



# STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

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## Introduction

Villanova College is committed to providing education and care to children and young people to assist them to develop into high achieving, supported students, positively connected to each other and to the communities in which they live and which they will serve.

All children and young people who come to Villanova College have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.

We have a zero tolerance for child abuse and other harm and are committed to acting in students' best interests and keeping them safe from harm.

The College regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintaining a child safe culture.

Each member of the College Community has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually, and collectively, to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all that they do, and every decision they make.

## Purpose

The Villanova College Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing is written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the College to child protection and safety, and to provide an outline of the policies and practices that we have developed to keep our students safe, including from abuse or other harm.

It is an overarching policy that provides the key elements of our approach to the College as a child safe organisation and sets the tone for the College's entire Child Protection Program.

The Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection, safety and wellbeing within the College
- the creation of a safe and supportive College environment and a positive and robust child safe culture
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety issues within the College compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Queensland.

## Scope

This Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing applies to all adults in the College community, including staff, volunteers, contractors, external education providers, parents/carers and other family members. This Policy applies in all College environments, both physical and online, and on-site and off-site College grounds (e.g. camps and excursions).



## National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The College's commitment to child safety is based on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations that have been published by the Australian Human Rights Commission following a recommendation from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the National Child Safe Principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

## Children and Young People's Rights to Safety, Information and Participation

Villanova College is a child safe and child-centred organisation. Our environment is friendly and welcoming to all children and young people.

We actively seek to include students in decisions that affect them. This includes decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and classroom learning and assessment environments.

We ensure students know about their rights to safety, information and participation. We recognise the importance of friendships and support from peers. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our organisation and regularly communicate with students about what they can do if they feel unsafe.



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## **Parents/Carers, Families and Community Involvement at the College**

The College recognises that parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children.

We ensure they participate in decisions affecting their children. We ensure families and relevant communities know about the College's operations and policies, including its Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing and Child Protection Codes of Conduct, record keeping practices, risk management, and complaints and investigation processes.

We actively seek to include families and relevant communities in decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and classroom learning and assessment environments.

We build cultural safety at the College through partnerships with relevant communities.

## **Valuing Diversity in the College Community**

Our College values diversity and does not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we:

- support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families
- support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families
- support students with disability and their families and act to promote their participation
- support students and families of diverse sexuality and act to promote their participation
- seek to recruit a workforce that reflects a diversity of cultures, abilities and identities
- ensure all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors have training about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, disability, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those with particular experiences or needs
- have a physical environment that actively celebrates diverse cultures and recognises cultural difference commit to promoting the inclusion of students of differing abilities.



## Our Child Protection Program

Villanova College is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our College's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of child safety and protecting students from abuse or other harm, and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe environment and culture at the College. It includes:

- Child Protection Codes of Conduct
- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and other harm and associated key indicators of abuse or other harm
- clear procedures for reporting child safety incidents or concerns internally, and for responding to allegations of child abuse or other harm
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Contractors, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters
- procedures for recruiting and screening Board members, the College Leadership Team, staff, volunteers and contractors
- procedures for reporting to external agencies, including Mandatory Reporting, and Reporting to Police
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe
- strategies to support and encourage the participation and inclusion of all students including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with disability
- child protection training
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse or other harm to protect, support and assist students
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Blue Card Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations requirements)
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Villanova College's induction process, all staff and direct contact volunteers are required to complete induction in our child protection policies, practices and procedures, and also receive annual refresher and ongoing child protection training.

Staff, direct contact and regular volunteers, and direct contact and regular contractors are supported and supervised during their engagement by the College to ensure that they are compliant with the College's approach to child safety.

## Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns to the College

Our Child Protection Program provides detailed guidance for Board members, staff, volunteers and contractors on how to identify key indicators of child abuse and other harm and how to report child safety incidents or concerns internally to one of our College's Student Protection





Contacts. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant external authorities.

Students at the College are provided with information about and encouraged to use multiple pathways to raise child safety incidents or concerns about or at the College. These include informal and formal ways, an 'anonymous' way, and through external child advocacy or child safety organisations. Formally, as required by the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld), our Student Protection Contacts are nominated as the staff members to whom students can report concerns about the conduct of another staff member that the student considers is inappropriate.

Parents/carers, family members and other community members who have child safety concerns or who suspect that a child or young person associated with the College may be subject to abuse or other harm can contact the Principal, the College's Senior Student Protection Contact.

**Any person** can also contact the Principal or Deputy Principal if they have concerns regarding the College's leadership in relation to child safety. Communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know basis'.

***Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.***

## The College's Response to Child Safety Incidents or Concerns

The College will take appropriate, prompt action in response to all child safety incidents or concerns, including allegations, complaints or disclosures of child abuse or other harm, breaches of our Child Protection Codes of Conduct and inappropriate behaviour by Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, students, parents/carers, Visitors and other members of the College community. The College's response will include:

- all matters that meet the required relevant thresholds being reported externally to Child Safety Services, the Police or the Queensland College of Teachers, depending on the issues raised
- the College fully cooperating with any resulting investigation by an external agency
- protecting any student connected to the child safety incident or concern until it is resolved and providing ongoing support to those affected
- securing and retaining records of the child safety incident or concern and the College's response to it.
- For information about the College's legal obligations to respond to and report child abuse and other harm, refer to the College's Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Harm, or Allegations of Harm (to Students Under 18 Years).

## Responsibilities for Child Protection at the College

Child Safety is everyone's responsibility. All adults in the College Community have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of students. Specific responsibilities include:

Our Student Protection Contacts are a point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the College. They are also responsible for championing child safety within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.



The Senior Student Protection Contact (Paul Begg) has additional child protection responsibilities, such as being a first point of contact for all child safety concerns or queries for the wider community and coordinating the College's response to child safety incidents in consultation with the College Leadership Team and the Board.

### **The Villanova College Board**

The Board is responsible for approving our Child Protection Program and ensuring that the College has appropriate resources to effectively implement our Child Protection Program.

### **The Principal**

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, the operational management of the College, and the Child Protection Program. The Principal is responsible for taking all practical measures to ensure that this Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing and the College's Child Protection Program is implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safe culture is maintained within the College.

### **The College Leadership Team**

Each member of the College Leadership Team is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available in their area of operations to allow the College's Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the College, and to support the Principal in the practical application of the College's child protection strategies, policies, procedures and work systems.

### **Staff**

All staff are required to comply with our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing and Child Protection Codes of Conduct, be familiar with our Child Protection Program and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm, and Blue Cards.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key indicators of abuse and other harm, to be observant, and to raise all child safety incidents and concerns with one of the College's Student Protection Contacts.

### **Volunteers**

All Volunteers at the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the College environment.

All direct contact and regular volunteers are required to comply with our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing and Child Protection Codes of Conduct and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm.

It is each direct contact and regular volunteer's responsibility to be aware of key indicators of child abuse and other harm, to be observant, and to raise all child safety concerns with one of the College's Student Protection Contacts.

### **Contractors**

All contractors engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in the College environment.



All direct contact and regular contractors engaged by the College are required to comply with our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing and Child Protection Codes of Conduct and understand their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse and other harm. The College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the contractor.

Direct contact and regular contractors include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and College cleaners. This also includes music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the College, but have an agreement with the College to use the College's facilities.

### **External Education Providers**

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College. The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of students in all College environments. All External Education Providers engaged by the College are required to comply with our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing and Child Protection Codes of Conduct.

Villanova College may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

### **Child Safe Human Resources Management**

Villanova College applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and direct contact volunteers. Our recruitment procedures comply with the College's Child Protection Human Resources Management and ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children and young people. All prospective staff, direct contact volunteers and direct contact contractors are required to maintain a valid Blue Card as required by legislation.

The College ensures that the College's College Leadership Team, staff and direct contact volunteers and direct contact contractors undergo child protection induction, and ongoing education and training as part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from harm.

Staff, direct contact volunteers and direct contact contractors are subject to regular supervision and performance monitoring whilst engaging with students.

The College ensures that professional development programs for staff include child protection education and training programs.

### **Child Safe Risk Management**

The College recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and we use this information to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning.

The College has developed a comprehensive Risk Management Program to assist in the identification, assessment and management of child protection risks in all College environments.



## Record Keeping

The College has a Child Protection Record Keeping Policy and is committed to best practice record keeping. In accordance with our policy, and as required by our Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns, all internal and external reports of child safety incidents and concerns, as well as any other responses by the College are recorded.

In maintaining records of child safety incidents or concerns, the College maintains confidentiality and privacy for students and families in accordance with federal and state privacy legislation.

## Policy and Program Review

Villanova College is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection Program. The Program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

The College is committed to actively seeking, actioning, and incorporating into this Policy, feedback from students, families, the wider College community, staff, Volunteers and Contractors, and will communicate any adjustments or amendments widely throughout the College community.

## Non-Compliance with Our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

Villanova College enforces this Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing and our Child Protection Codes of Conduct.

In the event of any non-compliance, we will instigate a review 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
- or in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement

## Relevant Legislation and Other Policies

- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
- Child Protection Regulation 2023 (Qld)
- Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)
- Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017 (Qld)
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017 (Qld)
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld)
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (Qld)