

Safeguarding Survey

Boolaroo-Booragul & Warners Bay Parish



2023

Results

The survey on safeguarding management in the Boolaroo-Booragul & Warners Bay Parish was conducted during May and June 2023. The surveys were available in multiple formats online and in hard copy. This is the first Safeguarding survey in this parish. The response rate was approximately 10% which is less than ideal for analysis and the results cannot be considered statistically significant and therefore cannot be generalised to the whole parish. Nonetheless the responses indicate trends which need consideration.

The respondents were mainly in the over 65 years range, 66.7%, 51-64 years 20.8% and 12.5% in the 26 – 50 years range. There were no responses from minors or young adults. The voices of the young and young adults are mainly silent therefore no comments can be made on the adequacy of Safeguarding measures in the parish for this group. In addition the male voice is also restrained as only 27.1% of respondents were male, with 68.6% female and 4.1% preferring not to say. The majority of respondents came from the St Marys Church (68.8%) and 31.3% from Boolaroo.

Volunteers made up 62.5% of the respondents however it was concerning that 11.4% and 17.1% were either not aware or unsure of their training requirements. Also 51.5% were not up to date or unsure if their requirements were up to date. A slim majority (58.3%) knew where to find the policies and procedure governing safeguarding however 41.7% did not. Online access to the policy and procedures was recognised as the main place (56.25%) to view these documents and 6.2.5% acknowledging the parish office as a site for access.

The majority (95.9%) of the respondents would be likely or highly likely to have the confidence to act if a child or adult was at risk. The comments revealed the value of non-maleficence – doing no harm and following policy. Comments reflective of the responses include:

- *“Everyone is responsible to protect the rights of others*
- *Believe in integrity and governance*
- *This is something not to be ignored*
- *Because it is important to do*
- *Everyone has the right to feel safe.*
- *A safeguarding breach is a serious matter, morally, I'm bound to act”*

The question as to who the report would go to 68.7% would inform either the Office of Safeguarding (47.9%) or the parish promoters (20.8%). The Parish priest would receive 31.3% of reports with 12.5% going straight to the police. The mode of contact 31.2% to either online to ACSL or Diocesan Safeguarding Office. A further 29.2% would directly contact ACSL and 39.6% would report locally.

Parish support processes for children and adults demonstrated that 66.7% agreed or strongly agreed that support was adequate with a third unsure. Comments reflective of the responses include:

- *“They have been promoting it for a long time in our weekly Bulletins*
- *I believe that we promote Office of Safeguarding, rights and responsibilities are talked about frequently*
- *I have noticed that there is DEDICATED committee that reports regularly to our Parish bulletin with information & advice.*
- *There is always room for improvement*
- *Processes have been improved over the last few years*
- *I am not fully aware of the structures within our parish.*
- *I do not know*
- *information is provided each week at the masses and in the church bulletin*
- *From what I have read in weekly bulletin*
- *have the safeguarding contact details in ALL parish bulletin every week*
- *unsure of support*
- *It has been advertised/ promoted in the parish bulletin”*

The issue of prevention is critical within the Church and 66.7% agreed that our Parish had acceptable prevention strategies in place. Although 33.3% were unsure there was no guidance on how this could be improved in the comments. Comments arising from this question included:

- *The processes are improved but the nature of the abusers makes it difficult to stop*
- *Not sure*
- *As I see the number of people involved including those on the Safeguarding committee, and those from our Parish on the Diocesan Domestic Violence committee.*
- *cause I believe the parish is up to date in regard to safeguarding*



- *Our Parish is informed and I feel that our Parish Priest is up front with the promotion of Safeguarding and will act upon complaints.*
- *Open discussion within the parish on the subject*
- *I believe that our Parish have their responsibilities at the forefront of their mind. We follow protocols that reduce the chance of any breach occurring*
- *Actions are being taken*
- *The committee has been working on these issues for some time.*
- *The Parish follows the Office of Safeguarding procedures and these procedures/updates are published in the weekly parish bulletin”*

Parents responding to the survey indicated that the age range was 8 – 17 years. In regard to online/ personal safety responses indicated that all minors over 12 could manage their own care. Under 12 was either ‘don’t know’ 75% and 25% too young. When feeling unsafe over 12 years would approach a responsible person with under 12 this result stands at 75% with 33.3% unsure if their child would act.ⁱⁱ All minors know of a safe person to talk to when feeling unsafe. This result is concerning as it appears minors have identified a safe person but there may be a barrier to act.

Stranger danger remains a threat, all minors over 12 years would know how to manage that situation. The parents of one third of under 12 years did not have confidence that their child would know what to do. All minors understand how to keep safe online. Interestingly 25% of minors may not know how to use 000.

Older Parishioners mainly feel safe when in church (97.4%), reflective of comments:

- *“Never felt otherwise (safe)*
- *We have a very inclusive Parish and feel supported when issues are raised.”*

Loneliness in the older person is an issue in our society however in our parish 92.2% stated they were not lonely at church. Concerningly nearly 8% did experience loneliness when in our church. There is an increase in loneliness at home with 15.8% acknowledge feeling alone. Concerns regarding safety outside our church was low 2.6%, no comments were made on how to improve these situations.

