



# OUR COMMON MISSION



Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd

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## Background

In October 2021, Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) established an advisory group to guide the writing of a national framework for all Catholic ministry and service. The framework needed to reflect current ecclesiology and safeguarding within an Australian and global context, and the requirement of each entity to develop their own codes of conduct.

*Our Common Mission* is the fruit of that work, drawing on Second Vatican Council and other Church and human rights documents to distil the synodal themes of mission, communion and participation for contemporary readers. It also combines key principles from the two previous national documents for ministry and service, *Integrity in Ministry* (2004) and *Integrity in Service of the Church* (2011), with best practice from US, UK and Australian sources, including the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS, Ed. 2) and National Response Protocol (NRP).

*Our Common Mission* proposes four interdependent principles - culture, relationships, stewardship and formation - to provide high level guidance for ministry and service in conjunction with other codes of conduct. As a living document, *Our Common Mission* will be subject to continuous review and improvement so that it remains future-focused in ensuring 'a safer Church for everyone, now and in the years ahead' (NCSS, Ed 2, p. 1)

## Purpose

*Our Common Mission* is for everyone involved in Catholic ministry and service. In adopting it corporately, the Church recognises that such a document only becomes effective when people see themselves reflected in the text.

The text's brevity is intentional: it should speak directly and inclusively to diverse groups and prompt deeper reflection for personal and communal use. Its purpose is synodal in both form and content. Marginal quotes are also intended to promote dialogue with the main text. *Our Common Mission* refers to key Church and human rights documents that may prompt further engagement for reflection and discernment.

*Our Common Mission* is grounded in a strengths-based approach to safeguarding and integrity. It includes responsibilities (mandatory reporting, supervision, reporting boundary violations, acting within expertise) that, if breached, may result in criminal or professional proceedings. *Our Common Mission* does not include specific guidance for addressing unacceptable or criminal behaviour. Standard 6 of the NCSS addresses processes for raising concerns and complaints. The NRP and any other Church complaints procedure must meet this standard. The relevant legislation and standards apply.

We urge all Church entities to adopt *Our Common Mission* as part of their ongoing commitment to put safety and integrity at the centre of mission. We expect it to be used for formation in ministry and service, in conjunction with each entity's code of conduct and professional standards.

## Mapping Our Common Mission

*Our Common Mission* forms a suite of documents including the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, National Response Protocol, National Response Framework, organisational codes and other international, civil and Church documents. The nested diagram visualises something that is at the core, still living and requiring adaptation but not subject to as many changing legislative and professional requirements as the outer levels.



## Our Common Mission

**The Catholic Church in Australia puts safety and integrity at the centre of culture, relationships, stewardship and formation for mission. Our commitment extends to every child and adult with whom we interact. It particularly extends to those most at risk and those who have most reason to doubt they will be safe.**

Our common mission begins with the Trinity.<sup>i</sup> God who became human ‘out of the abundance of love speaks to us as friends and lives among us,’ to ‘tell us of the innermost being of God.’<sup>ii</sup> We are made to share in this life of communion with God, with others and with all created things.

Communion is an invitation to see. We are invited to see our whole life and story together. We are invited to see others as a gift to ourselves.<sup>iii</sup> We come to see light, love and truth.<sup>iv</sup> And in seeing, we are invited to join a life enlarging our own, a life to the full.<sup>v</sup>

Our shared humanity depends on people who offer reasons for living and hoping.<sup>vi</sup> Our hope is for the full participation and communion of each person. We experience setback, grief and crisis, but still desire a way of being together. As we walk with Australia’s First Peoples, the oldest living cultures, we learn how to wait and listen. As we multiply with diverse languages and cultures, we learn we are called to change. Our call is to personal renewal and responsibility for what holds all things in common.<sup>vii</sup>

The renewal of our mission rests on universal rights and responsibilities that affirm our God-given human dignity. These rights and responsibilities belong to everyone. They cannot be violated. They cannot be taken away. They cannot be delegated.<sup>viii</sup> They take precedence over all other rights and responsibilities.<sup>ix</sup> They include the right to be kept safe and take part in decisions that affect our lives.<sup>x</sup> Participation is a human right, which recognises the duty to promote the common good and to do no harm. Causing harm, by any means, violates the dignity of the person and is incompatible with our gospel values as revealed in Jesus Christ.<sup>xi</sup>

Therefore, all our members and workers – lay, religious and ordained – are called to the highest standards of accountability, transparency, integrity and professionalism. *Our Common Mission* identifies these standards within a national framework for ministry and service. It is not a checklist. It is a living document that seeks continually to integrate faith and action in keeping everyone in our community safe.

