



# Child Safety and Safeguarding Program

## Child Safeguarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Policy and Procedures

### Background

St Patrick's College is a Catholic School in the Edmund Rice tradition. The charism of Blessed Edmund Rice expressed through the touchstones of Liberating Education, Gospel Spirituality, Inclusive Community, Justice and Solidarity, underpins our continued commitment to a safe and inclusive environment for all.

St Patrick's College is a Catholic day and boarding college for boys in the Edmund Rice tradition, established in 1893. St Patrick's College is committed to providing a caring, supportive, and safe environment where every student has a place, a voice and their story is known.

The EREA VSL Board, the College's and the Boarding School's governing authority, has approved St Patrick's College's Child Safeguarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Policy and Procedures, as set out in the Policy Administration section, below.

### St Patrick's College's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

All children and young people have a right to feel safe and be safe.

St Patrick's College is committed to embedding a culture where the safety, wellbeing, and participation of all children and young people under our care is paramount. Particular attention is given to the needs of vulnerable children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people with disability and mental health issues, children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children and young people who are unable to live at home, and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex. We are committed to at all times acting in the best interests of children and young people.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns are treated very seriously and consistent with our robust safeguarding policies and procedures. St Patrick's College is committed to nurturing the wellbeing of all children and young people, respecting their dignity, ensuring their safety and protecting them from abuse and other harm, including instances of racism and discrimination. St Patrick's College and its School-Based Staff, Contractors and Volunteers have legal and moral obligations to respond swiftly, including contacting authorities where relevant when we are concerned about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

St Patrick's College is committed to providing a safe and child-friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe and can actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

At St Patrick's College we have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in our students' best interests and keeping them safe from harm.

St Patrick's College regards its child safeguarding, wellbeing, and protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child safety, wellbeing and protection laws and regulations and maintain a child-safe culture.

## Purpose

**St Patrick's College (the College) is committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment.**

To be a child safe environment, St Patrick's College must have and implement a variety of strategies to ensure the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This includes respecting and valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their families and their

communities, and ensuring that racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated, and that any instances of racism within a “school environment” or “school boarding premises environment” are addressed with appropriate consequences.

In particular, Standards 1 and 5 of the Victorian Child Safe Standards require our College to:

- establish a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal students in which their diverse and unique identities and experiences are respected and valued
- uphold equity and respect diverse needs in policy and practice, including by paying particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people.

To implement these Standards, Ministerial Order 1359 requires The EREA VSL Board to develop and endorse a policy or statement that details the strategies and actions that the College and the Boarding School will take to meet a number of specific requirements relating to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

St Patrick's College recognises the importance of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student feeling that their sense of self and their identity is valued by the people and environments that surround them. Cultural identity and cultural safety (defined below) are fundamental to a student's overall wellbeing and sense of safety.

The risk of abuse and other harm is heightened for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students when they do not feel culturally safe. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students may be less likely to disclose abuse or other harm due to a lack of cultural safety and fear of authorities intruding into their family and community, based on historical experiences of systemic racism and abuse.

Creating a culturally safe organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, free from racism and discrimination, requires a willingness to learn, understand and respond to the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and to empower participation in decision-making at the College.

This Policy and its Procedures set out how the College promotes the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as required by the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359. In particular, this includes partnering with families, carers and communities and promoting equity and respecting diversity.

## Principles

EREA Victorian Schools Ltd. (EREA VSL) and St Patrick's College are committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and participation of all students. We have no tolerance for child abuse, racism and discrimination.

The EREA VSL Board and St Patrick's College have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected and their voices heard, and where they are safe and feel safe.

Ministerial Order 1359 and the EREA VSL Safeguarding Framework set out the principles that guide The EREA VSL Board and St Patrick's College in the development and regular review of the Child Safeguarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Policy and Procedures.

## Scope

For the purposes of this Policy and its Procedures, references to the College include the Boarding School.

This Policy and its Procedures apply to all School-Based Staff, including School Boarding Premises Staff, Volunteers and Contractors.

They apply in all College and Boarding School environments (together referred to as College environments) within the meaning of Ministerial Order 1359, including physical, virtual and online environments used during or outside of school hours, on-site and off-site College grounds (e.g. extra-curricular activities such as sport and other programs, camps and excursions, interstate and overseas travel).

## Definitions

Definitions of particular terms used in this Policy and its Procedures can be found in the [Child Safety and Safeguarding Policy: Master Definitions List](#).

Of particular relevance to this Policy and its Procedures are the following key definitions.

### **“Cultural Safety”/“Culturally Safe”**

“Cultural safety”, or a “culturally safe” environment, is a concept that goes beyond cultural awareness (knowledge and understanding of cultural differences and history) and cultural competence (culturally sensitive behaviour). It is about creating an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not only safe from racism and discrimination and treated in a culturally respectful manner but are also empowered to actively participate and supported to carry out culturally significant tasks.

