

1. Title

Safeguarding Policy

2. Scope

All individuals employed by, engaging in or attending a site where services or programs are governed by the Trustees of the Christian Brothers. This is including its various ministries and entities.

3. Geographical Application

All Oceania Province locations – Australia, New Zealand, PNG, Philippines

4. Legislation/Regulation

This policy is compliant with all relevant National and State Child Protection legislation and other relevant regulations regarding individuals who have additional support or care needs. All members to whom this document applies are expected to enact its requirements.

5. Objective

The objective of this Policy is to establish a foundation for Safeguarding processes and procedures, internal to the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers, which seek to:

1. safeguard children and adults: continuously seeking to engage in best practice which works to prevent and minimize the risk of harm to children and adults who engage with any services run by, or in collaboration with, the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers. It equally seeks to ensure that all those who hold a duty of care towards children are aware of their responsibilities to respond to safety concerns that arise;
2. provide guidance for staff: by ensuring there is a clear understanding of expectations and responsibilities of the staff members, volunteers, Ministry leaders, and Brothers in the event that a safety or wellbeing concern were to arise. An inadequate response could result in increased risk for the child, young person, staff member, or relevant other.

6. Policy Statement

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers and any associated ministries have a zero tolerance approach to child abuse. The safeguarding of adults is also a priority as all adults who participate in or are associated with the receipt or provision of Edmund Rice services have a right to be cared for, to feel safe, and to be protected. The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers is committed to developing a culture which recognises and upholds the rights of each individual, and one which supports the safety and security of all.

Safeguarding Policy OP1.5			
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Author:	Jennifer Lewis	Author's Position:	ERMO Safeguarding Coordinator
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A focus on safeguarding is maintained where all people, especially the vulnerable, oppressed, or marginalised, are provided the fundamental right to be kept safe.

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers also recognises that children, due to their developmental dependency, are a group within society who are at a higher risk of vulnerability to harm. As a consequence, the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers recognises an organisation-wide responsibility to facilitate the care, safety, and protection of children. This is supported through the implementation of comprehensive safeguarding programs designed to keep all safe from harm.

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers is committed to the establishment and maintenance of a child-safe environment for children in receipt of Edmund Rice services. As such,

- children’s services provided by Oceania Province Ministries are to be provided at professional best practice standards;
- ministry services are required to ensure service programs are attentive to both preventive and responsive strategies to child care, safety, and risk management;
- staff, volunteers, and Brothers are required to comply with the *Code of Conduct* in interactions with children at all times both within service roles and external to service roles;
- staff and volunteers are required to respond appropriately to the needs of each child with whom they interact.

It is paramount that all individuals to whom this policy applies take personal and professional responsibility to ensure that each and every child and young person feels safe, secure, and protected.

7. Safeguarding Principles

This policy is founded upon the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice.

While the following principles reflect the values and beliefs of the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers, they also provide a guide for practice and engagement with children who come into contact with a ministry or associated service.

- **Zero tolerance of abuse:**
Abuse towards a child or adult is NOT tolerated. The welfare and best interests of the child and adult are paramount.
- **Diversity respected:**
All individuals are unique and will be treated equally and fairly. The views of children and others are highly valued. Everyone has the right to be safe regardless of any diverse factors such as attributes, socio-economic status,

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nationality, sex, culture, ethnicity, beliefs, health, or any other status.

- **Shared responsibility:**
All to whom this Policy applies must comply with and enact these principles and practices in order for them to be meaningful and successful. Child protection is everyone’s responsibility, to ensure that a culture of safety is fostered and maintained within the organisation and its associated ministries and services.
- **Existence of risk for children:**
The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers acknowledges that barriers to child safety still exist within our society and, for that reason, persistent efforts to safeguard children and adults from harm are required.
- **Professional responses:**
All concerns regarding the safety, development or wellbeing of a child or adult will be managed with a high degree of professionalism and appropriate confidentiality will be maintained. Our practices seek to ensure that all parties involved in the process will be appropriately supported.
- **Accountability:**
Processes related to effective documentation, monitoring, and review procedures are practiced that support and inform management and staff to ensure their safeguarding roles and responsibilities are being conducted to the best of their ability.

By working to uphold these principles and/or rights, we are seeking to recognise and demonstrate a genuine respect for the inherent value, dignity, and worth of all. Through this commitment we are also demonstrating respect for basic human rights as this is the cornerstone of developing strong communities in which every member feels safe and secure, together with a having a sense of connectedness and belonging.

