

<b>Title</b>	Child Safety Policy
<b>Description of policy</b>	This Policy expresses the Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (CECG) commitment to the care and protection of children and young people. It identifies obligations and responses to provide child safe and supportive environments in CECG Schools, Schools, Early Learning Centres (ELC), school-aged care centres (SACs) and offices, and a framework for responding to concerns about the safety of children and young people. It implements both legislative and Catholic Church requirements. This policy applies to all CECG workers in all CECG workplaces and work-related activities.
<b>Required because</b>	CECG is required to have child safety and wellbeing policies by law and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. This policy meets those requirements and provides a useful overview of the different factors in CECG's comprehensive approach to child protection.
<b>Description of changes</b>	New Child Safety Commitment statement.
<b>Applies to</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organisation-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Specific (location, schools/ELCs&SACs, Service Area) <input type="checkbox"/> Staff only <input type="checkbox"/> Students only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff and students
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## 1. Summary

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- 1.1 This Policy expresses the Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (CECG) commitment to the care and protection of children and young people. It identifies obligations and responses to provide child safe and supportive environments in CECG Schools, Schools, Early Learning Centres (ELC), school-aged care centres (SACs) and offices, and a framework for responding to concerns about the safety of children and young people. It implements both legislative and Catholic Church requirements. This policy applies to all CECG workers in all CECG workplaces and work-related activities.
- 1.2 All CECG workers must implement this policy, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards in accordance with legislative and organisational requirements.

## 2. Child Safety Policy

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- 2.1 In decisions relating to children and young people, the best interests of the child or young person are the paramount consideration.
- 2.2 Appropriate and responsive systems and interventions by CECG can promote the interests of children and young people, reduce the risk of harm, and create and maintain a child safe environment.

## 3. CECG Commitment to Safety of Children and Young People

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- 3.1 As part of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, Catholic Education holds the care, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people enrolled in its schools as a fundamental responsibility.
- 3.2 This commitment is drawn from, and inherent to, the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the dignity of each human person which is at the heart of the Gospel.
- 3.3 We believe that children, young people and vulnerable adults are a gift from God with an intrinsic dignity, respect and security from physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological harm. It is our duty and responsibility to recognise the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult as paramount in all decisions and actions.
- 3.4 Catholic Education's purpose is to be faith-filled child safe Catholic learning communities of hope, joy and wonder where all are welcome and inspired to grow to their potential. In this context, Catholic schools are committed to ensuring the safety of all students.
- 3.5 We are committed to complying with the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales Child Safe Standards, providing and continually strengthening our child safe culture and environment for all children and young people.
- 3.6 All our staff and volunteers are committed to keeping children and young people free from abuse and harm, acting in their best interests and treating them respectfully, fairly and equally.
- 3.7 We have no tolerance for child abuse, racism, discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and racial vilification in physical and online environments. We are committed to identifying, managing, reducing and removing child safety risks early to prevent abuse and harm.

- 3.8 Child safety and wellbeing is at the forefront of staff and volunteers' day to day decisions and approach to teaching and learning.
- 3.9 We ensure their voices and concerns are heard and taken seriously and that they are empowered to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

### **Leadership, governance and risk**

- 3.10 Our strategies and reporting systems embed and enhance a culture of child safety and wellbeing through the leadership, governance and culture of our organisation which is underpinned by the following of a risk based approach to child safety.
- 3.11 We are committed in ensuring our leaders understand, lead and oversee our approach to child safety at a strategic, policy and operational level.
- 3.12 We have specific policies, procedures, action plans, reporting systems and required child safety related training that support our leadership team and staff to achieve our child safety and wellbeing commitments. This training includes recognising the nature and indicators of child abuse and other harm, responding to safeguarding risks, and how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.
- 3.13 We are committed to ensuring our staff and volunteers comply with the Catholic Education Code of Conduct and child safety related policies and procedures when performing their duties and address possible breaches in a timely and appropriate manner.

