



Catholic Parish of Melton

***Safeguarding Children and Young People
Policy***

Updated: September 2021



Date of next major review: September 2022

Introduction

The Catholic Church has a mission-driven moral and legal responsibility to create nurturing environments where children and young people are respected, where their voices are heard, and where they feel safe and are safe.

The Catholic Parish of Melton acknowledges that preventing child abuse requires proactive approaches across policies, procedures and practices consistent with the requirements of the:

- Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Australian Human Rights Commission)
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (Catholic Professional Standards Limited).

Duty of Care

The Catholic Parish of Melton (St Dominic's Parish, Melton) holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a fundamental responsibility of the Church. This commitment is drawn from, and inherent to, the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the dignity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel. (*Catholic Archdiocese Melbourne: Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy July 2019*)

This policy applies to all Parish personnel, including Parish employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy.

Right to Safety and Participation

A culture of safety within the Church ensures that children and young people (defined as a person **under 18 years of age**) can actively and fully participate in the life of the Church and realise their potential in a faith community. Our Parish has zero tolerance for all forms of child abuse and maltreatment and is committed to protecting children and young people from harm.

Child Abuse

Child abuse or maltreatment is defined as an act (or series of acts) that endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development and/or a failure to provide conditions to the extent that the health and development of the child or young person is significantly impaired or placed at risk.

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse including grooming
- Emotional abuse including spiritual abuse
- Family violence
- Neglect
- Discrimination
- Bullying

Signs and indicators of child abuse or maltreatment are not always obvious. Physical abuse may be more visible than other forms of abuse (e.g. bruising). Neglect is harder to identify as it consists of a failure to provide adequate care and attention. Likewise, you may not witness discrimination or bullying in relation to disability, mental illness, family violence, skin colour or race, gender identity or sexual orientation. However, it may result in signs or indicators in the child's behaviour, for example social withdrawal and depression.

All children and young people are vulnerable but there are some children and young people who have an even higher risk of abuse than the general population. They are children who have experienced abuse before or who have a disability, are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those experiencing poverty or homelessness or out of home care. Similarly, the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are more acute due to a history of racism, marginalisation and dispossession.

Dignity of Children and Young People

We value the contribution and dignity of all children and young people and create opportunities to involve children and young people in decision-making about programs, activities and events that affect them. We recognise the need for empowerment of all children and young people, especially those at greater risk of abuse. Their involvement in decision-making can be a significant protective factor in preventing abuse within Church organisations.

Informing and Involving Parents (and Guardians) in Promoting Child Safety

The Catholic Parish of Melton acknowledges that effective child safety within our parish, agencies and entities cannot be undertaken without the involvement of parents (and guardians) and seeks to engage parents as critical partners in promoting the safety of children and young people. The involvement of parents and guardians of children and young people who are more vulnerable to experiencing abuse is particularly important.

Safeguarding Children and Young People Within the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne acknowledges that preventing child abuse requires proactive approaches across policies, procedures and practices consistent with the requirements of the:

- Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Australian Human Rights Commission)
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (Catholic Professional Standards Limited)

In fulfilling this responsibility, the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne has developed a comprehensive framework to guide the implementation of child safety policies, procedures and practices within parishes, agencies and entities with the aim of preventing child abuse, empowering children and young people, and responding to concerns, disclosures or allegations of child abuse or child-related misconduct.

This policy provides a broad overview of the framework and should be read in conjunction with supporting resources e.g. implementation guidelines, factsheets, templates.

The application of this policy extends to clergy, employee and volunteer behaviour within the context of their role within the Church: within the physical boundaries of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (e.g. churches, parish halls, presbyteries); beyond the physical boundaries including pastoral support, visitation or outreach on non-church property (e.g. hospitals, detention centres, prisons, homes), online or via digital environments and while travelling outside the Archdiocese whether locally, interstate or overseas.

Safeguarding Responsibilities

Through the Professional Standards Unit, the Archbishop supports and assists parishes, agencies and entities to:

- implement safeguarding practices and processes outlined in this policy
- coordinate the response to allegations and reports of child safety related misconduct and child abuse in relation to clergy, employees and volunteers across the Archdiocese
- monitor and continually improve safeguarding practices and processes.

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne parish, agency and entity leadership is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and relevant procedures and practices within each parish, agency and entity to protect children and young people. The Professional Standards Unit will require the leadership of each parish, agency or entity with its Safeguarding Committee to summarise its compliance with the requirements of this policy on an annual basis.

The Safeguarding Coordinator/Committee established within each parish, agency or entity plays a central role in assisting the parish priest, or agency or entity leader with implementation of the requirements of this policy.

Further, as safeguarding children and young people is a collective responsibility; all persons in ministry, working or volunteering within the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne acknowledge their individual responsibility to comply with clear behavioural expectations to act in a manner that is caring, respectful and safe toward children and young people.

