

STUDENT PROTECTION POLICY

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Approved by	Diocesan Education Council	Date updated	12 May 2015

STATEMENT OF POLICY

We are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students. All staff and visitors in our schools have a responsibility to act to protect students from harm and to respond, manage and / or report any issues relating to the protection of students including any concerns relating to student harm.

INTRODUCTION

This policy is in the first instance inspired by the sincere belief of Catholic educators that every student is made in the image of God and should be treated with respect. It is regrettably true that students are vulnerable in schools as well as in social circles and their own families.

As a Catholic School Authority operating in the State of Queensland, Townsville Catholic Education Office is working with the Queensland Catholic Education Commission to ensure that Catholic schools in the State respond to the issue of Student Protection in ways which honour the ethical and legal requirements which apply, specifically the *Education (Accreditation of non-state schools) Regulation 2001* and the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers engaged in schools under the Townsville Catholic Education Office. This policy aims to assist staff and volunteers to understand and fulfil their responsibilities in relation to child protection and in responding to suspected child abuse and neglect. It reinforces a commitment to providing a safe learning environment for all students and the responsibility of staff and volunteers to respond appropriately to any issues that may impact this environment for any student/s.

RATIONALE

Every human being is created in the image of God and the inherent dignity of all should be recognised and fostered within the school community. All children and young people have a right to a safe and secure environment. All adults have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to promote their welfare and to protect them from any kind of harm. Students have a right to safety in relationships as part of their total education and therefore should be protected from harm. All persons involved in situations where harm to a student is suspected or disclosed, must be treated appropriately with sensitivity, dignity, respect and confidentiality.

We are committed to:

- A safe and caring environment within which students experience personal safety and safety in relationships, as well as developing a sense of their own dignity and the dignity of others.
- A curriculum which educates students in their rights to personal safety and a proper sense of their own dignity.
- Security for students from risk or harm while in the care of the school.
- Support for students who are at risk or suffer harm.
- Procedures that provide for a timely and appropriate response to concerns raised while giving due consideration to the dignity, safety and reputation of all persons concerned.

POLICY DIRECTIVE

The Townsville Catholic Education Office has worked with the Queensland Catholic Education Commission to develop and implement a Manual on Student Protection suitable for use in Catholic schools throughout the state. The manual, adapted to local requirements, provides a basic structure to enable schools to meet their responsibilities with respect to issues of student protection.

All staff, as a condition of their employment, and ongoing employment, participate in annual student protection training. All volunteer induction must include information in relation to responding to concerns around student harm.

Schools have additional responsibilities for the care and well-being of children and young people and in providing child –safe environments. These are:

- A duty of care to students
- A responsibility as mandated notifiers
- The provision of curriculum relevant to child protection for all students, and
- A code of conduct that affirms the standards of behaviour that are expected of all employees.

The Townsville Catholic Education Office Student Protection Policy and Procedure will be implemented, reviewed and maintained in accordance with legislative requirements.

Legislative imperatives

The Townsville Catholic Education Office will ensure that each school under its care provides:

- A response which ensures compliance with all mandatory reporting aspects of the *Education (Accreditation of non-state schools) Regulation 2001* as they apply to all categories of students outlined under Section 364 – 366 (B) of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*.
- A response which ensure compliance with all mandatory reporting aspects of the *Child Protection Act 1999* as outlined under Section 13E.

DEFINITIONS AND REFERENCES

A **child** is a person under 18 years of age.

An **employee** includes any person who has an agreement with the Townsville Catholic Education Office to carry out work and includes staff other than teachers.

A **volunteer** is a person who is engaged by the school not for financial reward but who may receive reimbursement for out of pocket expenses.

Harm is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing, irrespective of the source. Harm can be caused by: physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or sexual abuse or exploitation.

Townsville Catholic Education Office documents

Manual on Student Protection

Student Protection Policy and Procedure

Relevant Legislation

Legislation Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001 and Regulation 2001 (Qld).

Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 and Regulation 2006 (Qld).

Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 (Qld).

Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld).

Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000.