### **The involvement of children, young people, and families**

- 3.14 Creating child-safe school environments is a dynamic process that involves active participation and responsibility by schools, families and their communities. It is marked by collaboration, vigilance and proactive approaches across policies, procedures, curriculum and practices. Central to this process is openly communicating with children, young people and families about our approach to child safety and wellbeing and supporting their participation in decisions affecting themselves.
- 3.15 We involve all families, carers and communities in our processes to maintain a child safe culture throughout our schools and early learning centres. We provide continuing opportunity to improve our processes.
- 3.16 Each member of our community has a responsibility to understand their role in ensuring the wellbeing and safety of all students. This must be at the forefront of all that they do and every decision.

### **Child protection obligations**

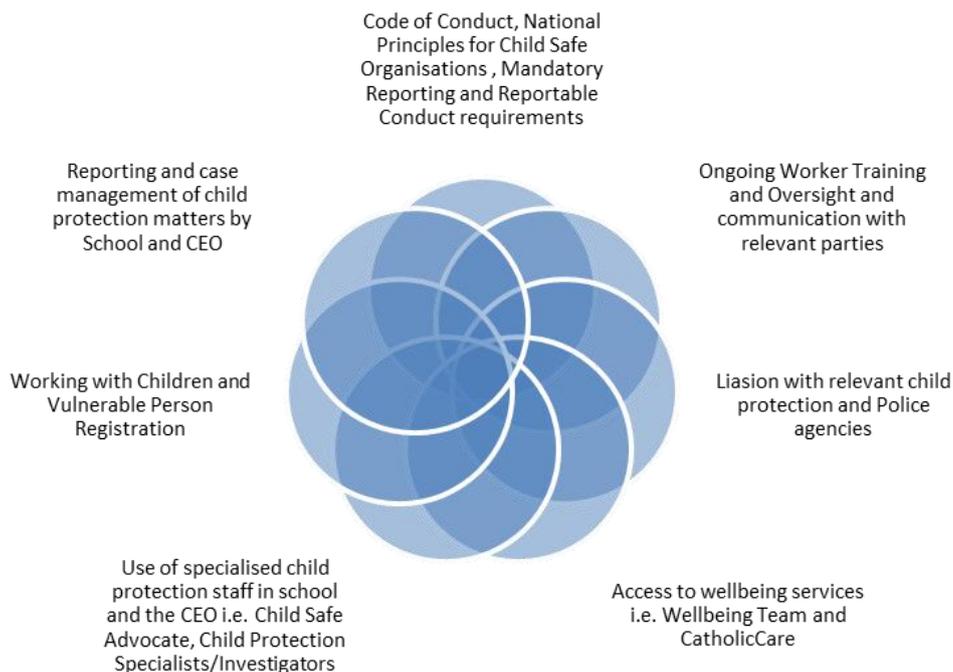
- 3.17 We treat all complaints, allegations and safety concerns seriously. We respond to any child safety concerns in a timely manner by following our procedures for managing and reporting child safety concerns. We follow complaint processes which are child friendly and assist the resolution of concerns in a timely manner.
- 3.18 We have a legal obligation to make mandatory reports in a timely manner to relevant child protection and policing authorities when we are concerned about a child and young person's safety.
- 3.19 We are committed to providing children and young people with the knowledge and skills to understand and maintain their own personal safety and make others aware when they do not feel safe.

## Continuous improvement

- 3.20 We are committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure we comply with all relevant child protection laws and maintain a child-safe culture.
- 3.21 We have child safe human resources and recruitment policies and practices for all staff.

## 4. The CECG Approach to Child Safety

- 4.1 CECG has a multifaceted approach to protect its students and provide a safe protective environment, outlined in the diagram below:



### CECG Approach to Child Safety

## 5. Child Safe Standards

- 5.1 The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations<sup>1</sup> and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards<sup>2</sup> are the minimum standards adopted by the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Education to ensure that children and young people enrolled in our Schools and Early Learning Centres (ELC) and attending our School Aged and Vacation Care are cared for in a child-friendly and safe environment. Compliance with these Principles and Standards is audited by CECG as part of a three-year cycle.
- 5.2 CECG implements the [National Child Safe Standards](#) and the equivalent ACT laws. It is in line with CECG ethos and legally required under the [NSW Children's Guardian Act 2019](#).

