

## **Holy Ascension Orthodox Church Child Safe Discussion Points for Parish Committee Meetings**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of these Child Safe Discussion Points for Parish Committee Meetings is to give effect to the parish *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety* and thereby help our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers make Holy Ascension Orthodox Church a safe place for children. 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 church and Parish Committee are 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 church.

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 parish is 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, Victorian, and other applicable Australian law.

We will engage sensitively with survivors of abuse and actively seek their input into our policies, procedures, and training.

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 Orthodox Christian 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.

### **The Purpose of these Discussion Points**

Our *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety* stipulates that child safety will be a standing agenda item at every meeting of the Parish Committee and every Annual General Meeting. These points have been developed to guide discussion at those meetings. They are not exhaustive. The Discussion Points reflect the 11 *Child Safe Standards* that developed out of the work of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, now enshrined in Victorian law.

### **The Child Safe Standards**

The 11 Child Safe Standards are:

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
2. Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture
3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
4. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
6. People working with children are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
7. Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child-focused
8. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through ongoing education and training
9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

## **Discussion Points**

### **Standard 1: Culturally Safe Environment for Aboriginal Children & Young People**

Have we established a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued?

Are we doing all that we can to keep Aboriginal children and young people safe in our parish?

Do they feel welcome and included?

If there are any gaps, what will we do?

### **Standard 2: Leadership, Governance & Culture**

Are we doing all that we can to keep children safe in our parish?

Who is taking responsibility for child safety in our parish?

If there are any gaps, what will we do?

### **Standard 3: Child Participation**

Do children have a voice in our parish?

Are we doing enough to show our children that they are valued?

How are we involving and including children in the life of the parish?

### **Standard 4: Families Informed & Involved**

Are we letting our parishioners and friends know what we are doing?

How are we doing this? Is it effective?

### **Standard 5: Equity & Diversity**

Does everyone feel welcome and included?

Are there appropriate opportunities for all who wish to be involved?

### **Standard 6: Workers Suitable & Supported**

Are all necessary Working With Children Checks up to date?

How are our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers performing in their work with children?

What additional support can we provide?

### **Standard 7: Child-focused Processes**

Are our complaint-handling processes understood?

Are they working?

Have complaints been acted upon?

What could be done to improve the process for all involved?

### **Standard 8: Education & Training**

Has everyone done their training?

Are there new resources or courses available that could help?

Do we need to allocate additional resources?

### **Standard 9: Safe Environments**

Are our risk assessments up to date?

Have all risk treatment actions been undertaken?

Have any new risks arisen?

### **Standard 10: Review & Ongoing Improvement**

How are we staying up to date with child safety?

Are we helping the parish become a safer place or are we just going through the motions?

### **Standard 11: Policies & Procedures**

Are our policies and procedures up to date?

Are they working?

Are they readily available and easy to understand?

Have there been breaches?

If so, how have we handled them?

When is review due, and who will take the lead on that?

### **Use of the Discussion Points**

To ensure comprehensive consideration of child safety issues by the Parish Committee, the Discussion Points will be worked through in order at each Parish Committee meeting. At parish Annual General Meetings, these points will be used as a general guide to discussion.

### **List of Related Documents**

The following parish documents are related to this Code of Conduct:

- Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- Child Safety Contact Person Role Description
- Child Safe Complaints Management Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct

### **Monitoring and Review**

With the assistance of the Child Safety Contact Persons, these Discussion Points will be formally reviewed by the Parish Committee 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 Victorian Commission for Children and Young People; the Diocesan authorities; and the parish insurer. We will particularly endeavour to draw on the experience of survivors of abuse in our own Orthodox Christian community here in Australia. Consideration will also be given to information prepared by organisations advocating for child safety.