



Diocesan Consultation and Communication Procedure

1. Purpose

This procedure establishes how the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat and its parishes will consult and communicate with workplace participants about workplace health and safety matters.

The procedure is intended to ensure that:

- relevant health and safety information is shared in a timely and understandable form.
- affected workplace participants have a reasonable opportunity to express their views.
- those views are genuinely considered before decisions are made.
- workforce participants and their Health and Safety nominees are advised of outcomes.
- hazards, risks, incidents, proposed changes, and safe systems of work are discussed and addressed.
- unresolved issues are escalated through an agreed process; and
- consultation arrangements are documented, monitored, and reviewed.

It supports compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic), including the duties to consult and issue resolution of health and safety matters.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all workforce participants including clergy, employees, leaders and managers, volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors, religious, parishioners, and representatives of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat.

Statutory duties remain with the person or employing entity on whom the law places them. Appointing a Health and Safety nominee does not transfer or remove those duties.

The Diocese and parishes may also consult volunteers, contractors, and other affected persons as a matter of good safety practice.

3. Governing principles

Consultation must:

- occur so far as is reasonably practicable.
- begin early enough to influence a decision.
- involve workforce participants who are, or are likely to be, directly affected.
- involve the relevant health and safety nominee
- inform the Diocesan OHS advisor, and provide updates (if appropriate)
- include relevant, accurate and timely information.
- provide a reasonable opportunity for views, concerns, and suggestions to be raised.
- take those views into account before a decision is finalised.
- communicate decisions, reasons, actions, responsibilities, and review dates; and
- be accessible to people with differing language, literacy, communication, location, or accessibility needs.

Consultation is not satisfied merely by informing people after a decision has been made. WorkSafe Victoria identifies consultation as central to effective representation.

4. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Employer	In accordance with the OHS Act 2004, the employer will as reasonably practicable, consult with workforce participants likely to be directly affected by the employer's management and control of the workplace as set down in Part 4, Section 35.
Local Leader	The Parish Priest or their authorised representative. Tasked to speak, consult on, or resolve issues relating to health and safety; forwards nominee reports to the Finance Council for consideration and action.
Duty holder	Any person or organization that owes a legal health and safety duty under occupational health and safety legislation enforced by WorkSafe Victoria.
Consultation	means sharing information, giving affected workforce participants a reasonable opportunity to express their views, genuinely considering those views, and communicating outcomes with affected workforce participants as set down under Section 35 (3), and in accordance with agreed consultation procedures.
Diocesan OHS Advisor	The person occupying the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat's position of Work Health and Safety and Physical Asset Administrator.
Parish Health and Safety nominee	Parish Health and Safety nominee may not always be an employee but a volunteer from the parish community who through a nomination process is appointed by the Parish priest. Acting on the request of parishioners, the nominee reports health and safety matters to the parish priest.
Health and Safety Consultative Zone Committee	means the consultative Committee formed by Parish health and safety nominees across participating parishes from an agreed geographical zone to consult, manage and review OHS policies and procedures across the Diocese.
Health and safety matters	means a concern about actual or potential risks to health or safety that requires consultation, action, or resolution.
Change	means any proposed alteration to work, systems, equipment, environment and facilities, staffing, or activities that may affect workforce participant's welfare, health or safety.
Safe system of work	means a method of performing work that identifies hazards, controls risks, allocates responsibilities, provides suitable information, instruction, training, and supervision, and is monitored and reviewed.

5. When consultation must occur

Consultation must occur when:

- identifying or assessing hazards and risks, including physical and psychosocial hazards.
- deciding how to eliminate or control risks.
- reviewing whether controls or safe systems of work remain effective.
- proposing changes that may affect health or safety.
- making decisions about workplace facilities or welfare arrangements.
- determining procedures for resolving health and safety issues.
- determining how workforce participants will be consulted.
- determining information, instruction, training, or supervision requirements.
- developing or reviewing workplace health and safety policies, procedures, and local arrangements.
- planning work, events, or activities that may introduce new or changed risks.
- reviewing incidents, injuries, illnesses, potential hazards, or near misses.
- introducing or engaging contractors where work may affect workforce participants.
- coordinating feedback on risks shared between the Diocese, a parish, contractors, or other duty holders.
- considering findings from workplace inspections, audits, risk assessments, or hazard registers; and
- workforce participant/s and/or a Health and Safety nominee requests consultation on a relevant health and safety matter.

