



Safeguarding Policy- Wodonga Catholic Parish

This Safeguarding Policy has been endorsed by the Parish Pastoral Council and was approved by Pantaleon Amaya on **November 11th 2022**.

[Our commitment to child and at-risk persons safety](#)

Our Parish is committed to child and at-risk persons safety. All children and at-risk persons who come to Wodonga Catholic Parish have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children and at-risk persons in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child and at-risk persons safe and friendly environment where children and at-risk persons feel safe and feel part of our parish community.

[Children's and at-risk persons rights to safety and participation](#)

Wodonga Catholic Parish staff and volunteers encourage children and at-risk persons to express their views. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all children and at-risk persons, who use our services, to **'have a say'** about things that are important to them. We encourage parents and carers to teach children and at-risk persons what they can do if they feel unsafe. We listen to and act on concerns children and at-risk persons, or their parents/carers, raise with us.

We value diversity and inclusiveness in our Parish. To achieve this, we welcome all and promote:

- **The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families**
- **The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families**
- **Participation of children with differing abilities together with their families.**
- **We encourage participation for at-risk persons**
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[Recruiting staff and volunteers](#)

Wodonga Catholic Parish applies the best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers. We require Working with Children Checks for relevant positions.

[Code of Conduct](#)

Wodonga Catholic Parish seeks to attract and retain the best staff and volunteers. We provide support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated.

We have developed a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the Code.

Breach of Policy

Where a person is found to have breached any of his or her obligations under this policy disciplinary action may be taken. This may include the termination of his or her employment. If there is a reasonable belief that a criminal act has been committed, the concerned party is advised to contact Victoria Police.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Our Parish takes all allegations seriously and has appointed **Sonia La Motte-Schubert and Jacinta Bartlett** to be the Child Safety Persons with specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers' parents or children. **You may contact Sonia on 0434-179-411 or the Parish Centre 6024-3366 Jacinta may be contacted on 0418-470-532**

Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS)

The Victorian Government has introduced the new RCS on 1st July 2017 to improve oversight of how organisations prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse. The RCS will not interfere with reporting obligations for Victoria Police or with Victorian Police investigations

The RCS applies to the following people associated with an organisation

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Office holders
- Ministers of religion
- Officers of a religious body

There are 5 types of “reportable conduct”

- Sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- Significant neglect of a child

When the “Head” of entity has been notified of an allegation they have a legal responsibility to report to the Commission for Children and young People (CCYP) within **3 business days** and follow up with an investigation. The “Head” then has a responsibility to report to the CCYP with the outcome of the investigation within 30 calendar days.

Risk management

We recognise the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur to at-risk persons and use this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children and at-risk persons

Relevant Legislation

- Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this act:

a) 'Failure to disclose' offence

A new offence came into effect on 27 October 2014 for adults who fail to disclose child sexual abuse to police. The new offence applies to all adults, not just professionals who work with children.

Any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child in Victoria must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse for not reporting.

For information about how the offence may affect the reporting obligations of funded organisations and Department of Health & Human Services staff, a fact sheet is available to download.

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>

b) 'Failure to protect' offence

A new 'failure to protect' offence came into effect on 1 July 2015 that applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so. A fact sheet is available to download from this page with more information about the offence.

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>

c) 'Grooming offence'

A grooming offence is now in effect to target individuals who communicate with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence>

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, at-risk persons, carers, staff and volunteers.

*This next review of this policy is due on **November 2023***

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large loop and a wavy line above it.

Fr Junjun Amaya PP