

March 2025



So much to share in our first newsletter for 2026

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2026. We are excited to share an invitation to our first webinar for the year that will be presented by Rev Dr Fr Hans Zollner SJ, internationally renowned theologian and psychologist, who will discuss the topic “The intercultural nature of safeguarding”.

We also share a summary of Gabrielle Hunt’s presentation on why we need to involve children in safeguarding conversations. Plus we have a spotlight on Douglas Russell as well as a final call for women to take part in the WISE research project.

If you like to have all your resources in one place, our new Global Safeguarding Alliance (GSA) website will be just the ticket - our new website, hosted on the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) pages, houses all our webinars, recordings and knowledge translation resources. We hope the website will help you find information easily and offer an easy way to share it with others.

We invite you to read on ...



Webinar: the intercultural nature of safeguarding

Our first webinar for 2026 will be presented by Rev Dr Fr Hans Zollner SJ, theologian and psychologist, Professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University and Director of its Institute of Anthropology, Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care. The topic he has chosen “The intercultural nature of safeguarding” will challenge the view that safeguarding is too hard because we have to reinvent what works in our part of the world.

As a founding member of GSA, Fr Zollner has played a major role in our drive to understand what works across cultures in different parts of the world. Drawing on international research and experience, Fr Zollner will explore safeguarding as a core expression of the Church’s mission, formation and commitment to human dignity — not simply a regulatory requirement.

Presenter: Rev Dr Fr Hans Zollner SJ

Time: 9 am (CEST), 5 pm (AEST)

Date: Thursday 9 April

We will send out an invitation to a zoom meeting very soon – for now please mark this date in your diary so you can join us.



Spotlight on Senior Researcher Douglas Russell

Many of our subscribers may recognise Douglas as the facilitator of our webinars, who introduces our speakers and their research. Or you might have met Douglas at one of the International Safeguarding Conferences in Rome.

But did you know that Douglas is a researcher himself, with a background in education in Australia, the UK and Dubai.

Douglas is the driving force behind an Australian survey of adults working with children and young people reflecting on their own safeguarding capabilities and on policies and practices in their organisation – this is now being translated into German and Spanish. He has many publications under his belt, many with an international focus, and is always looking for new ways to bring knowledge and evidence to the attention of those of us working with children. Douglas is always looking for ways to improve, and has some opinions on the value of AI.

[Read more](#)



Community of Practice now live

We are pleased to share that the Global Safeguarding Alliance is launching a new online **Community of Practice** on LinkedIn to support practitioners, leaders, researchers and volunteers around the world who are working to strengthen safeguarding in their own contexts.

The **Community of Practice** is for members to connect across countries, share useful resources, discuss practice challenges, and engage with evidence in a way that is accessible and relevant to everyday safeguarding work.

Over the next few weeks, we will gradually build content on the platform with a series of short posts, prompts and opportunities for discussion. These early posts are designed to help members feel comfortable, to clarify expectations for participation, and to build a shared understanding of how we can learn from one another in a global setting. As with all GSA activities, participation is entirely voluntary – reading, observing or contributing occasionally are all welcome ways of being part of the community.

We will also create polls to understand what you would like to see there, how you hope to be involved and active, and what support you need to engage in this online community. This will ensure that the Community of Practice is enjoyable as well as beneficial.

We look forward to working with you to build a community where safeguarding knowledge can be shared and strengthened across countries, cultures and professional backgrounds.

[Join the Community of Practice](#)



WISE survey of women in safeguarding practice

Not long left! Survey closes Friday 13 March!

To the women who have completed the survey for the WISE project - Women's Insights in Safeguarding Efforts in the Catholic Church - we thank you. If you haven't yet taken part, this is your last opportunity. We know so very little about safeguarding in church settings from the point of view of women. WISE aims to fill this gap by collecting insights from women all over the world.

You can participate if you are a nun, a sister or a lay woman active in Church life as a volunteer or staff member. The study will explore your experiences with current safeguarding measures, your ideas for improvement, and your views on the risks posed by both men and women within Church settings.

The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how safeguarding is implemented and will inform future policy and practice across global Church communities.

Please complete the survey or share the link to the survey with women in your network.

[Take part in the WISE survey](#)



Including children in conversations about safeguarding and gender-based violence

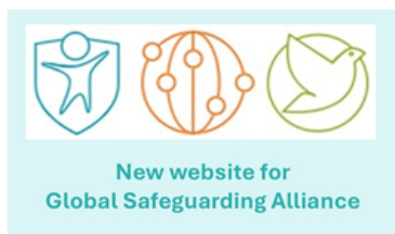
A recent conference in Melbourne, Australia, hosted by The Wesley Centre, focused on how religion, theology and culture contribute to—or help combat—gendered violence. ICPS's Research Associate Gabrielle Hunt added to the discussion by pointing out that **children are often missing from conversations about gender-based violence**. She also reminded delegates that the responsibility to fix harm frequently falls to women, even when they don't hold the authority within the system to change the structures causing it.

Gabrielle is well-placed to share these observations as she is currently researching gender and its role in victimisation and safeguarding practice in faith-based settings. This was part of her PhD research that examined the prevalence and prevention of child sexual abuse, including within faith-based settings. National data show that child abuse is widespread in Australia. **Many children experience sexual abuse from known adults and, in a significant proportion of cases, from other children and young people.** Overall, one in 250 Australians have experienced child sexual abuse by a leader or other adult in a religious organisation.

Gabrielle's research highlights how **gender norms, power, and authority shape these experiences and responses, underscoring why children must be included in conversations about gendered violence.** Interviews with religious leaders also revealed ongoing safeguarding challenges, including resistance to change, gaps between policy and practice, and theological beliefs that can either hinder or support protection efforts.

While many organisations have strengthened training and screening, progress is uneven and often heavily reliant on compliance. The findings point to the need for prevention efforts that address culture as well as procedures — including comprehensive education for children, survivor-informed practice, and theological reflection that prioritises dignity, accountability, and the safety of all children.

Listen to Gabrielle's 2025 webinar presentation for GSA "**Safeguarding as mission**" on YouTube where she addresses these issues.



A new website for all GSA resources

We are pleased to share a new online space where you can access all things GSA. Our **new GSA website** is hosted on the Australian Catholic University's ICPS website and has been designed to make it easy for you to find resources that help your safeguarding work.

Since 2020, the GSA has hosted six webinars and created knowledge translation content that makes research findings easy to read. All six topics and webinar recordings are now available in the section "**Webinars and knowledge translation**". If you are interested in research, explore our page "**Recommended reading**". We also have a page on current members of the GSA and a page about the GSA mission and guiding principles.

Find the resources that suit your needs, whether you are an academic, a teacher, a Church leader, a practice-oriented professional, a safeguarding professional, a trauma specialist or an individual looking for guidance.

If you would like to suggest a new topic for a webinar or suggest someone who is an expert in their field, we would love to hear from you. Get in touch via email: icps@acu.edu.au



Help us grow the alliance

Help us promote better practice in keeping children and young people safe. Invite your colleagues to subscribe to the Global Safeguarding Alliance. It's free and open to all.

Feel free to **forward this newsletter** to people in your network and invite them to **sign up as subscribers** so we can spread our news on safeguarding.



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