Consultation must occur before a decision is made wherever reasonably practicable. If urgent action is required to prevent immediate harm, interim controls may be implemented first, followed by consultation as soon as practicable.

6. Consultation process

The responsible local leader must ensure the following steps are completed.

6.1 Define the matter.

Identify:

- the hazard, risk, proposed change, or decision.
- workforce participants who may be affected.
- the relevant Health and Safety nominee and Diocesan OHS advisor, if appropriate.
- who has authority to make or approve the decision; and
- any immediate or interim controls required.

6.2 Share relevant information

Provide affected workforce participants and the relevant Health and Safety nominee and Diocesan OHS advisor (if appropriate) with the information that is reasonably necessary for them to understand the matter, which may include:

- the nature and location of the hazard or risk.
- incident, inspection, or risk-assessment information.
- proposed options and controls.



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- likely effects of a proposed change.
- applicable procedures or legal requirements.
- proposed timeframes; and
- information obtained from contractors, external specialists, or other duty holders.

In accordance with privacy legislation, personal, medical, pastoral, safeguarding, legal and commercially sensitive information must be managed confidentially and disclosed only where authorised or required.

6.3 Provide a reasonable opportunity to respond.

Allow enough time and suitable ways for affected workforce participants and the Health and Safety nominee and Diocesan OHS advisor (if appropriate) to:

- ask questions.
- read relevant information.
- raise concerns.
- propose controls or alternatives.
- identify practical consequences.
- seek assistance or advice; and
- provide feedback individually or collectively to the Parish Finance Council.

No person may be disadvantaged, threatened, or treated adversely because they raise a health and safety concern, participate in consultation, or perform a Health and Safety nominee role.

6.4 Consider views before deciding.

The decision-maker must genuinely consider the information, views, concerns, and proposed alternatives raised through consultation.

Where a suggestion is not adopted, the reason should be recorded and communicated back to the person/people who raised the concern.

6.5 Communicate the outcome.

Affected workforce participants and the relevant Health and Safety nominee must be advised of:

- the decision.
- the reasons for it.
- controls or changes to be implemented, if applicable.
- whose responsible for following up and due dates.
- interim measures, if appropriate.
- any outstanding disagreement or concerns.
- the escalation pathway; and
- and any review plans.

7. Consultation methods

Consultation may occur through:



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- direct discussions.
- team or staff meetings.
- Workplace health and safety inspections.
- hazard-identification and risk-assessment activities.
- incident and near-miss reviews.
- Health and Safety nominee consultation.
- Parish Finance Committee meetings.
- the Health and Safety Consultative Zone Committee meetings.
- committees or working groups.
- workforce participant briefings or Parish Bulletins.
- surveys.
- accessible telephone or online meetings; and
- written communications supported by an opportunity to respond.

The method must be appropriate to the seriousness and complexity of the matter, the time available, the people affected and the location of the work. Written communication alone is not adequate where it does not provide a genuine opportunity for dialogue.

8. Parish Health and Safety Nominees

8.1 Parish nomination and selection

The parish priest of each parish will seek nominations from the parish community for the parish health and safety nominee role. Invitations to nominate for this role will be published in the parish bulletin and posted on community noticeboards. The Parish priest will appoint the preferred nominee from among those who nominate.

The appointment and term of the Parish Health and Safety nominee must be recorded in the Parish Finance Committee minutes and communicated to parish workforce participants and the Diocese.

8.2 Statutory status

The Parish Finance Committee process supports Parish consultation and communication procedures, in accordance with the OHS Act 2004; and will as reasonably practicable, consult with workforce participants likely to be directly affected by the employer's management and control of the workplace as set down in Part 4, Section 35.

