

Child Safe Policy

St Brendan's Parish, Shepparton

This Child Safe Policy has been endorsed by the Parish Pastoral Council and was approved by Father Joseph Taylor July 2018.

Our commitment to child safety

Our Parish is committed to child safety. All children who come to St. Brendan'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 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

St. Brendan'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 use our services 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 from diverse cultural backgrounds

Recruiting staff and volunteers

St. Brendan's Parish applies the 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. Brendan'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.

Breach of Policy

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

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Our Parish takes all allegations seriously and have appointed Paul White to be the Child Safety Person with specific responsibility for responding to any complains made by staff, volunteers, parents or children. He can be contacted through the Parish office on 5821 2633.

Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS)

The Victorian Government has introduced the new RCS on 1st July 2017 to improve oversight if how organisations prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse. The RCS will not interfere with reporting obligations for Victoria Police or with Victoria 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 an 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 to 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.

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)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this act:

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. For information about how the offence may affect the reporting obligations of funded organisations, go to the Department of Health & Human Services website link - <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence>.

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. A fact sheet is available to download from the Department of Health and Human Services website.

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.

For information about how the offence may affect the reporting obligations of funded organisations and Department of Health & Human Services staff, see the fact sheet on the Department of Health and Human Services website.

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.

Date	Revised By	Description of Revision	Next Review
July 2018	Child Safe Team	Endt. To 3. And 4.1	July 2019
Date	Revised By	Description of Revision	Next Review
Nov 2019	PPC & Child Safe Team	Nil	Nov 2020
Date	Revised By	Description of Revision	Next Review