

THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND DIOCESE
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

CHILD-SAFE POLICY

*All children and young people have the right to
feel safe and to be safe all of the time.*

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Contents

<u>1. Policy</u>	4
<u>1.1 Scope</u>	4
<u>1.2 Purpose</u>	4
<u>1.3 Definitions</u>	4
<u>1.4 Responsibilities</u>	7
<u>1.5 Child Safe Standards and their Implementation</u>	7
<u>1.6 Compliance with policy</u>	12
<u>2. Procedure for Handling Disclosures, Complaints of Inappropriate Behaviour or Suspicions of Abuse or Harm</u>	13
<u>2.1 Receiving a complaint</u>	13
<u>2.2 Documenting a disclosure of harm and complaints of inappropriate behaviour</u>	13
<u>2.3 Immediate risk of serious harm</u>	13
<u>2.4 Assessing risk</u>	14
<u>2.5 Reporting to Child Protection Helpline(NSW)/Department of Health and Human Services (VIC)a disclosure</u>	14
<u>2.6 Investigation undertaken by the Diocese (where the matter has not been reported to Police) a disclosure</u>	14
<u>2.7 Reporting to relevant authority a disclosure</u>	14
<u>3. Appendices</u>	15
<u>4. Document Version Control</u>	18
<u>5. Change History</u>	18

1. Policy

1.1 Scope

The Diocese is committed to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children during their participation in Church services and all other activities run or sponsored by Church entities under its control.

This policy applies to all members of the Church community in the Diocese and addresses child safe standards which create, maintain and improve child safe practices across the Diocese and is to be applied in accordance with the beliefs of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

1.2 Purpose

This Policy has been developed by the Diocese to:

- Clearly demonstrate commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- Inform all members of the Church community in the Diocese of their obligations to act ethically towards children and their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children
- Give guidance on the process and procedures to ensure children's safety and wellbeing across all areas of the Diocese

1.3 Definitions

Acronym / Term	Definition
Diocese	The Australian and New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.
Diocesan Office	The office of The Australian and New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.
Child-friendly	A trusting environment that values, respects and welcomes children and young people. This means children and young people feel confident to raise any problem or concern and know they will be listened to.
Children	Refers to children and young people under the age of 18.
Children with vulnerabilities	Children who are at greater than normal risk of abuse. They may be receiving or may need community care services because of a disability, age or illness, and who may be unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.
Child-safe	Taking active measures to keep children and young people safe from physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

Child Safety Contact Person	An individual appointed by the rector of a church entity who is a trusted church community member who has a demonstrated rapport with children and young people and who has a current Working With Children (WWC) or Working with Vulnerable People Check (WWVP) in place and has received appropriate training.
Church	ANZ Diocese of ROCOR.
Church community	A parish, mission or monastic community of the ANZ Diocese, which may include which may include clergy, monastics, Diocesan employees, Diocesan officials, Church workers, Parish officials, Parish School workers, Volunteers, Parishioners and Visitors of church entities.
Church entities	Parishes, monasteries and missions within the Diocese.
Church workers	Individuals elected or appointed by parishes to assigned duties either with or without payment, including parish officials, Diocesan employees and Diocesan officials.
Clergy	Bishops, priests, deacons, sub-deacons, readers.
Dean	A senior cleric appointed by the Ruling Bishop to have administrative oversight of all clergy in his Deanery.
Diocesan employees	Employees working for the Diocese.
Diocesan officials	Individuals elected or appointed to Diocesan positions within the Diocesan Council.
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 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)

Monastics	Monks, nuns and novices.
Parish Officials	Individuals elected to Parish Councils, Sisterhood Councils, and Auditing Committees.
Parishioners	Individuals who attend divine services at an ANZ Diocesan church, or other gatherings, including social occasions, associated with the life of the parish.
Rector	Priest, abbot or abbess appointed by the Ruling Bishop to oversee a Parish, Monastery, Convent or Mission.
Reportable Allegation	An allegation that an employee/volunteer has engaged in conduct that may be Reportable Conduct.
Reportable Conduct	Includes a sexual offence, sexual misconduct, ill-treatment of a child, neglect of a child, an assault against a child, a failure to protect or a failure to report under the Crimes Act and behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.
ROCOR	Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.
Ruling Bishop	Bishop or Archbishop appointed by the Synod of Bishops of ROCOR with responsibility for all the parishes and church communities within the Diocese and authority over all the orders of clergy in the Diocese.
Visitors	Newcomers to the church community or parishioners from other parishes
Volunteers	Individuals undertaking voluntary duties on a regular basis within parishes or parish schools without payment.

1.4 Responsibilities

The **Diocesan Council** is responsible for updating and implementing this policy across the Diocese.