8.3 Parish Health and Safety nominee responsibilities

The role of the Parish health and safety nominees includes:

- representing workforce participants health and safety concerns.
- participating in consultation, workplace inspections, and reviews.
- bringing hazards, risks, and unsafe practices to the attention of the parish priest.
- monitoring the progress of agreed controls and actions.
- supporting communication between workforce participants, the Parish Finance Committee, and the Diocesan OHS advisor.



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- referring shared or unresolved matters to the Health and Safety Consultative Zone Committee.
- participating in the Health and Safety Consultative Zone Committee meeting; and
- maintaining confidentiality where required.

[Link to Parish Health and Safety Report Form \(online\)](#)

9. Health and Safety Consultative Zone Committee

9.1 Establishment and purpose

The Health and Safety Consultative Zone Committee establishes how the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat and its parishes will consult and communicate with workplace participants about workplace health and safety matters at the zone level.

9.2 Membership

Membership of the Committee should include:

- the Parish Health and Safety nominee from participating parishes within each zone group.
- the Diocesan OHS advisor.
- other persons invited for relevant expertise; and
- a chairperson and minute secretary selected under the Group's terms of reference.

[Link to Health and Safety Consultative Zone Committee's Terms of Reference](#)

9.3 Meetings

The Committee will meet regularly. Additional meetings may be called for a serious, urgent, or shared health and safety issue.

A standing agenda will include:

- identification of new physical and psychosocial hazards and emerging risks, the monitoring of significant or overdue corrective actions, and review of incidents and near misses.
- oversight of workforce participants safety through examining the effectiveness of controls and safe systems of work; organising workplace inspections, monitoring unresolved issues including escalation, if appropriate; and auditing health and safety findings.
- implementation of induction and training of Diocesan workplace health and safety policies (OHS policies), including lessons or improvements to be shared across parishes for workforce participants, and
- nominations for chairperson and minute secretary for the next scheduled meeting, accepted and confirmed before the close of business.

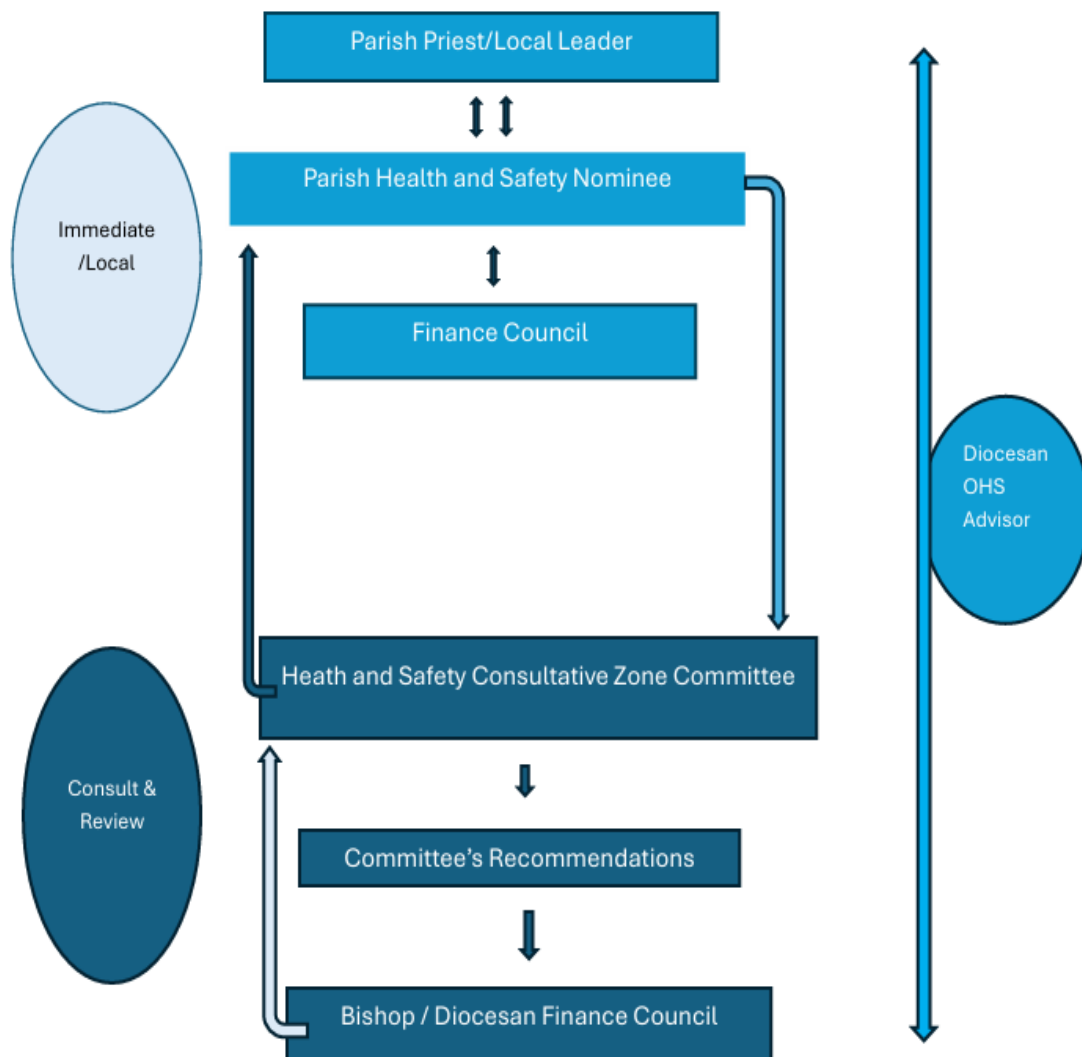
Minutes must record matters discussed, views raised, recommendations, decisions, action owners, due dates, and review dates. Minutes and outcomes must be communicated to parish priests, members of the Parish Finance Committees, the Diocesan OHS advisor and relevant workforce participants.

