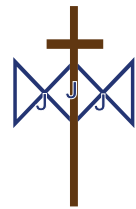


Framework for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults



Sisters of Saint Joseph
of the Sacred Heart



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of the Sacred Heart

CONGREGATIONAL
ADMINISTRATION
CENTRE

3 March 2017

As the Sisters of St Joseph have continued to engage in the work of the Royal Commission and the Truth Justice and Healing Council, it has been an apt time for us to review our procedures and policies regarding the safe-guarding of children and vulnerable adults and to establish a consistent national framework.

Mary MacKillop was a pioneer woman whose influence has shaped the lives of thousands of children and vulnerable people throughout this land. In particular, Australians identify with her ability to stand up for what she believed in. Her commitment to justice calls forth in the Sisters of St Joseph a willingness to address the injustices that we encounter along our journey of life and to speak out when others are unfairly treated. It requires us to be people who stand beside those who are most vulnerable in our society.

In this vein, the Sisters of St Joseph have developed a framework and associated policies and procedures for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. This has been created from research of both Child Protection Standards from around the world including work done on behalf of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the lessons from Mary MacKillop's life story lived through what the Gospel required of her.

The introduction of the safeguarding standards will enhance the way the sisters, employees and volunteers carry out the fundamental message of protecting children and vulnerable people, and provide a platform from which to ensure that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Yours sincerely

Sr Monica Cavanagh
Congregational Leader

Framework for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

“Whatever you do to the least of these – my brothers and sisters – you do to me”

These words of Jesus have been the ‘lodestar’ of Christian behaviour down through the ages, and are encapsulated in the spirit and charism of Mary of the Cross MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods. In the circumstances of the present time, they are further expressed in **The Sisters of St Joseph’s Framework for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults.**

INTRODUCTION

At the time of Mary MacKillop’s Beatification (1995) Pope John Paul stated “Mary MacKillop embodies all that is best in your nation and its people – genuine openness to others, hospitality to strangers, generosity to the needy, justice to those unfairly treated, perseverance in the face of adversity, and kindness and support to the suffering.” These underlying beliefs and values, formed from God being active in Mary’s life, provide the framework for which the Sisters of St Joseph have always endeavoured to give to children and vulnerable adults. This has been, in fact, an integral component of their mission.

The establishment of caring communities committed to the service of the poor, especially through the education of children, was at the heart of Mary’s vision. More recently the Sisters of St Joseph have been working towards building inclusive and supportive relationships in a world of increasing diversity, internationality and vulnerability. It is their ongoing vision to “stand as women of healing and hope within a Church community fractured by division, hurt and abuse.”¹

The centrality of God in her life gave meaning to Mary, enabling her to give complete reality to the values that were at the centre of her daily living. Today the Sisters of St Joseph are bringing together all required legislative and appropriate administrative, social and educational tools to develop practical policies and procedures for the continued safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults whilst recognising and acknowledging that over time this has not always been done well, this document includes processes that will ensure justice to those who have suffered abuse and prevent potential risk.

BACKGROUND

The Safeguarding Standards on which the Sisters of St Joseph are basing their “Framework for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults” have stemmed from both the lived charism of Mary MacKillop and the Sisters and the comprehensive work which has been carried out recently by many organisations such as the Australian Catholic Church. This includes the research of both Child Protection Standards from around the world and that conducted by the Parenting Research Centre on Key Standards of Child Safe Organisations on behalf of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Along with taking advantage of access to a wide range of practitioners in the safeguarding area, this framework also draws on documents from the Australian Catholic Church (including *Towards Healing* and *Integrity in Ministry, Integrity in Service of the Church*).

¹ Sisters of St Joseph “Living into Mystery” 26th General Chapter November 2013



SCOPE AND APPLICATION

The Standards of Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Persons apply to all Sisters of St Joseph, staff and volunteers.

Policies and procedures flowing from the Key Safeguarding Standards have been developed to form the “Framework for the Sisters of St Joseph”. This framework document is grounded in the charism of Mary MacKillop and Julian Woods and will provide a structure by which the safety of children and vulnerable adults is always seen as paramount in the mission and ministry of the Sisters of St Joseph.

