

# Child Safe Church Training Booklet



## Parish – Reporting Child Safe Concerns at St Margaret's

### If a child discloses to you

- Listen without interrupting or giving opinions.
- Tell the child that you believe them and that the abuse is not their fault.
- Let the child know that you will need to contact other people to help keep them safe.

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### If you witness an incident

- Do not engage directly with the alleged perpetrator.
- If the child is in immediate danger call 000.
- Remove the child to a safe place.
- If possible consult with the Priest, Child Safe Officer or Warden.

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- Decide if you have formed a reasonable belief that the child is in danger through what you have seen or heard. This might involve not only what the child has said but other reports from another child or church member.
- Ascertain whether the child has a disability, or is from an Aboriginal or cultural or linguistically diverse background.
- Obtain child's name and if possible address, age and parent's names.

- In a private space, ask the child an open ended question to gain more information (eg. I'm worried about what just happened then - are you OK?).
- Listen without interrupting or giving opinions.
- Let the child know that you will take steps to keep them safe.
- Ascertain whether the child has a disability, or is from an Aboriginal or cultural or linguistically diverse background.

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- Consult with Priest or Child Safe Officer first (unless the disclosure/incident involves them, or the child is in immediate danger in which case call 000).
- Priest/Child Safe Officer will support you to call Kooyoora (Diocesan Office of Professional Standards) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and/or Police, will contact the child's parents and will arrange support for the child as appropriate, including any special services that may be relevant for the child (eg. Aboriginal, CALD, disability, etc).

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- If the CSO is the subject of the complaint, consult with the Priest.
- If the Priest is the subject of the complaint, consult with the CSO who will assist you to ring Kooyoora 1800 135 206 or Child First 1300 369 146.
- If neither the Priest nor the CSO are available, call Kooyoora immediately.

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- Priest or Child Safe Officer will record incident with your assistance.

## 10 steps to a Child Safe Church

- Prepare – leaders read the policies and be familiar with them
- Statement of commitment to child safety
- Appoint Child Safety Officer
- Code of Conduct in place
- Everyone has WWC and Police checks
- Support and training offered for church members, including churchworkers
- Respond appropriately to complaints
- Carefully select and screen new churchworkers
- Good planning for events involving children and young people
- Encouraging the participation of children and families in decisions relating to them.

- cillors, treasurer, finance committee, counters) and anyone who is in a ministry role directly involving children
- Safe Ministry Check - For anyone engaged in a ministry directly involving children

### **Working With Children Check**

This check is completed by going online and filling out a page, and then taking ID down to the post office to have it verified and entered in the system. There is no cost to volunteers for this check.

If you don't have access to the internet or feel intimidated by technology, please speak to a parish councillor, make an appointment with Jen, Keren, or Mary, and one of us will help you walk through the process.

If you already have a WWC, you will need to log on and add St Margaret's as one of the organisations for which you hold the Check.

### **Police Check**

This check is completed by one of our Parish CrimCheck administrators sending you a link. As with the Working With Children Check, you will need to bring your ID documents to the CrimCheck administrator for verification. There is no cost to you for this; the parish covers the \$16 necessary. If you don't have access to the internet or feel intimidated by technology, please speak to a Keren or Jen (currently the CrimCheck Admin for the parish).

### **National Register Check**

This check is completed by Kooyoora Ltd, the Diocese' Professional Standards Office. This check is completed de rigueur for clergy and licensed lay people. We are still awaiting instruction from the Diocese for how to do this check for other office holders.

### **Safe Ministry Check**

This check is completed by Kooyoora Ltd, the Diocese' Professional Standards Office. This check is completed de rigueur for clergy and licensed lay people. We are still awaiting instruction from the Diocese for how to do this check for other office holders. It will likely involve an online form/survey to click through. Appropriate support will be provided for those who are not tech savvy.

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## Child Safe Church

- In 2012 the Victorian Government's inquiry into how churches and other organisations handled child sexual abuse claims resulted in the report Betrayal of Trust.
- It also resulted in three new criminal offences:

### Grooming

Grooming offence targets communication, including online communication, with a child under the age of 16 or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.

This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual abuse at a later time with the groomer (aged 18 years old or over) or another adult.

Maximum penalty 10 years imprisonment.

The offence applies when:

- An adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child, and
- the intention of the communication is to facilitate the child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.

Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity – for example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with the child, parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.

