



The Knox School

A co-educational, independent school with a global perspective

PRE-PREP TO VCE

Dear Parent / Guardian

RE: The Knox School Child Safe Standards Response

In December 2015, Minister for Education in Victoria, The Hon James Merlino MP, issued Ministerial Order No. 870 – *Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools*. The order represented a key component of the government's response to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations, and was born from the inquiry's findings, the *Betrayal of Trust* report.

The report provides a series of recommendations aimed at protecting children from all forms of abuse and neglect. Specifically, recommendation 12.1 called on the government to implement minimum standards for maintaining a child-safe environment for all organisations that have direct and regular engagement with children, including all schools. The compliance regime developed by the Victorian Government transfers the culture of child safety to every school in the State. At The Knox School we already have an excellent student culture and will ensure it works well for every child.

Throughout the past six months, the Executive of The Knox School, together with the Board of Directors, has worked at considering how The Knox School will formally meet and exceed the minimum standards as set by the state government. We are pleased to write that the process was both affirming of the remarkable pastoral care and commitment to children's safety that gives life to The Knox School day in, day out, and an opportunity to consider what opportunities present for the School to improve. There is also a significant compliance expectation on the School for which policy has had to be developed.

Within the 'Our School' menu on The Knox School's website (www.knox.vic.edu.au) there is now located a heading 'Our Commitment to Child Safety'. Here, available for all members of the School community, and indeed any member of the public, is the relevant draft documentation that affirms the School's commitment to child safety. Currently, five draft documents exist for your reference:

- **The Child Protection Program**
This document represents an overview of child safety at The Knox School: a summary of processes, policies and personnel.
- **The Code of Conduct**
The Code of Conduct establishes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour by members of the School community. While the code articulates professional boundaries for employees, it is also applicable to parents, students and all those who contribute to the vibrant entity that is The Knox School.
- **Child Protection and Safety Policy**
This policy articulates the twelve principles that guide the development of all policies, procedures, practices and policies at The Knox School to protect students.

- **Child Abuse Response Plan**
The response plan articulates the processes in place at the School to guide how employees respond should they be made aware that a child may be subject to abuse.
- **The Staff and Student Appropriate Conduct Policy**
A document that articulates the professional boundaries that exist in the School between staff and students.

All documents appear currently in draft form. They represent a commitment to a child safe culture of which all parents/guardians are integral members and thus we need your active input. We encourage all members of The Knox School to read the documents and to provide any feedback that they might have. Feedback can be offered to the Executive Assistant to the Vice Principal, Mrs Tracey Conway, and is best provided in e-mail to tracey.conway@knox.vic.edu.au.

All schools have until the end of 2016 to demonstrate how they meet the minimum standards and the documentation described above represents a significant first stage in The Knox School articulating all aspects of its child safe culture. As further documentation is written it will be provided for discussion and consultation.

Together with this letter please find two documents for your reference. The first is a summary of The Victorian Child Safe Standards while the second is a summary of Child Protection at The Knox School.

Our school days should be among the happiest days of our lives and it is incumbent upon all schools, The Knox School included, to ensure that this is the case for all students by providing a safe and secure environment. It is comforting to write that throughout this process the new minimum standards represent little change for the School and indeed are moreover an encapsulation of the best practice pastoral care practices upon which the School prides itself.

Yours sincerely



Mr Allan Shaw
Principal and CEO

Ms Wendy Lewis
Chair of the Board of Directors