



Standard 2

Commitment to Child Safety

Child Safe Policy

The well-being of children in our Parish community will always be our first priority, and we have zero tolerance for child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.

This **CHILD SAFE POLICY** has been endorsed by the Parish Pastoral Council and is approved by our Parish Priest.

Our commitment to child safety

Our Parish is committed to child safety. All children who come to St Mary's Parish have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children are welcomed, are valued members in our community, feel safe and have fun. This policy was developed in collaboration with our staff, volunteers, children who come to our parish and their parents. It applies to all staff, volunteers, children and individuals involved in our parish.

Children's rights to safety and participation

At St Mary's Parish staff and volunteers encourage children to express their views. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all children who participate in Parish activities to 'have a say' about things that are important to them. We teach children about what they can do if they feel unsafe. We listen to and act on any concerns children, or their parents, raise with us.

We value diversity and do not tolerate discriminatory practices in our Parish. To achieve this we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families
- welcome children with a disability and their families to promote their participation
- seek appropriate staff and volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds

Recruiting staff and volunteers

St Mary's Parish applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. We interview and conduct referee checks on all staff and volunteers and require Working with Children Checks for relevant positions. Our commitment to Child Safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements.

Code of Conduct

St Mary's Parish seeks to attract and retain the best staff and volunteers. We provide support and supervision, so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. We have developed a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the Code.

Our Child Safe Policy



Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Our Parish takes all allegations seriously and have nominated our Parish Associate Christine Sebire to be the Child Safety Person with specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children, or other persons. The Parish Associate can be contacted through the Parish office, or by phone on 0411 627 645.

Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS)

The Victorian Government has introduced the new RCS to improve oversight of how organisations prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse. The RCS will not interfere with reporting obligations for Victoria Police or with Victorian Police investigations

The RCS applies to the following people associated with an organisation

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Office holders
- Ministers of religion
- Officers of a religious body

There are 5 types of “reportable conduct”

- Sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- Significant neglect of a child

When the “Head” of entity has been notified of an allegation they have a legal responsibility to report to the Commission for Children and young People (CCYP) within **3 business days** and follow up with an investigation. The “Head” then has a responsibility to report to the CCYP with the outcome of the investigation within 30 calendar days.

Breach of Policy

Where a person is found to have breached any of their obligations under this policy disciplinary action may be taken. This may include termination of employment and, or participation as a volunteer. If there is a reasonable belief that a criminal act has been committed, the concerned party is advised to contact Victoria Police.

Risk management

We recognise the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and use this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

Relevant Legislation

- Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (mandatory reporting obligation)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

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Three new criminal offences have been introduced under the act (Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014):

a) 'Failure to disclose' offence

A new offence came into effect on 27 October 2014 for adults who fail to disclose child sexual abuse to police. The new offence applies to all adults, not just professionals who work with children.

Any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse for not reporting.

b) 'Failure to protect' offence

A new 'failure to protect' offence came into effect on 1 July 2015 that applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

c) 'Grooming offence'

A grooming offence is now in effect to target individuals who communicate with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers, along with those made by members of the wider Parish.

The next review of this policy is due on 04/ 01/2025.

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Fr. Novelito Lim', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fr. Novelito Lim
Parish Priest, St. Mary's, Echuca
Date: 04/01/2023

