



INSTITUTE OF
SISTERS of MERCY
OF AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA

INSTITUTE SAFEGUARDING POLICY

This Safeguarding Policy reflects the requirements contained in the
National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) Edition 2

November 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Safeguarding Commitment Statement	2
3. Purpose	3
4. Scope	3
5. Leading and Implementing a Safeguarding Culture	3
6. Requiring and Upholding Appropriate Standards of Behaviour	5
7. Identifying and Responding to Safety Concerns	5
8. Record Keeping, Information Sharing, Confidentiality & Privacy	5
9. Consequences of Breach of this Policy	5
10. Review of Safeguarding Policy and Related Documents	6
11. Glossary	7

1. Introduction

God's Word, living and active, compels us

"to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God". (Micah 6:8)

and the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, the Venerable Catherine McAuley, constantly reminds us that *"mercy is the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of following him"*.

This Safeguarding Policy (policy) expresses our commitment to live and work in accordance with the Gospel ideals and the values and principles as articulated in the *Constitutions of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea*. The policy also reflects the requirements contained in the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) Edition 2.

The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (Institute) is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment which respects and upholds the human rights and dignity of all people. We have a zero tolerance approach to abuse of all people and specifically children and adults at risk.

2. Safeguarding Commitment Statement

The Institute is actively committed to fostering communities of safeguarding that recognise the inherent rights and dignity of all people and the Gospel imperative to protect and nurture all children and adults at risk. The Institute is committed to creating and maintaining environments, both real and online, that are safe, supportive, caring and nurturing for all. We commit to safeguarding children and adults at risk from all abuse and neglect. In keeping with the Institute's Constitutions, and relevant Church protocols such as *Integrity in Ministry*, *Integrity in the Service of the Church*, National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and Protocol for Right Relationships in Ministry (Papua New Guinea), we strive to maintain the safety of all people including children and adults at risk with whom we come into contact. Consequently, we commit to ensuring zero tolerance of abuse by:

- Embedding a culture of safety and respect in the Institute's leadership, governance and practice.
- Prioritising the safety and best interests of children and adults at risk with whom we work and minister.
- Understanding the nature and risks of abuse and taking deliberate and immediate steps to prevent it.
- Encouraging the participation of children, adults at risk, families and communities in decision making about safeguarding policies and procedures, as appropriate.
- Responding to complaints of abuse sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in accordance with our lawful obligations and our own policies and procedures. This includes contacting the police immediately where there may be an immediate risk of harm to any person, especially to children or adults at risk.
- Undertaking regular auditing of our safeguarding policies and practices to ensure an ongoing culture of safety and respect for all.

The Institute is committed to ensuring zero tolerance of abuse in all its forms by creating a culture of safety and respect for all, including prioritising the safety of children and adults at risk with whom we have contact. All staff and those who work with the Institute are expected to take all reasonable steps to ensure the protection of all people including children and adults at risk and to comply with our safeguarding policies and procedures, including responding to and reporting all suspicions and allegations of abuse.

For more information or to raise a concern, please contact: safeguardingofficer@ismapng.org.au

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance about how the Institute will prevent, identify and respond to abuse and harm towards all people with specific emphasis on children and adults at risk. This Policy also:

- Supports the understanding of appropriate standards of behaviour towards each other, and children and adults at risk.
- Guides the development of systems and processes that contribute to the prevention and management of risks of abuse of children and adults at risk.
- Encourages a culture and environment that is supportive and protective of all, including children and adults at risk.

4. Scope

The policy applies to all personnel of the Institute, including religious sisters, employees, contractors and volunteers engaged by the Institute and its Corporate Entities as listed in the glossary.

The policy complies with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (Standards) Edition 2, which outline requirements for Catholic entities across Australia to promote the safety of all, including children 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.

The Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Commitment Statement at Clause 2 above is supported by and should be read together with the following related documents:

- Code of Conduct
- Complaint Handling Policy

Nothing in this policy affects the expectations outlined in other relevant Church documents or in civil law.

5. Leading and Implementing a Safeguarding Culture

The Institute Leader is ultimately responsible for ensuring the Institute is a safe environment for all, including children and adults at risk.

The Institute Leader has established a Safeguarding Committee to provide advice on the effective ongoing implementation of safeguarding practices, policies and procedures.

The day-to-day safeguarding work of the Institute is co-ordinated within the Institute's Standards and Legal Team. The Safeguarding Officer is a member of this team, and this role also acts as the Safeguarding Coordinator as required by the Standards.

