

## ACMR Materials Notes – September 2021

This document is designed to highlight and explain some key changes, clarifications and new policies that will be found in the material launched today. New documents will also be described. This is supplementary information and will not go into the same level of detail that is found in the materials themselves.

### **Critical notes:**

#### Clarification of Statements and Declarations

ACSL has clarified the text of the statements made by applicants and also Church Authorities (found on the third page of each form). Three substantive changes have been made.

1. The preamble has been revised to remove any ambiguity about what must be affirmed. The text is now clear that the list of statements which follow must all be affirmed, and not merely considered. If a person cannot unambiguously affirm each of these statements they cannot sign the form, and will be making a false statement if they do.
2. We have added the word 'relevant' to narrow the scope of criminal convictions and charges in the same document. Relevant here is defined as charges or convictions which relate to abuse or may indicate a risk to children or adults at risk. This is not intended to relax our standards in any way, but to make clear that simple traffic charges or convictions, for example, will not preclude someone from gaining an ACMR, as has already been the practice.
3. We have defined abuse in these forms and throughout our material according to the definition found in the second edition of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, currently in draft. This change has been made to encompass abuse of both children and adults.

It is vital that all Church Authorities ensure that every person who holds an approved ACMR ID meets these standards.

#### Threshold for removal

In our Procedures Guide and elsewhere we have sought to make clear that a Church Authority must have any ACMR ID holder's status changed to restricted immediately should they become unable to affirm every statement made in their original Safeguarding Statement.

This means that ID holders must have their status changed as soon as a Church Authority becomes aware of any safeguarding concern, allegation or investigation against them. The change of status must not be delayed pending the outcome of any process. No Church Authority may allow a person to retain approved status when aware, even imperfectly, of an allegation. By doing so a Church Authority would risk deceiving any fellow Church Authority should the ID holder present it as proof of good standing, therefore creating risk of harm if permission to minister were granted on the basis of this misleading information.

### Enforcement of WWCC policy

In light of the established nature of the ACMR and the recent improvements to the system, we will soon be enforcing the currency of WWCCs and equivalent clearances provided to us. As of the November 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, any ID holder who does not have a current WWCC recorded with us for any state or territory in which they regularly minister will automatically lose their 'approved' status.

We have chosen November 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 in order to allow Church entities time to address any expired clearances that are currently in our records. We will also be building and deploying systems in coming months to assist Church entities in complying with this requirement.

It is important to note at this stage that the ACMR's requirement for WWCCs is purely an internal policy meant as an additional level of safety. Checking an ACMR ID cannot and will never fulfil a receiving Church entity's legal responsibility to verify the WWCC details of someone applying for ministry.

### Distribution of lists

In light of all of these we will shortly be distributing fresh lists of ACMR ID holders and their details to all Church entities. We ask that these lists be carefully checked by our contact people and Church Authorities to ensure that all ID holders have appropriate statuses and up to date details.

### **Further notes:**

#### New and existing forms

We will not be able to accept any of the NCPS branded Individual or Church Authority Declaration forms (titled ACMR TH 45.6 for Individual and ACMR TH 45.7 for Church Authority) published in 2017 signed after today, 29/9/2021. If an application is to be submitted from today, it must include the new forms which have replaced these. We will however be able to accept other NCPS or ACBC branded forms as part of an application or Change of Status until the end of October.

#### Multiple regular ministry states

We are shifting to allowing applicants and existing ACMR ID holders to record more than one state or territory in which they regularly minister. For our purposes regular ministry will only include ministerial placements or appointments that inherently involve ministry across two or more jurisdictions. This is not intended to cover frequent travel and should not apply to the vast majority of ministers, but will accommodate compliance with our WWCC policy for those who do minister across jurisdictions.

Of course, individuals and Church entities are entitled to nominate any number of states and territories as places of routine ministry, as long as a WWCC or equivalent clearance is held for each. Some Church entities may benefit from the consistency of having all of a person's WWCC or equivalent clearances held with us and receiving reminders to update each of these.

### Process for restoration to 'Approved' status

In our Procedures Guide, we are detailing for the first time the process by which a person who has been restricted on the ACMR may have their status restored to approved. This will consist of a Change of Status form, along with a letter stating in broad terms why they were restricted and why a Church Authority is now able to reaffirm each of the statements contained in the Safeguarding Statement. This process has been in use for several years, but has not previously been set out publicly.

