

## ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

# SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS STATUS REPORT SEPTEMBER 2015

Child Protection Week 2015 provides the opportunity for me, as the Archbishop of Brisbane, to provide a report to the Catholic community on the strategies and actions we have initiated arising from the 'Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy' of the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

As Archbishop I am acutely aware of the harm that has been caused by those in whose care children should have been safe. We continue to express our sorrow for the hurt that has occurred.

As Archbishop I am personally committed to ensuring that the Archdiocese does everything it can to learn from the lessons of the past.

Not only do we need to learn more, but we need to teach more. We need to teach our communities the truth of abuse and the truth of what its prevention requires. The purpose of this teaching will be to create and sustain genuinely safe environments; and that will involve not just new processes, procedures and protocols. It will involve a change in the culture – a culture which has allowed abuse to happen and to be so badly mishandled when it came to light.

This Report is the first of what will be annual reports which outline the actions and strategies the Archdiocese of Brisbane has implemented to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. The Report seeks to demonstrate that the Archdiocese is doing what it said it would do to safeguard children.

It is my hope and prayer that the Catholic community of Brisbane will acknowledge the faults of the past and work together in ensuring a safe and nurturing future.

Archbishop of Brisbane

## **1) INTENT AND SCOPE OF THE REPORT**

This 'Status Report' is intended to provide an overview of the current status of the implementation of the Archdiocese of Brisbane's 'Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy'. The Report is being released as another activity through which the Archdiocese supports Child Protection Sunday (13 September 2015).

The Report is the first of what are planned to be annual 'Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Status Reports' by the Archdiocese of Brisbane. This Report details the actions taken by the Archdiocese since the beginning of 2014.

The Archdiocese of Brisbane is not aware of similar reporting measures in any of Australia's religious organisations.

## **2) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PAST WRONGS**

The Archdiocese of Brisbane fully endorses the position of the Australian Catholic Bishops:

"As bishops and leaders of religious institutes of the Catholic Church in Australia, we acknowledge with deep sadness and regret that a number of clergy and religious and other church personnel have abused children, adolescents and adults who have been in their pastoral care. To these victims we again offer our sincere apology".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Catholic Bishops Conference & Catholic Religious Australia, 'Towards Healing', National Committee for Professional Standards, January 2010, p. 1

### 3) COMMITMENT FOR THE FUTURE

The Archdiocese of Brisbane also recognises that it is not sufficient to only acknowledge past wrongs and apologise. Besides reparation for these wrongs, it is critical that policies and actions are put in place to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

The Archdiocese of Brisbane has adopted the following ‘Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults’ policy:

#### POLICY STATEMENT<sup>2</sup>

*...for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.*

Mark 10:14

***Children, young people and vulnerable adults are a gift from God with an intrinsic right to dignity of life, respect and security from physical and emotional harm. They are to be treasured, nurtured and safeguarded.***

This means that everyone in the church must ensure that the fundamental rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults are respected. This will be achieved through the development of respectful relationships and a commitment to safety embracing appropriate boundaries, behaviours and practices, in accordance with the Archdiocese of Brisbane *Code of Ethical Behaviour for employees and volunteers who work in service of the Church* as well as adherence to the legislative imperatives of the State.

“The Archdiocese of Brisbane is committed to taking the necessary steps to:

- demonstrate that the right to protection from harm for all people is paramount;
- foster best practice in safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- demonstrate accountability through establishing effective structures and practices;
- support Archdiocesan organisations and personnel in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults;
- uphold safe recruitment and selection practices for all Church personnel including volunteers because the Archdiocese is committed to employing people who will keep children and vulnerable adults safe from harm;
- uphold and maintain standards of conduct which set out clear guidelines regarding ethical behaviour as an essential part of reducing the risk of harm for all people;
- operate safe play, learning and pastoral environments that ensure safety”<sup>3</sup>

