

Saint Panteleimon Russian Orthodox Church

Child Safe Discussion Points for Parish Council meetings

Introduction The purpose of these *Child Safe Discussion Points for Parish Council meetings* is to give effect to the parish *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety* and thereby help our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers make Saint Panteleimon Russian Orthodox Church a safe place for children. It should be read in conjunction with the parish *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety*.

Definitions Key terms in this Child Safe Code of Conduct are defined in the parish *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety*.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Our clergy and Parish Council are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children.

For the children who belong to or visit our parish, we will provide a child safe environment. This means that we will act to ensure that children feel safe, are safe, and can participate appropriately, actively, and confidently in the divine services and in the broader life of our parish.

We have zero tolerance for any form of harm to or abuse of children. This includes emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

Although our parish follows the traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church, it is multi-cultural and brings together families and individuals of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and needs. We value both our unity and our diversity and are committed to words and actions that make this clear to our children and the children who visit us.

We have publicly available policies and procedures in place to support these commitments, and we will provide our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers with the necessary information, training, and other resources to ensure that they are met.

We take allegations and safety concerns seriously and will deal with them promptly and respectfully. They will be handled in accordance with our policies and procedures and, whenever necessary, New South Wales and other applicable Australian law.

We will engage sensitively with survivors of abuse and actively seek their input into our policies, procedures, and training.

All who belong to or visit our parish will be advised of our commitment to child safety and of their role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children while here.

Children’s participation Our Russian Orthodox tradition is rich and multi-faceted. In the life of our parish, we preserve rites and customs developed over many centuries and in significantly different cultural settings. We value these things, the living

expression of our Orthodox Christian faith, as a precious inheritance that we, in turn, hope to pass to our children and to their children.

To make this possible, we want our children to participate appropriately, actively, and confidently in the divine services and in the broader life of our parish. To this end, we will answer their questions, listen to their views, respect what they say, and provide them with opportunities to learn, read, sing, serve, and help.

The purpose of these Discussion Points

Our *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety* stipulates that child safety will be a standing agenda item at every meeting of the Parish Council and every Annual General Meeting. These points have been developed to guide discussion at those meetings. They are not exhaustive. The Discussion Points reflect the 10 *Child Safe Standards* that developed out of the work of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, now enshrined in NSW law.

The Child Safe Standards

The 10 *Child Safe Standards* are:

1. Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
5. People working with children are suitable and supported
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child-focused
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

Discussion Points

Standard 1 Are we doing all that we can to keep children safe in our parish?

Leadership, governance & culture

Who is taking responsibility for child safety in our parish?

If there are any gaps, what will we do?

Standard 2 Do children have a voice in our parish?

Child participation

Are we doing enough to show our children that they are valued?

How are we involving and including children in the life of the parish?

Standard 3 How are we involving families in parish life?

Families informed & involved	Are we letting our parishioners and friends know what we are doing? How are we doing this? Is it effective?
Standard 4	Does everyone feel welcome and included?
Equity & diversity	Are there appropriate opportunities for all who wish to be involved?
Standard 5	Are all necessary Working With Children Checks up to date?
Workers suitable & supported	How are our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers performing in their work with children? What additional support can we provide?
Standard 6	Are our complaint-handling processes understood?
Child-focused processes	Are they working? Have complaints been acted upon? What could be done to improve the process for all involved?
Standard 7	Has everyone done their training?
Education & training	Are there new resources or courses available that could help? Do we need to allocate additional resources?
Standard 8	Are our risk assessments up to date?
Safe environments	Have all risk treatment actions been undertaken? Have any new risks arisen?
Standard 9	How are we staying up to date with child safety?
Review & continuous improvement	Are we helping the parish become a safer place or are we just going through the motions?
Standard 10	Are our policies and procedures up to date?
Policies & procedures	Are they working? Are they readily available and easy to understand? Have there been breaches? If so, how have we handled them? When is review due, and who will take the lead on that?
Use of the Discussion Points	To ensure comprehensive consideration of child safety issues by the Parish Council, the Discussion Points will be worked through in order at each Parish Council meeting. At parish Annual General Meetings, these points will be used as a general guide to discussion.

List of related documents

The following parish documents are related to this Code of Conduct:

- Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- Child Safety Contact Person Role Description
- Child Safe Complaints Management Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct

Monitoring and review

With the assistance of the Child Safety Contact Persons, these Discussion Points will be formally reviewed by the Parish Council at least every two years. To the extent possible, review of these Discussion Points will take into account comments and suggestions from children; parish clergy, office-bearers, volunteers, and members; the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian; the Diocesan authorities; and the parish insurer.

We will particularly endeavour to draw on the experience of survivors of abuse in our own Russian Orthodox community here in Australia. Consideration will also be given to information prepared by organisations advocating for child safety.