### Failure to disclose

Failure to disclose child sexual abuse offence that requires adults to report to police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child (unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so). It establishes that reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility.

The law states that all adults must report to police:  
any reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed

## What happens if a report is made against me?

- You will be asked to step down from all positions and roles until the matter is resolved.
- Kooyoora will keep you informed of process and outcome.
- A fact sheet for respondents is available on the Kooyoora website: <https://www.kooyoora.org.au/client-institutions/anglican-diocese-of-melbourne/complaints/respondents/>

## The Code of Conduct

Covers:

- Standards expected of all of us from the top down
- Guidelines for physical touch, among other things
- Policy for electronic communication with youth
- Under the Diocesan policy, everyone who is a Churchworker who has, or potentially may have contact with children needs to sign this Code of Conduct as a condition of holding that office.

## Who is a Churchworker?

Everyone on a roster is a churchworker.

Official definition from Professional Standards Act 2009 (Anglican Diocese of Melbourne):

A Churchworker is anyone *“holding a position or performing a function, whether voluntarily or for payment with the actual or apparent authority of a Church authority or Church body...”*. A more detailed list of who that includes is found in the PSA2009 Section 3.1

## Volunteer Checks

- Working With Children Check - For all Churchworkers and anyone who may have contact with children
- Police Check (CrimCheck) - For all Churchworkers with potential contact with children, and for anyone who deals with finances, or who holds a position of responsibility
- National Register Check - For all officeholders (wardens, parish coun-

- make negative comments about the accused person
- make assumptions or speculate
- disclose details to anyone except the person to whom you report the matter
- under any circumstances inform the person to whom the allegations refer.

## How do I make a report?

### If a child is in immediate danger call 000

Who can report neglect and abuse of a child under the age of 18? Children, Parents, Staff and Volunteers

What sort of things must be reported? Any child safety concerns should be reported, including:

Disclosure of abuse of harm

Allegations, suspicions or observations

Environmental safety issues

Breaches of the Code of Conduct

Any suspicions or reports of child abuse must be reported to:



by another adult (over 18)  
against a child under the age of 16.  
unless there is a reasonable excuse or an exemption applies.

Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting obligations.  
Maximum penalty is 3 years imprisonment.

A reasonable excuse includes:

- A fear for safety, either to the victim or another person as a result of the disclosure
- The information has already been disclosed to police (for example, because a mandatory report has been made to child protection)

It does not include a concern for 'perceived interests', such as reputation, legal liability or financial status.

Other exemptions include:

- the victim requests confidentiality (exemption does not apply if the victim is under 16 at the time of disclosing the abuse, or has an intellectual disability and is unable to make an informed decision about the disclosure)
- the person is a child when they formed a reasonable belief
- the information would be privileged (for example, client legal privilege)
- the information is confidential communication
- the information is in the public domain
- where police officers are acting in the course of their duty.

### Failure to protect

Failure to protect a child from sexual abuse offence applies to people within organisations if:

- they hold a position of authority within a relevant organisation that works with children
- they know of a substantial risk another adult associated with the organisation may commit a sex offence against a child under 16 within the organisation's care
- they have the power or responsibility to remove or reduce that risk
- BUT they negligently fail to do so.

Maximum penalty is 5 years imprisonment.

Person in authority is dependent on the degree of supervision, power or responsibility to remove or reduce substantial risk posed by an adult associated with the organisation. For example, CEOs, board, council and committee members, principals, residential house supervisors, religious leaders.

A person associated with the organisation includes an employee, volunteer, or contractor. For example, it would include a parent who volunteers at a school to assist in the classroom or on an excursion.

Substantial risk includes the likelihood a child will become a victim – the legal test is whether a ‘reasonable person’ would have judged the risk.

Negligently failing to reduce or remove risk refers to inaction knowing there is a substantial risk. Could also include action such as moving an adult associated with the organisation to another location where they will still have contact with children.

the boundaries of normal behaviour of children and young people;

Over-compliance with instructions;  
Change in performance or behaviours;  
Underachieving.

## What should I report?

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

## What do I do...

...if someone discloses abuse? Or you notice a child exhibiting behaviours that may indicate child abuse, or if you observe someone engaged in inappropriate behaviour with a child?

### **How to respond appropriately to a disclosure:**

When a person tells you of harm which has been done to them –

- Don’t panic! Take a deep breath.
- stay calm
- listen carefully
- allow the person to continue at his/her own pace
- reassure the person that he/she has done the right thing
- tell them they are not to blame for the abuse
- tell them that you will do what you can to help
- report the abuse.