Given the number of present day Josephite jurisdictions and the wide variety of ministries of the Sisters of St Joseph, the document has been written such that the Sisters can refer to it from anywhere in Australia. With its direction they will then be guided towards good practice and relevant statutory obligations in order to protect children and vulnerable adults

This Safeguarding Framework provides

1. **Key Safeguarding Standards** with Links to the charism of Mary MacKillop and Julian Woods
2. **Rationale for each Standard**
3. **Policies and Procedures** (Standard 9) organised into a framework to provide structure and support that will lead to the protection of children and vulnerable adults.



'The Vision' by Jan Williamson

Standard 1:

The Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults is embedded in the leadership, governance and culture of the Sisters of St Joseph.

“Never see a need without doing something about it”

Julian Woods – Original Rule

Rationale

The words of Jack Bourke, father of Sr Virginia Bourke rsj, reflect a culture of child and vulnerable adult protection stemming from Mary MacKillop which moves beyond a historical context. He portrays a shared responsibility, a culture of the Sisters’ care of children and people at their most vulnerable.

“As told to me by my mother and father, here is some of the history of Mother Mary, in later years to become a legend as a citizen and above all a religious of the highest order. When professed, she became known worldwide as Mother Mary of the Cross. Along with Julian Tenison Woods she was the foundress of the Order of the St Joseph Nuns. This was a teaching order in outback places. The Sisters were carers of isolated bush women and their children. They were the solace of the expectant mother, black or white, no matter what religion, or perhaps none. In Mother Mary’s early days there were cases where she and her company not only brought children into the world, but laid them out and buried them.

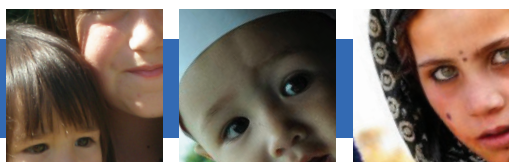
Mother Mary moulded her co-Sisters and her own work to soothe troubled waters, so much so that the toughest of men loved her and almost sat at her knee seeking her counsel on all the troubles of life. Mother Mary had many “brush ups” so to speak with a lot of narrow minded people. Mother Mary was a courageous, broad-minded and magnanimous woman. She was, although a woman of great piety, a great realist, with the ability to grasp the way in which the people of the world had to grapple with life.”²

In this living recount of Mary and the Sisters that it is possible to see in action Mary’s words about looking after the vulnerable, “seek first the poorest and the most neglected parts of God’s vineyard” (1900) and then for children “let us pray that the spirit of St Joseph will accompany his children and that they may do much good for themselves and others.” (1890).

And as Sr Monica Cavanagh reminds the Sisters, “Mary MacKillop’s commitment to justice calls forth in us a willingness to address the injustices that we encounter along our journey of life and to speak out when others are unfairly treated. It requires us to be people who stand beside those who are most vulnerable in our society.”³

² Bourke, Virginia rsj “In the tradition with Mary MacKillop” in Wicks, Pauline ed. Mary MacKillop Inspiration For Today, The Trustees of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, 2005, pp. 22 -23.

³ Cavanagh, Monica rsj, Mary MacKillop A Window of Hope, Wilkinson Publishing Pty Ltd, 2010, pp 45 - 46.



Standard 2:

Safeguarding of the Children and Vulnerable Adults is continuously reviewed and improved.

“God loves those best who help the weak to become whole”

Mary MacKillop 1890

Rationale

The Sisters of St Joseph have planned and created this framework and associated policies and protocols with the intention of regularly reviewing all areas of their ministry with children and vulnerable adults. This is done through internal and external consultation in order to ensure practices are improved. The complaints and concerns are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures so as to inform continuous improvement.

Standard 3:

Education and training are consistently provided to assist in the provision of safety for children and vulnerable adults.

“God wants us by every means in our power to lead others to life”

Mary MacKillop 1899

Rationale

Mary MacKillop and Julian Woods saw education as a means of changing the lives of people, particularly those in difficult circumstances. It is in this vein through the development of training programs and support networks that the Sisters hope to educate all members of the Congregation and SOSJ ministry employees and volunteers about the processes of keeping safe all children and vulnerable adults in their care. The training programs focus on education around the safeguarding standards, leadership in this area, and encompass the maintenance of training records.



Photo used with the kind permission of Mary MacKillop International.

Standard 4:

Communicating the safeguarding message of the Sisters of St Joseph ensures that Sisters, Families and communities are informed and involved.

