



Catholic
Education
Commission
Tasmania

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This Policy has been developed to outline how Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) will:
- (a) build an adequate critical incident prevention, response and recovery capability.
 - (b) respond proportionally and promptly to critical incidents and in a manner which, so far as responsibly practicable, protect Workers, Students and the broader community.

2 WHO DOES THIS POLICY APPLY TO?

- 2.1 This policy applies to all CET **Workplaces** in the Archdiocese of Hobart as defined in *CECT Terms and Definitions*.

3 WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

- 3.1 Under the Education Regulations 2017 “critical incident” means “*an incident that poses a present or imminent risk to the life, health, safety or wellbeing of a person or may cause a person to suffer extreme stress or fear.*” For the purpose of this policy, it also includes any situation that has a reasonable probability of becoming a critical incident.
- 3.2 Critical incidents typically involve one or more of the following characteristics:
- (a) Imminent risk to life.
 - (b) Abnormal and sudden occurrence.
 - (c) Where the coping responses of individuals and communities are, or maybe about to be, overwhelmed.
 - (d) The potential to leave lasting psychological effects.
 - (e) The potential of reputational damage of a Catholic Education Tasmania entity
- 3.3 Examples of a critical incident include (but are not limited to):
- (a) Child safety threat/event
 - (b) threats to persons or property;
 - (c) transmission or storage of inappropriate images;
 - (d) assault;
 - (e) an unexpected death;
 - (f) threat of bushfire or other natural event (flooding);
 - (g) operational disruptions such as power outage and ICT outages;
 - (f) destruction of or significant damage to school buildings;
 - (g) lockdown or evacuation orders; and
 - (h) emergencies involving Tasmania Police, Fire or Ambulance attendance.

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- (i) Significant misrepresentation of a CET entity (e.g. reputational damage) on communication platforms such as mainstream media and social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok).

4 POLICY PRINCIPLES

- 4.1** CET acknowledges critical incidents, unfortunately, can and do happen.
- 4.2** CET is committed to ensuring critical incidents are:
 - (a) Prevented from happening so far as reasonably practicable.
 - (b) Competently managed if they do occur.
 - (c) Investigated and reviewed;
 - (i) to prevent reoccurrence as far as is reasonably practicable
 - (ii) to identify factors or decisions that could be improved.
- 4.3** CET will ensure that schools and the TCEO have the necessary resources and training to achieve an adequate critical incident prevention, response and recovery capability.
- 4.4** Where a critical incident has occurred (or is thought to have occurred), CET will follow its Critical Incident Response Plan (**CIRP**) – see model plan in Appendix A.

5 CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1** Taking a trauma informed and culturally sensitive approach to the management and response to critical incidents.
- 5.2** Ensuring that all relevant Workers receive training (at least on an annual basis) in the application of CET's CIRP and the use of associated resources
- 5.3** Ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, assistance and support is provided to all people affected in a critical incident.
- 5.4** Taking the following actions to prevent critical incidents from occurring and to ensure critical incident responses are adequate:
 - (a) Using a risk assessment approach which draws on incident and hazard data to determine where mitigation is required to reduce critical incident risk as far as is reasonably practicable.
 - (b) Comprehensively investigating and documenting the events leading up to, during and immediately following a critical incident.
- 5.5** Reviewing the response to a critical incident to determine whether any steps can be taken to prevent such incidents from occurring.

6 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1** For CET to achieve compliance with this Policy the following people must fulfil the responsibilities

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allocated to them under this Policy.

Person	Responsibilities
Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Understand and comply with this Policy. b) Provide resources to maintain an adequate critical incident response capability. c) Ensure applicable statutory bodies are notified in accordance with legislation timelines (e.g. notify the Office of the Education Registrar if an incident causes a student, while in the care of CET, to be hospitalised for more than 3 days or is confirmed as a fatality). d) Participate in annual critical incident capability development training.
TCEO Manager Risk, WHS and Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Understand and comply with this Policy. b) Develop, document, and maintain adequate critical incident management plans, procedures and resources and ensure their accessibility to staff. c) Develop training content and coordinate annual capability development training for Directors and relevant Workplace Managers.
Workplace WHS Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Understand and comply with this Policy. b) Maintain an adequate critical incident response capability at their workplace(s). c) Ensure required evacuation and lockdown drills are undertaken to a satisfactory standard. d) Monitor the condition of essential services and report issues to the relevant asset manager. e) Investigate and close out critical incident reports and drive the implementation of corrective actions. f) Ensure WorkSafe Tasmania is notified in a timely manner of critical incidents that are deemed to be notifiable incidents.
Workplace Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Understand and comply with this Policy. b) Familiarise themselves with supporting procedures and resources.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Maintain an adequate workplace capability to respond to a critical incident. d) Follow CET's CIRP when managing a critical incident. e) Report on the occurrence of a critical incident as soon as reasonably practicable to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the relevant Principal Lead b) the relevant WHS Officer c) the relevant Director if the incident occurs in a TCEO workplace. d) Record critical incidents using the designated WHS incident form. e) Notify CET's Executive Director, copying in the relevant Principal Lead and the Manager: Risk, WHS and Compliance, if a student is hospitalised for more than 3 days or is confirmed as a fatality as a result of an incident while in the care of CET. The email for the Executive Director is executivedirector@catholic.tas.edu.au.
Relevant Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Understand and comply with this Policy. b) Attend training as required.

