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**Anglican Diocese of Gippsland**

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland (the Diocese) is committed to ensuring our centres of worship and outreach are safe places for all, especially children and vulnerable people. We have a duty of care to protect all who participate in the life of the church from abuse. We have zero tolerance for abuse of any kind.

We have extra duties to protect children of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islands and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

**Purpose**

The Diocese’ Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our Diocese’ approach to implementing the Child Safe Standards.

It informs our church community of everyone’s obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of children across all areas of our work.

**Aims**

Our policy aims to:

• Minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct and misuse of positional power.

• Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly and promptly.

• Ensure all people involved in our programs are safe.

• Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

**Scope**

This policy:

* applies to all clergy, employees, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with children.
* applies in all physical and online church environments used by children during or outside of church activities, including other locations provided for a child’s use (for example, a church camp) and those provided through third-party providers
* should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related church policies section below.

**Definitions**

**Abuse:** Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to physical abuse, emotional abuse, family violence, sexual abuse, grooming and neglect.

**Child** - Child means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.

**Child Safety** - Child safety includes matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.

**Child abuse** - Child abuse includes:

1. any act committed against a child involving:
   1. a sexual offence
   2. grooming offences under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958
2. the infliction, on a child, of:
   1. physical violence
   2. serious emotional or psychological harm
3. the serious neglect of a child including exposure to family violence and its effects

**Church environmen**t - Church environment means any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside church hours:

1. Any physical building or property of the church;
2. Online or virtual church environments made available or authorised by the church governing authority for use by a child (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services);
3. Other locations provided by the church or through a third-party provider for a child to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
   1. camps
   2. ministry activities
   3. non- church program providers or another church; or
   4. sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

**Church clergy, employees and volunteers** **(Churchworkers)** – Any individual working in a church environment who is:

1. directly engaged or employed by a church governing authority;
2. a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the church governing authority to perform child-related work;
3. a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the church; or
4. any person authorised to undertake a role, office or position.

**Direct contact** – Direct contact means providing support, guidance and supervision directly to children with the potential to have direct unsupervised contact with children during the normal course of conducting church activities.

**Disclosure:** A disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in authority and / or leadership, including a trusted adult within the church community that they have been subject to abuse or knows of abuse. A disclosure may not be an allegation or a notifiable circumstance, but it is the responsibility of the person in authority and / or leadership to investigate and take appropriate action.

**Safe environment:** The environment, both temporal and spiritual, in which all necessary steps are taken to keep all those in our care safe, including protections from spiritual, physical and emotional abuse, bullying and neglect.

**Safe leader:** has been through a thorough recruitment process, understands responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team member.

**Safe Program:** all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned.

**SCTA**: Safe Church Training Agreement under the National Council of Churches in Australian Safe Church Program

**Volunteer** - Volunteer means a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the church or associated activities, such as op-shops, the Abbey on Raymond Island and any associated social enterprise activity.

**Vulnerable person -** A person who may be considered to be susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health, status (physical or mental), age, grief, previous experience of abuse, social isolation or financial hardship. In this sense vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

**Statement of Commitment to Child Safety**

The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our children are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children.

We promote positive relationships between children and adults and between children and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to children in our church environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal children, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other children experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting children based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our church, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our church has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child’s safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our children, families, clergy, employees and volunteers, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

**Culture**

The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to promoting within the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland:

• Due diligence

• Integrity

• Duty Of Care

• Fairness

• Transparency

• inclusivity

• Collaborative Ministry

We recognise that:

• The welfare of the child is paramount and that it is everyone's responsibility to ensure their safety.

• All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

• Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of past experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island children, children from cultural and linguistic backgrounds and children with disabilities are at the highest risk of abuse and their welfare and safety requires proactive and culturally appropriate care.

• Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other organisations/agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

• Our physical, as well as emotional environment must be safe for all vulnerable people.

We commit to:

• **Safe recruitment of leaders**

We will screen all prospective leaders in our ministries, before they are appointed (ie Safe Ministry Application, Working With Children Card, Police check.)

• **Adequate training of volunteers**

We require all leaders to attend safe church workshops (eg SCTA or online workshop) before commencing in their role and to attend a 'Refresher Course' every 3 years. We require all leaders to attend additional specific training as required.

• **Continued Supervision of Leaders**

We commit to ongoing training, supervision and support for leaders.

• **Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious misconduct**

All leaders and volunteers will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to our procedure. We will listen to and believe children who raise allegations of abuse.

• **Clarity and accessibility**

We will ensure that our procedures for responding to allegations of abuse are clear and accessible.

**Misconduct.**

When a leader has an allegation of misconduct made against them we will provide support to the alleged victims and perpetrators and seek a just and fair solution/outcome. All processes undertaken in relation to responding to allegations of abuse and misconduct are established under the Professional Standards Act and Protocol 10.1 Responding to Allegations of Abuse and Harassment *(These documents are available on the Diocesan Website:* [*www.gippsanglicans.org.au*](http://www.gippsanglicans.org.au)

**Legal Framework**

This policy encompasses both National and State legal requirements. In particular, the Reportable Conduct Scheme and Mandatory Reporting requirements

**Making A Report**

Tell someone if you feel uneasy or have the slightest concern about:

• The behaviour of an adult towards a child or vulnerable person or a child towards another child.

• The welfare of a child, or

• That someone may have been abused.

**If a child is in imminent danger - ring 000**

**Otherwise, contact the Director of Professional Standards**

**on**

**0457 813 500**

**Responding to disclosures**

• We will listen to, be supportive of and believe children who raise concerns.

• All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse to the Director of Professional Standards - or directly to the police.

• We will ensure that procedures are clear and appropriate in responding to allegations of abuse.

**Providing an open safe environment**

• We will encourage and welcome participants and their families a say in programs and activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and suggestions.

• We will create a child-friendly and safe environment that reflects the needs of children and young people and is informed by their input.

• We will obtain appropriate information relating to program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.

• We will be accountable and transparent.

**Understanding and valuing diversity.**

• We will encourage and celebrate diversity through program content and the physical environment.

• We will understand that cultural safety means different things according to a child's background and experience, and seek to respond accordingly.

**Related Church Legislation and Policies**

* Professional Standards Act
* Protocol 10.1 Responding to Complaints of Abuse and Harassment
* Safe Church Policy
* Protocol 10.3 Clearance Protocol

This Policy was adopted by resolution of Bishop in Council on 15 December 2022

Date Adopted 30 November 2022 Date last reviewed Date to be reviewed November 2023

Consultation: Safe Ministry Authority, Diocesan Corporation, Senior Diocesan Staff Group.