### Removal of addresses

As will be clear in our new Individual Declaration form and Procedures Guide, we have formalised the decision, announced in our 2019 update, to discontinue the collection of addresses. This decision has been taken as part of streamlining the ACMR and ensuring that your time and ours is focused on maintain the currency of safety-related information. All address details currently held have been securely removed from the system. Of course, this does not change the critical importance of updating the ACMR when an ID holder has begun regular ministry in a new State or Territory.

### Routine reports

As mentioned in the Procedures Guide, ACSL will distribute list of ACMR ID holders to each Church Entity each January and July. This is done for the benefit of those who work with us, but it is vital that Church entities do not wait for these in order to provide any updates which might occur in the interim. Details on the required timing of updates can be found in the Procedures Guide.

### Contact details

As you will have seen, ACMR Supervisor Llywellyn O'Brien now has ACSL contact details. All correspondence, updates and applications can now be directed to [ACMR@acsltd.org.au](mailto:ACMR@acsltd.org.au) or 0448 108 101. Older NCPS, ACCPS and ACBC contact details will be retired in coming months but will be monitored for a short time.

### Seminarians and novices

Across our documents we have added clarifications that all those who are in formation towards ordination or religious life, such as seminarians and novices, are both subject to the requirements of NCSS 5.7.1 and eligible to apply for an ACMR ID. Some who are unlikely to move often or to perform any kind of ministry during formation will find little use for an ID, while for others it will be very useful. Church entities may benefit from having uniformity across their members, or at least being able to register a person ahead of their ordination or advancement into a later stage of formation in which they will conduct ministry.

### Enhancements on checking site

As noted in our email, ACMR IDs can now be checked at [ACMR - Australian Catholic Ministry Register](#). We have enhanced this site slightly compared to the previous one, adding the ability for you to type or paste ID's in one go. In response to some requests for additional features successful results will also display the person's ACMR ID and the date on which the search has been performed.

## **New materials:**

### Transfer form

Our new transfer form is designed to replace the previously unclear process by which an ACMR ID holder would be formally moved from one Church entity to another. This form will be used when a person has moved to or been formally loaned to another Church entity, such that the receiving Church Authority will become or act as their Church Authority. A typical example might be the incardination of a priest in a new diocese. These will not need to be used for any placements, appointments or movement in which a person remains associated with their existing Church Authority.

### Procedures Guide and Frequently Asked Questions

Along with new forms, we are issuing some new material to help people understand and engage with the ACMR.

The main part of this is a new ACMR Procedures Guide, which we hope will assist all those who interact with us to know our processes and what each of them involves step by step. If you are unsure about our requirements, policies or how to do something this is a great place to start. This document should be especially helpful for training someone who has never used the ACMR before.

We are also re-publishing a thoroughly updated set of Frequently Asked Questions, which will live on our website but also be downloadable for printing or reference.

### NCSS 5.7.1 Guidelines and Statement Templates

Alongside this ACMR specific material we are also publishing a new guideline for the implementation of National Catholic Safeguarding Standard 5.7.1. This guideline details the requirement for use of safeguarding statements previously set out in *Towards Healing* 45.6 and 45.7. This will be a key reference point for how Church entities can make sure that they are complying with NCSS 5.7.1, including how this applies to ACMR ID holders, those who can make simple declarations of good standing and where a safeguarding disclosure must be made. By documenting these processes we aim to help Church entities in reformulating their policies, documents and forms beyond *Towards Healing* and to encourage standardisation in this important area.

To assist with the safe management of the movement for ministry, we are also providing two new templates for safeguarding statements and declarations.

The first template is attached as the *ACSL Safeguarding Statements form template*. This reflects those already in use around Australia and can be used where no disclosure is needed. We don't intend this to replace existing forms already in use, but to provide a useful guide on re-wording forms post *Towards Healing* as well as offering it for any Church entity which does not have an existing form online. If any Church entity would like help adjusting or rebranding this template for use in practice, please contact Llywellyn who will be able to assist.

The second is attached as the *ACSL Safeguarding Statements and disclosure form template*. This is an example of how a Church entity could formalise the process for those whose safeguarding statements must be accompanied by a disclosure of a safeguarding concern.