



Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv DD STL
Bishop of Parramatta

Level 2, 12 Victoria Rd, Parramatta NSW 2150
PO Box 3066, North Parramatta, NSW 1750

☎ 02 8838 3400 📠 02 9630 4813

✉ bishop@parracatholic.org

🌐 parracatholic.org

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Dear friends and colleagues in ministry,

To enhance safety for children in NSW, the Government has extended the NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme to religious entities. As Bishop of the Catholic Church in Western Sydney, I am pleased to support this development to work with the Australian community to ensure our agencies and ministries are the safest places they can be for children.

In 2018, The Bishops of NSW supported the government in this initiative as part of the Australian community's commitment to the protection of children from abuse. The change has come about through the new Children's Guardian Act 2019 which takes effect from 1st March 2020. This change was one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme has operated in NSW for 20 years. It is not new. Simply, the changes now extend the scheme for the first time to religious entities and so it captures more of our volunteers, workers and contractors who were not caught before.

As Bishop, I am the Head of Agency of a Relevant Religious Entity under the new law. This means I have certain legal obligations to fulfil.

One of my responsibilities is to ensure that all employees, volunteers, religious/clergy, contractors and subcontractors in the Diocese of Parramatta, who the Diocese requires to hold a Working with Children Check (WWCC) to carry out their work, are informed about the Scheme and what it means for them.

Another of my responsibilities is to have a system in place, to ensure any allegation of reportable conduct (or a reportable conviction) is notified to the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) within 7 days of when a ministry/parish become aware of the matter. Further, I am responsible to ensure that we have a system to complete the 7-day notification, make reasonable inquiries to make a finding of the allegation, and give the OCG an investigation report within 30 days following the notification.

To fulfil this duty, I have arranged for the Officer for Safeguarding Diocese of Parramatta to manage all notifications and investigations for all our parishes and ministries at this time. To support this, I am requesting all leaders of parishes and ministries to inform all their workers about the reportable conduct scheme (especially those required to hold a WWCC).

All leaders of parishes and ministries must support and guide their employees to inform their manager/supervisor of any allegation of reportable conduct (or a reportable conviction) they are become aware of within 24 hours. Subsequently, the manager/supervisor must inform the Office for Safeguarding immediately of the information. I then require the manager/supervisor to work with the Office for Safeguarding so the notification can be made within 7 working days, and relevant investigation report completing in the required timeframe.

Resources will be made available to assist you to comply with your responsibilities and to inform and support your agency employees, religious and clergy members, volunteers and contractors.



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The Scheme has always been allegation based. This enables us to be better placed to protect children, and have a fair process for workers, by responding to early high-risk information.

The Diocese has been managing allegations of reportable conduct that schools, child care centres and other agencies have been required to report and investigate in the past 20 years so we are well equipped with procedures and support frameworks to manage the extension of the scheme to personnel in parishes and ministries who were not previously under the framework of this Scheme.

For most parishes and ministries, the matters that require notification under the Scheme are matters they already reported to the Office for Safeguarding as part of their duty of care and professional standards.

The role of the NSW Children's Guardian is to oversight how the Diocese manages the notification and subsequent process. This includes, amongst other things, that we comply to the timeframes required at law, undertake proper risks assessments, and ensure fair procedures to those persons subject of the allegations.

I thank you for taking up your responsibility in keeping children safe by supporting the Diocese in our compliance to this government scheme.

Information is currently available now at the Office for Safeguarding website: www.safeguarding.org.au or the Office of the Children's Guardian www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au.

Should you have any queries please email the Office for Safeguarding at safeguarding@parracatholic.org

Yours in Christ,

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