



## Rationale

The Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) Board is committed to:

- zero tolerance of child abuse;
- listening to and empowering children and young people; and
- keeping children and young people safe.

The DOBCEL Board maintains governance oversight of DOBCEL Schools.

The DOBCEL Board has particular responsibilities for the safeguarding of children and young people as required by the [Ministerial Order 1359 Implementing the Child Standards- Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises](#).

This places accountability for managing the risk of child safety and abuse on the DOBCEL Board. Consistent with Ministerial Order 1359, the DOBCEL Board, requires schools governed by DOBCEL to have in place appropriate arrangements to regulate the conduct and decisions of school staff for the benefit of all students.

These arrangements include implementing and complying with the DOBCEL Child Safe Policies and having clear and comprehensive procedures and reporting mechanisms. The objective is for the DOBCEL Board and the wider school community to be confident in the school's capacity to make and implement appropriate decisions, with child safety as an overriding principle.

DOBCEL will take account of the diverse needs of children, paying particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. DOBCEL will also pay particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students and LGBTIQ+ students.

## Policy Statement

The DOBCEL Board is responsible for the development of strategies to deliver appropriate education about:

- Children and young person safety and abuse awareness and prevention
- Standards of behaviour for students attending DOBCEL Schools
- Healthy and respectful relationships, including sexuality

The DOBCEL Board promotes the [Ministerial Order 1359 Implementing the Child Standards- Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises](#) and requires that DOBCEL schools ensure these Standards are promoted and presented in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand and user-friendly to children and young people, in particular, the complaints processes.

The DOBCEL Board requires that DOBCEL schools take steps to understand the diverse circumstances and needs of children and young people who engage or may engage with them.

The DOBCEL Board requires DOBCEL schools to provide staff and volunteers with information and guidance:

- about children and young people's diverse circumstances, how to identify factors that can increase vulnerability to harm and how to promote equity and safety for all children and young people
- on how to take action to support and respond to children and young people who are experiencing vulnerability, including making inquiries and responding where there are signs of increased vulnerability
- on how to take action to uphold equity for all children and young people, promote children's safety and prevent child abuse and harm

The DOBCEL Board requires that school leaders set clear expectations around achieving equity and respect for diversity.

The DOBCEL Board requires DOBCEL schools to ensure that all children are reasonably supported to participate in all school activities.

Students in DOBCEL Schools will take an active part in establishing and embedding appropriate standards of behaviour.

Students will be encouraged to make positive changes within the school environment and these strategies will be documented in schools.

Children and young people have unique insights into their own lives, their needs and the world around them. They have a right to be heard and have their concerns and ideas taken seriously, particularly on matters that affect them – including how to keep them safe.

In DOBCEL Schools, enabling and promoting the empowerment and participation of children and young people includes:

- providing students with access to sexual abuse prevention programmes and to relevant related information in a developmentally and age-appropriate way
- supporting children and young people to understand their rights, contributing to child safety planning and raising concerns
- promoting and encouraging children and young people's participation in decision-making
- seeking children and young people's views about what makes them feel safe and unsafe
- valuing and respecting children and young people's opinions
- establishing an environment of trust and inclusion that enables children to ask questions and speak up if they are worried or feel unsafe
- promoting children's participation provides valuable information about their experience
- facilitating means that children and young people are empowered to develop child-safe policies that are understandable and owned by them

DOBCEL Schools will initiate student engagement in the school review processes by means such as focus groups or surveys about various child safety issues to determine the level of understanding and awareness in school communities.

## Definitions

**Cultural safety:** Cultural safety is about creating an environment that is safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This means there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity and experience. Cultural safety is about:

- Shared respect, shared meaning, and shared knowledge
- The experience of learning together with dignity and truly listening
- Strategic and institutional reform to remove barriers to the optimal health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes addressing unconscious bias, racism and discrimination, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination
- Individuals, organisations and systems ensuring their cultural values do not negatively impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including addressing the potential for unconscious bias, racism and discrimination
- Individuals, organisations and systems ensuring self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes sharing power (decision-making and governance) and resources with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is especially relevant for the design, delivery and evaluation of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Cultural safety is the positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination and more than 'cultural awareness' and 'cultural sensitivity'. It empowers people and allows them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves. (CCYP, 2022, p.172)

**Culturally and linguistically diverse:** Culturally and linguistically diverse is a broad and inclusive term for communities with diverse language, ethnic background, nationality, dress, traditions, food, societal structures, art and religion characteristics.

Culturally and linguistically diverse does not usually include Aboriginal communities and people because of distinct history and experience as Australia's First Nations people. For the purpose of the Standards there are specific considerations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, however, the cultural and linguistic diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is also acknowledged.

**Diversity:** describes a range of personal characteristics, circumstances, life experiences and backgrounds. The combination of these differences makes up a child's unique identity and shapes the way they experience the world and the types of needs they have

**Empowerment:** is building up children and young people to strengthen their confidence in themselves and in an organisation. It involves equipping children with the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions and enabling them to increase control of their lives

**Equity:** means making adjustments so that children have equal opportunity for the skills, knowledge and resources they need to be safe regardless of their characteristics, circumstances, life experiences and backgrounds

**Human rights:** are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination

**Personal attribute:** a personal characteristic that is protected by State or Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation. These include race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious belief or activity, political belief or activity, age, intersex status, physical features, pregnancy, carer and parental status, breastfeeding, marital or relationship status, lawful sexual activity, employment activity, industrial activity, expunged homosexual conviction or personal association with anyone who is identified with reference to any protected attribute

**Sexism:** is when people are treated unfairly or bullied because of their sex. All children, young people and adults, regardless of their sex characteristics or identity, should be treated fairly and given equal opportunities. It is against the law to be treated unfairly or bullied because of your sex. Outdated gender stereotypes can lead to sexist attitudes and discriminatory behaviour.

## Policy Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's two-year review cycle of its child safety practices.