



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PORT PIRIE

SCREENING POLICY –
WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

Catholic Education, Parishes and Catholic Communities,
Diocesan Offices and Affiliated Catholic Organisations

Approved by:
Child Protection Council

Commencement Date: 01 April 2020

Review Date: March 2023

SCREENING POLICY - WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

Policy Vision Statement:

The Diocese of Port Pirie is a community of believers drawing on our rich tradition and celebrating our diversity, striving for fullness of life in God. We seek to build a family-centred Church, strengthening community and spreading the good news of Jesus Christ, with a particular concern for those who are poor and disadvantaged.

The Diocese is a child safe organisation, which reflects Gospel values in providing children, families and individuals with a welcoming, nurturing, child-friendly environment, free from risk of harm. The Diocese aims to provide safe environments for all.

1. Introduction

The Catholic Diocese of Port Pirie takes seriously its duty of care for those who entrust themselves to it and to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all participants in programs and activities across the Diocese. The Diocese recognises and encourages the significant role that the Church community plays in the provision of an environment that nurtures the well-being of children, young people and those who are vulnerable through age, disability or crisis.

The screening policy builds on the Church's commitment to promote and maintain safe environments for all. It reflects the state and national obligations of all in the community, in relation to creating safe environments for all.

State legislation requires employees, volunteers and contractors within organisations to be appropriately assessed as to their suitability to hold or perform roles within the organisation. In particular, Working with Children Checks have been specified as part of that assessment process for those working with or in the vicinity of children as outlined in the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016.

This Policy applies to all Clergy (resident & visiting), Religious (resident & visiting), Employees, Contractors and Volunteers. Herein these groups will be referred to as persons working or volunteering in the Catholic Diocese of Port Pirie.

2. Purpose

This policy reaffirms the expectation that Working with Children Checks are to be undertaken for all individuals engaged at any location within the Catholic Diocese of Port Pirie with the exception of those exempted under Section 4.

This policy aims to;

- Support Diocesan locations in meeting their paramount responsibility for the safety of children, young people and vulnerable persons engaged with their locations and or services
- Contribute to a process of establishing the suitability and integrity of persons working and volunteering within the Diocese, thus limiting the possibility of unsuitable persons providing service at any location
- Ensure the Diocesan screening and suitability practices comply with legislative and policy requirements and that all decisions around suitability are based on the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable others and the principles of natural justice.
- Provide confidence with regard to the privacy and confidentiality of the process.
- Ensure the ongoing security and confidentiality of all relevant records.

3. Scope

- This policy applies to all Clergy and Religious Persons, all Employees and all Volunteers who provide service at any Diocesan location.
- This policy applies to any Contractor or Third-Party Provider providing service at any Diocesan location.
- Working with Children Checks are undertaken through Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Working with Children Checks encompass not only a check against an individual's relevant criminal history background but also now includes;
 - Cross-jurisdictional expanded criminal history and
 - Other police reports, and
 - Child protection information (held in other Government repositories), and
 - Care concern investigation information (held in other Government Repositories).

4. Policy Detail

Principles

- The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults is the paramount obligation of the Diocese and must not be overridden by other interests
- The implementation and monitoring of Working with Children Checks are only one means by which the Diocese meets its obligations to the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- The monitoring of a person's suitability to be engaged with the Diocese is continuous and persons engaged must be suitable to do so at all times
- Assessing a person's suitability to be engaged with the Diocese must be based on sufficient and relevant information
- The use, storage and disclosure of personal and sensitive information about a person's history must occur in accordance with the requirements of the organisation or department providing the information. It must also comply with legislative requirements and in accordance with the National Privacy Principles

General Process

- All new appointments which attract remuneration or a stipend will be subject to a satisfactory 'Employee' Working with Children Check.

