ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE
Office for Safeguarding Services

2024 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 parish visits were well attended, with participants actively engaged and responsive.

- The parishes demonstrated a good understanding of the safeguarding criteria and requirements for compliance reflecting significant effort by the Office for Safeguarding Services.

- The parishes rated an average of 73% compliance with the safeguarding criteria.

- The parishes compliance rate has improved in comparison to last year, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement.

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

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

- The main impediments to achieving compliance are:
  - the capacity of parishes to manage worker credentials; and
  - the absence of a reliable, efficient, and user-friendly IT system to track and monitor worker credentials data, particularly for volunteers.

- There is a need to improve systems and processes for monitoring and managing worker credentials data. There should be a standardised process that ensures consistent and timely updates of credentials data across all parishes.

Recommendations

The key recommendation made by the auditors were:

1) The Archdiocese should undertake a cost benefit analysis of implementing a fit-for-purpose IT solution to better manage volunteer credentials.

2) As a priority, the People & Culture team should undertake a full analysis of worker credentials with a view to improving the accuracy of that data and achieving compliance. Where non-compliance is identified (particularly with screening checks) the Archdiocese should take appropriate remedial action.

3) The Archdiocese should develop training for Parish Secretaries and Local Safeguarding Representatives on the current procedures for maintaining worker credentials data.

4) The Archdiocese should establish a specific competency for the Parish Secretary role which emphasises the proficient use of technology and leadership as this position is mostly responsible for maintaining worker credentials.