



# Safeguarding Responsibilities of the Parish Priest/Administrator by Canonical Appointment Practice Guide

## Introduction

In the Diocese of Broken Bay, the Parish Priest/Administrator by his canonical role of governance has the responsibility to ensure both legal and church mission obligations are met in the pursuit of attaining a culture where people, especially the vulnerable feel safe. The Diocese is committed to Safeguarding and details this in its public commitment.

### OUR DIOCESAN COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING

*We the people of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay are committed to fostering communities of safety and care for all people, especially for children and others in the community who are vulnerable.*

*Our commitment is underscored by our faith in Jesus Christ who teaches the fundamental sanctity of each human person, and by our dedication to sustained education, practice, and conversation about our moral, legal, and spiritual obligation to safeguard all those within our community.*



The protection of children and vulnerable adults within our Diocese will be achieved as every member of our community strives to be a person who:

1. **Wants** our children to be safe, to grow and to flourish, and have zero-tolerance to any attitude and activity that makes children less than safe;
2. **Acts** with integrity, humility and sincerity, being truthful and open-hearted, and accountable and transparent, throughout our Diocesan community;
3. **Shows** care for the rights of all people who are supported by Diocesan systems that are clear, accessible, and compliant;
4. **Leads** by a constant commitment to raising awareness, education, professional development, and supervision;
5. **Listens** to others with an open heart and mind, and responds well so that concerns and risks may be identified early and addressed;
6. **Reaches** out with compassion to all who have experienced hurt in our community, restoring relationships and building hope through support, acknowledgement and just redress;
7. **Communicates** openly and honestly so that there is a clear articulation and demonstration of expectations, standards, structures and processes for Safeguarding throughout our Diocesan community;
8. **Engages** the knowledge and experience of the wider community so that through dialogue and collaboration we can contribute to growth in the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

*Each of us can make a difference.  
Each of us can help to protect one another.  
We are called to Step Up and to Speak Out  
for the protection of all.*



CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE OF  
BROKEN BAY



This practice guide presents an understanding of Safeguarding and it addresses the subsequent Safeguarding functions (both administrative and pastoral) in which the leader of the Parish must understand and implement. The Parish Priest/Administrator is not alone in carrying out these processes and actions. Support from the Office for Safeguarding (Chancery) is ongoing and people of the community must also feel empowered to assist in fulfilling the Safeguarding goals.

The information addressed throughout this guide covers three areas of Safeguarding and the functions of each. These areas being:

- A. What the Diocese of Broken Bay means by a culture of safety and care
- B. Civil Legislation Responsibilities
- C. Best Practice Responsibilities in the Diocese of Broken Bay

## A. WHAT THE DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY MEANS BY A CULTURE OF SAFETY AND CARE

Establishing a culture within a parish which espouses care is one key ingredient for generating and maintaining a safe community. A culture of care involves two distinct actions by the Pastor. These being - Care for the Parish as a Man of Communion within and responsible for a community of ministries and Care of Self.

*“To be invited to ministry is to be entrusted with the sacred responsibility of caring for others and contributing to their personal and spiritual growth and development, while at all times respecting their freedom and autonomy. Ministry is, by definition, always relational. To be effective and successful in ministry, one must have a well-developed sense of boundaries which guide the where, the when and the how of what is appropriate to the particular interactions that constitute the practices of ministry. All responsibilities have corresponding accountabilities. While it is a privilege to be entrusted with ministry in the name of the Church, all who share that sacred privilege are accountable not only for the strategies they adopt in their ministry but for how they implement such strategies and manage the resources at their disposal.” (Rev Dr David Ranson)*

Ministerial action towards those who regularly participate or those visiting and to those you visit are actions of care which incorporates, love, respect and dignity. *“ We all have a responsibility to protect, honour and advance the dignity of every human person. We are often welcomed into the lives of people at sensitive and important moments when people are more than usually vulnerable.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Integrity in Our Common Mission, A national code of conduct document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy, Religious and lay men and women exercising pastoral ministry in Australia, November 2023, page 29.