All Rectors are responsible for:

- Ensuring their church entity complies with the requirements of this Policy and making members of their church entity aware of the requirements of this Policy.

- Ensuring their church entity has two Child Safety Contact Persons (one male and one female) to receive and manage any complaints under this Policy.

The **Ruling Bishop and Deans** are responsible for:

- Ensuring all clergy and monastics comply with the requirements of this Policy.

1.5 Child Safe Standards and their Implementation

Standard 1 : Child safety is embedded in our leadership, governance and culture

1.5.1 All children have the right to feel safe and to be safe all of the time. Our goal is for the Diocese and every Church entity to function in an environment of "Zero Harm". To this end we believe that:

- a. All categories of harm can be prevented.
- b. The Diocesan Council and every church entity is accountable for the safety of children and young people in their respective environments.

We have a zero tolerance of any behaviour that may threaten the safety of children.

1.5.2 The Diocese requires all clergy and monastics to:

- Read, understand and sign the **Code of Conduct**.
- Possess a current **Working With Children Check (WWCC) or Working with Vulnerable People Check (WWVP)** in the state or territory that they work in.
- Undergo necessary screening and training each year as stipulated by the Diocese Office to stay up to date with any changes in procedures to ensure the safety of children in all activities that occur within the Diocese.

Church workers who engage in child related work where they are providing services for children; where the work normally involves being face to face with children and where contact with children is more than incidental to the work must also comply with the above three requirements.

1.5.3 The Diocese has agreed risk management strategies which focus on preventing identifying and mitigating risks to children for high risk activities and special events. All Church entities are required to implement the following strategies when proposing to undertake high-risk activities and special events:

- The **Child and Young People Risk Management Strategy**
- **Risk Management Plan for High-Risk Activity**

1.5.4 The Diocese encourages a culture of reporting all allegations of harm and notes that certain states and territories have reportable conduct schemes requiring a notification to the relevant authority in the State/Territory of a reportable allegation. All Church entities are required to implement the Procedures attached to this Policy.

1.5.5 To support compliance with this commitment all Church entities are required to report annually to the Office of the Diocese (**Child Safe Child Friendly Church/Parish Report**) on:

- all individuals identified as requiring a working with children check
- individuals who have undertaken training in relation to the requirements of this Policy
- activities undertaken on the church entity property involving children
- activities undertaken away from the church entity property involving children
- complaints received relating to children
- any recommended changes to parish practices or procedures

Standard 2 : Children and young people participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

1.5.6 The Diocese implements strategies to enable children and young people to participate in decision-making and have their voices heard. This may include:

- Information sessions for children during organised activities by the Diocese or individual church entities where children can make suggestions or raise questions and concerns.
- Seeking the views of children and young people where activities may impact them (e.g, Youth events) and encouraging their participation in safety and wellbeing issues.

Standard 3 : Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

1.5.7 The Diocese acknowledges that families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child and participate in decisions affecting their child. Communication and participation strategies for engaging with and responding to the diverse needs of families and communities are demonstrated by:

- Requiring all church entities to have a copy of this Policy available on site and making this accessible on the Diocese website.
- Encouraging church entities to raise awareness of the approach of the Diocese to child safety and wellbeing.
- Ensuring appropriate parental consents are received by church entities for relevant church activities.

Standard 4 : Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice

1.5.8 The Diocese is committed to an environment where children's diverse circumstances and needs are recognised and all children feel safe, welcome and included. This is evidenced by:

- Programs and activities organised by the Diocese or individual church entities that cater for the diverse needs of children including those children with vulnerabilities.
- Ensuring risk management strategies identify factors that may increase the risk of abuse for children with vulnerabilities and have management actions in place to mitigate these risks.

- Communicating the contact details of Child Safety Contact People (one male and one female) of each church entity.

The Diocese commitment to equity and diversity must be read and implemented to ensure it is consistent with and in conformity to the Canons, Regulations, and teachings of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

Standard 5 : People working with children are suitable and supported

1.5.9 The Diocese is committed to keeping children safe and ensuring that all clergy, monastics, Diocesan employees; Diocesan officials, Church workers and volunteers have relevant probity checks and are aware of their child safety responsibilities, including reporting obligations. This is demonstrated by:

- Ensuring that all clergy, monastics, Diocesan employees, Diocesan officials, Church workers and volunteers read, understand and sign the Code of Conduct.
- Ensuring all clergy, monastics, church workers and volunteers in leadership and child-related work have a verified WWCC or WWVP in the State/Territory that they are working within – individuals who do not have a current WWCC or WWVP cannot work in the appointed role until this clearance is obtained.
- Ensuring each church entity monitors their WWCC or WWVP checks throughout the year and advise any individuals when they need to renew their application.
- Ensuring individuals and/or parishes update the Diocese regarding information that may impact an individual's ability to hold a WWCC or WWVP.
- Ensuring that the Diocese Office monitors all clergy and monastic WWCC or WWVP checks and advise clergy and monastics when WWCC or WWVP checks need to be renewed.
- Ensuring that all clergy and monastics have a National Police Check carried out every 3 years which is documented and monitored by the Diocesan Office.

