



DAUGHTERS OF
OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART
AUSTRALIAN PROVINCE

**RESPONDING TO
HISTORICAL ALLEGATIONS
POLICY**

2023

Policy Statement

In all circumstances where historical abuse allegations are brought to the attention of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Australian Province ('**OLSH**') will cooperate fully with all external investigating agencies.

OLSH will also review its current policies and procedures considering the findings of historical abuse investigations, to determine if there is learning that may strengthen our approaches to safeguarding.

Principles

- Learning arising from investigations into historical abuse can contribute significantly to the strengthening of a culture of care and protection, transparent systems and enabling structures.
- Acknowledging that Province's approach to safeguarding will be strengthened is not an admission that prior policies, procedures and processes were deficient, but rather is an indication of OLSH's commitment to continuous improvement.
- OLSH is committed to building holistic relationships with people whom Sisters, employees or volunteers may have harmed by conduct which has caused pain and suffering.
- Redress for victims of abuse signals the OLSH commitment to victim's rights, safeguarding and the rigorous improvement of protective systems and structures. Morally, it is the right approach and can contribute significantly to victims' healing.

Roles and Responsibilities

<p>Provincial Leader</p>	<p>Provincial Leader is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to disclosures of abuse with empathy, willingness to listen and compassion • Acknowledging the suffering of survivors of abuse and assisting with their healing • Actively promoting an ongoing commitment to a safeguarding culture • Assisting survivors of abuse with civil claims • Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all involved in a historical abuse matter.
<p>Safeguarding Coordinator</p>	<p>The Safeguarding Coordinator is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to disclosures of abuse with empathy, willingness to listen and compassion • Acknowledging the suffering of survivors of abuse and assisting with their healing • Actively promoting an ongoing commitment to a safeguarding culture • Assisting survivors of abuse with civil claims • Case managing claims received through the National Redress Scheme • Assisting survivors of abuse through their interactions with the Province • Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all involved in an historical abuse matter • Liaising with external government and non- government agencies including meeting reporting obligations • Completing any arising investigation with transparency, confidentiality and procedural fairness.
<p>All Sisters</p>	<p>All Sisters are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to disclosures of abuse with empathy, willingness to listen and compassion • Informing the Provincial Leader or Safeguarding Coordinator immediately about any historical safeguarding concern.
<p>All Employees</p>	<p>All Employees are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to disclosures of abuse with empathy, willingness to listen and compassion • Informing the Provincial Leader or Safeguarding Coordinator immediately about any historical safeguarding concern.
<p>All Volunteers</p>	<p>All volunteers are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to disclosures of abuse with empathy, willingness to listen and compassion • Informing the Provincial Leader or Safeguarding Coordinator immediately about any historical safeguarding concerns.

All Contractors	<p>All contractors are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to disclosures of abuse with empathy, willingness to listen and compassion • Informing the Provincial Leader or Safeguarding Coordinator immediately about any historical safeguarding concern.
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Procedure

1. Any allegation of historical abuse which relates to OLSH should be reported to the Provincial or the Safeguarding Coordinator within 24 hours of receipt.
2. OLSH will, where possible, provide support to the complainant. This may involve providing assistance around accessing pastoral care, external counselling or reporting matters to the Police.
3. The Safeguarding Committee will be responsible for overseeing the handling of the allegation, including confirming that it has been referred to the Police, if required, and that all relevant information held by OLSH, has been provided to relevant authorities.
4. Where the allegation relates to a State/Territory that operates a Reportable Conduct Scheme, the Safeguarding Coordinator will make the report to the relevant authority body within the designated timeframe where required.
5. At the conclusion of any Police investigation, the Safeguarding Committee will determine whether it is appropriate to undertake an internal investigation. An internal investigation would generally be warranted where the alleged conduct constitutes:
 - an allegation of Reportable Conduct,
 - an alleged breach of *Integrity in Ministry*
 - *an alleged breach of Integrity in the Service of the Church*
 - *an alleged breach of relevant Codes of Policy or Practice; and/or*
 - A Sister, employee, volunteer or contractor has been implicated in the allegation and is still in ministry, volunteering or employed by the Province.
6. The Safeguarding Committee will consider any other requirements for reporting or sharing information. This may include any information which should be shared with associated organisations so that they may manage any risks to children or young people as they arise.
7. In all circumstances, OLSH will undertake an internal review to determine if there is a need to amend policies, procedures or processes. Reviews will be focused upon the identification and application of learning to minimise future risk.

8. Where allegations are substantiated, OLSH will offer redress to victims by way of a restorative response, either through the National Redress Scheme or other financial compensation and counselling support. A pastoral meeting will always be offered to a person to facilitate a further step towards healing.

Information

Document version 2 prepared in April 2023 and authorised by the Provincial Leader of The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Sr Philippa Murphy.

For any questions or feedback, please contact:

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