It is also important that pastors acknowledge and address the need to respect and practice self-care. Effective ministry is not only enhanced by, but is reliant upon, attention to care of self, *“each recognises in themselves and in each other the ‘image of God’ and a ‘temple of the Spirit’.*<sup>2</sup> Because of this we are moved to care for ourselves, recognising that our physical, emotional and spiritual health are gifts from God.

Safeguarding grows upon the foundation of a culture of safety and care. As a leader of the Parish community the Pastor is called upon to model the Church’s life, mission, relationships and worship and strives to be a sign of an instrument of the communion that is God’s plan for creation.

When a parish is called upon to safeguard its people, the Church is asking Parish leaders to support pro-actively a culture of care that espouses honesty, engagement and conversation. The result should be a community environment where children and adults at risk: know that their community is alert to areas of risk and harm, capable of applying appropriate actions of prevention; are confident to voice their concerns at all times; and have trust that their concerns will be listened to respectfully and seriously.

To this end it is imperative to acknowledge that a combination of Church mission and civil legislation can complement each other to safeguard members of the Parish and wider community.

## B. CIVIL LEGISLATION RESPONSIBILITIES

As ministers of communion the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator is obligated to fulfil legislative and administrative obligations<sup>3</sup>. Such obligations refer to laws that support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Administrative functions pertaining to legal oversight include;

1. Working with Children Check
2. Reportable Conduct Scheme
3. Risk of Significant Harm Mandatory Reporting; and
4. Reporting Crimes to the NSW Police.

### 1. Working With Children Check (WWCC)

A WWCC is a legal requirement in NSW for people who work or volunteer in child-related activities.

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<sup>2</sup> Integrity in Our Common Mission, A national code of conduct document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy, Religious and lay men and women exercising pastoral ministry in Australia, November 2023, page 30.

<sup>3</sup> Integrity in Our Common Mission states that we abide by the requirements of mandatory reporting and other relevant legislation, ensuring that the proper processes of law are not interfered with or hindered. November 2023, page 11.



The result of a WWCC is either a clearance to work with children for five years, or a bar against working with children. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

**Legislation:** *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* and *Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013*

**Administer:** NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG)

<https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-children-check>

**Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator Legislative Obligations:** The Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator is deemed to be the employer of the Parish and you have legal obligations under the legislation. It is against the law to engage anyone in child related work without a verified WWCC. If a worker or volunteer requires a Check, by law, there are actions the employer must take.

*Employers must:*

- **Register** the organisation by filing in an online form which creates an online profile with the Office of the Children's Guardian. Employers nominate a username and password so they can log into the system and verify workers
- **Identify roles** within their organisation undertake child-related work and need a WWCC and which roles are not child-related or fall under an exemption
- **Verify** workers' WWCC numbers online including:
  - new workers or volunteers using their Application (App) number or WWCC number
  - a WWCC number renewed prior to the WWCC expiry date.
- Ensure their own WWCC number (if required) is verified online by an appropriate person in the organisation (employers cannot self-verify) prior to engaging someone in a child-related activity
- **Keep records** of employees who require a WWCC. Records include their full name, date of birth, WWCC number, verification date, verification outcome, expiry date and whether the worker is in paid or volunteer work. Details must be maintained in the Child Related Parish Activity Register. The verification of the worker's WWCC must be recorded in the Register within 5 working days.
- As part of registering, nominate two people from the organisation who are authorised to receive confidential information in case the Office of the Children's Guardian or Safeguarding Office contacts about a change in someone's WWCC status. Please keep these contact details up to date.
- Remind employees to renew which they can do up to three months before their WWCC expires. A WWCC is valid for 5 years subject to a change in status.
- Remove anyone who's WWCC status is barred, interim barred, whose WWCC cannot be found or has expired from child-related work. You can only employ people who have a WWCC clearance in child-related work.