Most older parishioners felt supported by the parish (92.1%) again it is concerning that 7.9% do not. Most (94.7%) had someone available for support. Comments from this question included:

- *“I know I can go to the Priests, and there are friends in the Parish who are part of the original Parish Group and we still meet each month, some of whom I could reach out to.*
- *Would only have to ask for support.*
- *Not as much as previously priest, who probably new me.*
- *Whilst not needing active support at the moment, I feel confident that support is there if needed- I only have to reach out.*
- *I feel there is a great community atmosphere in our Parish”*

When asked how our Parish can support our older members the following was mentioned:

- *Just continue to be open and inclusive with all Parishioners*
- *Tea, coffee n soup night after mass, where people can join in and get to know one another. Which will build and strengthen our parish*
- *Sometimes just to listen*
- *I am sure if I required support it would be there*

Awareness of cyber crime is critical in this age group 91.2% of older respondents believed that they understood how this crime may present. The comments indicated a wide range of views and generally there was an openness to learn more. Comments included:

- *“Delete all straight away*
- *Don’t know them all. They cause a lot of anxiety*
- *Most of the time I can see these but sometimes they can be confusing but I always get advice*
- *I am open to learning more*
- *I thought I was”*

A wide variety of resources were identified if an online issues appeared. Comments included:

- *“professional security advisors*
- *Depends on what the issue is as to who I would go to. Wouldn’t be the parish that’s for sure*
- *Have a tech support group where I live and if the occasion arises could go to them*



- *family*
- *Depending on what it is I would go to the police or Acorn*
- *Family*
- *Scam Watch or the relevant authority*
- *Husband*
- *Yes.*
- *Myself"*

General comments were varied in the subject matter:

- Concerns for a child I would call DCJ helpline 132111
- I don't have children, so don't qualify in that regard. Not to say I would ignore safety of other adults and children, however few attend the mass I go to
- No comments, except that the Parish is doing excellent work with all of this
- Other than the notes in the bulletin each week I am not aware of what safeguarding practices are in place.
- So pleased to see these issues are being looked at and hopefully those who have responsibility for Safeguarding will do their utmost to keep our Parish safe.
- This document does not make its main purpose clear. What is 'catholic safeguarding'. This needs to be clearly expressed in order to answer the questions
- Why don't the altar servers get changed in the old sacristy at St Mary's Warners Bay, away from the priest. This was the reason why the new sacristy was built.

Discussion

Safeguarding in our Parish has become more visible in the last few years and compliance has been required since 2015. This survey was aimed at scoping the understanding of safeguarding issues within our community. As stated, the number of returns was low and not a good representation of the wider parish however there were some interesting trends emerged. The awareness of the issues of safeguarding are improving and our community are highly likely to act if concerned. There have been many improvements to the physical spaces and where Parish activities take place. The Parish is now based in a shopfront in Warners Bay, this is the public face of our Parish and moves us into the community space. Small changes in the churches have improved safety and transparency, for example the glass door in the sacristy.

It is positive that the majority of the respondents know where to find the Policies and Procedures, the link on the local website now has links to the ACSL and ease of use of the website is constantly improving. Concerningly a significant number of volunteers do not know if they are compliant, by now all volunteers have been notified and training sessions have been organised. It should be noted that unless ALL compliance measures are met the volunteer cannot act in their role; this is a National requirement.

The activities of safeguarding have been recognised by respondents as having a role in the support and prevention of risk in adults and children. The auditing process requires a Parish to have evidence to prove compliance. The actions stated in the results indicate that this parish has recognised that the safeguarding activities such as the bulletin, the access to safeguarding posters and pamphlets are evidence of compliance.

The parents' perceptions of their children's safety indicated some potential educational gaps such as knowing how to use 000. It is evident that building confidence to recognise and act when a minor is in a difficult situation is critical however this is a balance. For younger children there is now an activity book with a safeguarding focus. Our schools in conjunction with parents continue to work with our young people in this area. It would be an advantage if the parish had some input from our young people directly so that we can support our schools and parents.

Our older parishioners appear to have mainly positive experiences however there are still elements of loneliness and lack of support. Some suggestions were put forward and will be considered. Online and phone scams are part of everyday life and many are targeted at older people. Most respondents are able to identify a scam when a call or post is suspicious, however continued education is important for all age groups.

The general comments were mainly positive and supportive of the actions implemented by the safeguarding promoters. It is also evident that some respondents were still unsure of where safeguarding fits within our community. We encourage parishioners to engage with safeguarding and our meetings are open to observers attending. The NHS in the UK articulate that; *Safeguarding means protecting a citizen's health, wellbeing and human rights; enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. ... Safeguarding children, young people and adults is a collective responsibility.*

i Not all comments included. A selection that represented all views was used

ii Aggregate results therefore do not add to 100