



Brigidine Southern Cross Community Australia

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

Terms of Reference

for

Brigidine Safeguarding Reference Group Australia (BSRGA)

1. INTRODUCTION

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.

In the last number of years, we have sadly awoken to the reality of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse of children, young people and adults at risk in our midst and the pervasive impact of this in terms of lifelong 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.

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 adults at risk.

Our policies and procedures for safeguarding children and adults at risk 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

The care, safety and wellbeing of children, young people, and adults at risk is a central and fundamental responsibility of all Brigidine Sisters and those who employed by or volunteer with them.

These Terms of Reference set out the scope, functions, and membership for the Brigidine Safeguarding Reference Group Australia (BSRGA).

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.

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

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

¹ the Statement is displayed on the website at www.brigidine.org.au/policies

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>

The BSRGA provides advice and makes recommendations, on the above matters for consideration and endorsement by the Brigidine Southern Cross Community Leadership Team.

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'.

The BSRGA has been established to assist the Brigidine Southern Cross Community Leadership Team address these issues and to provide some stability over leadership changes.

3. FUNCTIONS

The BSRGA will undertake the following functions within the above scope: -

- Uphold the values expressed in the Congregation's Safeguarding Statement on Children and adults at risk (September 2018)
- Develop and supporting the implementation of consistent congregational policies and procedures in Australia for the safeguarding of children, young people, and adults at risk.
- Provide advice in relation to these policies and procedures
- Provide guidance and support on complaints, when requested by the relevant Congregational Leader or Leader of the Brigidine Southern Cross Community Sisters Australia, as defined in the Complaints policy.
- Provide relevant information and updates for Leadership Teams and support ongoing education for sisters, employees and volunteers as requested
- Remain informed about matters related to developments and requirements in all areas of Professional Standards and Safeguarding
- Inquiring into, considering, and reporting on any proposal or matter concerned with Professional Standards or Safeguarding as directed by the Brigidine Southern Cross Community Leadership Team (BSCCLT).

4. MEMBERSHIP

- Members of the BSRGA will be appointed by and accountable to the Brigidine Congregational Leadership Team
- The BSRGA will have no more than 5 members, with one additional ex officio Brigidine CLT member
- The term of appointment for a member will be 3 years, with a re-appointment of 2 or 3 years
- The BSRGA will consist of Brigidine sisters, lay and/or other religious members
- Members who are Brigidine sisters will hold the interests of the Brigidine Southern Cross Community
- BSCCLT will nominate a Chair from within the members of the BSGRA to facilitate the meetings

5. REMUNERATION

- 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
- 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

- The BSGRA will meet for a minimum of two meetings per year and other meetings as needed
- All BSGRA members will endeavour to work in a collaborative manner with the aim of reaching a consensus on issues. Where genuine disagreement arises, members will make every effort to establish a consensus and collectively respect any outcome
- All discussions at meetings will be respectfully survivor focused
- Members of the BSGRA will treat all information as confidential and consistent with the Brigidine Congregation privacy considerations
- 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

- These Terms of Reference will be monitored for compliance and effectiveness by the Brigidine Congregational Leadership Team. A review will be conducted every two years. Interim reviews will occur at any time as required in response to either feedback or changes in legislation or policy to ensure the Terms of Reference remains relevant.

8. CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE BRIGIDINE SAFEGUARDING REFERENCE GROUP AUSTRALIA

- Ms Claire Pirola, Safeguarding Specialist, Brisbane, Catholic Education Office (Chair)
- Sr. Anne Hill csb
- Sr. Angela Ryan csb
- Sr. Chanel Sugden csb

Version Control			
Version	Date	Changes / Acceptance	Author
1	30 March 2023		