The Institute Leader and Institute Leadership Team leads and promotes a safeguarding culture and monitors compliance with the Safeguarding Policy and continual improvement of its safeguarding practices, through:

- Upholding and modelling a standard of behaviour consistent with relevant Church documents and civil law, and championing safeguarding and the dignity and rights of all with particular regard to children and adults at risk within the Institute's community.
- Promoting the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.
- Publishing and displaying the Safeguarding Commitment Statement and making sure the Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaint Handling Policy are readily available to personnel and the broader community as appropriate.
- Taking all possible steps to ensure that only people who are suitable to have contact with children and adults at risk are engaged by the Institute.
- Empowering all personnel to take responsibility for safeguarding and providing opportunities for them to have input into improving safeguarding practices.
- Encouraging people to bring forward safeguarding concerns or complaints including complaints about the safety of children or adults at risk and including disclosures of current or historical abuse and providing appropriate processes by which to do so.
- Responding to disclosures and complaints in a timely manner that is transparent, respectful, fair and accountable.

The Manager of the Institute's Standards and Legal team will support safeguarding compliance and continual improvement, through:

- Reporting any safety concerns about children or adults at risk to the appropriate civil authorities as required by legislation, and also to inform the Institute Leader.
- Ensuring Safeguarding is a standing agenda item of the Institute's Standards and Legal team regular staff meetings.
- Ensuring the Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Complaint Handling Procedures are regularly reviewed by the Institute Leadership Team according to the specified timeframes in each document.
- Ensuring the monitoring and recording of the currency of Working with Children Checks and other relevant background checks held by personnel.
- Ensuring the provision of safeguarding training and support for personnel, including initial/induction and refresher safeguarding training (at least every two years) for all personnel, and participation in the 'National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders' for the leadership team. Training will include the Institute's Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Policy, reporting obligations, e-safety, factors that may place people, children, and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse, cultural safety and diversity.
- Providing at least six hours of annual professional/pastoral supervision and/or reflective practices/mentoring for relevant personnel which include a focus on safeguarding responsibilities.
- Ensure up-to-date participation records to ensure personnel complete safeguarding training and supervision as required.
- Requiring all personnel to sign an acknowledgement of their agreement to comply with the Institute's Code of Conduct.

- Ensuring regular assessment, monitoring and management of safety risks for physical and online environments.
- Managing and resolving complaints, including direct or indirect concerns, disclosures or allegations of current or historical abuse towards children or adults, as per the Complaint Handling Policy.

6. Requiring and Upholding Appropriate Standards of Behaviour

The Institute expects all personnel to uphold the human rights, dignity and well-being of all people and to safeguard children and adults at risk from abuse and harm.

Personnel will be provided with ongoing supervision and support to meet their safeguarding responsibilities. Annual performance reviews for personnel will include responsibilities for safeguarding children and adults at risk if this is relevant to their role.

All personnel must comply with the Institute's Code of Conduct.

7. Identifying and Responding to Safety Concerns

The Institute has a 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.

8. Record Keeping, Information Sharing, Confidentiality and Privacy

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.

The Institute will maintain current knowledge of, and comply with, 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.

9. Consequences of Breach of this Policy

- Any breach of the Safeguarding Policy should be referred to the Safeguarding Officer for further action.
- A breach of the Safeguarding Policy is a disciplinary matter which may result in a formal warning or suspension from ministry or service. Serious breaches of the Safeguarding Policy may result in dismissal for personnel, or in the case of religious, disciplinary action, in accordance with our Constitutions and the canonical processes.

10. Review of Safeguarding Policy and Related Documents

The Safeguarding Policy and related documents will be updated as required, including whenever a breach is identified, and reviewed at least every three years. The Institute will consult stakeholders as part of reviewing the Safeguarding Policy and related documents. The outcomes of each review will be documented.

The Manager of Standards and Legal is responsible for ensuring the review is completed.

