

ST. NICHOLAS SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
BLACKTOWN  
A PARISH AND CHURCH COMMUNITY  
OF THE METROPOLITANATE  
OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND  
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



СРПСКА ПРАВОСЛАВНА ЦРКВА СВ. НИКОЛА  
БЛЕКТАУН  
ПАРОХИЈА И ЦРКВЕНА ОПШТИНА  
МИТРОПОЛИЈЕ  
АУСТРАЛИЈСКО-НОВОЗЕЛАНДСКЕ  
СРПСКЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ЦРКВЕ

# Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church Community BLACKTOWN

## Child Safe Policy

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."*

**Mt. 19:14**

## **CONTENTS:**

### **1. POLICY**

1.1 Purpose

1.2 Scope and Audience

### **2. RESPONSIBILITIES**

2.1 Child Safe Officers

2.2 Employees and Volunteers

### **3. DEFINITIONS**

### **4. PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING DISCLOSURES, COMPLAINTS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE OR HARM**

4.1 Types Of Complaints (What To Report)

4.2 Making A Complaint (Who Can Report)

4.3 Reporting Obligations (Who To Report To)

4.4 Risk Management Strategies (How To Report)

4.5 Complaint Process (How To Report)

### **5. HOW WE PUBLICISE OUR CHILD SAFE REPORTING POLICY**

### **6. PUBLICATION AND REVIEW**

### **7. DOCUMENT VERSION CONTROL**

# 1. POLICY

## 1.1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect children and young people and vulnerable adults who receive Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church Community Blacktown (hereinafter called the “Church Community”) services. This is an interim document, used only in the Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church Community Blacktown, until the Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand of the Serbian Orthodox Church does not distribute its official Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct.

This documents aims to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection;

The **Church Community** believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practise in a way that protects them.

### Our Policy aims to:

- Implement the Child Safe Standards;
- Minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of positional power;
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly;
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe; and
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

## 1.2. SCOPE & AUDIENCE

The Child Safe Policy applies to all adults in the Church community including employees, volunteers, education providers, external providers, parents, carers, and other family members.

This policy applies to all environments associated with the Church Community including physical, online, on- and off- site church premises.

The Child Safe Policy applies to all activities that relate to children during Church services and all other activities run or sponsored by the Church Community or any other entities under its control.

# 2. RESPONSIBILTIES

## 2.1. CHILD SAFE OFFICERS

The Church Community Annual General Meeting will appoint two (male and female) Child Safety Officer responsible for annual updating and implementing this policy, and:

1. Ensuring the elected members of the Church Community Board, staff and volunteers comply with the requirements of this Policy;
2. Making members of their Church community board, staff and volunteers aware of the requirements of this Policy; and
3. Receive and manage any complaints under this Policy.

## Training

The Parish Priest will ensure

- All staff involved in work with children have participated in an initial child protection induction and an update during the past year;
- all staff involved in work with children are aware of the indicators of abuse and neglect of children and young people;
- all staff involved in work with children are aware of their obligation to advise a child safety officer of concerns about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people that arise during the course of their work;
- All staff involved in work with children are aware of their mandatory obligation to report suspected risk of significant harm and of the procedures for doing so.

## **Reporting and monitoring**

The Child Safe Officers will

- Use appropriate tools to inform decision-making, such as the online Mandatory Reporter Guide, professional judgement or specialist advice where there are concerns about risk of harm, maintain a workplace register of staff.
- Ensure participation in annual updates and inductions of new staff, or they must sight individual records of staff inductions. This applies to all staff in permanent, part-time, casual or volunteer roles within the Metropolitanate.
- Determine whether concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children or young people constitute risk of significant harm and, if they do, report these to the Department of Communities and Justice.
- Keep records of reports to Department of Communities and Justice as confirmation that mandatory reporting requirements have been met.
- Record the report engagement number, retain records and related papers in secure storage and keep these confidential. These records are to be provided to any successor if serious safety issues remain after a report has been made to, and accepted by, the Department of Communities and Justice, refer the matter to the departmental regional officer responsible for student services so the case can be taken up at a senior level within the Department of Communities and Justice seek advice from the relevant state or territory body where there is uncertainty about whether concerns amount to risk of significant harm.

## **Supporting children and young people**

The Child Safe Officers will

- Establish effective systems for child protection concerns to be identified in the course of the work of staff, reported and action taken, where appropriate, so vulnerable children and young people are supported.
- Take reasonable steps to coordinate decision-making and coordinate services to children and young people and their families with other local service providers, if required.

