

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Staff who work in the Catholic Education Office Sale for the Diocese of Sale (**the DOSCEL Secretariat**) provide leadership, support and services to primary and secondary Catholic schools managed and operated by DOSCEL (**Schools**) in the Diocese of Sale, State of Victoria.

Each member of DOSCEL's Secretariat shares responsibility for creating and maintaining a child safe and inclusive organisation where children and young people under their care are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of DOSCEL's approach to implementing Victoria's Child Safe Standards under *Ministerial Order 1359: Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*. It informs and guides DOSCEL's processes and practices for upholding the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in DOSCEL schools and across all areas of the DOSCEL Secretariat's responsibilities.

2.0 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all DOSCEL Secretariat staff, volunteers and contractors, whether or not they work in direct contact with children and young people. It also applies to DOSCEL Board members where indicated.

The Policy should be read and observed together with DOSCEL's other child safety policies, procedures and codes, listed below under Related Policies and Procedures (section 7.0).

3.0 STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

DOSCEL holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of Catholic education. 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.

DOSCEL commits to promoting inclusive and safe schools in the Diocese of Sale through:

- upholding the primacy of the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- empowering families, children, young people and staff to have a voice and raise concerns
- implementing rigorous risk-management and employment practices.

The DOSCEL Secretariat, in partnership with DOSCEL schools, will systematically and continually identify and assess risks to child safety and will eliminate (where possible) or

reduce all potential sources of harm. Risk management practices will be embedded in effective, transparent and well-understood policies, procedures and practices that are regularly reviewed and updated as required. When child safety concerns are raised, identified and/or reported, they will be investigated and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

DOSCEL schools will endeavour to ensure that their students are engaged and active participants in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on their safety. Particular attention will be paid to the inclusion and safety of Aboriginal students, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning and/or asexual (LGBTIQA+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting children and young people based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated and will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

DOSCEL will employ highly competent and professional Secretariat staff who are formed and challenged to maintain the safety of all children and young people in DOSCEL schools. The high quality of staff appointments will be upheld through rigorous employment and staff review processes and practices.

DOSCEL Secretariat staff and DOSCEL schools will stay abreast of current legislation and will meet their legislative duties to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in their care, inclusive of legislation pertaining to the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Ministerial Order No. 1359), mandatory reporting, relevant Information Sharing Schemes, grooming, failure to disclose and failure to protect requirements.

4.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 DOSCEL Board Members

In performing their roles and responsibilities, Board members:

- address child safety matters as a regular agenda item at Board meetings
- provide feedback in relation to, and act in accordance with, DOSCEL's Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to Board members
- monitor the implementation and efficacy of this policy and all related child safety policies and procedures
- provide reports, as required, to the Company Member
- provide support to the Chief Executive Officer/Director of Catholic Education and the Executive Leadership Team, as required, in managing complaints and reportable incidents.

4.2 DOSCEL Executive Leadership

The DOSCEL Executive Leadership Team comprises the Chief Executive Officer/Director of Catholic Education – Diocese of Sale, the Chief Operations Officer, the Chief Compliance Officer and the Chief Financial Officer, Information and Infrastructure Officer.

The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained in DOSCEL schools, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with *Ministerial Order No. 1359*. This includes ensuring that risk management systems and procedures are consistently applied, monitored and reviewed.

The Chief Executive Officer/Director of Catholic Education – Diocese of Sale holds ultimate responsibility for:

- ensuring effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed;
- promoting inclusive practices in DOSCEL Schools where the diverse needs of all students are considered;
- facilitating regular open discussion on child safety issues within the DOSCEL Secretariat, including at Executive Leadership Team meetings, staff meetings and Board meetings;
- ensuring the provision of regular professional learning and training for staff, volunteers and contractors (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing, prevention of abuse and responding to abuse;
- creating the conditions where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to authorities.

4.2 DOSCEL Secretariat Staff, Contractors and Volunteers

All DOSCEL Secretariat staff, contractors and volunteers:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction programs and training
- act in accordance with DOSCEL's Child Safety Code of Conduct and Related Policies and Procedures as listed below in section 7.0
- understand and enact, where required, the PROTECT guidelines: Four Critical Actions for Schools.

