

Saint Panteleimon Russian Orthodox Church

Child Safe Complaint Management Policy

Introduction The purpose of this *Child Safe Complaints Management Policy* is to set out the steps to be taken when a complaint is made about child safety in parish life. It should be read in conjunction with the parish *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety*.

Definitions Key terms in this Child Safe Code of Conduct are defined in the parish *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety*.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Our parish is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children.

For the children who belong to or visit our parish, we will provide a child safe environment. This means that we will act to ensure that children feel safe, are safe, and can participate appropriately, actively, and confidently in the divine services and in the broader life of our parish.

We have zero tolerance for any form of harm to or abuse of children. This includes emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

Our Orthodox Christian parish is one of Russian tradition that is nevertheless multi-cultural and brings together families and individuals of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and needs. We value both our unity and our diversity and are committed to words and actions that make this clear to our children and the children who visit us.

We have publicly available policies and procedures in place to support these commitments, and we will provide our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers with the necessary information, training, and other resources to ensure that they are met.

We take allegations and safety concerns seriously and will deal with them promptly and respectfully. They will be handled in accordance with our policies and procedures and, whenever necessary, New South Wales law.

We will engage sensitively with survivors of abuse and actively seek their input into our policies, procedures, and training. We will particularly draw on the experience of survivors of abuse in our own broader Russian Orthodox community.

All who belong to or visit our parish will be advised of our commitment to child safety and of their role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children while here.

Children’s participation Our Russian Orthodox tradition is rich and multi-faceted. In the life of our parish, we preserve rites and customs developed over many centuries and in significantly different cultural settings. We value these things, the living expression of our Orthodox Christian faith, as a precious inheritance that

we, in turn, hope to pass to our children and to their children.

To make this possible, we want our children to participate appropriately, actively, and confidently in the divine services and in the broader life of our parish. To this end, we will answer their questions, listen to their views, respect what they say, and provide them with opportunities to learn, read, sing, serve, and help.

When should a complaint be made?

A complaint should be made by any person who, in the course of parish life:

- witnesses unacceptable behaviour towards or around children
 - receives a disclosure of abuse
 - suspects harm or abuse towards a child
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How should a complaint be made?

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, by email, in writing, or online. Complaints should be directed to one of our two Child Safety Contact Persons.

Immediate actions

When a complaint is received, the following actions will be taken:

- if required, the child will be removed from immediate harm
- the person the complaint is made about will be removed from child-related work
- As required, contact will be made with the NSW Police, the NSW department of Communities and Justice, and the Office of the Children’s Guardian
- Investigation will be carried out in a timely, fair, and transparent manner (having regard to privacy obligations)
- Without compromising any investigation, the parties will be kept advised
- Support such as counselling will be offered to the child

A report of the complaint and the way in which it was resolved or escalated will be prepared and stored securely.

Reporting obligations I – Criminal Offences

NSW Police

Any situation involving children that could be considered a criminal offence should be reported to the NSW Police on **131 444**. This includes child sexual assault, physical assault, and grooming offences. Under NSW law, it is an offence for adults to not report to the police if they “know, believe or reasonably ought to know 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 risk of a child becoming a victim of child abuse.

Reporting obligations II – Risk of Significant Harm

NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice

Under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW), **any person** who has reasonable grounds for believing that a child is at risk of significant harm may report this.

A ‘Risk of Significant Harm’ report may be made by any person by calling the Communities and Justice **Child Protection Helpline** on **132 111**. This line is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW), **certain persons** who have reasonable grounds for believing that a child is at risk of significant harm must report this. These ‘mandatory reporters’ include persons in religious ministry and persons providing religious-based activities to children.

Mandatory reporters make a ‘Risk of Significant Harm’ report via the [ChildStory Reporter Community](#).

Reporting Obligations III - Reportable Conduct Scheme

NSW Government Office of the Children’s Guardian

Under the *Children’s Guardian Act 2019* (NSW), the Office of the Children’s Guardian must be notified of any reportable allegation or conviction against an employee of a religious body. The report must be made by the Head of Relevant Entity (HRE) within seven days of the religious body becoming aware of it.

Until such time as a Diocesan Reportable Conduct Policy is developed, the HRE under the Reportable Conduct Scheme is the parish rector.

For the purposes of this *Reportable Conduct Scheme*:

- *reportable conduct* means a sexual offence, sexual misconduct, ill-treatment of a child, neglect of a child, an assault against a child, an offence under sections 43B or 316A of the *Crimes Act 1900* (that is, failing to remove or prevent risk of child abuse, or concealing child abuse), or behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- a *reportable allegation* is an allegation that reportable conduct has been engaged in
- a *reportable conviction* means a court finding that there has been reportable conduct
- an *employee* is anyone who is required by the religious body to have a Working With Children Check.

Before making a report under this section, the HRE will consider the Office of the Children’s Guardian [Reportable Conduct Scheme Assessment Tools](#).

Under this section, reports will be made and investigations will be undertaken in accordance with [the resources provided by the Office of](#)

List of related parish policies and documents

The following parish documents are related to this Policy and Statement:

- Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
 - Child Safety Contact Person position description
 - Child Safe Code of Conduct
 - Child Safe discussion points for Parish Council meetings
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Monitoring and review

With the assistance of the Child Safety Contact Persons, this Complaint Management Policy will be formally reviewed by the Parish Council after each complaint, and at least every two years. To the extent possible, review of these Discussion Points will take into account comments and suggestions from children; parish clergy, office-bearers, volunteers, and members; the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian; the Diocesan authorities; and the parish insurer. Consideration will also be given to information prepared by organisations advocating for child safety.