If the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator receives a letter or email advising you that a current employee or volunteer has become barred (or has an interim bar) or has a cancelled WWCC status, the Pastor must immediately remove the worker from the child-related activity. It does not matter whether they are paid or unpaid; supervised or unsupervised.





Contact the Safeguarding Office for support. Options may include:

- transfer the worker (including volunteer) to a non-child-related role
- suspend them from work pending the outcome of an internal investigation
- dismiss the worker (including volunteer).

If the OCG finds the employer non-compliant with the legislation, the employer will receive significant penalties. In the instance of the Parish, the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator is the known employer and therefore liable for the fines. Penalty infringement notification for an entity such as the Parish attracts 100 penalty units (100 x \$110 = \$11 000). A penalty infringement notification is administered and issued by the OCG.

The records of the WWCC are maintained in the Child Related Activity Parish Register. The register is submitted biannually to the Safeguarding Office (in line with the Visiting Clergy Audit Register). A census of the Child Related Activity Parish Register will take place for the following periods:

- 1 April to 30 September (inclusive). The due date of the census is 1 October; and
- 1 October to 31 March (inclusive). The due date of the census is 1 April.

### Further Information

*The following documentation is available from the Diocesan intranet under Parish Safeguarding Administration.*

Bar, Interim Bar, Not found WWCC outcome Practice Guide  
Working With Children Check Policy

## 2. Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Reportable Conduct Scheme is in place to monitor the behaviour of those that work with children. That is the behaviour of adults towards children. The scheme is in place to protect children as well as those that work with children.

Anyone who has a WWCC for their engagement with the Parish falls under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

The Bishop is ultimately responsible as the 'Head of Relevant Entity' (HRE) in ensuring systems are in place for reporting, responding and reducing the likelihood of reportable conduct.

**Legislation:** *Children's Guardian Act 2019*

**Administer:** NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG)

<https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme>



**Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator Legislative Obligations:** As the employer of a worker who is a WWCC holder of the Parish the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator has a responsibility to inform the worker about the Reportable Conduct Scheme. As the employer you also have a responsibility to receive any reportable allegations or reportable convictions against the WWCC holder and report them to the Safeguarding Office immediately. The Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator will accept the cost of any investigation required under the Reportable Conduct Scheme as a Parish expense. Additionally, as a WWCC holder, the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator may himself be subject to a reportable allegation for his behaviour towards children.

### Further Information

*The following documentation is available from the Diocesan intranet.*

Fact Sheet Responding to Reportable Conduct

Policy Responding to Reportable Conduct

## 3. Risk of Significant Harm Mandatory Reporting

Certain persons are Mandatory Reporters who are under a legal obligation to make a report if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a Child (under 16) is or may be at Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH). Anyone who provides *religious ministry or persons providing religion-based activities to children* including those that have a WWCC Exemption are deemed mandatory reporters.

**Legislation:** *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*

**Administer:** NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)

[www.dcj.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au)

**Parish Priest/Administrator Legislative Obligations:** Clergy are Mandatory Reporters. Anyone in the Parish who provides religious based activities to children (worker or volunteer) are considered Mandatory Reporters and have a legal obligation to report to the Child Protection Helpline if concerns are held about the safety or welfare or wellbeing of a child (under 16). The Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator must inform the Safeguarding Office if a report is being made to the DCJ.

**Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator Canon Law Obligations:** In addition to the Mandatory Reporting, the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator must note the provisions of the 2023 Moto *Proprio Vos Estis Lux Mundi* which requires a cleric or religious who has well-founded belief that a cleric or religious has committed certain crimes against the Sixth Commandment, including sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable person, to report this to the Bishop.

### Further Information

*The following documentation is available from the Diocesan intranet.*

Fact Sheet Risk of Significant Harm Mandatory Reporting

Policy Risk of Significant Harm Mandatory Reporting

Form Risk of Significant Harm Report (RoSH)



#### 4. Reporting Crimes to NSW Police

The key child protection role of the NSW Police is to intervene in child abuse to ensure immediate protection of children and young people.