8. Safeguarding Preventative response

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers seeks to develop and maintain a culture that works to promote the safety, health, development, and wellbeing of all individuals. This is achieved at various stages by ensuring that:

- a. all staff, volunteers, and Brothers undergo pre-employment screening prior to allowing access to children through work appointments;
- b. recruitment, assessment and selection processes are in place to demonstrate competency-based appointment selection in relation to staff and volunteers;
- c. all appointees possess a Working with Children clearance prior to commencing employment or volunteering, and ensuring all organisational policies and guidelines are adhered to. This is achieved by:

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- i. requiring all staff, volunteers, and Brothers sign an agreement to abide by the *Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct* and other relevant documents;
- ii. conducting regular self-audits;
- iii. ensuring that new staff participate in induction procedures and safeguarding training;
- iv. providing training to all staff, volunteers and Brothers within ministry services at a minimum on an annual basis;
- v. requiring safeguarding training for all staff, volunteers, Brothers and relevant others who are not in ministry services but may be in contact with children;

9. Responding to a Safeguarding concern or allegation

The Oceania Province Child Protection training, supported by relevant child protection reporting documents, provides employees, ministry staff, volunteers and Brothers with clarity and direction in responding to concerns and allegations related to the protection of children or adults experiencing adversity, where such concerns relate to their rights to care, safety, and protection.

All staff, volunteers, Ministry Leaders and Brothers are expected to be *aware* of potential or actual risk concerns in relation to a child or an adult experiencing adversity, and to be *responsive* in the following ways:

- ensure immediate safety by intervening, if it is safe to do so, to stop the harm from occurring;
- report the concerns immediately to the person in charge;
- contact the Safeguarding Coordinator as soon as possible to advise of the safety concern(s);
- document this information as soon as possible following receipt or observation of the information. The original written document must be maintained and provided to the Ministry Leader or the Safeguarding Coordinator.

10. Reporting Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers have care, safety and protection responsibilities in respect to child protection and/or adults experiencing adversity, namely:

- to undertake a mandatory report where there is *'reasonable suspicion'* of harm to a child due to abuse and/or neglect;
- in reporting concerns and allegations regarding children or adults experiencing adversity, safety and protection concerns to a designated on-site manager who will subsequently report this concern/allegation to the Safeguarding Coordinator;

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- to utilise the professional expertise made available via the organisation to support them in their reporting responsibilities.

11. Organisational Care, Safety & Protection Responsibilities regarding conflicts of interest

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers is committed to the avoidance of a conflict of interest risk when responding to child protection matters or concerns regarding an adult experiencing adversity:

- where a child protection or concern regarding an adult relates to a staff member, volunteer or Brother involved in a Ministry service the concern is investigated by the Safeguarding Coordinator;
- if the report is in relation to the Safeguarding Coordinator, contact must be made with the relevant authority / authorities.
- where a child protection and adult safety concern or allegation relates to a staff member, volunteer or Brother involved in a Ministry service and the allegation meets the threshold that indicates the presence of unacceptable risk:
 - the staff member, volunteer or Brother is immediately excluded from Ministry service until an investigation is completed;
 - a Mandatory Report to the relevant child protection or other relevant authorities is made as required;
 - the reporting process is enacted and the Safeguarding Coordinator or the person employed and in charge of the Ministry or service, as directed by the Safeguarding Coordinator, makes a Mandatory Report to Child Protection authority or equivalent other; and,
 - make a report to the Province Leader as soon as is practical.

12. Individual Reporting Responsibilities

All staff, volunteers, Ministry Leaders, and Brothers retain individual responsibility to contact the Child Protection reporting authority or Police, whenever there is a concern or 'reasonable suspicion' of harm to a child or an adult where a criminal offence may have occurred. They also have an organisational responsibility to report these concerns to the appropriate and designated organisational person.

13. Related Information:

For a comprehensive understanding of the robust safeguarding practices of the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers and other related Ministries, this Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Statement of Commitment to Safeguarding
- Edmund Rice Ministries Oceania Safeguarding Processes and Procedures Manual for Ministries;
- Code of Conduct

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- relevant Legislation in each State and Territory (this is outlined further within the *ERMO Safeguarding Processes and Procedures* document for ERMO entities)
- Catholic Professional Standards Limited (CPSL) – National Catholic Safeguarding Standards
- Reportable Conduct Scheme (Victoria)

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