ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE
Office for Safeguarding Services

2023 External Safeguarding Audit

O'Connor Marsden & Associates (OCM) were commissioned to undertake an audit of a sample of 10 randomly selected parishes to gauge compliance with the Archdiocesan safeguarding criteria. The OCM auditors visited the parishes, performed site inspections, consulted with the Parish Priest and staff, and recorded criteria ratings using the online audit tool.

Key Findings

The key findings of the audit were:

- The Archdiocesan safeguarding criteria are fit-for-purpose and commensurate with the capacity of parishes.

- The revised volunteer safeguarding credentials matrix is fit-for-purpose and manageable.

- The sampled parishes had a strong understanding of the Archdiocesan safeguarding criteria and what is required to achieve compliance.

- The internal safeguarding audit tool embedded in the Guardian (IT) system allows for the efficient capture and analysis of compliance data and supporting evidence across parishes.

- The sampled parishes rated an average of 63% compliance with the safeguarding criteria on a met or not met basis.

- The sampled parishes demonstrated highest compliance with screening checks for Clergy, displaying safeguarding-related information in high visibility locations, regularly promoting safeguarding and related topics, and maintaining records of the ministries performed by clergy.

- The sampled parishes demonstrated lowest compliance with screening checks for volunteers, volunteers signing the Prior Conduct Declaration and Safe Conduct Standards, and volunteers completing safeguarding training.

- The main impediment to achieving compliance with the safeguarding requirements is the capacity of parishes to maintain up-to-date volunteer safeguarding credentials.

- A number of issues relating to the capacity of volunteer Local Safeguarding Representatives to properly fulfil the role were identified.

Recommendations

The key recommendation made by the auditors were:

1) The Archdiocese should translate key safeguarding information and artefacts into other languages for parishes with considerable non-English speaking communities.

2) Parishes should be required to complete a safeguarding self-assessment prior to future audits to streamline the process.

3) The Archdiocese should consider an alternative IT solution to more efficiently manage volunteer safeguarding credentials.

4) The Archdiocese should reconsider the appropriateness of the Local Safeguarding Representative role remaining a volunteer role.