**Failure to Report Offence:** All adults in NSW are required to report information to police if they know, believe or reasonably ought to know that a child (under 18 years) has been abused. Failure to report imposes a penalty of two to five years imprisonment.

**Failure to Protect Offence:** An adult working in an institution who has the power to minimise risk will commit an offence if they know another adult working there poses a serious risk of abusing a child and they have the power to reduce or remove the risk, and they fail to do so. Failure to Protect is punishable up to two years imprisonment.

**Legislation:** *Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)*

**Administer:** NSW Police

[www.police.nsw.gov.au](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au)

#### Further Information

*The following documentation is available from the Diocesan intranet.*

Fact Sheet Reporting Crimes to NSW Police

Policy Reporting Offences under the *Crimes Act*

### C. BEST PRACTICE RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY

All Clergy in the Diocese of Broken Bay are committed to the safety of children and adults at risk. This commitment involves further practices that contribute to the safety and care of those present in the Parish community, particularly children and those who are vulnerable. The Diocese advises the following Safeguarding practices are to be implemented and monitored by the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator. The practices include:

5. National Police History Check
6. Permission for Visiting Clergy to your Parish and the use of the Sacristy Ministry Register
7. Submitting both the Visiting Clergy and Child Related Activity Parish Registers for auditing purposes
8. Management of Known Offenders
9. Safeguarding training and raising awareness for parish workers engaged in a child related role; and
10. Management of Complaints



## 5. National Police History Check (NPHC)

The Parish may require a Worker or prospective Worker to undertake a NPHC because of the nature of the duties and responsibilities to be carried out by the Worker. NPHC's are required by Diocesan Policy in certain roles. Refer to the Diocesan National Police History Check Policy to determine applicable roles of the Parish.

It is the responsibility of the Parish Priest/Administrator to ensure that he undertakes a NPHC when required. The Parish Priest/Administrator generally delegates the responsibility of the administration to an Authorised Officer (usually the Parish Manager/Secretary).

The NPHC applications are completed via access to an online portal managed by Verifynow. The Parish Priest and Verifynow enter in a contract to ensure that the portal is used for its intended purpose.

### Further Information

*The following documentation is available from the Diocesan intranet*  
Policy National Police History Check

The following is available under Parish Safeguarding Administration-  
Guidelines for Parish – National Police History Check

Differences between the Working with Children Check (WCCC) and the National Police  
History Check (NPHC) Fact Sheet

## 6. Safeguarding Induction, Training and Education

It is the responsibility of the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator to provide parish workers in roles that require pre-screening, with a safeguarding induction and relevant information about safeguarding depending on their role. Following the recruitment, checklists will assist to provide the correct information.

The Safeguarding Office can be contacted to register for the Safeguarding online induction course. The Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator should ensure communication about Safeguarding training and awareness raising messages are made available to the Parish community.

A record of training attendance, induction completion and the emailing of the electronic induction pack is maintained and managed by the Parish Office, generally the Parish Manager/Parish Secretary as part of the function of the Child Related Activity Parish Register.

The Safeguarding Office provides Safeguarding Presentations for Parish Workers and volunteers. Those in child-related roles must attend this training, and it is the responsibility of the Parish Priest to ensure those in these roles are invited to attend and that their attendance is recorded on the Child-Related Activity Register.





