



## Obligation to Report a Sexual Offence Policy

### Context

St Patrick's College is a Catholic day and boarding school 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. Edmund Rice Education Australia is committed to providing safe and supportive environments where all children and young people entrusted to our care are affirmed in their dignity and worth as a person.

### Background

Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA), as St Patrick's College's governing authority, sets the policy framework for all EREA schools. These policies have been contextualised for St Patrick's College's particular school environment so that our policies reflect the needs of our students.

### Source of Obligation

Under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (section 327), anyone aged 18 years or over must make a report to the Police if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under the age of 16 years, by a person aged 18 years or over. The person must disclose the information to the Police as soon as it is practicable to do so. Failure to make a report without reasonable excuse is an offence and carries a prison term.

If a report is made to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Child Protection) in accordance with **Mandatory Reporting requirements**, an additional report to the Police will not usually be required unless further information is obtained.

This obligation applies to anyone aged 18 years or over, including all non-teaching staff, Volunteers, and students aged 18 and over. The legislation also applies to teaching staff if not already covered by the mandatory reporting obligation.

### What must be reported?

The information that led the person aged 18 or over to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult (a person aged 18 years or over) against a child under 16 must be reported to the Police.

### What is a sexual offence?

The Crimes Act sets out what constitutes a "sexual offence". This includes:

- rape
- indecent assault
- incest
- sexual penetration
- grooming a child, or a person who has the **care, supervision or authority** of a child aged under 16 for sexual conduct with the child
- encouraging a child to engage in, or be involved in, sexual activity.



A "sexual offence" includes an attempted sexual offence.

### What is a reasonable belief?

A "reasonable belief" is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

A "reasonable belief" might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows the child states that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse lead to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

### How to make a report to the Police

To report to the Police that a child is in immediate risk of being sexually abused please call Triple Zero (000).

Alternatively, you can contact your local police station.

### Exceptions

If you fail to disclose a sexual offence against a child to the Police, you will **not** be held liable where your reason for not reporting is that:

- you fear on reasonable grounds for the safety of any person (other than the offender), and a failure to report is reasonable
- the victim told you about the sexual offence (directly or indirectly), the victim was over 16 years old when they told you about the sexual offence, and the victim requested that the information not be disclosed (unless the victim has an intellectual disability and does not have the capacity to make an informed decision about this)
- you believe on reasonable grounds that the information has already been disclosed to the Police by another person (such as by Child Protection, in response to a Mandatory Report) and you have no further information.

Unacceptable reasons for not reporting include if you are concerned with the interests (including the reputation, legal liability or financial status) of:

- the person involved in the sexual offence
- any organisation (such as the College).

Making a report made under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) **Mandatory Reporting** obligations may constitute a 'reasonable excuse' if you believe that you have no further information to provide to the Police.



## Overseas Students

The College must notify the VRQA if the alleged sexual offence relates to an Overseas student and the College has issued a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) letter in relation to that student thereby assuming responsibility for approving the student's accommodation, support and general welfare.

## Record Keeping Obligations

For the College's record keeping obligations relating to child protection incidents, refer to **Child Protection Record Keeping**.

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## Status of Policy

This policy has been developed by CompliSpace.

This policy was extracted from the CompliSpace portal on 7 July 2021.

This policy has been endorsed by the College Advisory Council on [date].

This policy is due to be updated in 12 months from the date endorsed by the College Advisory Council unless required earlier.