



# ***The Catholic Parish of Sacred Heart and St Columba***

*Our Parish is a Christian community which welcomes all to walk together  
in a spirit of compassion, justice and hope.*

*Our Parish is committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity  
of all children and vulnerable adults.*

## **March 2025 Safeguarding Report**

### **Parish Safeguarding**

The Parish Safeguarding Committee recently discussed options for the annual Safeguarding weekend. This will be held on the weekend of 30 / 31 August. As we did last year we will provide a series of information in the newsletter and on our website in the month leading up to the weekend.

This year will use information from Fr Hans Zollner and from the ACSL Learning Platform and one of the focuses will be on promoting the link between hospitality and feeling safe.

### **ACSL Learning Platform**

Jane recently attended a session Embedding a Culture of Safety into Parish Pastoral Councils (PPC). Below are some notes from the session and we will provide more information around this in the lead up to the Safeguarding weekend.

The three presenters were Fr Chris DeSouza, Fr Brian Lucas and Fr Mark Coleridge.

Fr Chris DeSouza spoke about the need for PPC to move away from operating and more towards leading cultural change and he also spoke about vulnerability. His points included:

- Challenge to move away from operative culture
- To grow awareness and sense of what vulnerability is and that it usually connects to power
- All of us experience vulnerability at times
- How would Jesus would respond to a person feeling unsafe
- Encourage PPC to talk with each other about fears etc on safeguarding
- Three types of vulnerabilities: physical - age, disability, environment ; emotional - power comes to play; spiritual
- Reticence to talk about vulnerability
- Culture - increased sense of vulnerability when parish is made of up different cultures etc

We respectfully acknowledge the Yaluk-ut Weelam clan of the Boonwurrung Nation who are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land.

Fr Brian Lucas spoke about some of the history of abuse

- History has relevance - over 40years
- We made mistakes
- Risk of overdose of safeguarding - people become complacent or even cynical
- No single person in a parish is responsible for safeguarding

Archbishop Mark Coleridge was very passionate and compelling about his experience with speaking to people who have been abused:

- It took him 30 years to come to terms that the abuse and the cover up was about culture
- He / the church went through disbelief, denial, defensiveness (a few bad apples)
- Bad apples idea didn't wash and came to a head at the Royal Commission
- Profoundly is an issue of culture across society
- We are called to a kind of conversion - victims or abuse are at the centre of the church's life - they are the crucified
- Great sense of fatigue
- Feeling like it's not my business

How do we embed it in the way the Council manages the parish?

- Do whatever needs to be done to understand the effects of abuse and therefore trauma
- Acknowledge that we are dealing with a culture issues
- Recognise and explore our own vulnerability
- Survivors of abuse are not 'them' or 'out to get us', they are us, they are 'ours' - even if they don't want anything to do with us
- Set Safeguarding in larger context - church as a safe place - a sanctuary
- Duty of care extends to the homeless, migrants, those with disability and victims / survivors of domestic abuse
- Shape the church as a genuinely safe place for all
- It is not the call of Royal Commission or legislation or church requirements - has come through from the Plenary Council and Synods - this is the voice of the Holy Spirit
- Addressing abuse and synodality are part of the same process
- Shouldn't just be an item on an agenda - don't quarantine it - it has to suffuse all items / across the parish
- I have lost the sense of fear of 'this getting out' - it is well and truly out and our reputation is in tatters.
- The challenge isn't administrative.

A good question is "what might our parish look like if it was safe for all?" There can be an issue of perception - challenge our perceptions. How can we grow that sense in a practical way in PPC or broadening our vision. "Whose eyes are you seeing it through?"

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