- Collaborate with other agencies for the care and protection of children and young people in ways that strengthen and support the family and in a manner that respects the functions and expertise of each service provider.
- Exchange relevant information to progress assessments, investigations and case management as permitted by law.
- Use best endeavours in responding to a request for a service from the Department of Communities and Justice provided that the request is consistent with departmental responsibilities and policies.

## **2.2. EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS**

All persons involved in work with children in the Metropolitante, regardless of their employment status (full time, part time, temporary, casual employes and volunteers, and those who join during the year) will

### **Training**

- Participate in a child protection induction and in annual updates.

### **Reporting**

- Adhere to mandatory procedures for conveying risk of harm concerns to the Child Safety Contact Person as the responsible person or to the Parish Priest/Dean, if the responsible person is the person that the complaint is against.
- Adhere to mandatory procedures for reporting risk of significant harm to the Department of Communities and Justice.
- Ensure, where they have reported any risk of significant harm concerns to the Child Safety Contact Person, has reported those concerns to the Department of Communities and Justice.
- Report directly to the Department of Communities and Justice if they believe the Child Safety Contact Person has not reported risk of significant harm concerns to the Department of Communities and Justice, and they still have concerns about risk of significant harm.
- Ensure that any relevant information that they become aware of, subsequent to a report being made to the Department of Communities and Justice, is provided to the Department of Communities and Justice. If the additional information forms concerns about risk of significant harm a report must be made to the Department of Communities and Justice.

### **Supporting children and young people**

- Cooperate with reasonable steps to coordinate service delivery and decision-making with other relevant service providers.
- Avoid undertaking any investigation of the circumstances giving rise to a report where risk of significant harm has been reported, without the express prior approval of the Child Safety Contact Person.

- Inform children and young people, or vulnerable adults, of their right to be protected from abuse and of avenues of support if they have concerns about abuse.

### **3. DEFINITIONS**

#### **Child**

A child is a person who is under 12 years old.

#### **Young Person**

A young person is a person who is 12 years old or older but not yet an adult.

#### **Adult**

An adult is a person who is at least 18 years old.

#### **Bishop**

The Bishop is the Spiritual Head of the Metropolitanate in all matters pertaining to teaching, liturgical-sacerdotal officiating and governance, elected and appointed by the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

#### **Dean**

A Dean is a member of the Clergy, appointed by the Bishop as a governance supervisor of a church territorial unit comprised of a designated number of Church Communities and Parishes, known as a Deanery.

#### **Parish Priest**

The Parish Priest is a priest appointed by the Bishop to a particular Parish as the Head of the community.

#### **Child Safe Officer**

Is an individual elected by a Church Community Annual General Meeting (AGM) to the Church Community Board, who has a current Working With Children (WWC) or Working with Vulnerable People Check (WWVP) in place and has received appropriate training.

#### **Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand**

The Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand of the Serbian Orthodox Church is a body of Orthodox Christians, canonically and hierarchically an integral part of the Autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church.

#### **Church Community**

A Church Community is a legal entity of a Parish tasked to assist in the administration and maintenance of local church property for the benefit of the Church and for its religious life.

#### **Church Community Board**

The Church Community elects the members of the Church Community Board at the AGM to serve as the executive body, pending the approval and the appointment of the Diocesan Executive Board and the Bishop.

#### **Harm/Incident**

Any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect or sexual abuse or exploitation

#### **Inappropriate behaviour**

Such behaviours may include, but are not limited to:

Yelling, abusive or offensive language, one-on-one or in front of others;

Any form of physical force, whether directed at people or objects (e.g., pushing people, thumping tables, inappropriate gestures);

Inappropriate comments about a person's faith, race, nationality, culture, language, appearance, personal life, or defamation/slander of people and/or their families-drinking to excess-inappropriate sexual comments/jokes, advances or physical contact-spending excessive amounts of time alone with children or in contact with children outside of work hours (either physical or via email/phone/social media);

The supply of alcohol, drugs and/or gifts to children; kissing or touching of a sexual nature consistent with grooming children-constant belittling or unreasonable criticism of others-inappropriate teasing and/or joking at the expense of others;

Distressing others;

Isolating people from the Church community or discouraging them from participating in community life;

Making unreasonable demands on Church workers;

Minimisation or non-acknowledgement of people's contributions-abusive oral or written communications or any other form of abusive, aggressive or offensive behaviour via any electronic medium (including social media).