9.4 Escalation

The Committee may escalate a matter to the Diocesan Finance Council.

Urgent or serious matters must not wait for the next scheduled meeting.

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10. Resolution of health and safety issues

Health and safety issues should be resolved as close as practicable to the workplace and without unreasonable delay.

The parties must:

1. identify the issue and the affected workforce participants.
2. identify any immediate risk and implement interim controls.
3. consult the affected workforce participants, and Health and Safety nominee.
4. consider the number and location of workforce participants affected, whether the risk is immediate, and the controls required.
5. agree on actions, responsibilities, and timeframes.
6. document and communicate outcome/s; and
7. review whether the resolution is effective (Review dates will be set commensurate with the issue and actions agreed).

If the issue is not resolved locally, it must be escalated promptly to the parish priest or local leader if appropriate, then to the Consultative Zone Committee as appropriate.

Nothing in this procedure limits workforce participants rights, WorkSafe inspector involvement or other entity under occupational health and safety legislation. WorkSafe Victoria provides guidance on formal issue-resolution procedures.

Where an issue presents an immediate threat to health or safety, affected people must be protected and the hazard isolated or work stopped where lawful and safe to do so. Any potential notifiable incident must be referred immediately through the Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure.

[**Link to Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure**](#)

11. Roles and responsibilities

Diocesan leadership and the Diocesan OHS advisor must:

- establish and maintain the consultation framework.
- provide resources, advice, templates, and support.
- monitor whether consultation arrangements are operating effectively.
- receive and address escalated or Diocese-wide matters.
- consult on decisions within Diocesan control; and
- monitor trends and systemic actions arising from Consultative Zone Committee meetings.

Parish Priest/ Local Leader must:

- remain accountable for local implementation and monitoring of the consultation framework, and identifying when consultation is required, including liaising with the Parish Finance Committee.



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- consult affected workforce participants and relevant Health and Safety nominee/s by:
 - providing relevant information before decisions are made,
 - involving them in decision-making;
 - documenting views, decisions and actions, and
 - communicating outcomes.
- ensure hazards and unresolved issues are acted upon promptly and review the effectiveness of controls.
- provide information, instruction, training, and supervision.
- invite nominations and appoint a Parish Health and Safety nominee.
- ensure actions are assigned, resourced, monitored, and closed.
- escalate matters that cannot be resolved locally; and
- support the nominee to participate in consultation and Zone Committee meetings.