5.0 POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

DOSCEL has established work systems, practices, policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe environment and culture within the DOSCEL Secretariat and across DOSCEL Schools. The key elements are described below.

5.1 Child Safety Code of Conduct

DOSCEL's Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines the standards of conduct expected of all DOSCEL Secretariat staff and adults engaged in the activities of DOSCEL Schools, inclusive of volunteers, contractors, external education providers, religious and chaplains. It is published on the DOSCEL website.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct:

- is included as part of induction training for new staff, volunteers and contractors;
- specifies expected behaviour in both physical and online environments;
- supports and informs DOSCEL's policies and reporting procedures should breaches of the Code be suspected or identified;
- is accounted for in employment contracts to ensure compliance;
- is signed by employees, volunteers and contractors to ensure there is a shared understanding of and commitment to DOSCEL's child-safe culture and practices.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

5.2 Child Safety Policies

DOSCEL has a suite of child safety policies and procedures that address matters such as:

- the indicators of child abuse and other harm
- reportable conduct allegations and investigations
- procedures for responding to and reporting child safety incidents or concerns
- mandatory and non-mandatory reporting obligations
- external reporting agencies (e.g. DFFH Child Protection, The Orange Door, the Police, the Commission for Children and Young People)
- record keeping and confidentiality
- child safety and family violence information sharing schemes.

The policies are published on the DOSCEL website and are listed below (section 7.0).

5.3 Risk Management

Each DOSCEL school maintains its own child safety and wellbeing risk register, and designated DOSCEL Secretariat staff support DOSCEL Schools to identify, assess and manage risks in their physical and online school environments. Certain activity-specific risk management procedures for off-site activities (e.g. school camps and excursions involving third party providers) require DOSCEL's Compliance and Risk Officer's review and approval before proceeding.

5.4 Culturally Inclusive and Safe Environments

DOSCEL proactively supports the building of strong school cultures where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, values and practices are respected, and where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families feel included, respected, listened to and safe.

DOSCEL Schools are encouraged and supported to build school-wide knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, perspectives, values, skills and attitudes, beginning with local content and broadening the depth of discovery to include these cultures across Australia. This includes embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in the curriculum as demonstrated in the Victorian Curriculum F–10. DOSCEL employs an Education Officer: Inclusive Education (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) to assist schools in these curriculum initiatives.

DOSCEL schools are encouraged to begin assemblies and whole-school liturgies with Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the school is located. Programs and activities that raise awareness of national events and anniversaries are also strongly promoted, for example, Harmony Day (March), National Sorry Day (May), National Reconciliation Week (May–June) and NAIDOC Week (first week of July).

5.5 Student Empowerment

Staff in DOSCEL Schools are expected to explicitly teach personal and social skills. High priority is assigned to strengthening students' skills and confidence in recognising unsafe situations with adults or other students, to speaking up and acting on concerns relating to themselves or their peers, and to knowing who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe.

All DOSCEL Schools have several key policies and documents published on their website that provide students and families with information on how to report safety and wellbeing concerns. These policies carry varying titles but will usually include:

- Anti-Bullying and Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Management Policy
- Digital Learning Policy (Internet, Social Media and Digital Devices)

The DOSCEL Secretariat hosts an annual Child Safety Week, usually in the first week in September, involving parishes and schools across the Diocese of Sale. Each year a specific theme is chosen and a range of resources and activities developed to communicate and reinforce the theme's key messages. The overarching objectives of Child Safety Week include to encourage children and young people to learn about behaviours that will help to keep them safe, and to encourage parents, guardians and carers and parishioners to have open conversations with the children and young people in their lives about their safety, whether online, at school, or in the community.

5.6 Family Engagement

DOSCEL Schools are encouraged to regularly raise awareness of the important role that parents, guardians, carers and other family members have in monitoring and promoting children and young people's safety and wellbeing.

