

CHILD SAFE POLICY

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Contact: Registrar

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Introduction

In our Safe Church policy, we affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected and have their views and opinions valued at all times. Our policy aims to create environment where all children and young people thrive on all areas of their wellbeing, including spiritual. We also live in a country that legislates for the people's safety.

The Victorian government has established Child Safe Standards, through the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* ("the Act"), to create and maintain child safe organisations:

- **Child Safe Standard 1:** Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued
- **Child Safe Standard 2:** Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
- **Child Safe Standard 3:** Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- **Child Safe Standard 4:** Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
- **Child Safe Standard 5:** Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
- **Child Safe Standard 6:** People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
- **Child Safe Standard 7:** Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused
- **Child Safe Standard 8:** Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
- **Child Safe Standard 9:** Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

- **Child Safe Standard 10:** Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
- **Child Safe Standard 11:** Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY:

The Anglican Diocese of Bendigo is committed to keeping children and young people safe.

As a church we:

- recognise the pain and suffering of survivors of childhood abuse;
- commit to promoting a child safe culture throughout all levels of our church;
- are especially aware of children's diverse backgrounds, circumstances and needs and commit to providing equal protection to all children and young people and actively work to address racism and discrimination
- welcome ongoing legislative change that improves child safety in organisations;
- endorse and are determined to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards in order to be a child safe church;
- support the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse,
- encourage ongoing child safe education and policy development in our diocese
- commit to creating environments that allow children and young people to reach their potential and thrive in all areas of their wellbeing, including spiritual wellbeing.
- ensure appropriate support and reporting mechanisms are in place for children and young people when they have concerns or complaints
- value the voice of all children and young people and actively seek their opinions and views

Our policy aims to:

The intention of this policy is two-fold:

Protect and empower our children

Children are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say, and to that of their parents/ guardians and the wider community.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally
- consider the needs of children and young people who are unable to live at home
- are attending to the needs of LGBTQIA¹ children and young people
- ensure children know their rights and how their voice will be heard

Guide our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our church leaders/workers, employees and volunteers must agree to abide by Faithfulness in Service (as amended from time to time), the Professional Standards Uniform Act and Diocesan Safe Church Policies which specify the standards of conduct required when working with children.

We commit to:

- children being safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of all children.
- zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, in every instance.
- to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
- robust recruitment practices for all church leaders/workers, employees and volunteers.
- to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability, with zero tolerance for racism and discrimination
- Creating an environment that supports children's wellbeing and assists them to grow and thrive in all areas, including spiritually.

¹ lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex, and asexual (or allies).

- Communicating in ways that are meaningful to children and young people
- Actively seeking the voice of the children, their parents/ guardians and the community on child safety and wellbeing areas
- to considering the needs of children and young people who are unable to live at home
- giving attention to the needs on non-binary and gender diverse children
- Continually reviewing and improving how we assist children to thrive in our Church and nurture their relationship with God.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to recruit skilled people to work with children. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a current Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Other checks include National Police Checks, reference checks or screening as required by the Lay Safe Ministry Clearances Policy or Professional Standards Uniform Act.

Training and Supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. We provide Safe Church Training so that our staff and volunteers who work with children are aware of child safe practices, can identify and minimise risks of child abuse and know our organisational policies and procedures.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers, parents and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

Through our Safe Church Training we also encourage our staff and volunteers to:

- develop their skills to protect children from abuse and help them thrive;
- promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including Victoria Police and Kooyoora.

Communication

The Diocese has a Communication Policy to maintain integrity and safety for all church members and in particular children. Electronic Communication Guidelines are in place to ensure that parent or guardian consent is obtained prior to any communication with children and records are maintained. The guidelines also outline requirements when taking photos or videos of children participating in church activities and require permission prior to publishing.

We encourage age appropriate, creative ways to engage with children, their families and the community about child safety and wellbeing. Foster environments that support the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual domains of wellbeing is our priority.

Legislative Responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.

Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Reportable Conduct: Reporting to the Commission of Children and Young People, any reasonable belief of 'reportable conduct' (as defined by the Act) within three days. This is done via Kooyoora (as per the Allegations, Concerns, Complaints section below).

Mandatory Reporting: people in religious ministry are mandatory reporters and legally required to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities.

Through the Safe Church Training we encourage all staff and volunteers to be ethical reporters.

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously. All complaints are directed to Kooyoora which operates according to the Professional Standards Uniform Act. The Director of Professional Standards can be contacted at Kooyoora on **1800 135 246**.

Safe Church Training includes ensuring all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

Definitions

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years

Professional Standards Uniform Act: refers to Synod legislation adopted by the Diocese of Bendigo

Policy Scope & Coverage

The Child Safe Policy applies to all church leaders/workers, employees and volunteers associated with ministry in our church.

Policy Responsibility

Bishop in Council is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy

Related Documents: Internal

Other relevant policies and documents relating to child safety and which should be considered in conjunction with this policy include:

- Diocese of Bendigo Safe Church Policy
- Diocese of Bendigo Safe Communication Policy
- Diocese of Bendigo Electronic Communication Guidelines
- Diocese of Bendigo Lay Safe Ministry Clearances Policy
- Faithfulness in Service (as amended May 2016) – Code of Good practice
- The Joys and Responsibilities of being a Christian in this Parish - Code of Practice for Congregations
- Professional Standards Uniform Act legislation

Related Documents: External

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- Reportable Conduct – Information Sheet 2
<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/What-is-reportable-conduct.pdf>
- Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness & Housing:
Mandatory Reporting
[Mandatory reporting - DFFH Service Providers](#)
- Betrayal of Trust – State Government Victoria
 - Failure to disclose offence
 - Failure to Protect offence
 - Grooming Offence
 - Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse –
Final Report Volume 6: Making institutions child safe
[Final Report - Volume 6, Making institutions child safe](#)
 [\(childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au\)](http://childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au)

Approved by Bishop in Council:

1 November 2017

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