### Further Information

The following documentation is available from the Diocesan intranet.  
Policy Safeguarding Education and Training (Chancery and Parish)  
Policy Child Related Activity Parish Register (and Audit) Policy

## 7. Visiting Clergy to your Parish

### D. Administration of Permissions

- It is necessary for all Clergy and Religious who Minister in Australia to comply with *the* National Response Protocol. There are specific requirements for Clergy not incardinated in the Diocese, and Religious, who wish to exercise public ministry in the Diocese or who assume residence in the Diocese. In addition to Church requirements, Clergy and Religious are also required to be fully compliant with the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (the Act) and the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013* (the Regulations) (see Working With Children Check Policy and further information above at point 1).
- The administration of the permissions of clergy visiting a Parish is the Safeguarding Office. An online form can also be submitted. It is located on the Safeguarding webpage at - <https://www.bbcatholic.org.au/safeguarding/safeguarding-in-the-chancery-and-parishes/visiting-clergy>
- The records of the Visiting clergy are administered by the Parish Office, generally the Parish Manager/Parish Secretary. It is the role of the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator to ensure this is correctly administered by providing oversight.
- The Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator ensures all visiting clergy have the appropriate permission prior to performing public ministry.

### E. Sacristy Ministry Register

- All clergy visiting the Parish to publicly minister must sign the Sacristy Ministry Register prior to their celebration.
- The Parish Priest/Administrator has oversight of the register (Canon 35 § 1)
- The Parish Office retains an electronic register of those who have been granted permission to visit the Parish.
- The electronic register is submitted biannually to the Safeguarding Office for auditing purposes. The Parish Priest/Administrator signs the final register and has oversight on the implementation of recommendations from the audit. (Further details about the administration of audit is provided at point 7.

## 8. Ministering in a Chapel of Broken Bay

It is a requirement of all **Clergy who publicly minister** at the Chapel to **sign the Sacristy Ministry Register (SMR)** located at the Chapel (*refer to Sacristy Ministry Register (Register Fact Sheet)*). Inclusive of Clerics who are formally appointed as the Chaplain or the Chapel falls within the jurisdiction of the appointed Priest or Deacon of a Parish. Additionally, visiting clerics are required to seek permission to minister publicly at the Chapel.



### Further Information

*The following documentation is available from the Diocesan intranet.*

Policy Visiting Clergy and Religious

Policy Working with Children Check

Policy Child Related Activity Parish Register

National Response Protocol

Our Common Mission and Integrity in Our Common Mission

Sacristy Ministry Register Fact Sheet

Visiting Clergy to your Parish and Visiting Clergy Audit Practice Guide

Ministering in a Chapel of Broken Bay Fact Sheet

## 9. Audit

### Visiting Clergy and Child Related Activity Parish Register (Registers)

A bi-annual audit of the Registers administered by the Office for Safeguarding are scheduled for the following periods.

- 1 April to 30 September (inclusive). The due date of the Audit is 1 October; and
- 1 October to 31 March (inclusive). The due date of the Audit is 1 April.

Responsibility for this may be delegated to the Parish Office to maintain and monitor the records of the register. The Parish Priest/Administrator is responsible for ensuring accurate records are maintained and there is further information about this being a legislative requirement at point 1. The Parish Office will present the register to the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator for signing prior to submitting for auditing purposes.

Further information about the administration details of the Audits is available from the documents listed here.

### Further Information

*The following documentation is available from the Diocesan intranet under Parish Safeguarding Administration.*

Clergy Visiting Your Parish and Audit Practice Guide

Child Related Activity Parish Register and Audit Practice Guide

## 10. Management of Known Offenders

If the Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator becomes aware that a person attending any of the Parish services or activities is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child abuse, or has been convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse, the Parish Priest/Administrator must implement a risk management process for assessing and managing risks posed to children by the person's inclusion or ongoing involvement with the Parish.

Immediately contact the Manager for Safeguarding (Chancery & Parishes) who will support you with the next steps.



## 11. Management of Complaints

The Parish Priest/Administrator/Moderator is responsible to ensure that complaints that are received about the safety of the child (including historical matters) are addressed in a manner that is responsive and respectful.

It is important as the leader to play a part in creating a culture that encourages and welcomes the reporting of concerns, responds to complaints, allegations and disclosures promptly, thoroughly and fairly and immediately protects children at risk.