Schools are expected to provide families with accessible information about their child safe policies and practices and to involve them where appropriate in their approach to child safety and wellbeing. Strategies to achieve this are the purview of each school, but may include:

- posting key policies and procedural guidelines on the school website and intranet;
- informing families via school newsletters about any significant updates to child safety policies or processes;
- providing families with information about promoting children and young people's safety and wellbeing via newsletters and parent information sessions;
- discussing the needs of students through parent-student-teacher interviews;
- organising interpreters and translations to engage families and carers from non-English speaking backgrounds in conversations about child safety strategies;
- providing diverse methods of communication for/with families, including email, social media, meetings and workshops;
- hosting community workshops on child safety and wellbeing topics and providing families with take-home information to help them talk to their children and young people about safety and wellbeing at home, online, at school and in the community;
- communicating with and appropriately involving families at all stages of the process if a concern is raised or a complaint is made.

5.7 Diversity and Equity

DOSCEL proactively supports Schools to welcome and celebrate the rich diversity of their students and families and to promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination.

DOSCEL Schools are expected to pay particular attention to individuals and groups of students with additional and specific needs. This expectation includes tailoring child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- students unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- students who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Strategies and actions to address challenges that students experience due to their diverse attributes will vary across schools, but may generally include:

- offering activities that promote inclusion and diversity within the school community;
- communicating that discrimination and bullying are not tolerated;
- ensuring that students and their families know how they can safely and confidently raise concerns or report incidents that occurred at school and outside school;
- engaging genuinely with students, finding out what matters to them, what they know and don't know about safety, and what they need to be safe and feel safe all the time;
- responding to family violence in a way that is culturally responsive, safe, child-centred, and non-discriminatory;
- providing staff with training to identify and address racism, bullying and discrimination;
- seeking out expert advice as needed to support inclusion, such as an occupational therapist or speech pathologist;
- committing to the provision of school infrastructure that enables the inclusion of students of all abilities.

5.8 Suitable Staff and Volunteers

All DOSCEL Schools apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people. Their employment practices are guided by DOSCEL's Recruitment and Engagement Policy and Guidelines on the Employment of Staff.

The employment of DOSCEL Secretariat staff is equally rigorous, as described below.

5.8.1 DOSCEL Secretariat Staff recruitment

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, DOSCEL:

- sights, verifies and records the person's Working with Children Check evidence or equivalent background check, such as a Victorian Institute of Teaching registration
- collects and records:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

5.8.2 DOSCEL Secretariat Staff induction

All newly appointed staff participate in DOSCEL's child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program includes a focus on DOSCEL's Child Safety Code of Conduct, reporting obligations policies, and other child safety and wellbeing policies and information that DOSCEL considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

5.8.3 Ongoing supervision and management of DOSCEL Secretariat staff

All DOSCEL Secretariat staff engaged in child-connected work are supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children and young people is safe and appropriate. Staff are monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks and staff professional registration requirements. Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people is managed promptly and in accordance with DOSCEL's policies and legal obligations.

5.8.4 Volunteers and contractors

All volunteers and contractors participate in DOSCEL's child safety and wellbeing induction program and are required to comply with the expectations outlined in DOSCEL's Child Safety Code of Conduct and related child safety policies.

5.9 Child Safety Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff in DOSCEL schools and the DOSCEL Secretariat understand their responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction program, DOSCEL Secretariat staff participate in a range of training and professional learning programs that are delivered at least annually and include:

- guidance on DOSCEL's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices;
- the completion of an online training module on reporting obligations, including mandatory reporting, reportable conduct and other legal obligations;

- how to recognise indicators of child harm, including harm caused by other children and students;
- how to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing;
- how colleagues who disclose harm will be supported;
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people;
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for DOSCEL volunteers and contractors, is tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

5.10 Complaints and Reporting Processes

Victoria's Child Safe Standards under Ministerial Order No.1359 emphasise the importance of processes for complaints being child-focused, culturally safe, and accessible to children and young people. To this end, DOSCEL schools are expected to:

- let students know that they can make a complaint about any kind of harm perpetrated at school, outside school, by an adult or by other children or young people, including bullying or cyberbullying and other forms of harm;
- encourage students to approach a trusted staff member and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers;
- ask students about their experiences of making complaints, and act on feedback from students in the complaints process.