Every member of the clergy, employee or volunteer within the Archdiocese has a moral, legal and ethical responsibility to care for, and promote the wellbeing of children and young people, and protect them from harm or abuse.

This applies to all those involved in Archdiocesan parishes, agencies and entities including:

- clergy, including all canonical administrators of a parish (e.g. bishop, parish priest, assistant priest, migrant chaplains, visiting clergy, priests in residence, supply clergy, deacons)
- Sisters, Brothers and Religious Priests holding an appointment from the Archbishop to undertake work in parish or Archdiocesan entities
- employees (including casual employees)
- lay ecclesiastical ministers including pastoral associates, those engaged in chaplaincy
- volunteers
- seminarians
- persons residing at the presbytery or on the grounds of the parish, agency or entity
- students on placement
- contractors (where applicable).

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy parallels the development of similar policies in a range of Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne organisations involved in education, health and welfare. CatholicCare, Catholic Education Melbourne, Catholic systemic schools, Mannix College and Villa Maria Catholic Homes all have safeguarding policies and personnel working or volunteering in these organisations will be guided by these policies and are not bound by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's Safeguarding Children and Young People Framework.

SAFE PERSONNEL

Selection, recruitment and screening

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne seeks to provide safe and enriching interactions with children and young people within the context of parishes, agencies and entities, sets out selection, recruitment and screening processes that consider the suitability and appropriateness of persons to work with children and young people in ministry or in an employment or voluntary role to minimise the risk of child abuse occurring.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

A specific child safety code of conduct provides guidance to clergy, employees and volunteers in the context of their involvement with children and young people in their parish, agency or entity role.

Induction

Induction processes incorporate safeguarding awareness to build a foundation of understanding and commitment to the safety of children and young people.

Safeguarding Training

In supporting clergy, employees and volunteers to promote the safety of children and young people and discharge their responsibilities in line with this policy, the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne provides a range of training and education activities that equip clergy, employees and volunteers with the skills and knowledge to promote the safe participation of children and young people.

Supervision

It is a requirement of this policy that those whose roles involve working with children and young people are provided with supervision and support to undertake their role in a manner which promotes the safety of children and young people and enables detection of behaviour that may be detrimental to children and young people.

SAFE PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Child Safety Risk Management

Catholic Parish of Melton safeguards children and young people by employing a risk management approach that identifies and assesses risk associated with programs, activities and events involving children and young people to minimise opportunities for harm to occur.

Practice and Behavioural Guidelines

In addition to risk management processes, our Parish utilises practice and behavioural guidelines in relation to conducting programs, activities and events involving children and young people.

Responding To and Reporting Child Abuse

The safety of children and young people is paramount. All concerns, allegations or complaints of child abuse will be taken seriously and acted upon consistent with the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's moral, ethical and legal obligations to safeguard children and young people.

In Victoria, the following legislation governs how adults should respond to child abuse:

- The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) defines when a child is in need of protection (s 162) and the mandatory reporting obligations of certain professionals working in our community (ss 182, 184).

- The *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic) sets out the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- The *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) creates the offences of ‘failure to protect’ (s 49O) and ‘failure to disclose’ (s 327) which place additional legal responsibilities in relation to reporting, if a reasonable belief has been formed that a child or young person is at risk of or experiencing child sexual abuse.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne acknowledges its moral, legal and ethical duty to effectively respond to and report concerns, allegations or complaints of child-safety related misconduct and/or child abuse to the appropriate authorities such as the Victoria Police, Child Protection (Department of Health and Human Services) and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People).

Children and young people (and their families) within the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne have information and support to report a concern, allegation or make a complaint through processes that are accessible and respectful.

It is a requirement of this policy that the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne clergy, employees and volunteers, make a report if they have formed a reasonable belief that a child or young person has experienced abuse, is experiencing abuse or is at risk of harm in the course of their ministry or work. Not reporting child abuse or misconduct that places children and young people at risk of harm is a breach of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

Making a child abuse report involves notifying statutory authorities and the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne in a timely manner (as soon as practicable after forming a reasonable belief, unless the child or young person is in imminent danger).

Reporting to the PSU ensures that parishes, agencies and entities across the Archdiocese report and respond appropriately to concerns, allegations of complaints in relation to safety of children and young people.

All reports are to be documented on the **Child-Safety Related Misconduct and/or Child Abuse Report Form** and emailed to the Professional Standards Unit – professional.standards@cam.org.au – as soon as practicable.

In Victoria, alleged child abuse perpetrated by:

- clergy, employees and volunteers is reported to the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) within Victoria Police
- a family member is reported to Child Protection - Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- a child or young person is reported to Child Protection (DHHS) and/or the SOCIT (Victoria Police) (e.g. sexually harmful behaviour, aggression, violence, online exploitation).

