



Catholic Schools Child Safe Schools

Child Safe Standards: Guides for Catholic Schools An Introduction

Background

The Victorian government, in response to the [Betrayal of Trust](#) report (Parliament of Victoria, Family & Community Development Committee 2013), has introduced seven minimum Child Safe Standards into law to ensure that child safety is at the forefront of all organisations that work with children. [Ministerial Order No. 870](#) (State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training 2016) specifies the actions schools will be required to take against each standard to manage the risk of child abuse in schools. Schools are required to meet the standards by 1 August 2016.

Ministerial Order No. 870 is an essential resource for the work of schools in meeting the standards. The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) has recently released the [CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety: A safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in Catholic schools](#) (CECV 2016). This is also an important reference for meeting the requirements of the Ministerial Order.

The Child Safe Standards

- Standard 1:** Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
- Standard 2:** A child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety
- Standard 3:** A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- Standard 4:** Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Key Messages – Implementation of the Standards in Catholic Schools

- Catholic schools are places where the sacred dignity of each person is recognised, respected and fostered.
- Catholic schools take an integrated and collaborative approach to building and strengthening safe and respectful school communities.
- Catholic schools are places where young people feel safe and in reality are safe.
- Children and young people in Catholic schools are aware of their right to be safe, are empowered to have a voice about safety and know how to raise concerns.

These principles are inherent in the teachings and mission of Jesus Christ with the sanctity of each individual human being at the heart of the Gospel.

Principle of Inclusion

In implementing the minimum Child Safe Standards, schools must 'take account of the diversity of all children, including ... the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable' (State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training 2016). >>

Definitions*

School Governing Authority: Ministerial Order No. 870 refers frequently to the 'school governing authority'. In Catholic schools, this term could refer to the parish priest, the canonical administrators, an incorporated school board or a congregational order. The Ministerial Order also says that the governing authority may share or assign responsibility for discharging the requirements of the Order.

School Environment: A school environment is any virtual or physical place made available by the governing authority to the child during or outside school hours. It includes the school campus, online school environments and other locations such as school camps, excursion and sporting event venues.

Child: For the purposes of interpreting the *CECV Child Safe Standards: Guides for Catholic Schools*, the term 'child' is universally used to describe any child or young person who is enrolled as a student in a Catholic school.

**Definitions of all terms relevant to creating a child-safe environment are provided in Ministerial Order No. 870 documentation. A glossary of terms is also included in the publication, An overview of the Victorian child safe standards (Victorian Department of Health and Human Services 2015).*

The Resource Guides for Catholic Schools

A set of seven resource guides has been developed to capture the essential elements of each Child Safe Standard. These guides are designed to be read as a full set or to be read as stand-alone resources in recognition that some schools may require information on specific standards at a point in time rather than all.

Supporting Tools and Advice

The Catholic sector is developing advice and tools to support schools to implement the Child Safe Standards. Catholic education is also working collaboratively with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) and other education sectors to develop relevant cross-sectoral resources.

Getting Started

- Become familiar with the details contained in the Ministerial Order.
- Audit the school's level of readiness to comply with each standard. An online VRQA Readiness Tool (VRQA 2016) was made available for school completion in February. A PDF version is still available for schools to assess their readiness and gaps. An additional audit tool is also provided in the document *An overview of the Victorian child safe standards* (Victorian Department of Health and Human Services 2015).
- Develop a Plan of Action to ensure school compliance with the Ministerial Order by 1 August 2016.
- Allocate roles and responsibilities for child safety to staff members.
- Consider creating a child safety leadership position in your school.
- Involve students and parents in conversation about child safety strategies.
- Communicate the school's commitment to child safety via newsletters and public statements.
- Include child safety as a standing item on leadership team and staff meeting agendas.

Resources

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2014, *Industrial Relations Page*, accessed 16 May 2016 www.cecv.catholic.edu.au. For information about and resources from the CECV Industrial Relations Unit.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2013, *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse website*, accessed 16 May 2016 www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au. For information about the focus of the Royal Commission including its research agenda and reports.

State of Victoria, Commission for Children and Young People 2015, *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Environment Version 2*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.cryp.vic.gov.au/downloads/creating-a-childsafe-organisation-guide.pdf.



State of Victoria, Department of Justice 2016, *Betrayal of Trust implementation*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/betrayal+of+trust+implementation. For information about the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry response including Criminal Law reform.

State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services 2011, *Human Services*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.dhs.vic.gov.au/home. For information on the Victorian Child Safe Standards for all organisations working with children.

Truth, Justice and Healing Council 2016, *Melbourne Response*, Truth Justice and Healing Council, Canberra, accessed 16 May 2016 www.tjhcouncil.org.au/about-us/about-the-council.aspx. For information about the Catholic Church's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority (VRQA) 2016a, *Child Safe Standards*, State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training), Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Pages/safety.aspx. For compliance information and advice on implementation of Ministerial Order No. 870 by the regulatory authority responsible for the registration of Victorian schools.

VRQA 2016b, *VRQA Child Safe Standards Readiness Tool*, VRQA, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/documents/readiness.pdf.

References

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) 2016, *Commitment Statement to Child Safety: A safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in Catholic schools*, CECV, East Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 <http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=8589940208>.

Parliament of Victoria, Family & Community Development Committee 2013, *Betrayal of Trust. Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other non-government organisations*, Vol. 2 of 2, Parliament of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/fcdc/inquiries/57th/Child_Abuse_Inquiry/Report/Inquiry_into_Handling_of_Abuse_Volume_2_FINAL_web.pdf.

State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training 2016, *Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools Ministerial Order No. 870*, Education & Training Reform Act 2006, Gazette No. S2, accessed 16 May 2016 www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2016/GG2016S002.pdf.

State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) 2015, *An overview of the Victorian child safe standards*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc.

State of Victoria, DHHS 2011, *Child safe standards*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 16 May 2016 www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/child-safe-standards. †