



# Student protection policy

## Rationale

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working within Toowoomba Catholic Schools and upholds the duties set out in relevant state legislation and principles of the UN Charter of the Rights of the Child. The welfare and best interests of students are paramount and all students attending Catholic schools in the Diocese of Toowoomba have a right to protection from harm.

This policy expresses the commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment, the prevention of harm to students and appropriate responses when a staff member or volunteer reasonably suspects harm or risk of harm to students. All staff members and volunteers in schools are required to support students who have been harmed, or are at risk of harm and, where appropriate and permitted by law, work in partnership with other statutory agencies.

Schools have additional responsibilities for the care and wellbeing of children and young people and in providing child-safe environments. These are

- a duty of care to students
- a responsibility as mandatory reporters
- the provision of curriculum relevant to child protection for all students and
- a code of conduct that clearly sets out the standards of behaviour that are expected of all staff and volunteers.

## Legislative references

- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017 (Qld)
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld)
- Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)
- Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017 (Qld)
- Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 (Qld)
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)
- Evidence Act 1977 (Qld)
- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
- Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld)

## Definitions

The following definitions are used in this policy.

- A **child** is a person under 18 years of age.
- **Harm**, to a child, as defined in section 9 of the *Child Protection Act 1999* is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused.

Harm can be caused by

- physical, psychological or emotional abuse or
- neglect or
- sexual abuse or exploitation.

Harm can be caused by

- a single act, omission or
- circumstance or
- a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

- A student is any person enrolled as such within Toowoomba Catholic schools. This includes a 'relevant person' for the purposes of mandatory reporting under sections 366 and 366A of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*. A 'relevant person' is
  - a student under 18 years attending the school;
  - a kindergarten age child registered in a kindergarten learning program at the school; or
  - a person with a disability who -
    - under section 420(2), is being provided with special education at the school; and
    - is not enrolled in the preparatory year at the school.
- A **staff member** is any person who is employed by Toowoomba Catholic Schools on a casual, fixed term, or continuing basis, pursuant to a contract of employment or appointed to a role at the school pursuant to an agreement with a religious order.
- A **volunteer** is a person who is engaged by the school not for financial reward but who may receive reimbursement for out of pocket expenses.

## Values

The Toowoomba Catholic Schools values of human dignity, unlimited potential and a flourishing life for all are at the core of the work of schools. Children and young people have a fundamental right to protection from all forms of abuse and neglect. These values place an obligation on all staff and volunteers to act decisively and responsibly to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people is safeguarded at all times.

## Policy statement

Toowoomba Catholic Schools supports the rights of children and young people to learn and flourish within a safe, nurturing environment and is committed to developing a strong culture of safety and support.

## Consequences

- The Toowoomba Catholic Schools student protection policy, processes and guidelines will be implemented, reviewed and updated in accordance with legislative requirements.
- The safety and wellbeing of all students will be promoted in different ways throughout the year including the provision of a relevant curriculum program.
- All staff members will complete annual training in the Toowoomba Catholic Schools student protection policy, processes and guidelines in relation to reporting suspicions of sexual abuse, likely sexual abuse, harm, or inappropriate behaviour of staff members and volunteers, to students.
- All volunteer induction processes will include information in relation to responding appropriately to student protection concerns.
- Schools will work in partnership with families to ensure consistency of message and expectations.
- Children and young people will be appropriately included in the design and development of child safety processes and the delivery of professional development to staff.
- Student protection processes will be transparent and accountable and the privacy and confidentiality of information respected.



Most Reverend Robert McGuckin | Bishop of Toowoomba