Standard 6 : Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse (or other concerns) are child-focused

1.5.10 The Diocese is committed to ensuring that all complaints of child abuse or other inappropriate behaviour are taken seriously and responded to promptly. This is demonstrated by:

- Ensuring all complaints are reported including:
 - Disclosure of harm
 - Inappropriate behaviour around children
- Suspicion of abuse or harm to a child
- Ensuring the Procedure within this Policy is child focused and includes information on how to make a complaint, respond to a complaint, investigate a complaint and provide support and assistance for those making a complaint.

- Clearly articulating in the Code of Conduct what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- Ensuring accurate records are held at church entities of any complaints made.
- Ensuring reports about child safety are made to government agencies in accordance with legislative obligations.
- Ensuring that Child Safety Contact People for each church entity are trained in the Procedure relating to this Policy which is the responsibility of the Diocese Office.

Standard 7 : The church community is equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe, through continual education and training.

1.5.11 The Diocese will promote child safety and wellbeing by ensuring that all clergy, monastics, Diocesan employees and Church workers are provided with relevant knowledge, skills and confidence to prevent and identify abuse and to respond to complaints by:

- Receiving a copy of this Policy and the ANZ Diocese of ROCOR Code of Conduct.
- Undertaking periodic training including, where appropriate, engaging external experts to deliver appropriate training.
- Providing awareness sessions on the child safe practices and strategies within the Diocese.
- Ensuring that when members of the church community or volunteers disclose harm or risk to children and young people, that they have the necessary support from church leaders and appointed Child Safety Officers.

Standard 8 : Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse or other kinds of harm to occur.

1.5.12 The Diocese promotes child safety and wellbeing in physical and online environments by:

- Outlining expected behaviour of all clergy, monastics, Diocesan employees and Church workers in the Code of Conduct.
- Providing for appropriate supervision (Child Safety Officers) of adults working with children.
- Providing information to children about physical and online safety and appropriate conduct in these spaces through awareness sessions during organised activities.
- Ensuring risk management plans for organised activities identify risks to child safety in physical and online environments and outline how these will be managed.
- Ensuring that any opportunities to harm children are reduced or removed.

Standard 9 : Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.

1.5.13 The Diocese is committed to embedding the Child Safe Standards and ensuring that there are systems in place to monitor and evaluate the implementation of these Standards. This is demonstrated by:

- Ensuring that there is a biannual review of this Policy and associated policies.
- Ensuring the Diocesan Office documents the review of these policies.
- Ensuring Minutes of the Diocesan Council reflect recommendations regarding suggested improvements to child safe practices and implementation of these improvements.

Standard 10 : Policies and procedures document how the Diocese is child safe.

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

- Placing this Policy and all associated documents on the Diocese website.
- Seeking an external review of this Policy by an external expert every 2-3 years to ensure it complies with the 10 child safe standards and reflects current best practices.
- Encouraging church entities to make this Policy accessible.
- Ensuring members of the church community know who to contact if they have questions about our child safe policies and procedures.

1.6 Compliance with policy

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in line with the ANZ Diocese of ROCOR Code of Conduct.

References

Diocese documents related to this Policy

- Code of Conduct
- Child and Young People Risk Management Strategy
- Risk Management Plan for High-Risk Activity
- Child Safe Child Friendly Church/Parish Report

2. Procedure for handling allegations of inappropriate behaviour or reportable conduct allegations

These procedures are to be used by the Child Safety Contact Person within the church entity, the Rector or Dean when they receive an allegation from a child or any church member regarding the above.

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

2.1 Receiving a complaint

- Remain calm and find a private place/time to talk with the child or church member.
- Give your complete attention and do not rush.
- Explain why you can't keep it a secret – explain that you will need to tell someone who can help keep the child safe.
- Take steps to understand the nature of the allegation including whether it is a reportable allegation and whether it is an allegation of a criminal offence.
- If you need to ask questions to clarify the nature of the concern, you should use open ended questions – questions that cannot be answered yes or no.
- Complete an incident report form (**Appendix 1**) and record the details as soon as possible to ensure they are accurately captured. Include:
 - Time, date and place of disclosure.
 - 'word for word' what happened and what was said, including anything you said and any actions that have been taken.
 - Date of reports and signature.
 - Advise the rector immediately of the disclosure. If the disclosure involves the rector, advise the Dean or the Ruling Bishop.