<sup>1</sup> <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/projects/child-safe-organisations>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.acsltd.org.au/services/professional-and-safeguarding-standards/national-catholic-safeguarding-standards/>

Each of the ten Standards corresponds to the ten National Principles

## 6. Risk-Based Approach

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- 6.1 CECG adopts a risk-based approach to manage, assess and triage child safety related matters and provide appropriate support for relevant parties. A risk-based approach is consistent with the practices of child safety and other regulatory agencies. It provides the best practice to reduce or remove the risk to an acceptable level, in a timely manner with appropriate resources.
- 6.2 Risk assessment is built into CECG's procedures at many levels including excursion and school activity management, incident reporting, and all investigation and incident response processes. The overarching Risk Management Policy sets CECG's framework for risk assessment and management, with further guidance in specific policies.

## 7. Education

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- 7.1 CECG recognises the key role of educating children and young people on their rights including their right to safety, the right to be listened to, and the need to engage in protective behaviours. CECG has embedded protective behaviours training in student and worker training. Students receive this education in various age-appropriate formats throughout their schooling by teachers and appropriate specialists. Workers receive this education as part of their initial training and on an ongoing basis.

## 8. Working With Children and Vulnerable People

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- 8.1 CECG's workers are required to maintain compliance with vulnerable person and working with children registration schemes. This ensures workers and volunteers, are appropriately vetted by an external agency before engaging in child related work and is a key part of the child safety process. The Working with Vulnerable People Policy (ACT) and Working with Children Policy (NSW) set out CECG's requirements.

## 9. Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting

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- 9.1 Workers employed by CECG must report<sup>3</sup> if they have reasonable grounds to believe or suspect a child or young person has experienced or is at risk of certain kinds of significant harm. Full details of the reporting requirements and processes can be found in the CECG Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting Policies (separate policies for the ACT and NSW).
- 9.2 In both the ACT and NSW, workers must report if they believe a child has experienced sexual abuse or non-accidental injury. NSW workers must also report if they believe a child has experienced neglect, emotional/psychological harm, or exposure to domestic violence.
- 9.3 CECG encourages any concerned person to report any child safety issues to an appropriate person. This can include any CECG worker such as a Teacher, Assistant Principal, or Principal. It can also include Child Protection agencies and ACT and NSW Police.
- 9.4 Both NSW and ACT legislation allow for Voluntary Reporting. Neglect, emotional/psychological abuse, or exposure to domestic violence can be reported in the ACT even if reporting is not mandatory.

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<sup>3</sup> Mandatory Reporting in NSW is governed by the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 s27. In the ACT it is governed by the Children and Young People Act 2008 s356.

## 10. Reporting child sexual offences in the ACT

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- 10.1 By law, all adults are required to report to police if they have reason to believe a sexual offence has been committed against a child (section 66AA of the Crimes Act 1900). This law is separate and additional to Mandatory Reporting.
- 10.2 Section 66AA includes a criminal offence for any adult who fails to report, without one of the approved reasons listed in the law.
- 10.3 CECG workers are required to report any sexual offences under the CECG Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting Policy (ACT).

## 11. Reportable Conduct

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- 11.1 CECG must report to the ACT Ombudsman<sup>4</sup> and NSW Office of the Children's Guardian<sup>5</sup> any allegations or convictions involving workers for certain Reportable Conduct. The report must be made whether the conduct is related to work or not. NSW law only requires reporting of 'employees' while ACT law requires reporting of any worker that engages in reportable conduct must be reported - including employees, contractors, volunteers or other people engaged to provide services to children.
- 11.2 Reportable conduct includes a range of behaviour involving children sexual misconduct, ill-treatment, or certain crimes.
- 11.3 The full reporting requirements and process are provided in the CECG Reportable Conduct Policy (ACT) and Reportable Conduct Policy (NSW).
- 11.4 CECG's obligations under the reportable conduct scheme include:
  - Reporting of reportable conduct allegations and convictions to the ACT Ombudsman and NSW Children's Guardian;
  - Sharing of reportable conduct information with other prescribed organisations or designated entities as appropriate and in accordance with legislative requirements; and
  - Maintaining appropriate practices and procedures in relation to the prevention of reportable conduct and dealing with reportable allegations and convictions involving CECG workers.
- 11.5 CECG's compliance with the ACT and NSW Reportable Conduct Schemes is supported by other workplace misconduct processes. These processes include investigation of workplace misconduct matters less serious than those in the reportable conduct schemes. Using a risk-based approach to complaints, these matters are normally dealt with in the school environment, centrally managed by the School and Family Services Team.