(In the event that a person has a current Working with Children Check for volunteering and commences paid work, that check will need to be upgraded. This upgrade must be applied for within 28 days of starting the paid work and only in the event that the paid work is for more than seven days in a calendar year)

- All new appointments (volunteers) for which no remuneration is received will be subject to a satisfactory 'Volunteer' Working with Children Check.
- All persons (*new and existing*) will be precluded from ministry, employment, contracting or volunteer roles within the Church if they are not willing to obtain a Working with Children Check.
- All persons providing service in either a paid (*includes Stipend*) or voluntary capacity will be checked on a five yearly cycle unless exempted under this policy (*Section 4 - Exemptions*).
- All checks will be undertaken with the informed consent of the individual concerned.
- Identity must be verified as part of the screening process.
- Suitability of persons will be monitored for the full term of engagement with the Diocese.
- Where cross sector service provision occurs, flagging systems will be utilised.
- No other documents will be accepted as prior evidence of screening if they have not had the Working with Children Check undertaken by Department of Human Services in SA, except where it applies to Interstate Clergy & Religious Persons undertaking a visit for less than 10 consecutive days.

- All information relating to Working with Children Checks will be managed in a sensitive, private and confidential manner.
- Any associated documentation relating to Working with Children Checks will be managed in a confidential and secure way in accordance with National Privacy Principles reflected in the Diocesan Privacy Policy.
- All assessable information (*Section 19*) will be reported to Department Human Services through the Screening and Verification Authority within the required timeframe.

- **Exemptions**

While some exemptions to the policy requirements apply, the Diocese reserves the right to require a Working with Children Check for any role, at any time, at its absolute discretion.

- **Permanently incapacitated and inactive Clergy/Religious**

Only applies in the instance that a Clergy member becomes permanently incapacitated through illness or injury and is no longer able to provide ministry. A medical certificate from a medical practitioner is required and will be required to be stored on file in lieu of a renewed check.

- **All children under the age of 14 years**

- **Some Occasional Volunteers**

Exemption under this category only applies where the service provided does not involve a home visit, an excursion or overnight stay or working with a child with a disability. The provision of service must be no more than 7 times in a calendar year and persons must also be directly supervised at all times by someone at the location who has a current valid Working with Children Check.

- **South Australian Police Officers**

- **Australian Federal Police Officers**

- **Some Contractor / Third Party Service Providers (On-Site)**

Some occasional or one-off Contractor/Third Party Providers may be exempt under this category dependent upon nature of visit, frequency and level of supervision at the location.

- **Visiting Clergy & Religious Persons**

Interstate: Visiting Clergy & Religious Persons who are attending in order carry out a spiritual/religious role of any kind must, prior to their arrival:

- provide evidence of their Working with Children Check obtained from their current state and also provide either;
- their current ACMR ID number or
- a signed Individual Declaration plus a Church Authority Declaration signed off by their current Diocesan Archbishop/Bishop or Provincial stating:
 - that they have not been the subject allegations of improper conduct
 - that they have not been charged with a criminal offence or been the subject of any child protection concerns

*****Visiting Clergy and Religious from interstate will be required to undergo a Working with Children Check in South Australia in the event that their length of stay exceeds 10 consecutive days*****

Overseas: Visiting Clergy & Religious Persons who are attending in order to carry out a spiritual/religious role of any kind must, prior to their arrival:

- provide an itinerary for their planned visit (*if visitation is for less than 10 days*)
- provide a police certificate from the country in which they live (*if visitation is for more than 10 days but less than 30 days*) and
- provide a signed Individual Declaration plus a Church Authority Declaration signed off by their current Diocesan Archbishop/Bishop or Provincial stating:
 - that they have not been the subject allegations of improper conduct
 - that they have not been charged with a criminal offence or been the subject of any child protection concerns

*****Visiting Clergy and Religious from overseas will be required to undergo a Working with Children Check in South Australia in the event that their length of stay exceeds 30 days*****

- **Third Party Service Providers - Off Site**

At the point of engagement with the third-party service provider, the Diocesan location must obtain a written assurance from the provider that all personnel located at these external sites have been screened in accordance with the requirements of the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and all Government directives and policy relating to the protection of children.