“Nothing is too little to be noticed”

Mary MacKillop 1873

Rationale

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. It is important that the Sisters of St Joseph ensure that all relevant people are informed and involved. The families and communities in which children and vulnerable adults live need to have access to appropriate information concerning governance, operations and safeguarding policies. Having an opportunity to feed into the communication process is also beneficial to the children and vulnerable adults.

Standard 5:

The empowerment of children and vulnerable adults to participate and have a say about issues and decisions that affect them are essential to the success of the safeguarding framework.

“Try to keep God with us by charity of thought, word and Act”

Mary MacKillop 1890

Rationale

Amongst all her commitments, Mary MacKillop had a special place for children and the vulnerable. It is through this kindness that the Sisters provide a voice for children and vulnerable adults to help them develop the skills and resilience for their protection now and into the future.



Photo used with the kind permission of Mary MacKillop Foundation.

Standard 6:

The people working with children and vulnerable adults are suitable for their roles and supported in them.

“Let St Joseph’s true children remember their mission to seek first the poorest, most neglected parts of God’s vineyard”

Mary MacKillop 1900

Rationale

Mary MacKillop saw the Josephite mission as bringing hope, relief, encouragement and God’s love to all whom she encountered. Just as she then looked for women who would be fit to carry out a mission of love to the children, particularly amongst the poor and isolated in the emerging Australian colonies, so now do the Sisters of St Joseph look to ensure that those called to this ministry and employment within the organisation are suitable for their roles and supported in them.

In this context all Sisters, employees and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults are required to have the relevant State’s “Working with Children Check” (WWCC). The Sisters in ministry provide their WWCC information to their Regional Leader or her delegate. Sisters in Parishes or other ministry also provide their WWCC information as required in the workplace situation.

Standard 7:

Complaints Processes are easily accessible to the people who need them.

“Do not, for the sake of defending one or two, shrink from speaking the plain, open truth”

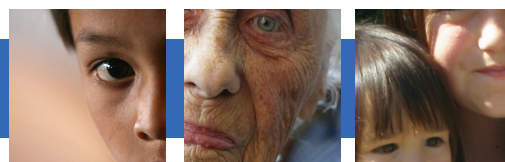
Mary MacKillop 1871

Rationale

As far back as 1872 two clergy whilst working at Kapunda were accused of neglecting their parochial duties, overstepping the bounds of propriety and engaging in behaviour demeaning to their state. The Sisters of St Joseph stationed at Kapunda reported their alleged misdemeanours to Julian Woods. One of these priests was summarily dismissed from their position within the diocese.⁴

It is imperative to ensure that strong reporting systems are in place to ensure current legislated requirements are adhered to in order to protect children and vulnerable adults. Whilst recognising and acknowledging that over time this has not always been done well, processes to provide justice to those who have suffered abuse are included.

⁴ Foale, Marie Therese rsj The Josephite Story, St Joseph’s Generalate Sydney, 1989, p60



Standard 8:

A Risk Management process minimises the opportunity for abuse to occur in physical or online environments.

“As the Institute of the Sisterhood of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart was established to meet the many wants of the Australian Colonies, and these wants can hardly be realised by those who have not had some experience of them, it follows naturally that a brief explanation of some may not be unwelcome to those charitably interested in the welfare of religion in that remote quarter”

Mary MacKillop 1873

Rationale

In talking about spirituality, Mary MacKillop very much understood that the land of Australia was unique. Each part of its unique beauty and isolation required a different understanding. It is in this context of understanding these differences that the Sisters of St Joseph assess situations of risk to children and vulnerable adults. The assessment includes an appropriate response in order to minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur in physical or online environments. The maintenance of records ensures that all facets of safeguarding and complaints are used to continuously assess both all areas of possible risk and appropriate responses.

Standard 9:

Development of Policies and Procedures

“May God grant you courage and true wisdom in all you say and do.”

Mary MacKillop 1875

Rationale

The Policies and Procedures for the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable adults are based on the Safeguarding Standards of organisations mentioned above. Within each of these standards are developed the written instructions that provide fundamental strategies that will ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults. It is not enough only to communicate these policies. Rather they must also ensure that they are closely linked and that all the Sisters, Employees and Volunteers have the understanding, knowledge, skills and capacity to work through the procedures.

