

SAFETY CHECKING AND POLICE VETTING PRACTICES

in the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand

Background

In the work undertaken within the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand, trust is placed in people (clergy, religious, employees and volunteers) to provide support and assistance to children and vulnerable adults. The purpose of these procedural recommendations is to minimize the likelihood of all people, but, particularly the more vulnerable members of society, being put at risk by individuals who may have displayed behaviour that could be detrimental to others' safety and wellbeing.

Consistent safety checking and police vetting can help assess whether people pose a risk to children and vulnerable adults and provide a way of preventing known abusers from working with children and vulnerable adults.

In particular, these recommendations ensure alignment with the expectations set out by the Children's Act, 2014.

Process

The key components to the personnel checking include:

- ***Referee checks:***

Ask the person to identify at least one referee who can be contacted for a discussion about the person's history relevant to the role, any concerns around interacting with children or vulnerable adults and the person's suitability for the role. Date and record the discussion.
See Referee Form.

- ***Police vetting:***

Completing a NZ Police Criminal Record Check, and any other required checks if the person has lived overseas.

Appropriately responding to the results of the NZ Criminal Record Check, in accordance with the procedures set out in the ***Police Vetting Flowchart***. The consent form which must be completed by the subject of the police vet can be found at:

<https://www.police.govt.nz/advice/businesses-and-organisations/vetting/forms-and-guides>

When in doubt, the safety checking and police vetting process should be completed.

Where an individual has spent significant periods of time in a country other than New Zealand, the relevant vetting officer will oversee the process of ensuring that a police vet is completed from any country where the individual resided for a significant period of time.

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If a person provides evidence of a current police vet through any organization, this is not valid in terms of the work that the person undertakes within the diocese or other Catholic organization. For instance, if a person holds a current registered teacher certificate, for which an acceptable police vet is a prerequisite, this does not preclude the person from a police vet for work to be carried out within the Catholic organization. The police vet from one agency is not transferable to another.

Every three years a fresh police vet or Ministry of Justice Criminal Record Check, including an identity check if there has been a change of name, must be completed.

Disclosure and Storage of Information

Details of the results of a Criminal Records Check will only be disclosed to the relevant person with the entity's authority to view sensitive personnel material. In all cases the Privacy Act (1993) will be observed.

All information related to the safety checking and police vetting process will be stored securely and access restricted to the relevant vetting officer.