DOSCEL has a suite of reporting policies and guidelines, listed in section 7.0 below, that specifically address reporting matters such as:

- reportable conduct allegations and investigations;
- mandatory and non-mandatory reporting obligations;
- external reporting agencies (e.g. DFFH Child Protection, Child First/The Orange Door, the Police, the Commission for Children and Young People);
- record keeping and confidentiality;
- child safety and family violence information sharing schemes with prescribed Information Sharing Entities (ISEs).

In addition, if there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, staff in DOSCEL Schools and in the DOSCEL Secretariat are aware that they must observe the joint protocol of the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET), the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV), titled:

- PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools
- PROTECT: Identifying and responding to student sexual offending in Victorian schools.

5.11 Record Keeping, Privacy and Information Sharing

DOSCEL is committed to best practice record keeping. All internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses undertaken by the DOSCEL Secretariat or DOSCEL Schools, are recorded and stored in accordance with DOSCEL's Child Safety Record Keeping Policy.

Information and records relating to incidents, complaints, responses and decisions are treated as confidential, except where the sharing or distribution of information and/or records is mandated by statutory requirements or principles of natural justice. In this regard, if a complaint or report involves conduct that is serious and/or potentially criminal, any legal obligations to report relevant information to external authorities will over-ride confidentiality.

DOSCEL Schools are prescribed Information Sharing Entities (ISEs), meaning that, where legislated requirements are met, schools are able to share and/or request confidential information with other ISEs to promote child wellbeing or safety. This occurs via the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) or the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS). Further information pertaining to this matter is outlined in DOSCEL's Child Safety and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes Policy.

5.12 Policy, Practices and Procedures Review

DOSCEL is committed to the continuous improvement of its Child Safety policies and practices. They are regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all relevant Church, statutory and legislative requirements.

6.0 LEGISLATION AND REFERENCES

- [*Australian Privacy Principles 2014 \(Cth\)*](#)
- [*Child Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines*](#)
- [*Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic.\)*](#)
- [*Child Wellbeing and Safety \(Information Sharing\) Regulations 2018*](#)
- [*Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic.\)*](#)
- [*Crimes Act 1958 \(Vic.\)*](#)
- [*Crimes Amendment \(Protection of Children\) Act 2014 \(Vic.\)*](#)
- [*Department of Education and Training \(2018\), PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools*](#)
- [*Department of Education and Training \(2018\), PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending*](#)
- [*Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic.\)*](#)

- [Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 \(Vic.\)](#)
- [Family Violence Protection Act 2008 \(Vic.\)](#)
- [Family Violence Protection \(Information Sharing\) Regulations 2018](#)
- [Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework](#)
- [Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Contextualised Guidance](#)
- [Ministerial Order No. 1359: Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises \(made under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 Vic.\)](#)
- [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Wrongs Act 1958 \(Vic.\)](#)
- [Worker Screening Act 2020 \(Vic.\)](#)

7.0 RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- *DOSCEL Acceptable Use of Information and Communications Technology Policy*
- *DOSCEL Anti Bullying and Bullying Prevention Policy*
- *DOSCEL Child Safety Code of Conduct*
- *DOSCEL Child Safety and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes Policy*
- *DOSCEL Child Safety Record Keeping Policy*
- *DOSCEL Commitment Statement to Child Safety*
- *DOSCEL Complaints and Grievances Management Policy*
- *DOSCEL Cyber Safety Policy*
- *DOSCEL Duty of Care Policy*
- *DOSCEL Guide to Reporting Conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme*
- *DOSCEL Guidelines on the Employment of Staff*
- *DOSCEL Mandatory Reporting Policy*
- *DOSCEL Protection of Children – Anti-Grooming Policy*
- *DOSCEL Protection of Children – Failure to Disclose Policy*

- *DOSCEL Protection of Children – Failure to Protect Policy*
- *DOSCEL Recruitment and Engagement Policy*
- *DOSCEL Sexual Consent, Disclosure and School Obligations Guidance*

8.0 REVIEW

Implementation Date: October 2022

Review Date: October 2024