

# Parish Safeguarding Support Officer (PSSO) Frequently Asked Questions



## What support can a PSSO offer the Parish Priest?

The role of a PSSO is to support the Parish Priest and assist him to fulfil his role and responsibilities set out in the Archdiocese's safeguarding and child protection policies and protocols. The Parish Priest will discuss with the PSSO the particular ways the Parish Priest can be supported in relation to safeguarding. Ways the PSSO can support the Parish Priest as follows:

- attend '**Spreading the Message in Your Parish**' safeguarding training and other safeguarding training updates as required and communicating this information to the parish.
- provide safeguarding induction and training to volunteers based upon the resources provided by the Safeguarding Office at the Spreading the Message training.
- assist the Parish Priest with proactive measures to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults in the Parish environment including assisting with conducting risk assessments for parish activities.
- supporting the Parish Priest in coordinating safeguarding Self Assessment Reviews and audits within the parish as and when requested by the Archdiocese or on behalf of the Archdiocese.
- raise the profile of safeguarding within the Parish by continuing to draw awareness of the importance of safeguarding
- reporting to the Parish Priest on any issues or concerns that come to their attention.
- assist the Parish Priest to conduct regular checks to ensure that the Visiting Clergy Register is properly completed and a copy is sent to the Chancery every six months.
- assist the Parish Priest to conduct regular checks to ensure that the Code of Conduct When Working with Children and Young People is read and signed by staff and volunteers who work with children and is reviewed and endorsed annually within the Parish.

## Who does the PSSO report to?

The PSSO reports directly to the Parish Priest. The Parish Priest is the person responsible for fulfilling safeguarding responsibilities and reporting safeguarding concerns within the Parish. The PSSO is purely a support role in assisting the Parish Priest in discharging his responsibilities.

## Is the PSSO role a volunteer position?

Yes, the role is an unpaid volunteer position within the Parish. That being said, the role is open to existing paid staff members of the Parish. If a paid staff member accepts the PSSO role, the PSSO role would be an additional unpaid volunteer position to their paid position.

You are required to sign a Parish Volunteer Agreement when commencing in this role in the Parish.

## Who will provide training to enable the PSSO to undertake this role?

The Safeguarding Office will provide the following training and resources to the PSSO:

- Train the trainer 'Spreading the Message in Your Parish' training session
- Safeguarding training presentation package for Parishes including PowerPoint presentation and notes
- Safeguarding Guidelines to assist in the understanding of Safeguarding Cultural Change in the Parish, Safeguarding Induction requirements, the Code of Conduct for Working With Children, Meeting Attendance template, Safeguarding Self-Assessment Review document to be used as a Safeguarding Compliance Checklist.

## Does the PSSO have to regularly attend Mass at the Parish where they hold the PSSO position?

Yes. It is important that the PSSO attends Mass regularly in the Parish where they are the PSSO, even if they live in a different Parish. It is important for the PSSO to build a relationship with the Parish Priest and the parishioners in that Parish and to know the workings of the Parish. There may also be events held by the Parish where it would

# Parish Safeguarding Support Officer (PSSO) Frequently Asked Questions



be useful for them to attend.

## **Will the PSSO need to conduct Working With Children Check Clearances for staff and volunteers of the Parish?**

No, verifying Working With Children Check numbers is the responsibility of the Parish Priest who may delegate the role to the Parish Secretary or other Parish administrative staff.

## **Does the PSSO have any administrative responsibilities such as record-keeping in the Parish?**

No, record-keeping and any other administrative tasks are the responsibility of the Parish Secretary, other administrative staff and the Parish Priest. It is noted that the Parish must permanently retain all records relating to child protection, child-related incidents, complaints or allegations.

## **Will the PSSO require access to the Parish Administration & Communication System (PACs?)**

No, the PSSO will not require access to PACs.

## **What are the PSSO's responsibilities in relation to the Visiting Clergy Register?**

The Visiting Clergy Register must be signed by all clergy who are visitors to the Parish. The PSSO does not have to be present when the signing occurs however they must undertake a regular check of the register in discussion with the Parish Priest to ensure it is properly completed and signed as required and that the Register is sent to the Chancery Office (even if it is blank) for reporting purposes on 1 January and 1 July every year.

## **How often will the Parish be audited in relation to safeguarding?**

From time to time, the Parish may be audited by the Archdiocese (e.g. Safeguarding Office) or by an external party on behalf of the Archdiocese.

In the second half of 2017, the Safeguarding Office implemented a Safeguarding Self Assessment Review to further support parishes in collaboration with the Parish Priest and the PSSO. The purpose of the Review was to assist parishes to prepare for prospective external audits.

It is anticipated that in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, Catholic Professional Standards Limited (CPSL) will adopt the 10 Child Safe Standards and implement auditing processes to ensure the incorporation of and compliance with the 10 Child Safe Standards into Catholic institutions nationwide.

## **What type of risk assessments will the PSSO be expected to assist the Parish Priest with?**

A safeguarding risk assessment must be conducted for all Parish activity where children will be present. A basic risk assessment template and guidelines are available on the Parish Intranet or the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney website under the Safeguarding tab which can be completed for each parish event or activity. The risk assessment **is only required to be completed once for a recurring event** or activity, and stored by the Parish Priest in the Parish Office and reviewed if necessary for each recurrent activity. It is expected that each parish will have their own suite of Risk Assessments for any Safeguarding related activities that can be consulted on, distributed to event teams and updated as required when parish events are held.

## **Who will support the PSSO in this role?**

- The Safeguarding Team will be providing further safeguarding support and training to all PSSOs.
- Safeguarding is most effective when the Parish Priest, the Parish Secretary, the Parish Council work in collaboration with and provide support to the PSSO.
- The network of PSSOs between different parishes can provide support to each other.