

# The Anglican Parish of Christ Church Essendon

## Child Safe Policy 2017

### **About this Policy:**

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment that the clergy, parishioners and volunteers associated with this Parish have to child safety. It provides a brief statement and overview of the strategies this Parish has in place to ensure children are protected from harm.

### **Policy Statement:**

At the Anglican Parish of Christ Church Essendon we embrace diversity and want **all** children to feel welcomed, safe and nurtured in their wellbeing. We provide a child safe environment with a zero tolerance of discrimination and abuse.

We as a Church are aware of how common abuse is, that churches are sanctuaries of healing and safety - and yet they have been used to engage in, or excuse sexually abusive and other harmful, discriminatory or prejudicial behaviour. We do not condone this, and apologise to those who have been harmed in the past. There are no excuses for abuse - and that it is never a child's fault, but that of the abuser, and of the other adults around who fail to protect and speak out.

### **Our commitment to child safety**

We commit ourselves to valuing diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices. We are taking steps towards promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of **all** children and families including children of Aboriginal descent, children of culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability. We commit to action to stop people who go against or ignore this policy.

We commit ourselves to valuing and upholding **all** children's rights to safety and participation by encouraging 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 provide information to parents and children on how they can raise their concerns and report incidents if the situation arises.

We commit to best practice for recruiting staff and volunteers according to the Diocesan Guidelines. We ensure that all those working with children hold a current 'Working with Children's Check' and in some instances Police Checks. We provide training, support and supervision for all our staff and volunteers. All those working with children are provided with Duty of Care information from the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne and are expected to comply. This information can be found in booklet form in the church narthex and online at:

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

We are committed to a Code of Conduct which provides guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom will receive training on the requirements of the Code. We educate staff, volunteers, parents and children about the expected standards of behaviour and what will happen if a person does not comply. We listen to and act on concerns or allegations of non-adherence to the Code of Conduct.

We commit to listening to child safety concerns and responding promptly. We have appointed several Child Safety Persons with the specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children. Our complaints processes are outlined in the booklet "Information for people thinking about making a complaint" available in the Church narthex and online at: [www.melbourne.anglican.com.au](http://www.melbourne.anglican.com.au) All also have the option of making a complaint to the police.

We commit to an ongoing Risk Management approach as this enables us 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.

We have an ongoing commitment to review this policy. It will be reviewed at least every two years. We will continue to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers and use these to inform our policy.

Diocese of Melbourne – Professional Standards (Kooyoora Ltd) 1800 135246

**Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT)**

Brimbank: (03) 9313 3460

Melbourne: (03) 8690 4056

*updated August 2017*

## **Appendix 1: The Anglican Parish of Christ Church Essendon. Code of Conduct for a Child Safe Church.**

This Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour by adults towards children. The Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. It also helps clergy, staff, parishioners, and volunteers by providing them with guidance on how to best support children and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations. All clergy, staff, parishioners, and volunteers are required to comply.

**All** are responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- ✓ Reading and complying with the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Duty of Care handbook which includes guidelines on physical contact with children.
- ✓ Adhering to our Child Safe Policy, and duty of care policy.
- ✓ 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 and responding to them appropriately.
- ✓ Reporting and acting on any breaches of this Code of Conduct, complaints or concerns.
- ✓ 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.

The staff and volunteers in contact with children must NOT:

- Seek to use children in any way to meet the needs of adults.
- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse.
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with children.
- Engage in rough physical games.
- Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality.
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.
- Develop 'special' relationships with specific children or show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention.
- Exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking site or email addresses with children (under 18).
- 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. I understand that breaching of this code may result in disciplinary action.

Name

Signature

Date

## **Appendix 2: The Anglican Parish of Christ Church Essendon Procedure for Reporting Concerns for Child safety**

Support the child and their family. It is very important to validate a child's disclosure, no matter how you feel about it. This means listening to the child, taking them seriously and responding and acting on the disclosure by implementing your organisation's reporting procedures.

Key steps include:

- Let the child talk about their concerns in their own time and in their own words. Give them your full attention, the time and a quiet space in which to do this.
- Be a supportive and reassuring listener. Comfort the child if they are distressed.
- Tell the child it is not their fault and that telling you was the right thing to do. Let them know that you will act on this information and that you will need to let other people know.
- Alert relevant people in your Parish (Parish Priest, Children's & Families Minister, unless that person is the defendant). Take action in accordance with Anglican Diocese procedures (\*see Duty of Care handbook).
- Record the child's disclosure using the child's words. Document all the steps in the process and outcomes the incident.
- Contact the child's parents to let them know (other than if the disclosure related to abuse within the family).
- Assist the child and their family to access appropriate support for the child, such as counselling etc.
- Let the child and their family know about steps the organisation is taking, such as the initial internal investigation, and any resulting action including reporting to Police or Child Protection, or changes to policy or procedures within the organisation to make it more child safe.
- Praise the child for helping the organisation become safer for children.
- Report suspected abuse promptly to the appropriate authorities.

Note: A recurring theme in submissions to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was that victims of abuse were not believed when they disclosed abuse.

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