



Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide

SCREENING POLICY – WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS



Approved by:

Archbishop of Adelaide

+ *Pat O'Regan*

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Policy Reviewer:
Manager, Screening and Verification Authority

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Policy Vision Statement of the Archdiocese of Adelaide

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

1. Introduction

In line with the integrity in our common mission (2023) principles, the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide 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 Archdiocese. The Archdiocese recognises and encourages the significant role that the Church community plays in the provision of an environment that nurtures the wellbeing of children, young people and those who are vulnerable through age, disability or crisis.

The policy builds on the Church's commitment to promote and maintain safe environments for all and should be read in conjunction with the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide, Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. This policy informs and directs the child safeguarding principles and procedures in the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide.

It is also important to be aware of 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 Archdiocese of Adelaide.

2. Purpose

The Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide takes seriously its obligation to provide a safe environment for all individuals under its care. We are committed to ensuring the utmost protection for everyone involved. As part of this commitment, it is our policy to require Working with Children Checks for all personnel engaged at any site within our jurisdiction, with exceptions as outlined in Section 4.

This policy aims to;

- Support Archdiocesan locations in meeting their paramount responsibility for the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults engaged with their locations and/or services.
- Contribute to a process of establishing the suitability and integrity of persons working and volunteering within the Archdiocese, thus limiting the possibility of unsuitable persons providing service at any location.
- Ensure the Archdiocesan 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 adults and the principles of natural justice.
- Provide confidence regarding 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 Archdiocesan location.
- This policy applies to any Contractor or Third-Party Provider providing service at any Archdiocesan location.
- The Legislative Authority governing the screening policy for Working with Children Checks includes the following Acts;
 - Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016
 - Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Regulations 2019
 - Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017
 - Children and Young People (Safety) Regulations 2017

These Acts outline the legal framework within which the screening policy operates, ensuring compliance and adherence to relevant regulations concerning the safety and well-being of children.

- Working with Children Checks are undertaken through Department of Human Services (DHS)

- Working with Children Checks are a continuously monitored living check that 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 Archdiocese's paramount obligation and must not be overridden by other interests.
- The implementation and monitoring of Working with Children Checks are only one means by which the Archdiocese 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 Archdiocese is continuously monitored by DHS (living check) and the Archdiocesan office of the Screening and Verification Authority. Persons engaged must be deemed to be suitable to do so at all times.
- Assessing a person's suitability to be engaged with the Archdiocese must be based on sufficient and relevant information.
- Any individual who is deemed to be a 'prohibited person' in accordance with the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* will not be able to be engaged by the Archdiocese.
- 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
- The centralised recording and monitoring of information relative to the provision of service by employees, volunteers and contractors within the sectors of the Archdiocese will occur to ensure compliance to state legislation. It also enables appropriate channeling of communication and notification of risk to the parts of the Archdiocese who require it.

General Process

- All new appointments which attract remuneration, or a stipend will require a current, not prohibited Working with Children Check prior to working with children or young people.

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

- All new volunteer appointments *(where service provision exceeds 7 times in a calendar year)* for which no remuneration is received will require a current, not prohibited 'Volunteer' Working with Children Check prior to working with children or young people.
- All rostered volunteers, Child Safe Contact Persons and Extra Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion *(regardless of frequency of service provision)* will require a current, not prohibited 'Volunteer' Working with Children Check prior to working with children or young people.
- 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 the relevant Working with Children Check prior to working with children or young people.
- All persons providing service in either a paid *(includes Stipend)* or voluntary capacity will be required to renew their Working with Children Check on a five yearly cycle unless exempted as per legislation.
- All checks will be undertaken with the informed consent of the individual concerned.
- Identity must be verified as part of the screening process.
- Ongoing suitability of persons will be continuously monitored for the full term of engagement in the Archdiocese.
- Requests for new checks will be forwarded to the Screening and Verification Authority for initiation direct with DHS and further recording onto the Archdiocesan system where the validity and currency of checks can be updated, monitored and reported upon as required.
- All current Working with Children Checks presented at any location *(including self-governed catholic schools located within the Archdiocese)* will be verified and registered directly onto the Department of Human Services portal by the Screening and Verification Authority *(directly registered organisation with DHS)* who monitors all cross-service activity relative to Working with Children Checks in and across the Archdiocese.
- All Clergy who become permanently incapacitated through illness or injury and are no longer able to provide ministry or conduct public religious or spiritual activities, are required to provide a medical certificate from a medical practitioner that will be stored on file in lieu of a renewed check.
- All Religious Persons who become permanently incapacitated through illness or injury and are no longer able to provide ministry or conduct public religious or spiritual activities, are required to present a letter of advice from their Order. This will be stored accordingly on file in lieu of a renewed check.

