



# Mannix College Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Mannix College is committed to building and nurturing an environment where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard, and where they feel, and are, safe.
- 1.2. This policy applies to all College employees, contractors and volunteers (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Responsible College Persons").
- 1.3. All activities at Mannix College are covered by relevant Commonwealth and State laws, and the College's own policies and procedures.

## **2. Duty of care**

- 2.1. Mannix College is dedicated to upholding its fundamental responsibility to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

### 3. Right to safety and participation

- 3.1. A culture of safety within Mannix College ensures that children and young people (defined as persons under 18 years of age) can feel safe when participating in College life.
- 3.2. Mannix College has zero-tolerance for all forms of child abuse, neglect and maltreatment of children and young people and is committed to protecting children and young people from harm.

### 4. Child abuse

- 4.1. Child abuse or maltreatment is defined as an act (or series of acts) that endangers or impairs a child or young person's physical health, emotional health or development. Categories of child abuse and maltreatment include:
  - a) physical abuse
  - b) sexual abuse, including grooming
  - c) emotional abuse, including spiritual abuse
  - d) family violence
  - e) neglect
  - f) discrimination
  - g) bullying
- 4.2. Signs and indicators of child abuse or maltreatment are not always obvious. Physical abuse may be more visible than other forms of abuse (e.g. bruising). Neglect may be more difficult to identify as it includes a failure to provide adequate care and attention. This type of conduct, even if not witnessed, may manifest in changes to a child's behaviour, for example, social withdrawal and depression.
- 4.3. All children and young people are vulnerable, but there are some children and young people who have a higher risk of being harmed or abused. They include children who have previously been abused, have a disability, are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, or experience poverty, homelessness or out-of-home care. Similarly, the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are more acute, due to a history of racism, marginalisation and dispossession.
- 4.4. **Dignity of children and young people.** Mannix College values the contribution and dignity of all children and young people and creates opportunities to involve them in decision-making about programs, activities and events that affect them. Mannix College recognises the need for empowerment of all children and young people, especially those at greater risk of abuse. Their involvement in decision-making can be a significant protective factor in preventing abuse.
- 4.5. **Informing and involving parents (and guardians) in promoting child safety.** Mannix College acknowledges that effective child safety within parishes, agencies and entities cannot be undertaken without the involvement of parents (and guardians), and seeks to engage parents (and guardians) as critical partners in promoting the safety of children and young people. The involvement of parents and guardians of children and young people who are more vulnerable to experiencing abuse is particularly important.

## 5. Safeguarding children and young people within Mannix College

- 5.1. As a Child Safe Organisation, Mannix College acknowledges that preventing child abuse requires proactive approaches across policies, procedures and practices that are consistent with the requirements of the following:
  - a) Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria)
  - b) National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Australian Human Rights Commission)
  - c) National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (Catholic Safeguarding Limited)
- 5.2. In fulfilling this responsibility, Mannix College has developed a comprehensive framework to guide the implementation of child safety policies, procedures and practices with the aim of preventing child abuse, empowering children and young people, and responding to concerns, disclosures or allegations of child abuse or child-related misconduct.
- 5.3. This policy provides a broad overview of the framework and should be read with the resources provided by the organisations listed under paragraph 5.1.
- 5.4. The application of this policy extends to Responsible College Persons within the context of their role within the College: within the physical boundaries of Mannix College; beyond the physical boundaries, including pastoral support, visitation or outreach on non-Mannix College property, online or via digital environments and while travelling locally, interstate or overseas.

## 6. Safeguarding responsibilities

- 6.1. Through the Professional Standards Unit (**PSU**), the Archbishop of Melbourne supports Mannix College to:
  - a) implement safeguarding practices and processes outlined in this policy;
  - b) coordinate the response to allegations and reports of child safety-related misconduct and child abuse in relation to clergy, employees and volunteers across the Archdiocese; and
  - c) monitor and continually improve safeguarding practices and processes.
- 6.2. Mannix College Senior Management Team ensures compliance with this policy and relevant procedures and practices to protect children and young people.
- 6.3. Further, safeguarding children and young people is a collective responsibility; all Responsible College Persons at Mannix College acknowledge their individual responsibility to comply with clear behavioural expectations to act in a caring, respectful and safe manner toward children and young people.
- 6.4. All Responsible College Persons have a moral, legal and ethical responsibility to care for, promote children's and young people's wellbeing, and protect them from harm or abuse.

