

## CHILD PROTECTION WEEK TALK – 2024

We acknowledged Child Protection Week and the theme for 2024 is **Every child in every community needs a fair go. All conversations matter, they are a powerful tool to keep children and young people safe & well.**

In doing so, our Safeguarding stance will become a visible and measurable witness to the community: That Christ's Church cares for them as Christ himself does.

It seems quite a while since I have been here talking to you all about Safeguarding Children and Adults-at-risk but that doesn't mean that nothing has been happening. The Royal Commission held in 2018 handed down recommendations after hearing from over 7987 survivors who gave evidence or presented submissions to the Royal Commission. An interesting statistic that was recorded is that of the total perpetrators in the Catholic church, 30% were priests, 32% were Brothers and....29% were lay people, so those perpetrators come from all walks of life. Not a nice picture of what has occurred over the years, but it does bring real meaning to the policies and practices that have now been put in place throughout the church regarding our volunteering practices. We are never going to fully stop these things from happening, but we sure can do our best and let everyone know that we are on the lookout and will not tolerate any such behaviour. Thankfully through the co-operation and support of all our volunteers and paid workers, our Parish is compliant in all areas of Safeguarding as was reported in this year's Safeguarding Audit Report. We received an email back from the Archdiocesan Audit team stating "I am very pleased to advise that your parish of Bracken Ridge/Bald Hills is 100% compliant and no action items had to be issued for attention. This is a fantastic achievement and testament to your leadership teams indicating that Safeguarding children and adults-at-risk is taken seriously and at the forefront of your activities, ministries and services. Please share this wonderful outcome with your parish community".

Our aim is to continue to make this Parish a safe community. The **3 P's** – **Safe People** – where safeguards are in place when selecting, recruiting and training all paid and volunteer positions, **Safe Practices** – where

safeguards are applied to all parish activities, ministries and services and **Safe Places** – where safeguards are applied to all properties and locations in which parish activities, ministries and services are conducted. These are all part of what we do here at St Joseph's & St Anthony. These practices mean we are **ALL** covered but with a special emphasis on the children and adults-at-risk.

The meaning of a child is someone under the age of 18 and they can be vulnerable because: they are dependent on adults, they are easily influenced by authority, they are very trusting and have little life experience and can be especially naive. But who is an Adult-at-risk? A person over 18 years of age who may have a reduced capacity to protect themselves from abuse or exploitation, or who is experiencing disadvantage. What makes them vulnerable – there are a few things like illness, disability, literacy difficulties, financial hardship, homelessness, suffering grief, drug & alcohol dependency and even old age.

For me safeguarding is harnessing the caring common sense innate within people and turning it into visible active everyday practice for the benefit of all. Here at St Joseph's & St Anthony's we all want everyone to find a warm welcome and a safe harbour, so we are purposefully journeying together towards those 3 P's I mentioned earlier - Safe People, Safe Practices and Safe Places.

Conversations are a valuable tool to shed light on harms experienced by children and adults at risk. We need to have open, frank and supportive conversations around difficult topics in order to keep children safe, well and connected to community and culture. Protecting children is everyone's business and when we work together, we can give every child, in every community, a fair go.

Where to get more information, support your child to get content taken down and get more help - [eSafety](#) can help get content taken down and provide further support and advice. Make a report to [eSafety](#) by completing the online form at [www.eSafety.gov.au/report](http://www.eSafety.gov.au/report) Search for the 'eSafety Guide' to learn more about how to stay safe on games, apps and social media. There are many agencies that support children and young people who have

experienced online child exploitation or online grooming. These are listed at [accce.gov.au/help-and-support/who-can-help](https://accce.gov.au/help-and-support/who-can-help). Reporting online child abuse material. It is illegal to view, share or produce suggestive or explicit images of children. This content can be reported directly to the platform and at [www.eSafety.gov.au/report](https://www.eSafety.gov.au/report). The AFP's [ThinkUKnow](https://www.thinkuknow.org.au) program has a range of resources for families and children around preventing online child exploitation. These are available at [www.thinkuknow.org.au](https://www.thinkuknow.org.au). eSafety has a range of resources and free webinars for families and children around online safety. These are available at [www.eSafety.gov.au/parents](https://www.eSafety.gov.au/parents) [www.thinkuknow.org.au](https://www.thinkuknow.org.au)

As the Local Safeguarding Representative for this parish, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who participate in ministries in our parish and for your co-operation regarding training, obtaining Blue Cards, Volunteer Data forms and Police Checks. If you have any concerns about our parish community, please feel free to contact me – my details are always in the newsletter and if I'm away for any length of time Lisa Harrison steps into this role. If you wish to remain anonymous you can call [STOPline](https://www.stoplinc.com.au) which is a free service supported by the Archdiocesan and these details are regularly in our parish newsletter. If you have concerns about children and adults outside of our parish activities, there are pamphlets available on the desk near the front door to advise who and how to contact the appropriate authorities.

I thank you for your time today to listen and your continued support in making this parish a safe and welcome place to be a part of.

Clare Kennedy – LSR spoken at all 3 masses 7/8 Sept 2024