- **Visiting Clergy & Religious Persons**

Interstate: Visiting Clergy & Religious Persons who are visiting the Archdiocese and may carry out any spiritual/religious role of any kind must provide, prior to their arrival:

- evidence of the Working with Children Check obtained from their current state (and that event is less than 10 consecutive days) and
- 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

Overseas: Visiting Clergy & Religious Persons who are visiting the Archdiocese and who may carry out any spiritual/religious role of any kind must, prior to their arrival:

- provide an itinerary for their planned visit (if visitation is for less than 7 days)
- provide a police certificate from the country in which they live (if visitation is for more 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 if their length of stay exceeds 7 days or in the event that the work involves overnight stays or close personal contact with a child with a disability*******

- Where cross sector service provision occurs, flagging systems will be utilised.
- 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.
- All assessable information (Section 19) will be reported to Department of Human Services through the Screening and Verification Authority within the required timeframe.
- The Screening and Verification Authority will liaise with and make requests for further information from locations (including self-governed catholic schools located within the

Archdiocese) where it applies to requests for further information via all Section 37 and 42F requests made by the Department of Human Services.

- All information requested via the Section 37 and 42F requests will be collated, redacted accordingly and provided direct to the Department of Human Services within the required timeframe by the Screening and Verification Authority.
- Other documents and or certificates will not be able to be accepted as prior evidence of screening if individuals have not had a Working with Children Check undertaken by Department of Human Services in SA, except where it applies to the Visting Clergy and Religious provisions above.
- All individual sector locations will receive regular ongoing weekly and monthly reports providing updates relating to clearances issued, status of current pending applications, forward expiry reminders (*three months in advance of expiry date*) as well as identification of expired clearances.
- Individuals will receive direct forward expiry reminder correspondence (*three months in advance of expiry date*) detailing the process required to renew a current check.
- Applications raised by the Screening and Verification Authority, that have not been completed online within the required timeframe, will be followed up fortnightly direct with the location and the individual concerned to ensure checks raised are progressed and are able to be finalised.
- All sectors across the Archdiocese are subject to ongoing audits to ensure compliance to all screening requirements.
- Costs associated with the initiation of new checks will be invoiced to the location once clearances have been processed and finalised.

- **Exemptions**

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

- **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 Occasional 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.

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

At the point of engagement with the third-party service provider, the Archdiocesan 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 other Government directives and policy relating to child safe environments compliance.

5. Key Roles & Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Screening and Verification Authority	The Authority is a centralised service area aligned under the Integrity and Safeguarding Branch of the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide. The Authority provides facilitation of all checks undertaken for the organisation. It also provides ongoing cross sector assessment and government reporting, 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 Archdiocese. The Screening and Verification Authority also provides service to the Diocese of Port Pirie as well as other affiliated Catholic organisations.
Responsible Authority (RA)	The Leader or Senior Person at the location who has overall responsibility for the activities associated with that location. They are required to ensure that every person engaged in either a <i>paid (for remuneration or stipend)</i> or voluntary (<i>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.
Nominated Authorising Person (NAP)	A Person(s) appointed by the Responsible Authority at the location. 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 voluntary (<i>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.
Department of Human Services (DHS)	The Unit is 'authorised' pursuant to the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 to conduct Working with Children screening on behalf of organisations. 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.
Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission	ACIC is an executive agency of the Australian Government. ACIC's National Criminal History Record Checking (NCHRC) 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.

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 Check Guidelines

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 Church within the Archdiocese of Adelaide (CCES).
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 Working with Children Checks 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.