## 7. Safe personnel

- 7.1. **Selection, recruitment and screening.** In seeking to provide safe and enriching interactions with children and young people Mannix College sets out selection, recruitment and screening processes that consider the suitability and appropriateness of persons to work with children and young people in an employment or voluntary role to minimise the risk of child abuse.
- 7.2. **Child safety code of conduct.** A specific child safety code of conduct provides guidance to Responsible College Persons in the context of their involvement with children and young people at Mannix College.
- 7.3. **Induction.** Induction processes incorporate safeguarding awareness to build a foundation of understanding and commitment to the safety of children and young people.
- 7.4. **Safeguarding Training.** In supporting Responsible College Persons to promote the safety of children and young people and discharge their responsibilities in line with this policy, the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (**CAM**) provides a range of training and education activities that equip Responsible College Persons with the skills and knowledge to promote the safe participation of children and young people.
- 7.5. **Supervision.** It is a requirement of this policy that those whose roles involve working with children and young people are provided with supervision and support to undertake their role in a manner that promotes the safety of children and young people and enables the detection of behaviour that may be detrimental to children and young people.

## 8. Safe programs, activities and events

- 8.1. **Child safety risk management.** Mannix College safeguards children and young people by employing a risk management approach that systematically identifies and assesses risks associated with programs, activities and events involving children and young people to minimise opportunities for harm to occur.
- 8.2. **Practice and behavioural guidelines.** In addition to the risk management process, parishes, agencies, and entities adopt the practice and behavioural guidelines when conducting programs, activities and events that involve children and young people.

## 9. Responding to and reporting child abuse

- 9.1. The safety of children and young people is paramount. All concerns, allegations or complaints of child abuse will be taken seriously and acted upon swiftly and consistent with Mannix College's moral, ethical and legal obligations to safeguard children and young people.
- 9.2. In Victoria, the following legislation governs how adults should respond to allegations of child abuse:
  - a) The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) defines when a child needs protection (s. 162) and the mandatory reporting obligations of certain professionals working in our community (ss. 182, 184).

- b) The *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic) outlines the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
  - c) The *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) states that a failure to protect a child from a sexual offence (s 49O) and a person who fails to disclose information to police after forming a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child (s 327) are both criminal offences. If a reasonable belief has been formed that a child or young person is at risk of or experiencing child sexual abuse there is a legal obligation to report it.
- 9.3. Mannix College acknowledges its moral, legal and ethical duty to effectively respond to and report concerns, allegations or complaints of child-safety-related misconduct and/or child abuse to the appropriate authorities such as the Victoria Police, Child Protection – Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (**DFFH**) and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People).
- 9.4. Children and young people (and their families) within Mannix College have information and support to report a concern, or allegation or make a complaint through processes that are accessible and respectful.
- 9.5. It is a requirement of this policy that Responsible College Persons submit a report if they have formed a reasonable belief that a child or young person has experienced abuse, is experiencing abuse or is at risk of harm. Failing to report child abuse or misconduct that places children and young people at risk of harm is a breach of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.
- 9.6. **Making a child abuse report** involves notifying the **College Principal/and/or Dean of Students and Wellbeing, statutory authorities and Pathways promptly** (as soon as practicable after forming a reasonable belief unless the child or young person is in imminent danger).
- 9.7. After receiving an abuse report, the College Principal will report the conduct to the DFFH and/or the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) (Victoria Police). This ensures that Mannix College can appropriately respond to concerns and allegations of complaints to the safety of children and young people promptly and effectively.
- 9.8. All reports are to be investigated by the appropriate agency, Victoria Police and/or DFFH, with Mannix College support and assistance.
- 9.9. In Victoria, alleged child abuse perpetrated by:
- a) clergy, employees and volunteers is reported to the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) within Victoria Police;
  - b) a family member is reported to Child Protection - Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH);
  - c) a child or young person is reported to Child Protection (DFFH) and/or the SOCIT (Victoria Police) (e.g. sexually harmful behaviour, aggression, violence, online exploitation).
- 9.10. **VICTORIA POLICE.** Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT): [www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document\\_ID=36448](http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=36448)

9.11. **CHILD PROTECTION (DFFH)**

- a) North and West (Metro) region: 1300 664 9777
- b) South region: 1300 655 795
- c) East region: 1300 360 391
- d) West (Rural) region: 1800 075 599
- e) After-hours and weekends: 13 12 78

9.12. Mannix College has a legal responsibility under the Reportable Conduct Scheme to notify the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) of current and historical incidents of suspected child abuse or misconduct that involve clergy, employees and volunteers.

9.13. Serious misconduct and/or criminal behaviour will be reported to the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission for Children and Young People) and/or Victoria Police and subject to an internal investigation and disciplinary action.

9.14. Disciplinary action will be determined by the seriousness of the substantiated misconduct and, in the case of Responsible College Persons, may consist of:

- a) counselling;
- b) training;
- c) a verbal or written warning;
- d) penalties relevant as per the Conditions of Residency or other policies;
- e) eviction; and/or up to
- f) dismissal.

9.15. Confidentiality and privacy will be maintained in relation to reports of child abuse in accordance with the principles of natural justice and our duty of care to safeguard children and young people. The safety and support needs of all parties involved in a report will be considered and addressed as part of this process.

## 10. General

10.1. Mannix College reserves the right to change this Policy at any time by publishing such changes or revised documents on the Mannix website. All changes take effect immediately, or such later date specified by Mannix College.

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