

National Catholic Safeguarding Standards

Implementation Guide Standard 4

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd acknowledges the lifelong trauma of abuse victims, survivors and their families, the failure of the Catholic Church to protect, believe and respond justly to children and vulnerable adults, and the consequent breaches of community trust.

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd is committed to fostering a culture of safety and care for children and adults at risk.

This is the first edition of the ***National Catholic Safeguarding Standards – Implementation Guide Standard 1*** produced by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (formerly Catholic Professional Standards Ltd.)

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ACSL respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters on which we work. We pay respect to their Elders, past and present, and young leaders of today and the future. ACSL commits itself to the ongoing work of reconciliation with our Aboriginal families and communities.

STANDARD 4



Equity is promoted and diversity is respected

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

*All children have rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or a girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor.*¹

This standard focuses on how recognition of children's diverse circumstances enables an organisation to work in a more child-centred way and empowers children to participate more effectively. This builds an organisational culture which embraces all children regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social, economic or cultural background.²

A child safe institution pays attention to equity by taking into account children's diverse circumstances. It recognises that some children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse than others, or find it harder to speak up and be heard, and makes the necessary adjustments to equally protect all children. A child safe institution tailors standard procedures to ensure these children have fair access to the relationships, skills, knowledge and resources they need to be safe, in equal measure with their peers.³

In short, respecting diversity should be taken to mean '*having the same aims for children's safety but finding different ways to achieve them*' that are more appropriate to the child's different circumstances.

Children with disability

All children are vulnerable but some children need special care and protection to ensure they are safe. Children with disability have an increased risk of being abused.

Children with disability are more vulnerable to harm and abuse such as harassment, bullying, humiliation, physical and sexual abuse. This can be due to:

- social isolation;
- limited provision of developmentally appropriate sexual and relationship information;
- low levels of expectation held about their capacity to identify and report concerns;
- inaccessible pathways to raise issues, concerns and complaints;
- communication difficulties;
- personal care needs requiring the involvement of different people and various levels of supervision; and/or
- signs of abuse being viewed as being related to the child's disability.⁴

Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Australia is a culturally diverse country made up of many nationalities, cultural backgrounds and language groups. The Catholic Church in Australia is equally diverse.

¹ United Nations, *Article 2 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

² Australian Human Rights Commission, *National Statement of Principles for Child Safe Organisations - Consultation Draft*, p 10, 2017

³ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Final Report: Volume 6, Making Institutions Child Safe*, p 421, 2017

⁴ Commission for Children and Young People, *Tip Sheet: Child Safe Organisations-Safety of Children with a disability*, Victoria, 2016

Like other aspects of child safety, creating and maintaining an entity in which the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is kept safe requires effort. Steps to ensure cultural safety include sharing knowledge, raising awareness, developing understanding that leads to cultural sensitivity and finally cultural competence.⁵

Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

The *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* highlighted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are at a higher risk of abuse in organisations. There are several reasons for this including, but not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children may be less likely to disclose abuse due to lack of cultural safety and a fear of authorities intruding into their family and community, based on historic experiences of systemic racism and abuse; and
- there is an over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in organisations with high situational risk factors such as out-of-home care, youth detention and boarding schools.

Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child needs to feel that their sense of self and their identity is valued in some way by the people and environments that surround them. Cultural identity and safety are fundamental to a child's overall wellbeing. Being connected to culture is a strength and protective factor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Creating a culturally safe organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children requires a willingness to learn, understand and respond to the diversity of Aboriginal cultures. In a culturally safe environment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should define what is comfortable and safe.⁶

4.1 The entity actively anticipates children's diverse circumstances and backgrounds, and provides support and responds effectively to those who are vulnerable.

Organisations should be safe and welcoming for all children. A welcoming organisation is one where all children feel comfortable and where services and ministries are delivered in culturally safe and inclusive ways. This reduces the risk of discrimination, exclusion, bullying and abuse.

How could your entity implement this criterion?

