



BRIGIDINE SAFEGUARDING REFERENCE GROUP AUSTRALIA (BSRGA)

*To act justly and to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.
(Micah 6:8)*

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

- 1.1. As Sisters of St Brigid (Brigidine Sisters) we are committed to living in right relationships with all. We intend that these relationships, especially with the most marginalised, will be characterised by compassion, respect and justice.
- 1.2. In the last number of years, we have sadly awoken to the reality of sexual, emotional and physical abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults at risk in our midst and the pervasive impact of this in terms of life long trauma. In the wake of this we are called to be in solidarity with those who have been hurt and traumatised and to be part of the healing and reconciliation process.
- 1.3. Thus the 2018 Council of the Congregation developed a Congregational Safeguarding Statement:

As a congregation of Brigidine sisters we value the right of every person to dignity and respect. We are committed to establishing right relationships and just structures within our Communities and in our ministries. We protect the well-being of all people and ensure that appropriate measures are in place for the safety of children and vulnerable adults.

Our policies and procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are in line with the relevant guidelines and legislation in each civil jurisdiction in which our sisters, their colleagues, employees and volunteers are engaged in ministry. The Brigidine sisters fully comply and cooperate with civil law in each jurisdiction where they work and with Canon law.

Safeguarding policies are reviewed every three years or updated according to changes in the requirements of the civil jurisdictions in which our communities are involved in ministry.

Appropriate ongoing training and education is provided regularly for all our sisters, employees and volunteers.

Where Brigidine sisters work in other than Brigidine sponsored ministries they follow the safeguarding policies of the organisations in which they work, having received clearance for such ministry from the relevant civil authority. In the absence of there being appropriate policies in these workplaces, sisters follow their Brigidine Community policy and procedures.¹

¹ the Statement is displayed on the website at <https://brigidine.org.au/about-us/safeguarding>

- 1.4. The care, safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults, is a central and fundamental responsibility of all Brigidine Sisters and those who employed by or volunteer with them.
- 1.5. These Terms of Reference set out the scope, functions and membership for the Brigidine Safeguarding Reference Group Australia (BSRGA).
- 1.6. The Brigidine Sisters and the BSRGA acknowledge and respect the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child² and in their decision making will ensure that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
- 1.7. The Brigidine Sisters and the BSRGA acknowledge and respect the Australian Governments National Principles for Child Safe Organisations³ and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related standards⁴

2. Purpose and Scope

- 2.1. The Congregational Leadership Team (CLT) has established the BSRGA with the objective of providing expert advice and direction to the Australian Brigidine Sisters on:
 - Policies
 - Education
 - Complaint Management
- 2.2. The BSRGA provides advice and makes recommendations, on the above matters for consideration and endorsement by the CLT in consultation with Leadership Groups.
- 2.3. The establishment of the BSRGA is a significant response to the *Invitation and Call* from the 2016 Congregational Forum that states 'We are called in solidarity with others to extend and deepen our partnerships in a spirit of mutual respect and service fostering a sense of dignity and opportunity for all according to evolving needs'.

3. Functions

- 3.1. The BSRGA will undertake the following functions within the above scope:
 - 3.1.1. Upholding the values expressed in the Congregation's Safeguarding Statement on Children and Vulnerable Persons (September 2018);
 - 3.1.2. Developing and implementing consistent congregational policies and procedures in Australia for the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable persons;
 - 3.1.3. Monitoring compliance with these policies and procedures;

² cf Article 3.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

³ <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/national-principles-child-safe-organisations>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.htm>

- 3.1.4. Overseeing the management of complaints of sexual, physical or emotional abuse;
- 3.1.5. Providing relevant information and updates for Leadership Teams and ongoing education for sisters, employees and volunteers;
- 3.1.6. Remaining informed about matters related to developments and requirements in all areas of Professional Standards and Safeguarding;
- 3.1.7. Inquiring into, considering and reporting on any proposal or matter concerned with Professional Standards or Safeguarding as directed by the CLT.
- 3.1.8. The BSRGA has been established to assist Leadership Groups address these issues and to provide some stability over leadership changes.

4. Membership

- 4.1. Members of the BSRGA will be appointed by and accountable to the CLT.
- 4.2. The BSRGA will have not more than 5 members, with one additional ex officio CLT member.
- 4.3. The term of appointment for a member will be 3 years, with a possible re-appointment of 2 or 3 years.
- 4.4. The BSRGA will consist of Brigidine sisters, lay and/or other religious members. Members who are Brigidine sisters will hold the joint interests of both Australian Communities.
- 4.5. CLT will nominate a Chair from within the members of the BSGRA to facilitate the meetings.

5. Remuneration

- 5.1. All members of the BSRGA are volunteers and as such will receive no remuneration for their work unless they are requested to undertake work in their professional private capacity for the Brigidine sisters.
- 5.2. Reasonable expenses to carry out the purpose of the group such as travel and administration expenses, will be reimbursed by the Brigidine Sisters.

6. Meetings and Engagement

- 6.1. The BSGRA will meet for a minimum of two meetings per year and other meetings as needed.
- 6.2. All BSGRA members will endeavour to work in a collaborative manner with the aim of reaching a consensus on issues. Where genuine disagreement arises, every effort will be made by members to establish a consensus and collectively respect any outcome.
- 6.3. All discussions at meetings will be survivor focussed with an acknowledgement of this given by all BSGRA members present at the end of each meeting.

- 6.4. Members of the BSGRA will treat all information as confidential and consistent with the Brigidine Congregation privacy considerations.
- 6.5. Members of the BSGRA are expected to be alert to a potential for real or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise for them in case matters and respond to such in accordance with best practice.

7. Review

- 7.1. These Terms of Reference will be monitored for compliance and effectiveness by the CLT. A review will be conducted within 6 months of the establishment of the BSGRA and at yearly intervals thereafter. Interim reviews will occur at any time as required in response to either feedback or changes in legislation or policy to ensure the document is current, useful and easy to understand.

Section: Safeguarding, Version 1
Application: Brigidine Sisters
Endorsed: 5th September 2019
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Approved by: Brigidine Congregational Leadership Team