11. Glossary

Adult Abuse	An adult's vulnerability may not always be readily apparent, and indicators of abuse or harm towards adults at risk may be more difficult to recognise. The right of adults to make their own choices and decisions, and the circumstances in which they may have diminished capacity to do so, are also relevant considerations. Most commonly, the categories of adult abuse include financial, psychological, neglect, physical, sexual or spiritual. See the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) for further definitions of these categories.
Adults at risk (Vulnerable person)	Adults at risk are people aged 18 and over who are at increased risk of abuse, including those who: • are elderly • have a disability • have a mental illness • have diminished capacity • have cognitive impairment • exhibit signs of self-neglect • are experiencing transient risks, eg. bereavement, relationship breakdown, domestic or family violence, homelessness • have any other impairment that makes it difficult for that person to protect themselves from abuse or exploitation. Whilst taking care to not make assumptions or generalisations about individuals, we recognise that other aspects of a person's identity or life experiences may also increase their risk of vulnerability to abuse or harm, for example: • being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander • being a refugee or migrant • diverse gender or sexuality • speaking a first language other than English • surviving sexual abuse or child abuse
Allegation	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".
Child/ren	A child is an individual under the age of 18 years. The Institute recognises the importance of ensuring cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and all Indigenous children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, children in out of home care or

	who are homeless and children of diverse sexuality. The Institute recognises the importance of providing a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal, Torres Strait and Indigenous children and young people are respected and valued.
Child abuse	There are different legal definitions of child abuse in Australia. Most commonly, the categories of child abuse include sexual, physical, psychological, neglect, ill-treatment, exploitation and exposure to family violence. See the NCSS for further definitions of these categories.
Disability	Includes those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their 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>)
Diverse gender or sexuality	Diverse gender or sexuality refers to all the diversities of sex characteristics, sexual orientations and gender identities, without the need to specify each of the identities, behaviours, or characteristics that form this plurality.
Institute	Means Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, a religious institute of pontifical right and a public juridic person within the Catholic Church.
Leaders	Personnel who are responsible for important governance decisions within the Institute and/or who lead and coordinate improvement initiatives.
Ministries of the Institute	This includes McAuley Ministries Limited (MML), Young Mercy Links, Mercy Associates and Mercy Mission Services Inc (MMSI).
Personnel	This includes religious sisters, employees, volunteers, contractors (and others) engaged by the Institute.
Professional Standards	The behavioural standards required of all Australian Church Entities and their personnel for the safeguarding of all persons and the management of historical and current complaints regarding alleged violations of these behavioural standards. The Institute also applies these standards as minimum standards in all its activities in Papua New Guinea.
Religious Institute	An institute of consecrated life, a secular institute or society of apostolic life, and their provinces or equivalent.
Safeguarding	Measures to protect the safety, human rights and well-being of individuals, which allow all people to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.

Safeguarding Committee	A committee established to advise and support the Institute on all matters relating to safeguarding, including in relation to prevention, policies and procedures and complaint handling. Committee members need relevant and varied professional expertise in relation to, but not limited to safeguarding, child protection, organisational culture and structure, policy development, and need to include lay women and men.
Safeguarding Commitment Statement	A commitment statement describing the Institute's commitment to keep all, especially children and adults at risk, safe from harm. It informs the Institute's culture with respect to safeguarding.
Safeguarding Commitment Statement – Short Version for Recruitment Purposes	The Institute is committed to ensuring zero tolerance of abuse in all its forms by creating a culture of safety and respect for all, including prioritising the safety of all children and adults at risk with whom we have contact. All staff and those who work with the Institute are expected to take all reasonable steps to ensure the protection of children and adults at risk and to comply with our safeguarding policies and procedures, including responding to and reporting all suspicions and allegations of abuse.
Safeguarding Officer	An individual who champions safeguarding and co-ordinates the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards within the Institute.
Sisters	Means all professed members of the Institute and women who have been formally admitted to the Institute's formation program.
Supervision	A forum for reflection and learning, an interactive dialogue between at least two people, one of whom is professionally trained as a supervisor. The dialogue shapes a process of review, reflection, critique and replenishment for personnel. Supervision is a professional activity in which personnel are engaged regardless of experience or qualification. Supervision assists personnel in their accountabilities for professional standards (including in relation to maintenance of professional boundaries), defined competencies for their role and understanding and implementation of organisational policy and procedures. For sisters, professional/pastoral supervision assists in the maintenance of boundaries of the pastoral relationship and enhances the quality of their ministry. A sister's commitment to conscious and critical reflection on their ministry and ministry experiences is recognised as being important for the wellbeing of the sister, the people with whom they exercise ministry, the wider Church and the community.
Vulnerable Person	Refer definition for Adults at Risk.

Working with children check	Generic term used in the Standards to denote the statutory screening requirement for people who work or volunteer in child-related work. There is no single national framework setting out requirements for ‘working with children’ checks. Each state or territory in Australia has its own name, procedures and differences in scope regarding what this type of check entails. They are one part of the Institute’s recruitment, selection and screening processes.
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Version Control Page

Version Control			
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