### **Do not –**

- dismiss the concerns
- panic
- ask for more information
- promise not to tell anyone or keep it a secret

## Being Aware

### Indicators of harm

The impact of harm is not always easy to see. Behavioural changes can be warning signs and workers need to look beyond the behaviour for explanations. Recognising signs of harm in a child does not mean that harm is definitely happening – the signs may reflect other issues. There are three indicators of harm of children which may be observed by workers. These are verbal disclosures, physical signs or injuries, and behavioural indicators.

### **Verbal disclosures**

Indirect hints – ‘I don't like my baby sitter because he always wants to play when I want to sleep’.

Disguised disclosures – ‘I know someone who has been touched in a bad way’; ‘What would happen if a girl told her mother that her father had hit her but the mother didn't believe her?’

With conditions – ‘I have a problem, but if I tell you about it you have to promise not to tell anyone else.’ ‘Can I tell you a secret?’

### **Physical signs**

Injuries, especially if found on parts of the body where it is unlikely a child would hurt herself/himself or where the nature of the injury itself is of concern;

Poor hygiene; untreated physical problems; poor muscle tone; frequent inadequate or inappropriate clothing for weather; consistent lack of parental supervision; constant hunger, tiredness or listlessness;

Acting out – sexual gratification by self-stimulation, sexual knowledge beyond what is normally appropriate for the age of the child, excessive interest in bodily functions of other children, verbal references to sexual material.

### **Behavioural indicators**

Emotional problems e.g. extremely anxious or depressed; severe mood swings;

Truancy or habitual lateness for school;

Developmental lags or poor school performance;

Expressing violent or sexual behaviour in some way that is outside

## Child Safe Standards

The *Betrayal of Trust* Inquiry led to the Child Safe Standards legislation, which is aimed at changing the culture of organisations to be safe for children.

The seven Standards are as follows:

1. Embedding a culture of child safety through effective leadership.
2. Making a commitment to child safety with a policy or statement.
3. Having a clear code of conduct that establishes appropriate behaviour with children.
4. Screening, supervision and training for staff, to reduce the risk of child abuse.
5. Clear processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.
6. Identifying child abuse risks and ways to reduce them.
7. Empowering children to share their feedback and experiences about feeling safe.

### Diversity

The Child Safe Standards recognise the vulnerability of children from diverse backgrounds, such as:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse

Disability

Same-sex attraction, intersex or gender diverse

*We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.*

## The Child Safe Policy

To whom does this Child Safe material apply?

- Everyone
- Everyone needs to be aware of the Child Safe Policy – so we can make a safe church, a safe space for all.
- Leaders must be conversant in the details of the Policy in order that all activities may be safe for children.

## What is child abuse?

Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to:

Physical abuse  
Emotional and psychological abuse  
Family violence  
Sexual abuse  
Grooming  
Neglect  
Racial, Cultural, or Religious abuse  
Spiritual abuse

### *Physical abuse*

This means intentionally causing, or threatening to cause, physical injury to a child, or inadvertently causing injury as a consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

### *Emotional and psychological abuse*

This occurs when a person engages in inappropriate behaviours, such as rejecting, ignoring, humiliating, isolating, threatening or verbally abusing a child, or allowing others to do so. Because this kind of abuse does not leave physical injuries, it is often hidden and underestimated.

### *Family Violence*

This occurs when a person engages within the family context in violence. Violence can be of a physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, or emotional nature. Family violence may engage one or more members of the family, and be directed against any member of the family.

### *Sexual abuse*

A child is sexually abused when any person uses their authority over the child to involve the child in sexual activity. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity including fondling genitals, masturbation, vaginal or anal penetration by a finger, penis or any other object, voyeurism and exhibitionism.

### *Grooming*

This occurs when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional.

### *Neglect*

This means failing to meet a child's basic needs, such as providing adequate food, drink, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene and medical attention.

### *Racial, Cultural, or Religious Abuse*

This is conduct that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture or religion. It may be overt, such as direct racial vilification or discrimination, or covert, such as demonstrating a lack of cultural respect (attitude and values) and awareness (knowledge and understanding) or failing to provide positive images about another culture.

### *Spiritual abuse*

This means the mistreatment of a child by actions or threats when justified by appeal to God, faith or religion where the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm to his or her wellbeing or development.