2.2 Immediate risk of serious harm

- If required, remove the child from immediate harm by taking steps to cease and prevent further contact between the person and the child who is the alleged victim of reportable conduct or any other children.
- Advise the rector immediately of the disclosure. If the disclosure involves the rector, advise the Dean or the Ruling Bishop.

2.3 Assessing risk

- The Diocese will undertake an initial assessment of the reported incident to identify and plan to avoid or minimise the risks to:
 - The child(ren) who are the subject of the allegation
 - Other children with whom the employee may have contact
 - The employee against whom the allegation has been made
 - The Diocese
 - Other parties to the alleged incident (such as witnesses or reporters), and
 - The proper investigation of the allegation

- The Diocese will assess the potential risk to the investigation or any individual's health and safety before informing an individual about a reportable allegation against them.
- The Diocese will not inform an individual about the reportable allegation if doing so would compromise the investigation or put a person's health or safety at serious risk.

2.4 Reporting to Police

- If the reportable allegation requires a report to the Police (if it is a criminal offence), the Diocese (on behalf of the Ruling Bishop) will take this step after addressing any immediate risk to children or the investigation.
- After reporting to Police, the Diocese will not take any investigative action in response to the reportable allegation without confirming whether the Police will undertake inquiries or an investigation.
- If Police are conducting inquiries, the Diocese will consult with the police officer in charge about any action the Diocese proposes to take, including risk management action. This is to ensure that any police investigation is not compromised.
- Generally, when police are investigating the allegation, the Diocese will not take any action to alert the relevant person – directly or indirectly – to the allegation until clearance to do so is provided by Police.

2.5 Reporting to the relevant body

- If the allegation raises concerns that a child is at risk of significant harm/in need of protection the Rector should notify the Diocesan Office and a report to the relevant body within the State/Territory.

2.6 Investigation undertaken by the Diocese (where the matter has not been reported to Police)

- When considering the scope of an investigation into a reportable allegation, the Diocese will determine whether an 'investigation' includes any preliminary or other inquiry into, or examination of, the matter.
- The Diocese may elect to engage an external investigator if required and will apply the available guidance from the relevant state or territory body in conducting and finalising the investigation, including ensuring that the information gathering process is procedurally fair and the decision-making process is transparent, accountable and supported by the evidence

2.7 Reporting to relevant authority

- Certain states and territories have reportable conduct schemes in place which require reporting to relevant bodies – currently, these are the ACT, NSW and Victoria. In January 2024, this will also include Tasmania and WA.
- The Diocesan Office is responsible for ensuring that it holds accurate and up to date information on reportable conduct schemes across Australia and New Zealand.
- It is the responsibility of each Dean to be aware of the reportable conduct scheme obligations in place across the states and territories for which they have responsibility.
- Reportable conduct schemes require notification of reportable allegations to relevant authorities such as the (Office of the Children's Guardian (NSW)/ Commission for Children and Young People (VIC) within certain timeframes when these are received and the provision of a final report following an investigation.

3. Appendices

Appendix 1: Complaint/Incident Record Form in Relation to Children

This form should be used to record a suspicion, allegation or disclosure of reportable conduct or a complaint of inappropriate behavior and/or misconduct.

Parish [mission/community/chapel]: _____ Incident Date: _____

Your name and position in the Parish [mission/community/chapel]: _____

Name of child or young person involved: _____

Name of person making the complaint: _____

Name of the person who the complaint is made against: _____

Other persons involved: _____

Nature of the complaint/concern – include: times, date, location and what happened (this can include observations of the child's behavior).

Details of any injuries and if the child received medical attention.

Accurately record what the child said when describing what happened.

Details of anyone who witnessed what happened.

Does this complaint indicate an allegation of reportable conduct, i.e. physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect? Yes/No If yes, provide details of your report to the **appropriate reporting organisation in your state.**

Person spoken to: _____ Reference no: _____ Date: _____

If you become concerned that a child or young person known to you is being abused or neglected, or is likely to be abused or neglected, you should always report.

Immediate action taken:

If no action taken – reason:

If complaint relates to inappropriate behavior, details of internal discipline process followed: (Make note of any support or counselling that was offered to the child/person against whom the complaint was made).

Provide details for discipline process:

Any follow-up required? Yes / No –reason:

Reported By _____

Reported To _____

Copy sent to Diocese _____ Yes/No Date _____ Time _____

Name _____ Contact Phone _____

Signature _____ Date _____

To be held confidentially in the church files and accessed only by the Parish Rector, Child Safety Officer or equivalent.

4. Document Version Control

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5. Change History

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