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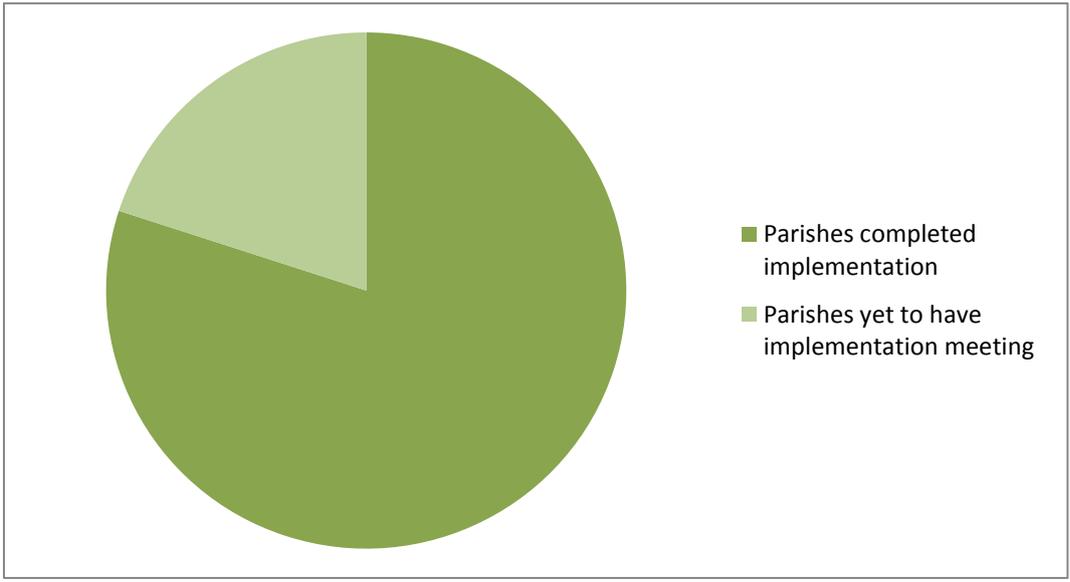
<sup>2</sup> Archdiocese of Brisbane, Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Prevention and Protection Policy’, January 2015, p.4

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.5

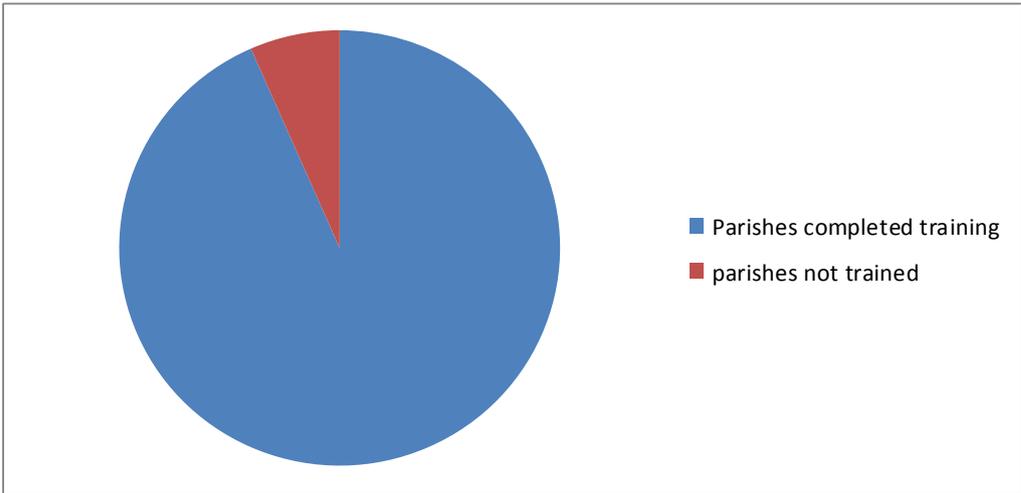
#### 4) IMPLEMENTING FROM THE LESSONS LEARNT