7 RECORD KEEPING

- 7.1 Records must be kept for the required length of time in accordance with our legal requirements, CECT Records Management Policy and records retentions schedule.

8 COMPLIANCE

- 8.1 This Policy relates to but is not limited to the following legislation and guidelines:

Commonwealth legislation

- (a) [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)

Tasmanian legislation

- (a) [Education Act 2016 \(Tas\)](#)
(b) [Education Regulations 2017 \(Tas\)](#)

Other

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- (a) CET's Critical Incident Response Plan
- (b) [CECT Records Management Policy](#)
- (c) [Non-government Schools Registration Board Guidelines](#)
- (d) [Tasmanian Office of the State Archivist Notice of a disposal freeze on records relating to children](#).

9 DEFINED TERMS

Workplace Manager – means a School Principal, Principal Lead, CET Deputy Executive Director and/or member of staff with team leadership responsibilities.

Definitions for all other key terms used in this document are included in the *CECT Terms and Definitions* available on the CET Website.

10 FURTHER INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

- 10.1** For further information and assistance in relation to this Policy please contact *Advisor: Governance Policy and Research* – policy@catholic.tas.edu.au

11 REVIEW

- 11.1** This Policy will be reviewed every four years, or earlier if a routine risk assessment recommends that amendments to this Policy be made as soon as practicable.
- 11.2** Updated versions of this Policy will be available on the CET website and on request.

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12. APPENDIX A – MODEL CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

Introduction

Critical incidents tend to be localised events that typically involve one or more of the following characteristics:

- (a) Imminent risk to life.
- (b) Abnormal and sudden occurrence.
- (c) Where the coping responses of individuals and communities are, or may be about to be, overwhelmed.
- (d) The potential to leave lasting psychological effects.
- (e) The potential of reputational damage of a Catholic Education Tasmania entity.

Examples of a critical incident include (but are not limited to):

- (a) Child safety threat/event
- (b) Threats to persons or property;
- (c) Transmission or storage of inappropriate images;
- (d) Assault;
- (e) An unexpected death;
- (f) Threat of bushfire or other natural event (flooding);
- (g) Operational disruptions such as power outage and ICT outages;
- (h) Destruction of or significant damage to school buildings;
- (i) Lockdown or evacuation orders; and
- (j) Significant misrepresentation of a CET entity (e.g. reputational damage) on communication platforms such as mainstream media and social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok)

Response

If an incident is considered critical, or has the potential to become a critical incident, the following procedure must be followed as closely as possible factoring in the type of incident, its scale and duration:

1. Initial response

Workplace Manager (or most senior staff member on-site):

- Confirm incident and confirm details.
- Contact emergency services (Ambulance, Fire, Police) as required, noting that if a full lockdown is initiated then police assistance must be sought immediately.
- Stabilise any injured person, if safe to do so.

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- If necessary, take required on-site management actions (noting not all critical incidents occur on-site e.g. a car accident involving staff or students).
- If applicable, provide attending Police with School Site Details Kit (refer to School Site Details Kit for Police Use Guidance Note)
- Report critical incident to the relevant Principal Lead/Director and WHS Officer as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Take measures to prevent uncontrolled communications e.g. students calling parents, social media posts.
- Update Principal Lead/Director and WHS Officer as circumstances change.
- Where a dangerous incident has occurred, or an incident has occurred which involves death or serious injury or illness, secure the incident site to prevent unauthorised access and ensure that evidence is not disturbed or contaminated.
 - o Where an incident site must be accessed or disturbed in order to assist an injured person, to make the site safe, or to minimise the risk of a further incident occurring, ensure that details of the access or disturbance are recorded.
- Where an incident involves a child safety allegation the Police, CET's Child Safety Officer and child safety authorities must be contacted in that order. No details or comments are to be provided to parents, staff or the school community until clearance has been received from police and child safety authorities.