## 12. Welfare

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- 12.1 Child Safety and Wellbeing issues can affect workers, parents, witnesses, children and young people to varying degrees. CECG has various pastoral care processes available to assist workers and other relevant parties including School Counsellors and the Employee Assistance Program and access to further services provided by CatholicCare. CECG is also able to access specialist counselling and psychological support for children, young people, parents, and staff.

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<sup>4</sup> Ombudsman Act 1989 (ACT) Division 2.2A

<sup>5</sup> Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) Division 3

## 13. Cultural Safety and Diversity

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- 13.1 CECG's recognises cultural safety, which seeks to ensure all people are treated with respect for their cultural needs and differences. Additional details can be found in CECG's Bullying and Harassment Policy and School Anti-Bullying Policy.
- 13.2 CECG develop's staff and student understanding of culture safety and diversity through ongoing training and recognising such aspects in child safety matters and responding appropriately.

## 14. Investigations

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- 14.1 The CECG Routine Complaints Investigations Procedure outlines how investigations are conducted and managed at School, ELC or School Aged and Vacation Care level and within the CEO. Investigations are conducted on a risk managed basis. Where an outside agency conducts an investigation and seeks information or documentation, the School and Family Services team will manage the response.

## 15. Family Law

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- 15.1 The CECG Family Law Policy sets out its approach to family law issues. It is the view of CECG that:
- Every child and young person has a right to receive high quality education.
  - Children's and young person's best educational interests are the paramount consideration.
  - Catholic systemic schools are not the appropriate place for resolving family disputes. If parents do not agree about their child's best interests, it is the role of the Family Court, not the school, to determine those interests.

## 16. Record Keeping

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- 16.1 The CECG Record Keeping Policy details requirements for CECG workers to maintain appropriate records in relation to child safety matters.

## 17. School Monitoring

- 17.1 The diagram below outlines how schools, ELCs and SACs are monitored to ensure they are complying with child protection requirements. The full procedures are outlined in the CECG Child Safe Standards Audit Guide.



Child Safety Monitoring Approach

## 18. Review and Continuous Improvement

- 18.1 CECG regularly assesses and reviews its child safety processes at a policy, procedure and operational level to continually improve how it addresses child safety matters. This process recognises the complexity of child safety and the need to continually assess approaches, available resources, access to specialist services, and education for staff, students and the school community.

## 19. Definitions

- 19.1 **Child:** in this policy is a person up to the age of 16 years. Some legislation differs slightly in how this is worded. For Family Law matters a child is up to the age of 18 years
- 19.2 **Risk of significant harm:** is where a child or young person is experiencing, to a significant extent, actual or potential circumstances causing concern for their safety, welfare or wellbeing. This situation may be sufficiently serious to require a response by an agency with or without the consent of a parent, guardian or caregiver. Such situations may include risk of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence or psychological harm.
- 19.3 **Worker:** All people carrying out work for CECG including employees, contractors and sub-contractors, volunteers, apprentices, and work experience students.
- 19.4 **Young Person:** in this policy is a person who has attained the age of 16 years but has not reached adulthood, or the age of 18 years.

## 20. Related Documents and Legislation

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### 20.1 Related CECG Documents:

- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Routine Complaints Investigation Procedure](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy ACT](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy NSW](#)
- [Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting Policy ACT](#)
- [Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting Policy NSW](#)

### 20.2 Legislation and Standards:

- [Family Law Act 1975](#) (Commonwealth)
- [Children \(Education Care and Services National Law Application\) Act 2010 No 104](#) (NSW as the model Act)

### 20.3 ACT

- [Child and Young People Act 2008](#)
- [Ombudsman Act 1989](#)
- [Working with Vulnerable People \(Background Checking\) Act 2011](#)

### 20.4 New South Wales

- [Children and Young Persons \(care and Protection\) Act 1998](#)
- [Child Protection \(Working with Children\) Act 2012](#)
- [Children's Guardian Act 2019 \(NSW\)](#)

## 21. Contact

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- 21.1 For support or further questions relating to this policy, contact the School and Family Services team.