Arising from the adoption of the 'Safeguarding Children Policy' the following actions have been undertaken by the Archdiocese of Brisbane:

<p><b>1) The Archdiocese of Brisbane adopted its "Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Prevention and Protection Policy" in June 2014.</b></p>	
<p><b>Detail:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Policy outlines a uniform standard of best practice in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.</li> <li>• The Policy applies to all in the Archdiocese working with children and vulnerable adults (whether paid or unpaid) and includes clergy, religious, employees, contractors, volunteers and students on placement.</li> </ul>

<p><b>2) Resourcing the Policy</b></p>							
<p><b>Detail:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full time employee position of 'Safeguarding Officer' appointed in January 2014.</li> <li>• An Archdiocesan 'Safeguarding Advisory Committee' was established in April 2014.</li> <li>• Local Safeguarding representatives have been appointed in 45 of the 100 Parishes. It is planned to have these representatives appointed in all Parishes by June 2016.</li> <li>• Centacare Community services managers and coordinators have been trained in the procedure '<i>Recognising Abuse and Receiving a Disclosure</i>'. These managers and coordinators will conduct this training with their staff.</li> </ul>						
 <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Implementation Progress by Parish</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Parishes completed implementation</td> <td>75%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parishes yet to have implementation meeting</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Category	Percentage	Parishes completed implementation	75%	Parishes yet to have implementation meeting	25%
Category	Percentage						
Parishes completed implementation	75%						
Parishes yet to have implementation meeting	25%						

3) Implementation of Safeguarding strategies and actions	
<b>Detail:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The safeguarding actions are built around three key strategies: safe recruiting and selection practices, codes of ethical behaviour and safe activities and environments.</li> <li>• Procedures have been revised in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recruitment practices</li> <li>○ Induction</li> <li>○ Supervision of staff, contractors &amp; volunteers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A revised Code of Conduct has been implemented.</li> <li>• Centacare Child Care Services staff complete training with <i>'In Safe Hands'</i>, an organisation providing advanced child protection training, including duty of care, intervention and prevention strategies, prior to commencing employment.</li> <li>• The Archdiocese has set Key Performance Indicators against which the strategies and actions can be measured. These include safe recruitment and selection practices; adherence to the Code of Conduct, safe activities for children, young people and vulnerable adults which have been risk assessed, reporting of allegations of harm according to the policy and the expectations of the National Committee of Professional Standards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Annual audits of these indicators are conducted.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

4) Professional Development							
<b>Detail:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A program of training staff and volunteers in Parishes and agencies has been implemented; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More than 2,500 parish &amp; agency staff, in 85 of the 100 Parishes have undertaken training</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Parishes completed training</td> <td>85%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>parishes not trained</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In August 2015, Dr Monica Applewhite conducted a series of seminars and workshops in the Archdiocese.</li> </ul>	Category	Percentage	Parishes completed training	85%	parishes not trained	15%
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5) Monitoring	
<b>Detail:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal annual compliance audits have been successfully completed in 23 parishes. It is planned for audits will be completed in all Parishes by November 2016.</li> </ul>

6) Independent External Auditing	
<b>Detail:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Archdiocese will implement Independent External Auditing of the Policy, Strategies and Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The audits will focus on particular areas of the Safeguarding strategies and actions and will be conducted over a rolling five-year period.</li> <li>A process will be initiated in the fourth quarter 2015 seeking 'expressions of interest' from suitably qualified external firms to undertake this task.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

7) Reporting	
<b>Detail:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Archdiocese has committed to producing 'Status Reports' every 12 months</li> </ul>

## 5) CONCLUSION

Learning from the lessons of the past, the Archdiocese of Brisbane is taking seriously its duty and responsibility to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults.

The Archdiocese has adopted a "**Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Prevention and Protection Policy**" and implemented a range of strategies and actions to support the Policy principles.

The Archdiocese has recently made further enhancements to the Policy by committing to Independent External Audits to provide further transparency in the implementation of the Policy.