

Safeguarding Sunday - 12 September 2021

Acknowledgement of Land, Seas and Waterways

As we reflect on Safeguarding Sunday, we acknowledge the First Nations Peoples as the traditional custodians of Country since time immemorial. We acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge Shirleen Campbell in her work titled 'Deep Listening' used for National Child Protection Week 2021 and embrace her knowledge from First Nations culture on the importance of deep listening in creating strong communities for children.

Grandmothers' Story: "As you may know, in Aboriginal culture, our country and its landscape are our classroom. We connect to country as we learn and grow into adults. Our country is always ready to teach our mob and to look after us. This painting shows two grandmothers (sisters) sitting around the campfire teaching the young girls and boys about growing up and walking in two worlds. Here you can see the two grandmothers, emu footprints, bush tucker and spinifex. The boys and girls are sitting around their campfires using deep listening to learn about country and being ready for the two worlds. The footprints are the grandmothers walking around."



Figure 1 Image and Words: 'Deep Listening'
by Shirleen Campbell, Alice Springs

Context



Figure 2 Images from <https://www.catholic.org.au/safeguarding-sunday>

The Catholic Church in Australia marks Safeguarding Sunday (formerly Child Protection Sunday) on the second Sunday of September, at the conclusion of National Child Protection Week. Safeguarding Sunday seeks to acknowledge the immense damage caused by the sexual abuse of children and adults at risk, including by priests, religious and lay people within Catholic contexts. It makes a commitment to practices and protocols that create and

maintain safe environments for all people. It invites people to pray for those harmed by abuse directly and indirectly. This weekend, the Catholic Church in Australia marks Safeguarding Sunday and invites us all to pray for those who have been abused, their families and supporters.

Scripture from the Second Reading at Safeguarding Sunday's Mass

James 2:14-18

Faith without Works Is Dead

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works?

Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith

Reflection by Rachel McLean, Leader Formation Catholic Education Services Cairns

The reading from the Letter of St James to the early Christian communities invites us to consider *how* we live our faith; to ponder what is our *way of being* in the world. The readings for Safeguarding Sunday, the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, are rather confusing if one were to try and relate them to the commitment that the day commemorates: that is, 'never again' will children be abused at the hand of the Church. Instead, Fr

Andrew Hamilton SJ invites us to encounter the Scripture and its connection to Safeguarding Sunday through a broader lens, one where all people are safeguarded. This invitation is to consider the ways in which the Church is a place of love, generosity, respect, forgiveness, prayer and hospitality - qualities found in the way Jesus lived his life. In committing to building places of safety for our children, we also build places of safety for the vulnerable, the marginalised and the oppressed.

Fr Andrew unpacks this invitation in the context James' letter in this way: "James gives us the example of our response to people in need who ask us for help. It is not enough to speak nicely to them. We are called to help them. This reading urges us always to look at our relationships from the perspective of the person in need. It also reminds us of the cost involved in our faith, and so of the depth to which following Jesus takes us."

When I consider this reflection, re-read the Letter from James and reflect on the "Deep Listening" artwork and words from Shirleen Campbell above, I am drawn to further explore my *ways of being* in this world. I have learnt so much from my First Nations colleagues, friends and elders I have met while working at CES, particularly in relation to First Nations ways of Knowing, Being, Doing and Valuing. The resonance between this ancient way of life and the invitation by James to have a faith that is more than words is profound. On Safeguarding Sunday, let us all take pause to consider how we can be workers of faith: people who never let children and the vulnerable be forgotten, maligned or abused again.

Prayer for our Children

See Me, Hear Me

Gracious God, provide us with a listening heart that we see and hear the voice of each of our children.

We ask you God to strengthen and guide all in our Catholic communities. Grant us the ability and time to listen carefully when children come to us seeking help.

May our schools and families respect, listen and do what is required to help all children feel safe. Help us to recognise the hurt felt by those wounded initially by abuse, then again through the failure to be heard.

We stand in constant need of your healing and help. Let your grace and love fall gently upon our children giving them the inner strength, peace, and resilience to seek out assistance when required.

We ask you God to provide each of us with the wisdom to involve children in making institutions and communities safer.

Amen

Call to Action

Read the [National Catholic Safeguarding Standards](#) that provide a framework for Catholic Church entities to build child-safe cultures.

Explore the National Association for Prevention of Child abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) resources:

- [Tips for Talking to Children about Personal Safety](#)
- [Tips for Listening to Children](#)
- [Ways to support and encourage a child's right to speak and be heard](#)

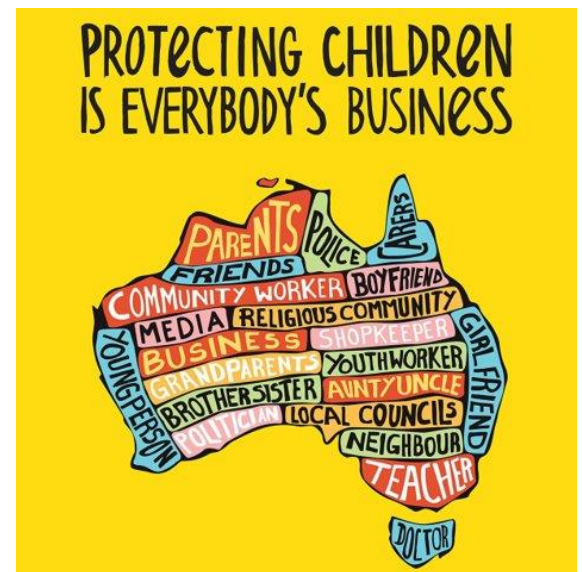


Figure 3 Image from [NAPCAN](#)

