

Office for Safeguarding and Professional Standards
(Chancery)

Diocese of Broken Bay

Pastoral Response for Clergy

Responding to a disclosure of
sexual abuse
or any other crime



SAFE • ATTENTIVE • RESPONSIVE

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1. Preamble

The mission of the Diocese of Broken Bay unequivocally supports those persons who have been affected by any form of sexual abuse at any time. The Diocese encourages persons who have experienced sexual abuse as a child or who are aware of sexual abuse of a child to come forward and disclose their experience of what occurred. They may choose to do this within the context of a Church community, either to a Priest, a school principal, or any person who works for the Church.

A person who tells of sexual abuse brings many emotions to the disclosure. The process of bringing what may have been long hidden into the light and speaking about what has been unspeakable can assist the person to find healing. Speaking about their experience may help the person in many different ways. Whoever a victim of sexual abuse chooses to trust with their disclosure needs to receive their story with respect and compassion, and without judgement.

An offender may decide to disclose their crime to Clergy. Disclosures made in the sacrament of reconciliation are exempt from the obligation to report. However, if the disclosure occurs outside the sacrament of reconciliation, reporting obligations exists.

2. Purpose

This protocol applies to Clergy and outlines the process by which clergy are to respond to and forward to the Diocese any disclosure of sexual abuse against a child or adult and, or other crime.

3. Principles

- The Diocese welcomes those who have been abused to come forward and inform the Diocese about their abuse.
- These people of abuse and their families have a right to be heard and should not have to carry their experiences in silence or on their own.
- Disclosures of abuse will be received with compassion and respect for the dignity of the person making the disclosure.
- A person who discloses abuse to a member of the clergy should be advised that the Diocese will comply with all legal requirements including notification to the police where required.

4. Process

A. When a person makes a disclosure

A person wanting to speak of abuse may make contact by phone, email or in the context of another conversation. Some people may have repressed the memories of abuse for many years because it is so painful. A person will generally only disclose abuse when they feel safe. The initial contact may be a person testing the reaction of the person to whom they are making their disclosure to see how the disclosure will be received. You may be the first person to whom a

person relates their experience. In all situations, the most important response is to hear their story compassionately and without judgement.

People may wish to speak about:

- Abuse that is happening to them now
- Abuse that happened in the past – this may be many years ago
- Something that they have been told
- Something that they have witnessed

The person disclosing to you may in fact be the offender. It is important that you advise them immediately that anything they tell you may not be able to be held in confidence and if they admit to a crime, you will need to report to police.

B. Guideline of what to do when a person makes a disclosure of sexual abuse

The best environment is one that is private, where you will not be interrupted. It is always preferable to allow the person to speak when they are ready, avoid suggesting that they come back at another time.

| DO | DO NOT |
|--|---|
| Adopt a listening style that is compassionate, calm and reassuring. | DO NOT dismiss the concerns. |
| Stay calm, be present, take what the person is telling you seriously and respond pastorally. | DO NOT allow any strong feelings you experience to show. This can deter the person from giving further information. Be aware of your own feelings and address them later. |
| Allow the person to continue at his/her own pace. | DO NOT probe for further information – you are not investigating. |
| Check with the person to make sure that you have understood what they have said. Do not suggest words but use their words. | DO NOT make promises that cannot be kept particularly in relation to keeping it secret. |
| Explain that you are required to report the abuse to the Diocese, who will report to other authorities as required by law. | DO NOT make any comments about the alleged perpetrator, make assumptions or speculate. |
| Keep the disclosure otherwise confidential | DO NOT make judgements or make statements about your belief or otherwise, about the information given. |

C. Guideline of what to do after a person makes a disclosure

- Write down what the person has told you
 - name and contact details of the person disclosing/victim
 - name of the perpetrator
 - nature of the crime (briefly)
 - when and where the alleged crime happened
- Immediately contact: Ms Jodie Crisafulli, Safeguarding (Chancery) Manager,
P: (02) 8379 1647, M: 0405 422 522, E: jodie.crisafulli@bbcatholic.org.au
- Consider what pastoral support the person who made the disclosure may need

- iv. Consider what supports you may need, noting any strong feelings that come up for you. The Office for Safeguarding and Professional Standards (Chancery) is here to assist you.

Remember! It is not your role to investigate

It is important that you are aware, that you are not responsible for deciding whether the abuse has occurred. You are responsible for ensuring that the Diocese is aware of the abuse/crime so that reporting obligations can be met, and appropriate steps taken including pastoral care. Your main role with the person making the disclosure is likely to be to provide pastoral care and to listen to the needs of the person.

D. Support Contacts

- [Blue Knot Foundation](#) - 1300 657 380, Counselling and support for survivors
- [Braveheart Inc](#) - 1800 272 831, Counselling and support for survivors, child protection advocacy
- [Care Leavers Australasia Network](#) - 1800 008 774, Support and advocacy for Forgotten Australians
- [Child Migrants Trust](#) - 1800 040 509, Social work services for Former Child Migrants, including counselling and support for family reunions
- [Child Wise](#) - 1800 991 099, Trauma informed telephone and online counselling for childhood abuse. Training and organisational capacity building on child abuse prevention
- [Children and Young People with Disability Australia](#) - 1800 222 660/03 9417 1025 National peak body for children and young people with disability. Provides information and systemic representation
- [Healing Foundation](#) - There is no phone number to contact the Healing Council. Please contact using their website. Service to help build the capacity of Indigenous organisations and support the development of the Link Up network
- [In Good Faith Foundation](#) - 03 9326 1190, Independent advocacy, case work, referral and support to aid recovery for victims, their families and communities responding to clergy, religious and lay abuse.
- [On the Line Australia Inc](#) - 1300 78 99 78, National telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with family and relationship concerns
- [People with Disability Australia](#) - 1800 422 015/TTY: 1800 422 016 National telephone line to provide information and referrals to people with disabilities
- [Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia](#) - 1800 211 028 24/7 telephone and online crisis counselling service for anyone in Australia who has experienced or is at risk of sexual assault
- [Tzedek](#) - 1300 893 335, Advocacy, referrals and support services to people who have experienced religious/clergy abuse, with a focus on the Jewish community