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# COVID-19 Vaccination and Safety Policy

## PURPOSE

The Diocese serves the people of God 'through her witness and through such activities as dialogue, human promotion, commitment to justice and peace, education and the care of the sick, and aid to the poor and children' (*Redemptoris Missio*, 1990, n.20).

The purpose of this policy is for the Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools Limited (DLCSL) to provide direction to Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lismore regarding the establishment and maintenance of practices to keep workers, students and volunteers safe from the impacts of COVID-19.

DLCSL is committed to implementing every reasonably practicable precaution to protect the health and safety of staff, contractors and volunteers working in schools, as well as, students attending schools from the impacts of COVID-19, and other persons with a legal right to be on premises controlled or managed by DLCSL.

For the purposes of this policy:

"Workers" extends to all staff, contractors, subcontractors, labour hire staff, work experience placements and volunteers on a premises controlled or managed by DLCSL; and

"Fully vaccinated" means the worker is up to date with the required number of COVID-19 vaccine doses as per NSW Government requirements and regulation. Currently this is two doses of an approved COVID-19 Vaccine and may include any subsequent booster vaccination shots as recommended by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) or any successor advisory group or otherwise required by law.

## APPLICATION

This policy applies to all persons engaged by DLCSL, including but not limited to employees, school staff, Catholic Schools Office staff, contractors, student placements and volunteers engaged in schools. Workers are to make themselves familiar with the requirements of this document and ensure they comply with the requirements and obligations outlined within it.

## POLICY

All staff have a responsibility to ensure the safety of themselves and others within the workplace. As such, all DLCSL staff, contractors and volunteers are expected and required to comply with applicable health and safety measures to reduce the hazard of COVID-19, including but not

limited to compliance with established workplace access controls such as rapid antigen testing, wearing of face masks, using provided personal protective equipment (PPE), maintaining appropriate physical distancing, engaging in appropriate hygiene and self-monitoring of potential COVID-19 symptoms when at work or otherwise engaged by DLCSL.

In order to gain entry to DLCSL premises, all staff, contractors and volunteers are required to be fully vaccinated in accordance with this policy.

### **EXEMPTION FROM VACCINATION**

Staff who cannot have any COVID-19 Vaccine due to a medical contraindication are exempt from being required to be vaccinated under this policy. An exemption to vaccination:

- Is subject to approval by DLCSL;
- Must be supported by Vaccination Evidence (including a Medical Contraindication Certificate or through the Australian Immunisation Register medical exemption);
- Is limited to medical contraindications that comply with ATAGI Guidelines in place from time to time; and
- May be temporary or ongoing (staff are not exempt from vaccination after a temporary medical contraindication has expired).

Staff, contractors or volunteers who are not vaccinated, due to medical contraindication may be required to take additional control measures, including providing proof of a negative COVID-19 test, as well as a requirement to self-isolate if exposed to COVID-19.

DLCSL requires proof of vaccination from all employees, contractors and volunteers prior to being permitted to attend at a DLCSL workplace.

Proof means the presentation of a vaccination certificate verifying receipt of a vaccination series approved by the NSW government, or by any other means deemed appropriate by DLCSL.

Staff, contractors or volunteers who disclose that they are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or who have not disclosed their vaccination status as required, will not be permitted entry into any DLCSL workplace.

Staff, contractors and volunteers will be required to update their vaccination status in accordance with established processes as required.

DLCSL will not maintain a copy of vaccination documentation. This information will only be used to the extent necessary for implementation of this policy, for administering health and safety protocols, and infection and prevention control measures in the workplace.

### **RATIONALE**

With the continuing spread of COVID-19, including all and emerging variants, data demonstrates a higher incidence of COVID-19 amongst unvaccinated individuals, increasing levels of contact between individuals as restrictions on movements and gatherings are eased or removed. It is important for DLCSL staff, contractors and volunteers to be fully vaccinated in order to protect themselves and others against serious illness from COVID-19 and to provide indirect protection to others, including colleagues and students.

The introduction of this policy is based on the following:

- COVID-19 is recognised by public health authorities both internationally and in Australia as a condition caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2);
- COVID-19 is a potentially fatal condition and is highly transmissible;
- Cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in NSW and other Australian jurisdictions and this poses an ongoing risk of continuing transmission of the virus and variants in the community;
- The risk in NSW of transmission of COVID-19 within the community remains significant and ongoing unless more COVID-19 vaccines are administered, and supported by boosters;
- The ever-changing COVID-19 situation requires ongoing management of relevant measures to enable DLCSL to fulfil its duty of care to relevant workers to provide safe and healthy school and office environments;
- There is a risk of transmission of COVID-19 among children at schools in DLCSL because the COVID-19 vaccine is currently not available for children of certain ages; and
- DLCSL considers that mandatory vaccinations are a suitable control for all relevant workers to most effectively minimise the risk of harm and to provide ongoing and uninterrupted service delivery for DLCSL schools and business operations.

## **OUTCOMES**

DLCSL will continue to closely monitor its COVID-19 risk mitigation strategy and the evolving public health information and context, to ensure that it continues to optimally protect the health and safety of staff, contractors, volunteers and students.

Should it be determined that additional precautions are necessary, DLCSL may decide to deploy new measures to protect staff, contractors, volunteers and students, and may amend this policy accordingly and/or communicate the required precautions to impacted staff.

DLCSL may vary, withdraw or replace the directive at any time in line with a public health order or other Government/NSW Health advice.

The requirement for employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and provide Vaccination Evidence, in accordance with this policy, are considered to be lawful and reasonable directions. Employees have a responsibility to follow lawful and reasonable directions given by DLCSL in accordance with their Employment Contract.

Staff who do not comply with this policy may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with DLCSL discipline policies and procedures, up to and including dismissal.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore: The Mission of Jesus Christ Foundational Values

Privacy Policy and Standard Operating Procedures

Work Health and Safety Policy