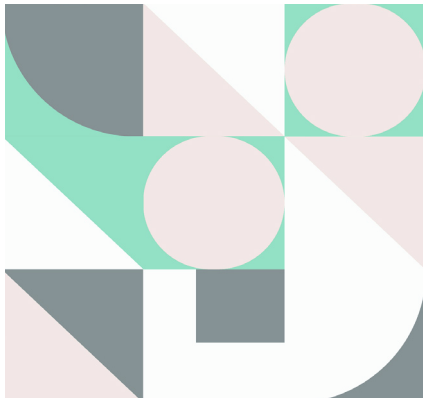
VOS ESTIS LUX MUNDI

Pope Francis has since published the motu proprio *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, which establishes new universal norms to ensure that bishops and major superiors of religious institutes are held accountable for their actions. In May 2020, the Bishops Conference published guidelines on the implementation of *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* within Australia, which [have been published on the Conference's website](#).

VADEMECUM ON POINTS OF PROCEDURE

In July 2020, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the *Vademecum: On certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics*. A "vademecum", which literally means "go with me", is a guide or handbook outlining procedures to be used in applying the law. The document is "intended to be flexible" and could be periodically updated.





EMERGING STRUCTURE AND PROTOCOL

NATIONAL RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Towards Healing and *The Melbourne Response*, which were developed in the mid-1990s, were scrutinised during the Royal Commission. While both protocols have undergone reviews and amendments in those years, it was considered beneficial to create a new national framework for handling concerns and allegations of child sexual abuse.

The Implementation Advisory Group commenced work on a “National Response Protocol” in 2019 to establish a new, nationally-consistent approach for handling complaints of sexual abuse and other misconduct. It would create the best outcomes for people bringing forward complaints and those responsible for responding to them. The Protocol was drafted with input from many stakeholders, including survivors and their supporters.

A liaison group with expertise in professional standards, safeguarding, pastoral care, complaints management, civil and canon law, and ecclesiology provided further assistance to bring the project to completion and provide recommendations to the Bishops Conference and CRA.

It is expected that the Protocol will be introduced, with interim status, in 2021.

A NEW NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING ENTITY

In 2019, the Bishops Conference and CRA, mindful that there are a number of national entities overseeing various aspects of child protection, safeguarding and professional standards, resolved to move towards the establishment of a single national office. Indeed, that single national office had been envisioned in 2016, but had not eventuated.

The creation of the national office is expected to take place in early 2021. It will be the result of two earlier reviews and subsequent work carried out by an expert group comprising lay, religious and clerical experts in social service delivery, safeguarding, professional standards, governance,

finance and canon and civil law. The process of establishing the national office has involved significant consultation with key stakeholders, including Catholic Professional Standards Ltd.

As announced in June 2020, the new national office will assume key functions of CPSL and will supervise independent audits of Church institutions, the training of Catholic leaders and the development and review of national standards. It will also incorporate functions currently entrusted to other national organisations, including the oversight of a new national protocol for handling concerns and allegations of sexual abuse.

The new office will retain the operational independence that CPSL has exercised. It will reduce duplication and be a more efficient means by which the Church can respond effectively to the issues under its mandate.

