

- 1: Title** Children & Vulnerable Adults' Protection Policy
- 2: Applies to** All staff, volunteers], Christian Brothers and temporary Ministry on-site individuals
- During the provision of an Edmund Rice service
 - When resident in an Edmund Rice community house
 - When traveling and in accommodation during:
 - o Work related activities
 - o Christian Brothers' community activities.
- All individuals attending an Edmund Rice service or organisational site for:
- Training, workshop or conference purposes
 - Trade purposes
 - Any other purpose.

3. Geographical Application

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

4. Legislation/Regulation

This Policy of the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers is compliant with all relevant National, State and Territory Child protection and vulnerable adult legislation each Ministry site is required to enact its requirements.

5. Policy Statement

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers, inspired by the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice, is characterised by four key values in relation to children:

1. Children are reflective of God's presence
2. Children have inherent and irreducible worth.
3. Every child is both a unique entity with unique fulfilment gifts and is a member of mutually inter-dependent communities.
4. Children have the right to live within a caring, safe & protected environment.

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers, inspired by the charism of Edmund Rice, is characterised by two key values in relation to vulnerable adults:

- All adults have inherent worth and dignity irrespective of differences in gender, culture, physical and intellectual capacity, sexual orientation
- 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 be safe and to be protected.

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The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers recognises that children, due to their developmental dependency, are a group within society who have a higher risk of vulnerability to harm. As a consequence, the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers recognises a whole-organisation responsibility to facilitate the care, safety and protection of children. The commitment of the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers encompasses:

- Children who attend services provided by Edmund Rice Ministries and with whom staff, volunteers and Brothers interact.
- Children whom staff, volunteers and Brothers are made aware of and who are not attending an Edmund Rice ministry service but may be at-risk of harm or being harmed.
- Children with whom staff, volunteers and Brothers interact in non-service roles.

The Oceania Province recognises, although its predominant work is with children [inclusive of adolescents], that it also has a Duty of Care in relation to the care, safety and protection of vulnerable adults. The Oceania Province recognises that there are groups of adults who are vulnerable to harm through maltreatment and exploitation.

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.

- 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 Seven Care Needs of each child with whom they interact.

The care, safety and protection of vulnerable adults is based upon a *preventative* and *responsive* approach to adult vulnerability risk management as outlined:

- *Preventative* – Oceania Province puts in place organisational measures to eliminate or to reduce risk of adult vulnerability.
- *Responsive*- Oceania Province when it is aware of concerns or allegations relating to adult vulnerability commits to undertake actions, which facilitate the immediate safety of the individual, investigating and responding to the concern or allegation appropriately.

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6. Child Protection Preventive Response

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers seeks to ensure that *no adult* is allowed to have access to children through a staff or volunteer work role when that adult is a known risk to children.

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers seeks to ensure *no child* [child-on-child harm] is allowed to have access to children through a staff or volunteer work role when that child is a known risk to children.

All staff, volunteer and Brother appointments are required to demonstrate employment appointment screening prior to allowing access to children through work appointments:

- Recruitment, assessment and selection to demonstrate competency-based appointment selection in relation to-
 - Staff – competency-based selection criteria appointment
 - Volunteers – Volunteer Competency-Task Framework
- No indicator of allegations or conviction through obtaining:
 - Federal Police Clearance
 - Working with Children Clearance.
- Child protection training
 - All staff, volunteers and Brothers within Ministry services are trained and must pass an assessment in the Code of Conduct, the Seven Care Needs of children, child protection knowledge and reporting procedural requirements [*Oceania Province Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Reporting Protocol, 2013*].
 - All staff, volunteers and interns who are not in Ministry services and may be in contact with children are trained and must pass an assessment in the Code of Conduct, the Seven Care Needs of Children, child protection knowledge and reporting procedural requirements
 - All Brothers who are not in staff/volunteer Ministry services and who are not in aged care facilities and/or incapacitated through ill health are trained and assessed in the Code of Conduct, the Seven Care Needs of children, child protection knowledge and reporting procedural requirements.

All children who are accepted for participation in an Edmund Rice Ministry service are assessed as not representing a harm risk to other children through –

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- Obtaining relevant referral information.
- Assessing the referral information to identify risks of harm to the child or to other children.
- Developing and implementing appropriate risk management case plans where risks are identified.
- Monitoring the implementation of the risk case management plan.

7.. Vulnerable Adult Preventive Response

There are four adult vulnerability strategic components these are:

1. Integration of organisational policies and guidelines that facilitate and support the adult vulnerability policy and protocol:
 - a. Human Resources
 - b. OHS
 - c. Human Rights
 - d. Code of Conduct
 - e. Adult vulnerability risk assessment audit
 - f. Compliance with State and National legislation relating to criminal behaviour, human rights, OHS
2. Appropriate staff and volunteer appointment processes involving -
 - a. Screening
 - b. Selection
 - c. Supervision
3. Attentiveness to adult vulnerability risks and management by having in place
 - a. Service standards
 - b. Code of Conduct
4. Having a guideline for dealing with adult vulnerability
 - a. Complaints management
 - b. Concerns or allegations management.

8. Avoidance of Conflict of Interest and Organisational Care, Safety & Protection Responsibilities

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers is committed to the avoidance of risk to children and vulnerable adults' care, safety and well-being when there is organisational awareness of a possible child protection or vulnerable adult concern or allegation.

