



Flowchart: Managing Safeguarding Complaints

This flowchart sets out the steps for managing a Safeguarding Complaint after it has been notified to the Safeguarding Office.

The Safeguarding Office is notified of a Safeguarding Complaint through the Parish Priest or Agency Head (or another person)

Refer to [Flowchart: Reporting Safeguarding Complaints](#) for immediate steps.

Initial assessment of the Safeguarding Complaint

The Safeguarding Office will complete *Form: Initial Assessment of Safeguarding Complaint* to assess and categorise the Safeguarding Complaint into one of the following three categories.

Serious Safeguarding Complaints are managed by the **Safeguarding Office**. *Examples of a serious Safeguarding Complaints include allegations of physical or sexual abuse of a Child.*

Procedures for managing a serious Safeguarding Complaint

1. Clarify the allegations/issues.
2. Action any required reports to the NSW Police, NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, and/or the Department of Communities and Justice, if this has not already been done to address immediate risk.
3. Notify senior managers responsible for overseeing the Respondent.

Where permitted by authorities, proceed with the steps below.
Note: steps 4 to 8 below can occur at or near the same time.

4. Implement longer term risk mitigation strategies for the safety of the Child or Children. *An example is making changes to the Child's usual activities or whereabouts.*
5. Commission an external investigation to proceed after step 8. Where the Respondent is a **member of Clergy or Religious Appointee**, the Vicar General will determine whether the Safeguarding Complaint has a 'semblance of truth' under Canon law. If there is a 'semblance of truth', the Vicar General will issue a decree to open a preliminary investigation under Canon law. An external investigation can be commissioned for the purposes of both civil legal and canonical requirements.
6. Communicate with the Complainant.
7. Determine immediate actions to take in relation to the Respondent (such as being stood aside from his/her position).
8. Engage with the Respondent. Where permitted by authorities, notify the Respondent of the Safeguarding Complaint.
9. Carefully communicate with parishioners and other stakeholders.
10. Notify senior managers, Parish Priest or Agency Head of outcome of investigation. As a result of the investigator's report and findings, consider disciplinary actions and any further steps. Where the Respondent is a member of Clergy, consider further steps under canon law.
11. Communicate with the Complainant at the conclusion of the investigation and consult with the Independent Safeguarding Advisory Panel in relation to any findings and advice to the Archbishop.

Less serious Safeguarding Complaints are referred back to the relevant **Parish Priest** or **Agency Head** to respond at the Parish or Agency level. *An example of a less serious Safeguarding Complaint is the use of inappropriate language in the presence of Children.*

Procedures for managing a less serious Safeguarding Complaints

The Parish Priest and Agency Head will typically take the following steps:

1. Clarify the issues.
2. Notify the Respondent.
3. Gather any additional information.
4. Resolve the Safeguarding Complaint.

Frivolous, vexatious, or other Safeguarding Complaints not capable of a response.

An example of a vexatious Safeguarding Complaint is where after the resolution of a Safeguarding Complaint, the Complainant continues to frequently contact the Archdiocese to seek to reopen their Safeguarding Complaint.

If appropriate, the Safeguarding Office will respond/inform the Complainant that the Safeguarding Complaint will not be responded to.

If it is not appropriate to respond, the Safeguarding Office will record its decision for the purposes of internal record-keeping.

For more information, refer to **Protocol: Managing Safeguarding Complaints**.