- Ensure the physical environment reflects a positive and welcoming approach to children from diverse circumstances, cultures and backgrounds. This may be through displaying posters, symbols, decorations or artwork that nurture a sense of identity;
- make sure the physical environment does not pose access difficulties for children with a disability;
- ensure your policies and Code of Conduct state a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and promote respect for diversity;
- demonstrate commitment to diversity through the entity's social media messaging;
- ask children and families about their culture and cultural support needs;
- educate personnel about the circumstances and experiences that increase a child's vulnerability to harm or abuse in institutional contexts, such as: children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;

⁵ Commission for Children and Young People, *Tip sheet: Child Safe Organisations-Safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds*, Victoria, 2016

⁶ Commission for Children and Young People, *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation: Child safety through respect for diversity and cultural difference*, p 14-15, Victoria, 2018

- educate personnel to understand barriers that prevent children from disclosing abuse or adults from recognising children’s disclosures, with particular attention to children’s cultural contexts, languages, cognitive capabilities and communication needs. Ensure that procedures minimise barriers to disclosure;
- ensure the entity’s procedures call for vigilance in identifying early warning signs or indicators of abuse for children with communication difficulties. Listen to children, no matter how they communicate their thoughts, views and concerns;⁷
- focus particular attention on safety and additional risks in closed or segregated environments, such as out-of-home care, boarding schools, specialist education facilities and disability support settings; and
- consult with people from a range of diverse backgrounds when developing strategies for addressing the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. This may include internal stakeholders such as families, carers and communities, or external experts from recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, disability support organisations and cultural community elders or organisations [Refer to Standard 3 Implementation Guide for engagement strategies with families, carers and communities].

Aligned with

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - National Principle 4.1

Royal Commission Child Safe Standard 4 (a)

⁷ Commission for Children and Young People, *Tip sheet: Child Safe Organisations-Safety of children with a disability*, Victoria, 2016

4.2 All children have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.

How could your entity implement this criterion?

- Use translation services and bicultural workers, as appropriate, with knowledge of child abuse issues, particularly to facilitate disclosure, reporting and complaint handling;
- provide safeguarding information, including complaints processes, in multiple formats for children with different levels of English literacy and proficiency, modes of communication, languages and cognitive abilities. This could include:
 - child-friendly policies and procedures translated in other languages and using positive cultural images, based on the entity's needs
 - simplified flowcharts for reporting concerns which have more images and diagrams, less text and include photos of contact people
 - individual strategies for children with severe disabilities to raise concerns. These are formally agreed strategies between the child, their parents and the entity
 - audio-visual formats
 - posters
- ask families from diverse backgrounds about their preferred format for provision of information [Refer to Implementation Guide Standard 3 for engagement strategies with families and carers];
- communicate directly with children with a disability about how they feel safe and what to do if they do not feel safe. Make sure they know who they can go to if they feel unsafe or have a concern or complaint. Make sure these processes take into account the child's developmental level and communication requirements [Refer to Implementation Guide Standard 2 for engagement strategies with children];
- be inclusive and collaborative with families and carers [Refer to Implementation Guide Standard 3 for engagement strategies with families and carers]; and
- access external expert advice when required, such as cultural advice or disability support, to assist in developing communication strategies.

Aligned with

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - National Principle 4.2

Royal Commission Child Safe Standard 4 (b)

4.3 The entity pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and children of diverse sexuality.

How could your entity implement this criterion?

- Welcome diversity by including positive images and references to race, disability, culture and diverse needs.
- Strive for a workforce that reflects diversity of cultures, abilities and identities.
- Implement awareness training as part of induction and ongoing staff education, with specific content related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and others with particular experiences and needs.
- Enable and facilitate independence with dressing, toileting and personal care where possible for children with specific disabilities. Where required, ensure your entity has a formal, agreed personal care plan for children with a disability needing any form of personal care. This agreement is between the child, parent and the entity. It should include expectations such as, for example, two adults required for toileting.
- Make clear reference in policies and procedures to additional considerations related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, disability, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and other experiences and needs.
- Implement and monitor the outcomes of specific strategies tailored to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with specific needs to ensure their safety and participation in the entity.

Aligned with

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - National Principle 4.3

Royal Commission Child Safe Standard 4 (c)