5. Key Roles & Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Screening and Verification Authority	<p>The Authority is a centralised service area aligned under the Diocesan Centre of the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide.</p> <p>The Authority provides facilitation of all checks undertaken for the organisation. It also provides ongoing cross sector assessment, in instances where risk has been reported or detected relating to a person. A helpdesk service, regular information dissemination, monitoring and reporting on expired checks and audits to assess ongoing policy and legislative compliance support the Working with Children Check process for the Dioceses of both Adelaide and Port Pirie.</p> <p>The Screening and Verification Authority also provides service to the Diocese of Port Pirie as well as other affiliated Catholic organisations.</p>
Responsible Authority (RA)	<p>The Leader or Senior Person at the location who has overall responsibility for the activities associated with that location.</p> <p>They are required to ensure that every person engaged in either a <i>paid (for remuneration or stipend)</i> or <i>voluntary (no payment)</i> capacity performing a specific role or task of any kind with a Parish, School, Centacare or other affiliated Catholic Agency has obtained the necessary Working with Children Check (<i>unless exempt under this policy</i>) through the Screening and Verification Authority.</p>
Nominated Authorising Person (NAP)	<p>A Person(s) appointed by the Responsible Authority at the location.</p> <p>The NAP is required to carry out the administrative duties associated with the Working with Children Check process. They are also required to ensure that appropriate registers of all persons engaged in either a <i>paid (for remuneration or stipend)</i> or <i>voluntary (no payment)</i> capacity performing a specific role or task of any kind with a Parish, School, Centacare or other affiliated Catholic Agency are maintained.</p>
Department of Human Services (DHS)	<p>The Unit is 'authorised' pursuant to the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 to conduct child related employment screening on behalf of organisations.</p> <p>The Unit has at its disposal, access to various information repositories relating to children and utilises this information in conjunction with the information received from ACIC to assess risk levels associated with individuals.</p>
Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission	<p>ACIC is an executive agency of the Australian Government. ACIC's National Criminal History Record Checking (<i>NCHRC</i>) program provides accredited agencies and police services with national criminal history information to support their processes of assessing suitability for employment or appointment to positions of trust.</p>

6. Monitoring, Evaluation & Review

- The Responsible Authority (RA) at each Diocesan location is responsible for implementing and monitoring compliance with this policy at their location.
- Screening and Verification Authority provides expiry notification reminders to individuals and to locations three months in advance of the expiry date
- Screening and Verification Authority provides ongoing monitoring and reporting of expired clearances and reports such information to the locations concerned
- Screening and Verification Authority undertakes ongoing policy compliance visits at locations and reports outcomes to the appropriate authorities
- Screening and Verification Authority continues to monitor the relevance of this policy, its alignment with legislation and its review and amendment.

7. Other Supporting Documents

- Screening and Verification Authority-Working with Children Checks Guidelines
- Screening Decision Chart
- Off Site Contractor – Standardised Statement

8. Definitions & Abbreviations

Term	Meaning
Catholic Church	The Catholic Church community is a broad concept that includes any Catholic Church body and all people involved in the life and work of the Church.
Child or Young Person	A child or young person is an individual aged from conception to 18 years of age, and may include young adults with disabilities.
Church Body	A Church body includes a diocese, religious institute and any other juridical person, body corporate, organisation or association, including autonomous lay organisations that exercise pastoral ministry within, or on behalf of, the Catholic Diocese of Port Pirie.
Clergy / Religious Person	The group or body of ordained Priests, Deacons and consecrated Brothers & Sisters who perform religious spiritual services.
Contractor	A contractor is a person engaged for remuneration to perform a specific role or task of any kind within a parish, school or other Catholic agency or organisation.
ACIC	Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission is a federally funded Agency that provides a police check service to accredited agencies. <i>(See Roles & Responsibilities)</i>
Department of Human Services (DHS)	DHS is Government funded and is 'authorised' pursuant to the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016, to conduct child related employment screening on behalf of organisations. <i>(See Roles & Responsibilities)</i>
Duty of Care	Duty of care is a legal obligation imposed on an individual which requires that a standard of reasonable care anticipating and avoiding foreseeable harm or minimising harm when it occurs for those who are in the care of the Church, is followed.
Employee	An employee is a person engaged for remuneration or stipend to perform a specific role or task of any kind within a parish, school or other Catholic agency.
Flagging systems	Various alert or prompt systems that protect against unsuitable persons being engaged with a particular location.
Screening	The consideration of a person's relevant history or other child related information to determine suitability.
Suitable	Where an individual has been determined to have met the requirements of the proposed role.
Third Party Provider	A third-party provider is a person engaged for remuneration to perform a specific role or task of any kind within a parish, school or other Catholic agency or organisation
Unsuitable	Where an individual has not met or maintained the required suitability.
Volunteer	A volunteer is an individual who has been assigned or given a role or responsibility of any kind within a parish, school or other Catholic agency or organisation, while not being paid for the service they provide.