

# **St Paul's Anglican Church Canterbury Child Safe Policy**

At St Paul's Anglican Church Canterbury ("St Paul's") we seek to be a community of people who are welcoming, caring and inclusive. Our commitment to children and their parents is to create a safe and friendly environment that allows children to flourish and grow in faith.

Our leadership is focussed on enhancing our organisational culture of child safety by ensuring regular discussion of child safety by staff and volunteers and setting clear expectations and policy on child safety.

This document provides an outline of the processes and procedures we have in place to ensure children are safe at all times.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

## **Commitment to Child Safety**

We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone at St Paul's is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

## **Children's rights to safety and participation**

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 seek to ensure the safety of any child with a disability and act to promote their participation in all services.

Our staff and volunteers encourage children to express their views. We listen to their suggestions on matters that affect them. We encourage all children in our care to 'have a say' about things that are important to them.

## **Valuing diversity**

We also seek to ensure the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families.

We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families.

## **Screening Staff and Volunteers**

All staff and volunteers who have contact with children must undergo screening procedures. This includes interviews, reference checks, police checks and Working with Children checks.

Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all staff and volunteer advertisements.

An induction programme is completed to ensure all staff and volunteers understand our Child Safe Policy.

## **Code of conduct**

Our code of conduct is the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Duty of Care handbook. It provides clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

A copy of the handbook is provided to all those in paid or voluntary positions who have contact with children. The handbook is available online at:

<http://www.melbourneanglican.org.au/mission/youthchildrenfamily/childrenfamily/Pages/Duty-of-Care.aspx>

## **Reporting a child safety concern or complaint**

Our parish complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.), the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) and the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust report

The Church Wardens have been appointed as Child Safety Persons with specific responsibility for responding to any concerns or complaints expressed about child safety.

We advise all staff and volunteers to call the police on 000 if a child is in immediate danger.

The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne has established a formal complaints process handled by the independent Director of Professional Standards (DPS). The DPS is responsible for making sure any complaint is handled correctly including appointing a professional support person if required.

Child Safety Persons are required to refer all serious complaints to the DPS. The DPS can also be contacted.

A booklet entitled *Information for People Thinking about Making a Complaint* published by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne is available in the narthex.

The reporting process is summarised in the attachment to this policy.

## Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

## 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 substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

**Grooming offence:** This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

## Risk Management

We apply a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse to occur and use this to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning.

In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We expect all staff and volunteers of the church to act as "first line of defence" against the risk of child abuse or harm.

The Parish Council has an oversight role to ensure the effectiveness of our risk management procedures.

## **Reviewing the policy**

We are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety policy. We intend this policy to be a living document that will be reviewed annually to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation, guidance or circumstance. We will undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, staff and volunteers.

The next scheduled review will take place in November 2018.

## **Definitions**

**Child** means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

**Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

**Child abuse** means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

**Child sexual assault** is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

**Reasonable grounds** for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator. A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) The child is in need of protection,
- (b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer “significant harm as a result of physical injury”,
- (c) The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child. A ‘reasonable belief’ or a ‘belief on reasonable grounds’ is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A ‘reasonable belief’ is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a ‘reasonable belief’ might be formed if:

- a) A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- b) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- c) Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- d) Professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

## Child Safety Reporting Process Summary

### What to report?

Any child safety concerns, including:

- disclosure of abuse or harm
- allegation, suspicion or observation
- breach of the Code of Conduct
- environmental safety risks and issues

**Call the Police on 000 if a child is in immediate danger**

### How?

Face-to-face verbal report, letter, email or telephone call

### Who To?

Church Wardens (see contact details overleaf) or the Director of Professional Standards (DPS).

Director of Professional Standards  
Kooyoora Ltd  
PO Box 329  
Canterbury VIC 3126  
1800 135 246 (Recorded Line)

### What happens next?

The Child Safety Person or DPS will:

- Ensure the safety of the child;
- Offer support to the child, the parents, the person who reports and the accused person.
- Contact the DPS (if not already informed), who will clarify the nature of the complaint and commence internal processes.
- The DPS will decide in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should be reported to the Police and make a report as soon as possible.

## Child Safety Persons Contact Details

| <b>Name</b>   | <b>Role</b> | <b>Mobile</b> | <b>Email</b>             |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Andrew Flint  | Warden      | 0419 313 047  | aflint@alphagreen.com.au |
| Jeremy Bishop | Warden      | 0413 313 948  | jeremybish@gmail.com     |
| Liz Olie      | Warden      | 0402 756 660  | lizoli@tpg.com.au        |