**In this way, they make their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. This invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity.’**

*(Laudato si’ 240)*

**The dignity of the people calls for communion, for the sharing and multiplying of goods, and for the participation of all for the sake of all.**

*(Let us dream, 110-11)*

**Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally; this fundamental right cannot be denied.**

*(Fratelli tutti 107)*

*Our Common Mission* requires all Church authorities, Catholic organisations, Catholic institutions and ministries to develop, or else adopt, their own codes of conduct in accordance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and other professional standards. Codes of conduct must comply with civil laws.<sup>xii</sup> They should also go further than compliance to create a mission ecosystem of culture, relationships, stewardship and formation. *Our Common Mission* commits the whole Catholic Church in Australia to this shared way of life.

**Every member of the Church, and especially its leadership, is entrusted with the imperative to foster and develop a culture of safety for everyone.**

*(National Response Protocol)*

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<sup>i</sup> *Ad gentes*, 7 December 1965, 1-2.

<sup>ii</sup> *Dei verbum*, 18 November 1965, 2, 4.

<sup>iii</sup> *Novo millennio ineunte*, 6 January 2001, 43.

<sup>iv</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 21 November 1964, 9.

<sup>v</sup> John 10:10

<sup>vi</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 7 December 1965, 31.

<sup>vii</sup> *Ad gentes*, 5-7, 9, 18, 22; *Gaudium et spes*, 44.

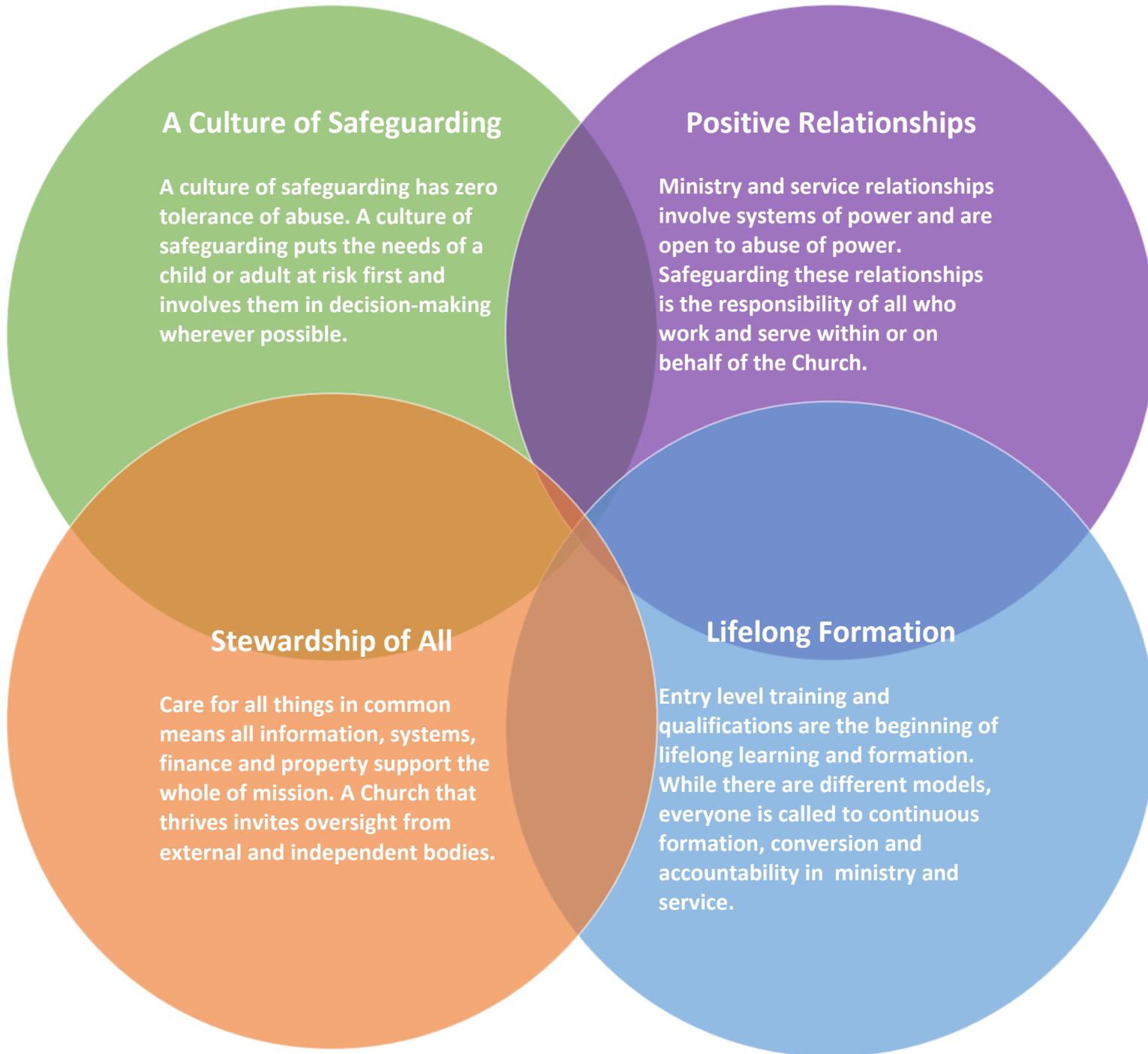
<sup>viii</sup> *Pacem in terris*, 11 April 1963, 9.