Adult complainants who have suffered abuse as children from personnel associated with the Church deserve a compassionate response when they come forward with their complaint. Concern and support for the person who is making the complaint about child sexual abuse must be at the heart of your response.

It is important that every complaint is taken seriously. This will be achieved if a culture exists that encourages people to speak up about their concerns because they feel safe to do so.

If a complaint that involves a child, is received, it must be reported to the Safeguarding Office as soon as possible. The Safeguarding Office may also need to fulfil Church requirements applicable to the National Response Protocol and *Vois Estis Lux Mundi*.

### Further Information

*The following documentation is available from the Diocesan intranet.*

Policy Complaints Handling

The following documentation is available from the Diocesan Intranet under Safeguarding Parish Resource Hub

Responding to a Child, Young Person or Vulnerable Adult Disclosing Abuse or Neglect Poster

## 12. National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Parish Self-Assessment & Action Plan

The Diocesan community endeavours to provide a safe environment where children and young people's rights, needs and interests are met.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual abuse recommended 10 child safe standards, drawing on findings and extensive research and consultation about what makes institutions child safe. These standards have been adapted at both a National and State level and are identified as the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the NSW Child Safe Standards.

The Australian Catholic Church has also articulated a framework that promotes the safety of children, developed upon the 10 child safe standards. This framework provides the 10 National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS). The NCSS are designed to drive cultural and behavioural change and promote accountability and transparency. The Standards assist

to provide a regulatory framework which can be audited against and assist in reducing risk and continual improvement. From 2020, the function associated with the NCSS is governed by the company, Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL)

Parishes are tasked to complete a Self-Assessment and Action Plan as it relates to the NCSS in the Parish.

The purpose of the Parish Safeguarding self-assessment and action plan is to assess the status of the Parish Safeguarding practices and culture against the given NCSS indicators and develop a Parish Safeguarding Action Plan that outlines the Parishes planned approach to Safeguarding.

The overall outcome is to ensure a Parish community is one that demonstrates a culture of safety and care as they continue their Safeguarding journey.

### Further Information

The following documentation is available from the ACSL website

<https://www.acsltd.org.au/services/professional-and-safeguarding-standards/national-catholic-safeguarding-standards/>

National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Edition 2, 2022

### Contact Details

Email the Safeguarding Office (Chancery & Parishes) at [safeguarding@bbcatholic.org.au](mailto:safeguarding@bbcatholic.org.au) or phone **02 8379 1605** if you require support or advice for any of the Safeguarding practices.

### REVISION/ MODIFICATION HISTORY

Date	Version	Current Title	Summary of Changes	Approval Date	Commencement Date
29/06/2020	1.	Safeguarding obligations of the Parish Priest/Administrator by Canonical Appointment Practice Guide	New	June 2020	June 2020
7/01/2021	2.	Safeguarding obligations of the Parish Priest/Administrator by Canonical Appointment Practice Guide	Update: Ministering in a Chapel of Broken Bay	Jan 2021	Jan 2021
9/02/2021	3.	Safeguarding obligations of the Parish	Update: To include NRP and VELM and to	Feb 2021	Feb 2021





		Priest/Administrator by Canonical Appointment Practice Guide	remove Towards Healing		
11/6/2021	4.	As above	New census and audit dates	June 2021	June 2021
13/03/2024	5.	Practice Guide: Safeguarding Responsibilities of Parish Priest-Administrator by Canonical Appointment	Integrity in Our Common Mission Replaced Pastor with Priest/Administrator/Moderator Updated office titles Updated references to intranet documents Changed title of document from obligation to responsibilities Clarified WWCC documentation requirements and that worker can only work with verified WWCC number. Clarified mandatory reporting requirements.		

## APPROVAL DATE/REVISION SCHEDULE

**Approved by:** Rev Dr David Ranson, Vicar General

**Date approved:** 13 March 2024

**To be revised:** 13 March 2026