

Commitment Statement

to Child and Vulnerable Adult Safety

We at St’s Parish,, hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults as a central and fundamental responsibility. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

At St’s, we are committed to ensuring that our Parish community promotes the inherent dignity of children and vulnerable adults and their fundamental right to be respected and nurtured in a safe Parish environment. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable children and vulnerable adults from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those with a disability.

At St’s, we are committed to create a nurturing Parish environment where all are respected, their voices are heard and where they are safe and feel safe. When allegations of abuse concerning children and vulnerable adults are raised, we will take prompt action to have these appropriately referred and investigated. We strive for continual improvement that is responsive to emerging thinking, evidence and practice, so as to eliminate the possibility of abuse occurring in the first place.

At St’s, we understand that creating a safe Parish environment is a process that involves active participation and responsibility by all in our Parish.

Every person involved in our Parish has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and vulnerable adults is at the forefront of all we do and every decision they make.

St’s Parish is committed to providing a safe and nurturing culture for all children and vulnerable adults through:

1. Upholding the primacy of the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults.

At all times, the ongoing safety and wellbeing of all children and vulnerable adults will be a primary focus of care and decision-making, with particular attention paid to children and vulnerable adults from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children and vulnerable adults with a disability.

To create and maintain a safe and nurturing culture, we will actively and continually develop and review all policies, processes and practices, informed by emerging thinking and evidence.

2. Empowering families, children and vulnerable adults, young people and staff to have a voice and raise concerns.

In partnership with families, we will ensure children and vulnerable adults are engaged and active participants in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on their safety.

This means that the views of parish and school staff and volunteers, children and vulnerable adults and families are taken seriously and their concerns are addressed in a just and timely manner. Children and vulnerable adults are also provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.

3. Implementing rigorous risk-management and employment practices.

At St’s, we will systematically and continually identify and assess risks to child and vulnerable adult safety and will eliminate (where possible) or reduce all potential sources of harm. Effective risk management will be embedded through effective and well-understood policies, procedures and practices.

At St’s, we will employ highly competent and professional staff and volunteers who will maintain the safety of all. The high-quality of staff appointments will be upheld through rigorous employment and staff review processes and practices and a thorough induction process for volunteers.

At St’s, we will stay abreast of current legislation and will meet our legislative duties to protect the safety and wellbeing the of children and vulnerable adults in our care, including the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Victorian Government 2016), mandatory reporting, grooming, failure to disclose and failure to protect requirements.

St John the Baptist Parish, Koo Wee Rup

Staff & Volunteer Child Safety Code of Conduct

[insert parish name]

[insert date]

Central to the mission of [insert parish name] is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children, young people and vulnerable adults and providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment to develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

Purpose

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults at [insert parish name] against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement child protection legislation and the Catholic Diocese of Sale “Code of Conduct for Caring for Children, *Promoting Child Safe Parishes*”.

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members at [insert parish name] are expected to actively contribute to a parish culture that respects the dignity of its members and affirms the Gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice. They are required to observe child-safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

Acceptable behaviours

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- adhering to the parish Child Safe Policy and upholding the parish’s Statement of Commitment to child and vulnerable adult safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children and others from abuse and harm
- treating everyone in the parish community with respect (modelling positive and respectful relationships and acting in a manner that sustains a safe pastoral environment)
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child have been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child or person
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child’s self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance policy towards discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children and others with a disability (for example, by ensuring reasonable care is taken to cater for any additional needs being faced)
- ensuring as far as practicable that an adult is not alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the police
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.)

- reporting any child safety concerns to the parish priest or the Vicar General if the concern relates to the parish priest (or child safety officer if the parish has appointed someone to this role)
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe.
- Recognise when service relationships are becoming unsafe and/or ineffective and be prepared to terminate those relationships with appropriate referral

Unacceptable behaviours

Staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child or vulnerable adult abuse
- 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)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors or being alone with a child with no good cause)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- manage disruptive or unsafe behaviour by degrading or isolating a child; corporal punishment is never acceptable. Physical restraint should only be used as a last resort or in an emergency
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal details or social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family who is/are not socially related outside of the pastoral duties reasonably associated with the role description of the person’s position in the parish without the parish priest’s or child safety officer’s (if the parish has appointed someone to this role) knowledge and/or consent (other than accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street)
- have any online contact (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) with a child or their family who is/are not family or socially related (unless necessary e.g. by providing families with e-newsletters)
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account to conduct parish communications
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child or their family who is/are not family or socially related
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians
- work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- consume drugs on parish premises or at parish events.
- Never display personal information such as phone numbers or email addresses of children on social networking sites

Breaches of this code of conduct will lead to disciplinary action,



**Safeguarding Children
Code of Conduct
St John the Baptist Parish, Koo Wee Rup
December 2016**

I, _____, confirm I have been provided with a copy of the above Code of Conduct.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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