

1. Summary

- 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

- 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.

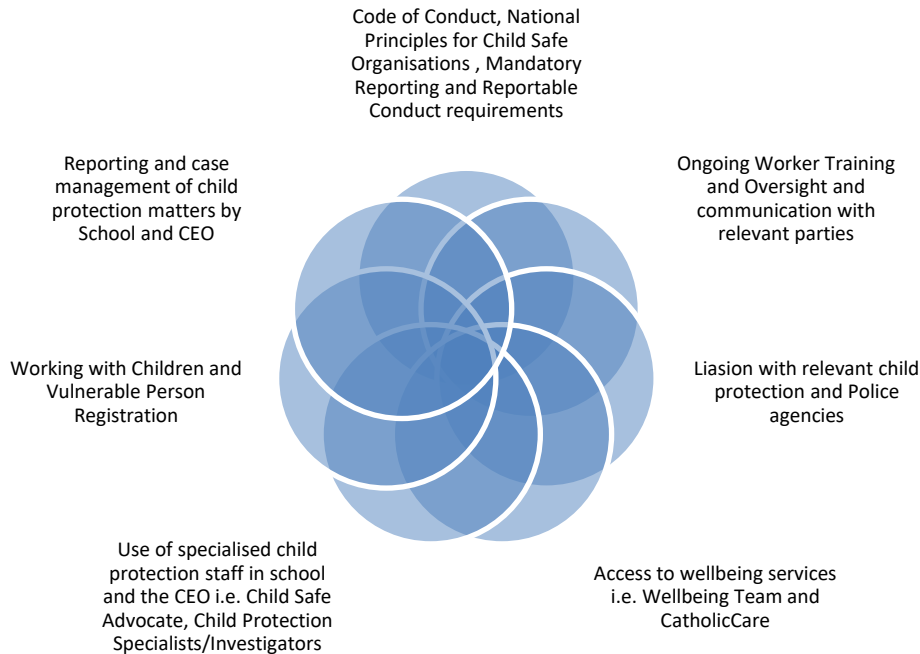
3. Our Commitment to Children, Young People and Families

- 3.1 CECG adopts the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Child Safeguarding Commitment¹:
- The Archdiocese is committed to creating a safe environment and instituting procedures to prevent abuse whilst responding to allegations and disclosures of abuse.
 - All children and vulnerable people have a right to safety and freedom from abuse of any kind.
 - All adults working with children and vulnerable people have a responsibility to care for them, to promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any form of abuse.
 - When any action is taken to prevent or respond to any type of abuse, the welfare and wellbeing of the child or vulnerable person is the primary concern.
 - The integrity of the family unit is respected but not to the detriment of the child or vulnerable person and the right of the child or vulnerable person to be heard.
 - The dignity of persons involved in situations where abuse is suspected or disclosed should be respected; they should be treated with fairness, sensitivity, dignity and respect. In the interests of justice, appropriate confidentiality must be maintained, with information that relates to suspected or disclosed abuse being provided only to those who have a right or a need to be informed.

¹ From the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Policy <https://cgatholic.org.au/professional-standards/safeguarding-policy/>

4. The CECG Approach to Child Protection

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 Protection

5. The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and National Catholic Safeguarding Standards

5.1 The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations² and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards³ 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.

² <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/national-principles-child-safe-organisations>

³ <https://www.cpsltd.org.au/safe-church/national-catholic-safeguarding-standards/>

Each of the ten Standards corresponds to the ten National Principles

6. Risk-Based Approach

- 6.1 CECG adopts a risk-based approach to manage, assess and triage child protection related matters and provide appropriate support for relevant parties. A risk-based approach is consistent with the practices of child protection 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

- 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

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

9. Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting

- 9.1 Workers employed by CECG must report⁴ 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 protection 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.

⁴ 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

- 10.1 In September 2019, the Australian Capital Territory introduced a new law that requires all adults 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

- 11.1 CECG must report to the ACT Ombudsman⁵ and NSW Office of the Children's Guardian⁶ 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

- 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.

⁵ *Ombudsman Act 1989 (ACT) Division 2.2A*

⁶ *Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) Division 3*

13. Cultural Safety and Diversity

13.1 CECG's child protection recognise 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 Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy and School Anti-Bullying Policy.

13.2 CECG to develop staff and student understanding of culture safety and diversity through ongoing training and recognising such aspects in child protection matters and responding appropriately.

14. Investigations

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

15.1 The CECG Family Law Policy sets out its approach to family law issues. It is the view of CECG that:

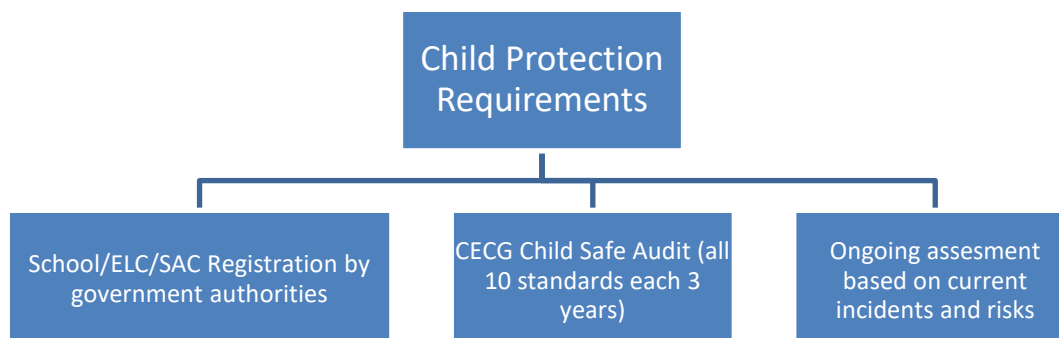
- Every child and young person has a right to receive high quality education.
- Children's and young person's best educational interests are the paramount consideration.
- Catholic systemic schools are not the appropriate place for resolving family disputes. If parents do not agree about their child's best interests, it is the role of the Family Court, not the school, to determine those interests.

16. Record Keeping

16.1 The CECG Record Keeping Policy details requirements for CECG workers to maintain appropriate records in relation to child protection 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 Protection Monitoring Approach

18. Review and Continuous Improvement

18.1 CECG regularly assesses and reviews its child protection processes at a policy, procedure and operational level to continually improve how it addresses child protection matters. This process recognises the complexity of child protection 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 sufficient serious to require a response by a 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

20.1 Related CECG Documents:

Complaints Policy
Critical and Non-Critical Incident Policy
Routine Complaints Investigation Policy
Reportable Conduct Policies - ACT & NSW
Mandatory and Voluntary Reporting Policy – ACT & NSW

Legislation and Standards:

[Family Law Act 1975](#) (Commonwealth)

[Children \(education Care and Services National Law Application\) Act 2010](#) (NSW as the model Act)

ACT

[Child and Young People Act 2008](#)

[Ombudsman Act 1989](#)

[Working with Vulnerable People \(Background Checking Act\) 2011](#)

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

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