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers is committed to the avoidance of a conflict of interest risk when responding to child protection or vulnerable adult concerns through:

- *Separation* of Oceania Province organisational management roles from required decision-making and case management response in

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relation to a child protection or vulnerable adult concern or allegation.

- *Utilisation* of competency-based professional expertise as reflected in professional training [e.g. social work, psychology, counselling] and in professional child protection and vulnerable adult experience, to manage the professional response to the concern or allegation.

9. Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Concerns and Allegations

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers is committed to responding to child protection and vulnerable adult concerns and allegations.

The Oceania Province *Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Reporting Guideline* provides Ministry staff, volunteers and Brothers with clarity and direction in responding to child protection and vulnerable adult concerns and allegations around children and vulnerable adults' care, safety and protection.

A child protection and vulnerable adult concern or allegation is defined as:

- *Child protection and vulnerable adult concerns* relate to available information, which is less serious, which may suggest an evolving or existing risk in relation to the well-being of a child – e.g. violation of the requirement that two individuals must be present when there is interaction with a child. Child protection and vulnerable adult concerns are responded to in the first instance within the organisation as indicated in the Reporting Guideline:
 - Where a child protection and vulnerable adult concern/s relates to a staff member, volunteer or Brother involved in a Ministry service the concern is investigated by the Children's Services Standards Coordinator and organisational recommendations made.
- *Child protection and vulnerable adult allegations* relate to available information, which meets the assessed statutory threshold of possible maltreatment or risk of maltreatment:
 - Where a child protection and vulnerable adult allegation/s relates to a staff member, volunteer or Brother involved in a Ministry service and the allegation meets the threshold of a child protection and vulnerable adult allegation the staff member, volunteer or Brother is immediately excluded from Ministry service until an investigation is completed.
 - Where a child protection and vulnerable adult allegation/s relates to a staff member, volunteer or Brother involved in

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a Ministry service and the allegation meets the threshold of a child protection and vulnerable adult allegation:

- The staff member, volunteer or Brother or any other person can make a Mandatory Report to the relevant child protection and vulnerable adult authority.
- The *Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Reporting Guideline*, is applied and the Children’s Services Standards Coordinator or the Executive Officer of the Ministry, as directed by the CSSC makes a Mandatory Report to the child protection and vulnerable adult authority.
- Statutory reportable conduct requirements are met.

10. Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Reporting Principles

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers outlines the expected roles and responsibilities of staff, volunteers and Brothers where available information suggests there is a reasonable suspicion a child or vulnerable adult may be at [abuse and/or neglect] risk of maltreatment, harm or being harmed.

All staff and volunteers are expected to pay immediate attention when there appears to exist risk indicators in a child or vulnerable adult’s environment, behaviours, conversations, emotions and perceptions, which may suggest the child or vulnerable adult is being harmed or is at risk of harm.

There are three key expectations upon all Ministry staff, volunteers or Brothers in responding to concerns/allegations relating to the well-being of children or vulnerable adults.

- *Awareness*- of when children’s or vulnerable adults right to a harm-free care, safety and protection environment may be violated or is at-risk of violation. Within this awareness is the requirement, where assessed, to report the situation to the Government child protection and vulnerable adult/child welfare authority
- *Responsive* - to undertake *actions* to report in a timely manner to designated persons as indicated in the Reporting Guideline.
- *Compliance* – to *comply* with reporting guideline and procedure requirements.

Reporting Responsibilities

- All staff and volunteers have child and vulnerable adults care, safety and protection responsibilities, namely:

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- All staff and volunteers retain individual responsibility whenever there is *'reasonable suspicion'* of harm to a child or vulnerable adult due to abuse and/or neglect, to undertake a mandatory report.
- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report child and vulnerable adult care, safety and protection concerns and allegations to a designated on-site Reporting Officer [Safety Officer, Child Protection Advisory Officer] who will subsequently report this concern/allegation to the Children's Services Standards Coordinator.
- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to complete training to capacity build their child protection and vulnerable adult knowledge and skills competencies.
- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to utilise the professional expert competencies made available via the organisation to support them in their reporting responsibilities.

11. Protocol for Responding to Child Protection and Adult Vulnerability Concerns or Allegations

All staff and volunteers need to pay immediate attention when they become aware of information, which may suggest a child or vulnerable adult is being harmed or is at risk of harm. Children or vulnerable adults may be being harmed or be vulnerable to harm as a result of:

- Their own actions
- Actions of another person – whether adult or another child
- The geographical and physical environment
- Combination of all these factors.

Staff and volunteers are expected to be *aware* of potential or actual risk concerns in relation to a child or vulnerable adult, be *responsive* to step in and stop the harm if there is an emergency situation or report immediately to the appropriate designated Ministry person [Children's Services Standards Coordinator] and is compliant with the reporting requirements of the Oceania Province.

12. Staff, Volunteer & Management Reporting Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers have responsibilities towards a child or vulnerable adult who is in receipt of or providing Edmund Rice services or who is involved in an activity, which may be associated with Edmund Rice services.

All staff and volunteers retain individual responsibility to contact the child protection reporting authority, whenever there is *'reasonable suspicion'* of harm to a child or a vulnerable adult where a criminal offence may have occurred.

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All staff and volunteers have an organisational responsibility to report to the appropriate and designated organisational person, the information relating to a child or vulnerable adult concern or allegation.

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to complete training to capacity-build their child and adult vulnerability knowledge and skills competencies.

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to utilise the professional expert competencies made available via the organisation to support them in their reporting responsibilities.

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