## Roles and Responsibilities

In addition to relevant roles and responsibilities set out in [Child Safety and Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities Policy and Procedures](#), the following people have particular responsibilities under this Policy and its Procedures.

The College’s Senior Child Safeguarding Officer is Mr Jamie Bobrowski.

The Boarding School Senior Child Safeguarding Officer Deputy is Mr James Hopper.

The College's Assistant Principal-Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Kevin Robillard.

The School Principal Steven O'Connor.

## St Patrick's College's Policy

1. St Patrick’s College values and respects the cultural diversity of our students and is committed to ensuring that the backgrounds of all students are sensitively recognised, catered for, celebrated and valued so that cultural differences do not compromise students’ safety and wellbeing.
2. St Patrick's College identifies, confronts and does not tolerate racism, and any instances of racism within the College or Boarding School environment are addressed with appropriate consequences.
3. St Patrick's College:
  - identifies children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds when they are enrolled in the College
  - employs appropriate strategies to ensure the safety of these children as required
  - encourages participation and empowerment of these children, their families and their communities in the development of these strategies

- considers these children when developing and implementing policies and procedures related to child safeguarding at the College
- educates our School-Based Staff about cultural safety and the strategies and procedures we have employed
- recognises that approaches to parenting vary considerably across culturally diverse groups, however, the safety of the student should always be the main consideration.

4. St Patrick's College implements a number of strategies and initiatives, as set out in Procedures, below, to ensure that the College is a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

## Procedures

St Patrick's College implements the following strategies and initiatives to ensure that the College is a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

- we seek guidance from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations with Reconciliation Action Plans on how the College can continue to be culturally safe
- we make contact and engage with local Traditional Owner groups and/or Registered Aboriginal Parties
- we seek and take into account cultural expert advice when developing and reviewing strategies for addressing child safety and wellbeing, child safety information and processes for students and families to raise child safety concerns
- we actively engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families about how they would like to be involved by:
  - providing an environment where they feel safe and valued
  - creating opportunities for families to voice concerns and to help define solutions
  - holding informal meetings or surveys to proactively seek and incorporate feedback on existing systems and policies
  - asking about the best way to provide information to students and their families to foster conversations around child safety
- we create a physical environment that is respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, including:
  - a physical acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of the land that the College is built on
  - the display of the Aboriginal flag

- developing information that is culturally appropriate and includes images portraying cultural diversity
- creating multilingual resources, as needed
- we ensure that racism within the College is identified, confronted and not tolerated, and that any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences, including by:
  - Contact College Child Safety Officer Mr Jamie Bobrowski

a child and young person's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported

strategies are embedded within the organisation which equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

measures are adopted by the organisation to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted, and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences

the school actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within it by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and their families, caregivers, or guardians

all the school's policies, procedures, systems, and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and their families, caregivers, or guardians.

## Implementation

This Policy and its Procedures are made available to all School-Based Staff, Volunteers, and Contractors, via the College's PolicyConnect site. They are included in induction training and in ongoing refresher training for School-Based Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors. For more information, refer to [Child Safeguarding Training and Supervision Policy and Procedures](#).

They are made accessible to parents/carers, students and the wider College community in summary in our [Child Safeguarding Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures](#), which is available on our public website as well as Complispace-PolicyConnect and Staff Learning Systems, SafeTripBuilder, Passtab, College Website, Contracts, Newsletters, Annual Reports, Annual briefings and the Crest..

They are also available in hard copy by request.

# Breach of the Child Safeguarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Policy and Procedures

St Patrick's College enforces this Policy and its Procedures. In the event of any non-compliance, we will instigate a review, in a timely and fair manner, that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- remedial education
- counselling
- increased supervision
- the restriction of duties
- suspension
- in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.

For more information, refer to [Child Safeguarding Compliance and Breach Policy and Procedures](#).

## Policy Review

A review of the Child Safeguarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Policy and Procedure is conducted every two years or earlier if required, such as due to changes in legislation or after any significant child safety incident.

The EREA VSL Board is responsible for ensuring that this Policy and its Procedures are reviewed and updated as needed and for approving this Policy and its Procedures.

## Source of Obligation and Related Legislative Instruments

- [Ministerial Order 1359](#), Clause 5



# EREA VSL and St Patrick's College Policy and Procedures Linkages

- [Child Safeguarding Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safeguarding Student Participation and Empowerment Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Family and Community Involvement in Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safeguarding Regular Reviews and Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safety Code of Conduct Policy and Procedures](#)

## Related Forms and Documents

## References and Resources

- National Office for Child Safety, SNAICC, and Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency [Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#), 2021
- Commission for Children and Young People, Tip Sheet: Child Safe Organisations – [Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children](#)

## Policy Administration

Responsible Officer	EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer
Policy Owner	EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding
Approving Body	EREA VSL Board
Approval Date	February 2024
Risk Rating	High

Date of next review	February 2026
<b>Policy Database Information</b>	
Version	1.0
Related Documents	
Superseded Documents	