

New child protection document to help Parishes

Fr Jim Monaghan

During March, the Child Protection Office in Adelaide sent out copies of the Implementation Procedures for the South Australian Catholic Child Protection Council Policy. The Policy is for the Care, Wellbeing and Protection of Children and Young People.

Attractively presented in vivid colours with many pictures of children and young people, the document sets out how parishes are to implement the Policy, which was inaugurated in 2006 by Bishop Hurley and Archbishop Wilson. Accompanying the implementation document is a fresh edition of the Policy itself. At this stage, priests and pastoral associates, along with school leaders, have received these booklets.

A special approach in our Diocese

Adelaide office has set a June 2010 deadline for implementing the policy, but in our Diocese we are implementing it via a Pilot Process involving Whyalla Catholic Parish. As Whyalla tries out the various elements of the policy, they will be circulated to the other parishes.

So far, here at Whyalla we have achieved:

- Updated our lists of parish ministers/volunteers
- Child Protection as an agenda item at all Parish Pastoral Council meetings
- basic induction of all volunteers for Child Safe Environments
- Discussed "Code of Conduct" and sent feedback questions to the Child Protection Council
- Commissioned Mrs Teresa Lynch as the voluntary parish Child Safe Contact Person (see article this page)
- Involving children and young people,

and placing children's work and activities, in the Sunday liturgy

- Included Child Protection as criterion for staff contracts.

The work of child protection started several years ago in the Diocese, and it's good to recall what we have achieved so far:

- Police checks for all parish staffs and all volunteers/ministers who work directly with children
- Child Safe Environments training (7 hours) for all parish employees (also for Centacare, Catholic schools employees and volunteers, SVdeP and other organisations)
- Procedures for vetting all

church personnel visiting or moving to the Diocese for pastoral work, retreats, sacraments etc.

- Implementation of Towards Healing and Integrity in Ministry documents; regular meetings of Professional Standards Resource Group, Bishop's Consultative Panel
- Child Protection Charter, and Towards Healing information, in all our church porches
- Catholic schools screening, training, updating of all staff and volunteers; protective behaviours training; Child Protection curriculum.

Our overall aim as a Diocesan Church is to assist every parish community to love and care for our children and young people, and to promote not only their safety but also their authentic spiritual growth within their families and our parishes. We ask the blessing of Jesus, the friend of children, and the intercession of St Mary McKillop, for the fruitfulness of this work of the Holy Spirit.

Photo L-R: Parish Pastoral Council Chair Jacky Stamoulis, Brian Flanagan, Secretary Bill Heron, Andrew Eades and Teresa Lynch.

Teresa commissioned to be contact for child safe environments in Whyalla

"Animated and challenged by the Gospel, the Catholic Church sees its care and protection of children and young people as a sacred work". (Introduction to the Implementation Procedures for the Catholic Church's Child Protection Policy). The Saturday Vigil Mass at St Teresa's Church was the venue for Mrs Teresa Lynch to be commissioned as the Child Safe Contact Person for Whyalla Catholic Parish. The role of Child Safe Contact Person comes from the Child Protection Policy's Governance and Leadership key element. Each parish is asked to commission a Child-Safe Working Party and/or a Child Safe Contact Person for this role. Suitable candidates in parishes could include teachers, social workers, the NAP from the Catholic school or parish, nurses and so on. While the role is being refined by the Child Protection Council, Teresa will commence by being a resource and information person for the Parish Pastoral Council, Parish Team and parishioners. She will be able to refer people to the right place in regard to any deeper enquiries they might have. Having Teresa commissioned in this position also continues to develop the profile of the care, protection and wellbeing of children and young people as something central in the life of the parish. As the policy states, "It is the responsibility of each person involved in the Catholic Church community to contribute to the creation of safe and enriching environments for children and young people".

