

St Mary's Parish, Echuca

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.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Our Parish takes all allegations seriously and have nominated our Parish Associate 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.

Our Child Safe Policy

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)

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 in May 2019.

Established and Approval



Parish Priest

Date: 1/9/2017

Code of Conduct

St Mary's Parish, Echuca

This Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour by adults towards children, young people and other vulnerable persons. It aims to protect and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur.

It also helps staff and volunteers by providing them with guidance on how to best support children and how to avoid and, or better manage difficult situations. All staff and volunteers are required to comply.

Our Code of Conduct has been endorsed by the Parish Pastoral Council and is approved by our Parish Priest under Our Child Safe Policy. This document will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. The next review is due in May 2019.

All staff and volunteers and members of our Parish are responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, and other vulnerable persons by:

- adhering to our child safe policy, and other policies, at all times taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect, including listening to and valuing their ideas and opinions
- welcoming all children and their families and carers and being inclusive
- respecting cultural, religious and political differences and acting in a culturally sensitive way
- modelling appropriate adult behaviour
- listening to children, young people and other vulnerable persons and responding to them appropriately
- reporting and acting on any breaches of this Code of Conduct, complaints or concerns
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child without clear lines of sight
- working with children in an open and transparent way – other adults should always know about the work you are doing with children
- respecting the privacy of children and their families, and only disclosing information to people who have a need to know

Staff and volunteers must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- seek to use children, young people and other vulnerable persons in any way to meet the needs of adults
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- develop any 'special' relationships with children, young people and other vulnerable persons that could be seen as favouritism (for example, inappropriate attention, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children, young people and other vulnerable persons or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with children
- discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children, young people and other vulnerable persons
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children, young people and other vulnerable persons
- exchange personal contact details such as a phone number, social networking site or email address with children, young people and other vulnerable persons
- have unauthorised contact with children and young people online or by phone

I have read this Code of Conduct and agree to abide by it at all times.

Name:.....

Signature:.....

Date:.....