



# Mary MacKillop College South Gippsland

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## **Commitment to Child Safety**

This Statement is intended to provide the central focus for child safety across Mary MacKillop College Leongatha, which is built around a unified understanding of the moral imperative and overarching commitments that underpin our drive for improvement and cultural change.

Our College sets out to be a school for the human person and of human persons. 'The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: that is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school'. (Congregation for Catholic education 1997, par.9)

Our College holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

Our College has a universal expectation about the protection of children. It is resolutely committed to ensuring that all those engaged in school life at our College promote the inherent dignity of children and young people and their fundamental right to be respected and nurtured in a safe school environment. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.

Our College has a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create a nurturing school environment where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and where they feel safe and more importantly are safe. When allegations of abuse concerning children and young people are raised, our College staff, wellbeing team and leadership will take prompt action to have these allegations appropriately investigated. While the context and reality at our College will differ from other schools, the fundamental issues of understanding effective practices in child safety and identifying and responding to child harm remain the same. Our College will strive for continual improvement, initiating practices that respond to emerging thinking, evidence and practice, so as to eliminate the possibility of abuse occurring in the first place.

Creating child-safe school environments is a dynamic process that involves active participation and imposing responsibilities on schools, families and the broader community. Effective child – safe environments are underpinned by collaboration, vigilance and proactive approaches across policies, procedures, curriculum and practices.

Every person involved in our College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively in ensuring that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make. Ministerial Order 870 defines the 'children and young people' in this document as those children and young people enrolled as students in Catholic schools in Victoria.

In accordance with Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, our College commits to providing a safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people in its care by:

**1. Upholding our highest priority for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.**

At all times, the ongoing safety and wellbeing of all children and young people will be the primary focus of care and decision-making, with particular attention paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

To create and maintain a safe and nurturing culture, our College will actively and continually develop and review all policies, processes and practices, informed by emerging thinking and evidence.

**2. Empowering families, children, young people and staff to have a voice and raise concerns.**

Our College in partnership with families, will ensure children and young people, are engaged as active participants in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on their safety.

This means that the views of staff, children, young people and families are taken seriously and their concerns are addressed in a just and timely manner. Children and young people are also provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.

**3. Implementing rigorous risk-management and employment practices.**

Our College will systematically and continually identify and assess risks to child safety and will eliminate (where possible) or reduce all potential sources of harm. Effective risk management will be embedded in school life through effective, transparent and well-understood policies, procedures and practices.

Our College will employ highly competent professional staff who are informed and challenged to maintain the safety of all students. The high-quality of staff appointments will be upheld through rigorous employment and staff review processes and practices.

Our College will stay abreast of current legislation and will meet their legislative duties to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in their care, including the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Victorian Government 2016), mandatory reporting, grooming, failure to disclose and failure to protect requirements.

Adhering to this commitment will ensure that Mary MacKillop College Leongatha will be a safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people attending the school.