- **VICTORIA POLICE**
- Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT):
www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=36448
- **CHILD PROTECTION (DHHS)**
- North and West (Metro) region: 1300 664 9777
- South region: 1300 655 795
- East region: 1300 360 391
- West (Rural) region: 1800 075 599
- After-hours and weekends: 13 12 78

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne - PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS UNIT

Across the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, the Professional Standards Unit is responsible for:

- Assisting parishes, agencies and entities to implement the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- Providing support, advice and training to Archdiocesan parishes, agencies and entities to strengthen their efforts in relation to child safety
- Assisting Archdiocesan parishes, agencies and entities to comply with the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and relevant standards
- Managing concerns, allegations and reports of child abuse and breaches of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy in accordance with moral, legal and ethical obligations to safeguard children and young people and the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Guiding improvements in relation to our approach to child safety across the Archdiocese (e.g. Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Code of Conduct, compliance, risk management, training) to meet legislative requirements at the state and federal level, and best practice expectations proposed by Catholic Professional Standards Limited
- Undertaking annual child safety audits.

Professional Standards Unit will receive and coordinate the response to allegations and reports of child abuse in relation to clergy, employees and volunteers across the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, consistent with our moral, legal and ethical responsibility to safeguard children and young people and our reporting obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Any employee, volunteer or parishioner who has a concern or needs assistance in relation to a child's safety should contact:

- the Parish Priest: 9743 6515 / melton@cam.org.au or
- the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator: 0490 885 515 csso.melton@gmail.com
or
- in the case of a criminal offence, directly to the police (000) or
- directly to the appropriate authorities as outlined in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne policy document – The Professional Standards Unit: 9926 5630 / professionalstandards@cam.org.au

Even if the Parish Priest or Safeguarding Coordinator does not believe that a mandatory report or report to police is warranted **this does not discharge the person of their obligation** to do so if they have formed a reasonable belief that abuse may have occurred or is likely to occur. If that person's concerns continue, even after consultation with the Parish Priest or Safeguarding Coordinator, that person is **still legally obliged** to make a mandatory report of their concerns.

Working With Children Checks

We acknowledge that the requirement for a Working with Children Check (WWCC) for all clergy, employee and volunteer roles across the Archdiocese is but one component of a comprehensive approach to child safety. Possessing a WWCC does not guarantee that a person is suitable to work with children and young people.

Clergy, employees and volunteers in parish, agency and entity roles represent the Archdiocese and hold a position of trust in our communities, irrespective of whether their role involves direct, indirect or no contact with children and young people.

In acknowledging that children and young people often hold those who work or volunteer in Archdiocesan parishes, agencies and entities in high regard, there is a need to ensure that all who work or volunteer within the Archdiocese have been appropriately screened through the WWCC process.

Employment in a paid or voluntary capacity is subject to and conditional upon a satisfactory WWCC (with few exceptions).

The WWCC requirements of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (CAM) exceed the requirements of the WWCC legislation. The Archdiocese's blanket approach to WWCCs ensures that we all stand united in creating safe environments for children and young people and demonstrates our commitment to excluding persons who pose an obvious risk to children and young people.

National Police Record Check Policy

A Police Record Check can provide important information (in addition to the Working with Children Check) that can be used to assess a person's suitability to work and/or volunteer with children and young people. The assessment of criminal history information is an important risk management strategy designed to ensure that an organisation does not knowingly expose children and young people to a person that may place them at risk.

All Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne clergy and employees are required to undertake a Police Record Check.

While all volunteers in Archdiocesan parish, agency and entities are required to undertake a WWCC, not all volunteers are required to undertake a Police Record Check. Police Record Checks are required for those applying for or volunteering in specific roles and/or activities that are considered to pose a high risk to children and young people within Archdiocesan parishes, agencies and entities.

Parish, agency and entity Safeguarding Committees are required to consider the inherent requirements of each volunteer role and assess the potential risks to children and young people to determine whether a Police Record Check is required for specific roles and/or activities that will be performed by volunteers.

Some examples of activities within volunteer roles that require a Police Record Check include:

- driving
- home visiting
- visiting special care facilities (e.g. refuges, hospitals, nursing homes)
- visits to community support agencies (e.g. disability support centres)
- overnight stays (e.g. camps, interstate or overseas trips)
- records and/or financial management with access to personal information about families, children and young people (e.g. name, address, date of birth, family circumstances).

Review of this Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

The Catholic Parish of Melton is committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

We will maintain a history of updates to the policy.

History of Updates to Policy

Date	Comment (e.g. major review, minor review)
September 2017	Initial Document
September 2020	Reviewed and Updated
September 2021	Reviewed and Updated