

Child Safe policy and code of conduct

St Columb's Anglican Church, Hawthorn, Victoria. Australia.

Approved by St Columb's Parish Council 24.04.2017

St Columb's Child Safe Policy: ¹

St Columb's is committed to child safety while enabling all children in our care to join in our parish activities with confidence. This is expressed in the following ways:

- We have zero tolerance of child abuse.
- Our staff and volunteers are trained to identify abuse risks and to remove or reduce those risks.
- Our recruitment policies for staff and volunteers includes screening applicants with a view to child safety.
- We are committed to respect the cultures of children from diverse backgrounds where those cultural practises do not conflict with Victorian Child Safety legislation.
- We are committed to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We consult the children in our care when making decisions, especially about matters/program changes that directly affect them.
- Inappropriate behaviour discovered towards children in our care will be reported through appropriate channels depending upon the severity and urgency of the matter. (See *Allegations, concerns and complaints* below)
- Our staff and volunteers working directly with children have agreed to this policy.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children and we continue to develop selection criteria, advertisements and position descriptions which demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our Diocesan, social and legislative responsibilities. We welcome applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

Fair procedures for staff and volunteers

The safety and wellbeing of children is a major priority and we will also aim to be fair and just to our staff and volunteers. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns, including investigation updates. All records will be securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised and investigation demonstrates there is substance to the allegation, St. Columb's will provide updates to children and families on progress regarding the allegations and any actions St Columb's or the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne and its agents may take.

Privacy

All personal information is stored according to our [privacy policy](#).

Legislative responsibilities

Our legislative responsibilities include:

- *Failure to disclose:* 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.

Risk management

St. Columb's has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks. This includes risks posed by physical environments ² (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments.³

Our risk management assessments will occur at the *April* and *August* meetings of the Wardens of St Columb's. They will include an audit of our Professional Standards, Occupational Health and Safety and Child Safety practices. The audit report will be given to our Parish Council and Annual General Meeting so that recommendations are followed up by the parish leadership and members.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed annually at the September meeting of the Parish Council and following any significant incidents.

Allegations, concerns and complaints.

Staff and volunteers will report observed or suspected abuse and report when they are approached by a victim of abuse. *In the Child Safe legislation, abuse includes: physical violence, sexual offenses, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect.*

Channels of reporting will depend upon the type, severity and urgency of the matter. The channels for reporting are:

- **The staff of St Columb's.** (Contact details on St Columb's web site and weekly News publications)
- **The Director of Professional Standards (Anglican Diocese of Melbourne).** (Phone 1800 135 246)
- **The Department of Health and Human Services (Child protection services).** (Phone 000 or 131 287)
- **The Victoria Police.** (Phone: 000)

We shall report an allegation of abuse if we have a *reasonable belief* that an incident took place. Factors contributing to *reasonable belief* are:

- A child states they or someone they know has been abused.
- Behaviour is observed that is consistent with that of an abuse victim.
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it.
- Observing suspicious behaviour.

Procedures for assessing and training staff and volunteers.

Staff (honorary or paid)

Because St. Columb's is host to many child based activities, all staff (honorary or paid) including those who hold a licence to work at St. Columb's from the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne (honorary or paid), regardless of whether they work directly with children or not, will be required to:

- Complete the Church Worker application form contained in the Diocesan Duty of Care manual (appendix A) 2011.
- Undergo a professional and character reference check.
- Provide evidence of a current Working with Children Check that reports to St Columb's.
- Provide a copy of a current Police Record Check every three years.
- Undergo regular training in Professional Standards and Child Safety run either by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, St Columb's or an agency approved by the Vicar of St. Columb's.
- If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.
- Successful applicants will be required to sign a contract that indicates their agreement to be bound by this policy and the codes of Faithfulness in Service for the Province of Victoria and Power and Trust in the Church for the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.⁴
- Staff working directly with children will need to provide evidence of qualifications and experience in that area.

Volunteers who are working directly with children will be required to:

- Have been regularly involved with the activities of St. Columb's for at least 12 months or, be a parent of at least one child involved in our children's programs.
- Fill in a St. Columb's Volunteer application form and provide two references.
- Undergo annual training in Child Safe policies. Training will be incorporated into the regular meetings of each parish ministry.
- Provide evidence of a current Working with Children Check that reports directly to St. Columb's.
- Agree to undertake and be bound by this policy and code of conduct.

Volunteers not working directly with children

As a church, we involve volunteers in a wide range of activities where occasionally children may also be involved. In accord with State government requirements for leaders in faith communities our policy is to require of volunteers *not* working directly with children the following:

- Evidence of a Working with Children Check (which may or may not report directly to St. Columbs)
- Child Safe training and/or signed agreement with this policy and code of conduct

These volunteers include:

- Members of Parish Council

- Wardens
- Service leaders
- Music team leaders
- Welcome team leaders
- Regular Teachers of adults or Children during worship services
- Prayer Leaders in public worship
- Life or Small group leaders
- Sports Administration team leaders
- Nominated guardians who accompany younger teens who participate in adult sporting activities

Safety sessions for Children

We will undertake age appropriate child safety sessions each year with children in our church run programs.

Those required to have a national police record check are:

- Any staff
- All those directly involved in administering our finances (the treasurer, the wardens, the bookkeeper)

People excluded from a working with children check or police record check are:

- Guest speakers or ministers, including Bishops, who are working only with adults.
- We will require local guest speakers and Bishops working with the general congregation (which includes children) to show one of our staff their current Working with Children's checks.
- Overseas or interstate guests will be exempt from this requirement but will not be able to work in our children's programs unless they can produce an equivalent to a Working with Children Check.
- No visiting speaker or Bishop local or otherwise is to be involved in children's programs at St. Columb's unless they can show a current Working with Children's check to our staff.

Code of conduct

All staff and volunteers of ST COLUMBS ANGLICAN CHURCH HAWTHORN are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to St. Columb's child safe policy.
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- treating everyone with respect.
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another.
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination).
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability.
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child.
- reporting any allegations of child abuse using the process in the St Columb's child safe policy.
- reporting any child safety concerns to St. Columb's staff.
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

Staff and volunteers must not:

- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children).
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometimes, for example while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area).
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors).
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.
- use inappropriate or discriminatory language in the presence of children.
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability.
- develop on-line contact with children in our programs outside the requirements of facilitating those programs.
- photograph or video a child in our programs without the consent of a parent or guardian.
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

Summary

By observing this code of conduct and Child Safe policy, you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of these standards.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

<p>I agree to undertake and be bound by this Code of Conduct and Child Safe policy</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p>
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Documentation

Our reference documents for this policy are the Victorian Government Child Safe legislation with accompanying documents, the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne duty of care manual (2011), the Victorian Council of Churches child safe documents, the National Anglican Church Faithfulness in Service Policy and codes of conduct (2007), the codes of Faithfulness in Service for the Anglican Province of Victoria and Power and Trust in the Church for the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. St. Columbs Child Safe policy replaces the Melbourne Anglican Diocesan Duty of care manual (2011) and its appendices. The duty of care manual and other relevant publications by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne may have their recommendations incorporated into St Columbs Child safe *training* for volunteers and staff.

[1] This policy is based on template provided by Victorian Government in July 2016.
www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc

[2] Duty of Care manual pp31-36

[3] Duty of Care manual 2007 pp24-25

[4] As amended by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne from time to time