<sup>ix</sup> *Vos estis lux mundi*, 7 May 2019, 19; *Vademecum*, 16 July 2020, 48.

<sup>x</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948 (Art. 1, 3, 4, 5, 7); UNICEF Simplified Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 3, 12.

<sup>xi</sup> *Dignitatis humanae*, 7 December 1965, 3, 7, 14.

<sup>xii</sup> *Vos estis lux mundi*, 7 May 2019, 19.



### **A Culture of Safeguarding**

A culture of safeguarding has zero tolerance of abuse. A culture of safeguarding puts the needs of a child or adult at risk first and involves them in decision-making wherever possible.

### **Positive Relationships**

Ministry and service relationships involve systems of power and are open to abuse of power. Safeguarding these relationships is the responsibility of all who work and serve within or on behalf of the Church.

### **Stewardship of All**

Care for all things in common means all information, systems, finance and property support the whole of mission. A Church that thrives invites oversight from external and independent bodies.

### **Lifelong Formation**

Entry level training and qualifications are the beginning of lifelong learning and formation. While there are different models, everyone is called to continuous formation, conversion and accountability in ministry and service.

## - Our Common Mission -

### **In committing to a culture of safeguarding, we have a responsibility to:**

- think and act in the best interests of children, and adults who are at risk.
- value the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- speak out when actions, behaviours, language, or environments may cause harm.
- embed effective safeguarding policies and practices at all levels of governance and leadership.
- ensure safeguarding resources are easily available and reviewed regularly; and
- meet all mandatory reporting and record-keeping requirements.

### **In committing to positive relationships, we have a responsibility to:**

- acknowledge our own vulnerability and power in any relationship.
- promote the autonomy and voice of others.
- clarify the nature of personal and professional relationships.
- understand and maintain physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological boundaries.
- report boundary violations to the relevant safeguarding authority.
- only act within and not beyond an area of expertise; and
- accept full responsibility for any real or perceived abuse of power.

### **In committing to stewardship of all, we have a responsibility to:**

- use resources ethically and sustainably.
- administer open and transparent financial and operational systems.
- respect confidential information.
- seek external, independent expertise; and
- identify and declare potential conflicts of interest.

### **In committing to lifelong formation, we have a responsibility to:**

- undertake relevant education, training, and development, including in safeguarding, professional standards and interculturality.
- have professional/pastoral supervision with a registered, independent supervisor if in a ministry role.
- engage in spiritual direction, or other form of reflective practice.
- attend to our own spiritual, physical, social, mental, and emotional wellbeing and seek additional professional or personal support as needed; and
- relate codes of conduct to both personal and professional formation.