

# Child Safe Policy

## 1. Purpose

This policy sets out the key elements of Cornish College's approach to ensuring child safety and seeks to provide an overarching set of principles that guide the development of College policies and procedures that aim to protect children from abuse.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Cornish College community.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

## 3. Key responsibilities

Position/Roles	Responsibilities
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To review and endorse the Child Safe Policy.</li><li>Ensure a culture of child safety is embedded into all aspects of the College.</li></ul>
Executive Leadership Team (ELT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To develop, maintain and approve the Child Safe Policy.</li><li>Develop and implement strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety.</li><li>Allocate roles and responsibilities for child safety within the College.</li></ul>
All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To comply with the Child Safe Policy.</li></ul>

## 4. KEY ELEMENTS OF THE POLICY

### 4.1 Commitment to child safety

Cornish College is committed to child safety. All children at the College should feel safe, happy and empowered.

The College has a zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns are treated consistently and very seriously. This reflects the legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when concern is raised about a child's safety.

The College is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early and removing or reducing these risks. Recruitment processes seek to ensure that the most suitable people are selected to work and volunteer with children, and that unsuitable people are screened out. Regular training occurs to inform staff and volunteers of child abuse risks.

All children are supported and respected at Cornish College, as well as our staff and volunteers. The College is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Specific policies, procedures and training exists to support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to support Cornish College's commitment to child safety.

#### **4.2 Students**

This policy is intended to empower children as vital and active participants of Cornish College. Where appropriate, students are involved when decisions are made about matters that directly affect them. Student views are listened to and treated with respect.

Diversity and tolerance are promoted at Cornish College. People from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

#### **4.3 Staff and volunteers**

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in the College community.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

#### **4.4 Training and supervision**

Training and education is important to reinforce the understanding that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Cornish College seeks to create a culture where all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. Staff and volunteers are trained to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

Staff and volunteers are also supported through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers are supervised regularly to ensure they understand the College's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (refer to Code of Conduct). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

#### **4.5 Recruitment**

All reasonable steps are taken to employ skilled people to work with children. Selection criteria and advertisements are developed to clearly demonstrate the College's commitment to child safety and an awareness of social and legislative responsibilities. The College understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers, ethical as well as legislative obligations exist.

Applications are encouraged from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check (see [Working with Children Check](#) website).

Reference checks and police record checks are carried out to ensure that the right people are recruited. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. Some record is retained (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected the decision making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

#### **4.6 Fair procedures for personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of children is the College's primary concern. The College also seeks to be fair and just to personnel. The decisions made when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

All allegations of abuse and safety concerns are recorded using the College's incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, updates are provided to children and families on progress and any actions the College takes.

#### **4.7 Privacy**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Cornish College has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

## 4.8 Legislative responsibilities

Cornish College has a legal obligation to protect children, including:

**Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.<sup>1</sup>

**Failure to protect:** People of authority at the College commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.<sup>2</sup>

Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.<sup>3</sup>

## 4.9 Risk Management

In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, Cornish College proactively manages the risk of abuse to our children.

The College has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

### 4.10 Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. Families and children have the opportunity to contribute to the policy. Where possible the College will do its best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

### 4.11 Allegations, concerns and complaints

Cornish College takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

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<sup>1</sup> A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed. See [Department of Justice and Regulation website](#)

<sup>2</sup> Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](#)

<sup>3</sup> Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. See [how to make a report to child protection](#) .

The College works to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. The College community has a shared responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if there is a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see Mandatory Reporting Policy).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

## **5. REFERENCES**

- Code of Conduct – SWPOL -002
- Mandatory Reporting Policy - SWPOL - 070
- Failure to Disclose Policy SWPOL - 071
- Risk Management Policy & Framework SGPOL - 030
- Privacy Policy – POL - 010