



CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF
WILCANNIA-FORBES

Guidelines Pastoral Response for Clergy and Workers

Responding to a disclosure of sexual abuse or any other crime

1. Preamble

The emotional, physical and spiritual safety, well-being and dignity of children and adults at risk is an integral part of the teachings and values of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes (the Diocese) is wholly committed to ensuring the safety, well-being and dignity of all children and adults at risk adults, and acknowledges its important legal, moral and spiritual responsibility to create a safe and nurturing environment for those children and adults at risk.

The Diocese is committed to helping those who have experienced sexual abuse or another crime as a child or those who are aware of sexual abuse or another crime of a child to come forward. We acknowledge the pain that victims and their families have experienced and continue to experience every day. The Diocese accepts its moral responsibility to address claims of sexual abuse and any other crimes against its priest and workers, and to treat all victims with respect and compassion.

In responding to sexual abuse or any other crimes, the Diocese seeks at all times to follow the laws of New South Wales, the National Response Protocol, the principles of natural justice and the requirements of Canon Law. In every process the Diocese treats the rights and needs of victims as its first priority.

The Diocese has developed guidelines for dealing with disclosures of abuse and concerns. These guidelines are for all clergy, parish and agency staff as well as volunteers in the Diocese.

2. Purpose

These guidelines apply to all clergy, parish and agency staff as well as volunteers in the Diocese and outlines the process to respond to disclosures or allegations of abuse. Any disclosure of sexual abuse against a child or adult and/or other crime must be forwarded to the Safeguarding Manager or the Vicar General of the Diocese who will work with you to meet your statutory responsibilities in reporting to authorities.

3. Principles

- The Diocese accepts moral responsibility to address claims of sexual abuse against its clergy and other ministers and workers of the Diocese and will treat all survivors of abuse with respect and compassion;
- Where the Diocese is not the responsible Church authority in relation to a claim, we will assist survivors to identify and approach the church entity which has responsibility;
- Where the Diocese is the responsible Church authority it will offer to meet with survivors and to assist them during the resolution of their claim (for example by financial help with counselling);
- In all cases, the strong preference of the Diocese is to resolve claims pastorally, and in a non-adversarial manner so survivors can avoid the costs and stress of litigation. This may be through a formal National Response Protocol process or through a pastoral meeting with a Church leader, such as the Vicar General or the Safeguarding Manager;
- In seeking to respond to survivors and to resolve claims pastorally, the Diocese will be guided by the Royal Commission's recommendations regarding redress and how institutions should respond;
- The Diocese recognises that survivors of abuse always have a right to take legal action instead of participating in the National Response Protocol, or another pastoral process. The Diocese will offer to meet the costs of counselling during the course of any such proceedings;
- If legal proceedings have been commenced and the Diocese is responsible or potentially responsible, we will seek to settle the case rather than require survivors to litigate to final judgement;
- In responding to legal proceedings, the Diocese will:
 - not rely on limitations periods in defending legal proceedings;
 - seek to ensure that the proper defendant(s) have been sued and will assist survivors in identifying proper defendant(s);
 - be open to seeking to resolve legal proceedings by alternative dispute resolution and will consider any potential resolution in light of the current state of the law.
- The Diocese endorses and will be guided in litigation by the "*Guidelines for Church Authorities in Responding to Civil claims for Child Sexual Abuse*";
- The Diocese supports and works with the National Redress Scheme to assist survivors of abuse bring their claim to the Diocese.

4. Process

a. When a disclosure is made

If a child or adult discloses abuse to you it may be one of the hardest things they have ever had to tell anyone. They have placed an enormous amount of trust in you and whilst you may feel shocked or hurt by what you have been told, it is important that you stay calm, listen and don't let your emotions take over.

A child or adult may want to speak with you about:

- Abuse that happened in the past – historical abuse
- Abuse that happened to someone else that they know
- Abuse that they witnessed happening to someone they know
- Abuse that is currently taking place to them or someone else

b. What to do when a child or adult discloses abuse or another crime to you

DO	DO NOT
<p>Reassure: the child or adult that they have done the right thing in telling you and you will help them by passing this information to the appropriate authorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen in a way that is compassionate, calm and reassuring.• Stay calm and take what the person is telling you seriously and respond pastorally.• Allow the individual to talk at his/her own pace.• Explain that you are required to report this matter to the Diocese, who will help you get appropriate support.• Explain that the Diocese will report to other authorities as required by NSW law.	<p>DO NOT: make promises that cannot be kept particularly in relation to keeping it a secret.</p> <p>DO NOT: dismiss the concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is important not to allow any strong feelings you experience to show. This can deter the individual from providing you with further information. <p>DO NOT: press for details or suggest words, fill in words or finish sentences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are not investigating this matter.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider what support services the person disclosing may need. 	
<p>Record: write down exactly what the person has said using their own words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check with the person to make sure that you have understood what they have said. Include the name and contact details of the person disclosing and the name of the alleged perpetrator. Include where and when the alleged crime happened. 	<p>DO NOT: make assumptions about what the person was disclosing, stay with the facts.</p> <p>DO NOT: discuss the matter with other people, maintain confidentiality and speak with your supervisor or the Diocesan Safeguarding Manager.</p>
<p>Report: to the appropriate authorities; if there is an emergency then report directly to the NSW Police, otherwise report to the Safeguarding Office or the Vicar General, who will support you in making reports to relevant authorities that are required.</p>	<p>DO NOT: tell them that everything will be fixed straight away.</p> <p>DO NOT: make judgements or make statements about your belief or otherwise, about the information given.</p>

c. Reporting disclosure to the appropriate authorities

The Diocese is obligated to report serious offences including physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse and neglect to the NSW police and relevant statutory authorities. Please contact the Safeguarding Office for further advice and support in taking the next steps.

Diocesan Safeguarding Manager

Anna Sammut **P:** Phone: (02) 6853 9341 **M:** 0448331481

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5. Support Services

 <p>Blue Knot Foundation Phone: 1300 657 380 Website: https://blueknot.org.au/</p>	 <p>NSW Domestic Violence Phone: 1800 656 463</p>	 <p>Bravehearts Phone: 1800 272 831 Website: https://bravehearts.org.au/</p>
 <p>CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes Phone: 6850 1788 Website: https://ccwf.org.au/</p>	 <p>Christian Counsellors Phone: 08 7099 2277 Website: https://ccaa.net.au/</p>	 <p>Interrelate Phone: 1300 473 528 Website: https://www.interrelate.org.au/</p>
 <p>Lifeline Saving Lives Crisis Support, Suicide Prevention, Lifeline Phone: 13 11 14 Website: https://www.lifeline.org.au/</p>	 <p>MensLine Australia Meline Australia Phone: 1300 78 99 78 Website: https://mensline.org.au/</p>	 <p>Relationships Australia Phone: 1300 364 277 Website: https://relationships.org.au/</p>
 <p>Survivors & Mates Support Network Phone: 1800 472 676 Website: https://www.samsn.org.au/</p>	 <p>Victims Access Line Phone: 1800 633 063 Website: www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/</p>	 <p>13 Yarn Phone: 13 92 76 Website: https://www.13yarn.org.au/</p>
 <p>Full Stop Australia Phone: 1800 385 578 Website: https://fullstop.org.au/</p>	 <p>1800 Respect Phone: 1800 737 732 Website: https://www.1800respect.org.au/</p>	 <p>Call 1800 ELDERHelp Phone: 1800 353 374 Website: https://www.1800respect.org.au/</p>