## **4. PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING DISCLOSURES, COMPLAINTS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE OR HARM**

### **4.1. TYPES OF COMPLAINTS (WHAT TO REPORT)**

All complaints should be reported. This includes:

- Criminal conduct
- Risk of significant harm (ROSH)
- Disclosures of abuse
- Unacceptable behaviour around children and young people that breaches our Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Suspicion of harm or abuse to a child or young person reportable conduct.

### **4.2. MAKING A COMPLAINT (WHO CAN REPORT)**

Everyone in our organisation has the right to make a genuine complaint and won't be punished if they do. This includes children and young people, staff members and volunteers. Reporting abuse is mandatory and encouraged – it is never obstructed or prevented.

### **4.3. REPORTING OBLIGATIONS (WHO TO REPORT TO)**

#### **Reporting criminal conduct**

Contact **NSW Police on 131 444** for anything you consider could be a criminal offence. This includes sexual assault, physical assault, grooming offences, and producing, disseminating or possessing child abuse material.

Note: It is a criminal offence for adults not to report to police if [they know or believe that a child abuse offence has been committed](#). In addition, people employed in child-related work may be subject to a criminal offence if [they fail to reduce or remove the risk of a child becoming a victim of child abuse](#).

### **Reporting risk of significant harm**

Any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm (ROSH) can report to the **Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) on 132 111** (this is a 24-hour service).

Mandatory reporters must report to the [ChildStory Reporter Community](#) if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at ROSH.

### **Reporting allegations and convictions**

Relevant entities must notify the Office of the Children's Guardian of reportable allegations or convictions (that is, reportable conduct). This includes sexual offences, sexual misconduct, ill-treatment of a child, neglect of a child, an assault against a child, failure to protect a child or failure to report if a child has been harmed, as well as any behaviour that causes significant psychological harm to a child.

### **Reporting breaches of our Child Safe Code of Conduct**

All complaints must be reported to our child safe contact officers.

## **4.4. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES (HOW TO REPORT)**

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, by email or in writing.

To ensure the immediate and ongoing safety of the child:

- Establish the welfare and safety of the child and take steps to ensure the child is removed from the risk;
- Reassure them and remain calm;
- Listen carefully without interrupting;
- Don't ask leading questions or any additional questions once you've established there is a genuine concern (to not compromise future investigations by NSW Police or DCJ);
- Support them, reassuring the child that they have done the right thing, that you believe them and that the abuse is not their fault;
- Explain what will happen, including timeframes;
- Don't make promises you can't keep;
- Don't confront the alleged perpetrator;
- Complete an incident report form and record the details as soon as possible to ensure they are accurately captured.
- Advise the Parish Priest immediately of the disclosure. If the disclosure involves the Parish Priest, advise the Dean or the Bishop.
- Seek guidance if you are unsure about what to do.

It is the child safety officer's role to conduct a risk assessment after receiving an allegation, to ensure the safety of all people involved and maintain the integrity of the investigation.

## **4.5. COMPLAINT PROCESS (HOW TO REPORT)**

Once a complaint has been made, use this step-by-step process to make sure it's appropriately followed up:

- Steps taken to remove child from harm;

- Incident recorded;
- Reporting obligations met, if necessary;
- Investigation conducted, keeping everyone involved up to date with what's happening;
- Offering ongoing support to the child as needed;
- Reviewing the incident and updating the organisation's child safe policies, if necessary.

## 5. HOW WE PUBLICISE OUR CHILD SAFE REPORTING POLICY

To ensure everyone in our organisation is aware of our Child Safe Reporting Policy and their reporting obligations we:

- Hold information sessions about our child safe policies and how they apply to families, workers and children
- provide workers with training opportunities so they understand our processes for complaints and allegations

## 6. PUBLICATION AND REVIEW

The Church Community will document and make available its policies and procedures for ensuring the safety of children and young people by:

- Appointing two Child Safety Officers.
- Organising the training in regards to this Policy.
- Seeking an external review of this Policy to ensure it complies with the Child safe standards and reflects current best practices.
- Ensuring members of the Church Community know whom to contact if they have questions about our child safe policies and procedures.
- Ensuring that children and young people have a say in reviews through feedback.

## 7. DOCUMENT VERSION CONTROL

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