

## Safeguarding Update

2022 has begun with a strong challenge and a reminder of the importance of safeguarding work in our parish communities and all organisations who represent the Catholic Church in Aotearoa NZ. It brings into sharp focus, our responsibility as members of the Catholic Church to value all people, protect them from harm and to create an environment where people feel welcome and safe.



### Te Rōpū Tautoko Report:

At the beginning of February, Te Rōpū Tautoko, the group which has coordinated the Roman Catholic engagement with the Royal Commission, published the results of the *Information Gathering Project*. Requested by the Royal Commission on Abuse in Care, this report outlines, for the first time, the scale of alleged abuse within the Catholic Church Aotearoa New Zealand between 1950 and the present day. It makes challenging reading, with a total of 1680 reports of abuse being made by 1122 individuals against Catholic priests, religious and lay people. Almost half of the reported abuse involved sexual harm. 75 percent of the abuse reported occurred prior to 1990 with most of the reports coming from the 1960's and 70's. If you wish to read the full report here is a link to the Te Rōpū Tautoko website: [Te Rōpū Tautoko - Catholic engagement with the Royal Commission](#) .

In response to these challenging statistics, Sister Margaret Anne Mills who is the President of the Congregational Leaders' Conference reminds us how "each piece of data represents many people's lives" and calls on Church leaders "to urgently understand and acknowledge our shared history; understand and acknowledge the shocking impact of abuse in church settings on victims and their families; understand what it means for survivors and our faith communities, and act today." Cardinal John Dew hopes these statistics 'will help us face the sad reality of what has happened' and that 'the Church will learn from this and affirm its commitment to the work of safeguarding'.

The revelations contained in this report and the impact of the Royal Commission's hearings from Maryland's School, which will take place this month, are likely to affect members of our Catholic community strongly. If someone in your Parish or Catholic organisation has suffered abuse in the care of the Church, encourage them to approach the Police, the Royal Commission, or the National Office for Professional Standards (NOPS) which is the Church's agency for managing reports of abuse. [Report Abuse or Concerns - National Office for Professional Standards \(catholic.org.nz\)](#). Make sure posters are visible in your parish church and buildings explaining the Complaint Process. Information about Complaints is also on the Diocesan Website but not everyone has access to online information.

### Safeguarding Training



*Safeguarding in the Catholic Church Aotearoa New Zealand (SCCANZ)*

Enrolments are open for an online two modular course offered by Te Kupenga, the Catholic Theological College. This training is part of the Church's commitment to promoting a One Church approach to safeguarding and to ensuring that those in ministry respect and care for all children, young people and adults who are vulnerable. It enables individuals to contribute actively towards establishing safe, caring

communities which are alert to the dangers of abuse.

We encourage priests, religious and lay people in active face-to-face ministry to participate in this course. [Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Aotearoa NZ – Te Kupenga](#) . If there are several enrolments from Otago Southland, we will see if some of the coursework could be done face-to-face, to complement the online work. We have had some feedback from other diocesan safeguarding advisors that this can really help.

### *Parish Workshops*

NOPS have developed a new combined workshop for parishes and Catholic organisations which we are trialling at present, and which will be part of the Training Workshops on offer this year. In addition, NOPS plan to develop 'Hot Topics' such as Risk Management, Reporting Concerns and Complaints, Two Person Practice, Encouraging Children's Voices and Basic Behaviour Management. These topics look to be helpful resources for specific ministry training.

### **Current Work**

Given the current restrictions to ensure as much safety as possible in the face of Omicron we are focusing on work that can be done at home.

- Developing the Diocesan Safeguarding Plan
- Developing the Safeguarding Website Information
- Developing Parish Resources
- Preparing for Safeguarding Parish reviews
- Establishing Contact with Catholic Organisations in the Diocese.

We will also be looking at the viability of an Online Zoom Training Option.

In the meantime, thank you for all the effort you make to ensure your parishes are welcoming and safe communities where people feel a sense of belonging and care.

Maria and Mike Noonan