Parish Finance Committee must:

- support the parish health and safety nomination and appointment arrangements.
- familiarise themselves with Diocesan workplace health and safety policies and procedures, including procedures relating to contractors and sub-contractors
- monitor significant hazards, incidents, overdue actions, and local safety performance;
- ensure recommendations from other bodies or committees are referred to the relevant decision-maker.
- monitor hazards and unresolved issues are acted upon promptly, review the effectiveness of controls, and maintain records
- ensure consultation outcomes are reviewed (for closure).

Workforce participants must:

- participate in consultations in good faith.
- provide practical information about the workplace environment including concerns arising from their activities.
- promptly report hazards, risks, incidents and near misses.
- follow agreed controls and safety instructions.
- cooperate with Health and Safety nominees (and Diocesan OHS advisor if required) and consultation arrangements; and
- take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others.

Contractors and other duty holders

Where work or risks are shared, the Diocese, parish priest, members of the Parish Finance Committee, contractor/s, and other duty holders must exchange relevant information and consult, cooperate and coordinate activities. Responsibility for each control must be identified and recorded.

[Link to Contractor Safety Procedure](#)



12. Records and confidentiality

The following records must be retained in the approved Diocesan or parish recordkeeping system:

- consultation records.
- information provided.
- feedback and concerns raised.
- decisions and reasons.
- action registers.
- Parish Health and Safety nominee and appointment records.
- Zone Committee records including meeting agendas and minutes.
- issue-resolution records.
- training records; and
- evidence that actions and controls were reviewed and closed.

Records must identify the health and safety matter considered, people or groups consulted, relevant Health and Safety nominee involvement, information shared, views raised, decisions made, actions, owners, due dates, communication method, and review outcome.

Records must be accessible for monitoring, audit and WorkSafe inspection while protecting personal, medical, pastoral, safeguarding, legal and other confidential information; in accordance with privacy legislation.

13. Monitoring and Review

The Parish Priest/Local Leader must monitor:

- participation in consultation (if and where appropriate).
- timeliness of responses including unresolved and overdue actions.
- recurring hazards, risks and issues, and where appropriate update the Parish Hazard Risk Register.
- the support provided to the Parish Health and Safety nominee.
- the implementation of Zone Committee recommendations.
- the effectiveness of the controls and safe systems of work; and
- how consultation outcomes are communicated.

This procedure will be reviewed at least every two years and earlier where:

- legislation or WorkSafe guidance changes.
- a serious incident or significant near miss occurs.
- consultation or issue-resolution arrangements prove ineffective.
- there is a material organisational or workplace change.
- recurring concerns indicate a systemic gap; or
- a review is requested by the Health and Safety nominee, or the Diocesan OHS advisor, or the Health and Safety Consultative Zone Committee or Diocesan/local leadership.

14. Related documents

- Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Workplace Health and Safety Policy (one page)



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- Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Workplace Health and Safety Policy – Principle Based
- Safeguarding Policy and Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedures.
- Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Risk Control Procedure
- Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure
- Contractor Safety Procedure
- Return to Work Procedure
- Diocese Consultation Record Template – See Appendix 1
- Health and Safety Consultative Zone Committee Action Register – See Appendix 2
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)
- OHS Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations 2025

Document owner	[Insert Diocesan role]	Version	1
Approval date	[Insert]	Next review date	[Insert]



Appendix 1 – Consultation Record Template

Date of Consultation: [Insert]

Workplace, parish, location, or meeting: [Insert]

Topic or issue: [Hazard, risk, proposed change, incident review, policy review, safe system of work or other]

Workforce Participants affected: [Insert]

Parish Health and Safety nominee involved: [Insert]

Information provided: [Insert]

Consultation method and response period: [Insert]

Views, concerns, and suggestions raised: [Insert]

Options or controls considered: [Insert]

Decision and reasons: [Insert]

Interim controls: [Insert]

Actions, Persons responsible, and due dates: [Insert]

Unresolved matters and escalation pathway: [Insert]

How outcomes were communicated: [Insert]

Review date and effectiveness outcome: [Insert]

Record completed by: [Insert]



Meeting date: [Insert]

Zone Committee: [Insert]

Meeting Time:

Parishes or workplaces represented: [Insert]

Matters Discussed

[illegible]