Relevant Principal Lead/Director

- Confirm the nature of the incident, its extent and possible consequences.
- Immediately inform Executive Director.
- Continue to liaise with school/workplace.

Executive Director:

- Convene a Critical Incident Team. A Critical Incident Team should include:
 - o Relevant Deputy Executive Director, Manager Risk, WHS and Compliance, Executive Manager People Services, relevant Principal Lead and CET Marketing and Communication Manager.
- Contingent on magnitude of incident, appoint a Response Coordinator and allocate roles to others e.g.
 - o Media liaison
 - o A contact person for school enquiries

Executive Director (or nominee) to notify relevant parties e.g.:

- Archbishop
- Chair of Catholic Education Commission Tasmania (CECT)
- Minister for Education Tasmania
- TCEO Media and Comms Team

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- Archdiocese of Hobart (AoH) Media Officer
- AoH Executive Director: Admin & Finance
- Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) and Independent Schools Tasmania (IST) leadership
- TCEO Leadership team members
- Relevant system managers and their teams
- **Relevant WHS Officer:**
- Assist Principal/Workplace Manager to manage critical incident.
- Notify WorkSafe Tasmania where a critical incident is also deemed to be a notifiable incident.

2. Situation stabilised

Workplace Manager:

- Convene school leadership team
- Update Principal Lead/Director and TCEO response coordinator
- Inform, if applicable, CET's Child Safety Officer if staff involved in a child safety related critical incident
- Inform in a timely manner CET's Executive Director, copying in the relevant Principal Lead and the Manager: Risk, WHS and Compliance, if a student is hospitalised for more than three days or is confirmed as a fatality as a result of an incident while in the care of CET.
- Complete and lodge required CET online reports
- Communicate sympathy/concern to affected staff, parents & families
- Provide regular updates to:
 - o Staff
 - o Students
 - o School community
 - o Parish Priest & Chaplain
 - o Chair of School Board
 - o Your 'buddy' principal

Executive Director:

- Inform the Office of the Education Registrar (where, as a result of the incident, a student in the care of CET dies or is hospitalized for more than three days).

Workplace Manager & TCEO Response Coordinator:

- Consider benefits or otherwise of temporary closure of school/workplace (refer to School Closure Guidance Note)
- Provide school / TCEO front line staff with briefing notes plus:
 - o Tips for managing enquiries

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- Tips for self-care
- Conduct end of day debrief
- Identify those needing extra support and provide it

TCEO Response Coordinator:

- Provide updates to the Executive Director to share with:
 - Leadership Team
 - Chair of CECT
 - TCEO media and Comms team
 - Principals
 - Appropriate system managers and their teams
 - CET colleagues of staff involved
 - Archbishop
 - Minister for Education Tasmania
 - AoH media officer
 - AoH Executive Director: Admin & Finance
 - DECYP and IST Leadership
 - Parish Priests/Chaplains
- Inform as see fit:
 - Legal Representation
 - Independent Education Union (IEU)
 - CET nominated Insurance Provider
- Liaise with impacted workplace to provide support with:
 - Funeral arrangements
 - Staff attending

Workplace Manager & TCEO Response Coordinator

- Consider:
 - Organising psychological support e.g. Catholic Care
 - Extra management or administrative staff
 - Review visitor protocols if necessary
 - Extra security
 - A meeting room for sensitive conversations
 - A quiet place for prayer / contemplation

Workplace Manager

- Complete

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- o CETKP Incident Report Form (and tick critical incident box)
- o Mandatory Report to Strong Families Safe Kids, if applicable
- o Inappropriate Staff Behaviour Report (child safety), if applicable

3. Recovery

Workplace Manager & TCEO Response Coordinator

- Use the critical incident resources on CETKP to assist with recovery
- Follow up information letter to school community
- Restore normal routines
- Debrief of Response Team
- Evaluate response
- Commence review into incident to prevent reoccurrence
- Continue to monitor those affected and provide support/ counselling as required
- Consider provision of a memorial service for any staff who died. This is generally best provided within a week after the funeral.
- Consider preparations for the coroner's investigation etc.
- Review affected person recovery and wellbeing on a regular basis - for several months in case of serious critical incident.

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