

APPENDIX I: TECHNOLOGY AND ONLINE SAFETY

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light.”
Matthew 6:22

1. PURPOSE & SCOPE

- 1.1. The Catholic Diocese of Armidale is committed to creating an environment that safeguards everyone, especially children and adults at risk. This includes not only safeguarding physical environments, but also online environments.
- 1.2. While use of the internet and social media assists in the work of evangelisation (reaching new people, broader advertisement of events, strengthening of relationships, etc), it is important to remember that this also brings new risks.
- 1.3. It is crucial for all Personnel of the Diocese to be aware of online risks and to adopt safe online practices which safeguard children and adults at risk from online abuse.

2. ONLINE ABUSE

2.1. Online abuse is behaviour that has a threatening, intimidating, harassing or humiliating affect on a person.⁵ Serious online abuses that should be reported to the eSafety Commissioner include:⁶

- Cyber-bullying towards a child:
When someone uses the internet to be mean to a child or young person so they feel bad or upset.
- Adult cyber abuse:
When the internet is used to send, post or share content that is harmful to the physical or mental health of someone who is 18 or older.
- Image-based abuse:
When someone shares, or threatens to share, an intimate image or video of a person without their consent (sometimes called ‘revenge porn’).

3. DIOCESAN SOCIAL MEDIA

3.1. To remain transparent, all Diocesan (including Parish and Agency) social media accounts and platforms must have more than one administrator. The online administrators must be

⁵ All definitions are from the eSafety Commissioner website: [Online safety | eSafety Commissioner](#). See *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) for specific legal definitions.

⁶ The *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) ([Online Safety Act 2021 - Federal Register of Legislation](#)) and the eSafety Commissioner ([Report online harm | eSafety Commissioner](#)) give step by step instructions of what and how to report online abuse.

18 years or older and must communicate to the relevant Parish Priest or Agency head all content being posted.

4. ONLINE SAFETY GUIDELINES

4.1. All Personnel of the Diocese of Armidale must be responsible, respectful and transparent in all online communication, especially with children and adults at risk.

4.2. They must:

- Be respectful and considerate in any online communication, especially with children and adults at risk.
- Communicate in a way that is consistent with their role in the Church.
- Use their real name to identify themselves and not a fake name.
- Keep private information confidential.
- Avoid using personal online accounts for ministry purposes.
- Obtain permission from relevant Parish Priest or Agency head before creating any online accounts or social media platforms on behalf of your parish, agency or ministry.
- Obtain written consent from parents or guardians before communicating with children online or over the phone. Communication with children should occur through approved ministry channels and, where possible, include parents or another adult.
- Where possible, only communicate with children online through group emails or messages and not on a one-to-one basis.
- Complete Risk Assessments for relevant activities in online environments as well as those in physical environments.
- Immediately notify the relevant Parish Priest or Agency head in the case that they become aware of any cyber-bullying or intimate images posted on any Diocesan social media platforms.

4.3. They must not:

- Become 'friends' or interact on their personal social media with children they have met through their role in the Diocese.
- Post, share or send online anything contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Post, share or send online anything that may be abusive to another including, but not limited to, cyber-bullying material, intimate images of another and inappropriate language.

4.4. Exceptions to the above include:

- a) One-to-one interaction online or over the phone with a child, in the case they disclose abuse. This must be for the sole purpose of the child disclosing abuse and cannot be continued once the one-time disclosure is made, except where the parent/guardian/another safe adult is present.

- b) One-to-one interaction online or over the phone with a child, in the case a child initiates contact for enquiries of vocations or other Church ministries. In this case it is permissible to communicate with the child, however the communication must be in specific response to the enquiry and without any unnecessary or unrelated conversation. The interaction must not take place on a personal social media account/phone. Parental consent should be obtained as soon as possible for further correspondence, and records of the one-to-one correspondence prior to parent consent must be maintained.