

CRITICAL INCIDENTS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND SERVICES IN THE DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

Scope: This policy applies to all Catholic schools, colleges, kindergartens and outside school hours care centres conducted by Catholic Education - Diocese of Rockhampton (referred to as Catholic Education in the document).

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Each Catholic school, college and service (hereafter referred to as Catholic schools) in the Diocese of Rockhampton will have written plans and procedures for responding to critical incidents.

2. DESCRIPTION

A critical incident is *“any event which has a stressful impact, sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or a group”*. (Mitchell & Everly 1993)

Critical incidents may include, but not be restricted to:

- natural disasters; eg cyclones, floods, bushfires
- industrial accidents; eg chemical spill, explosion
- incidents relating to school activities; eg bus accidents, fire
- death of a student or staff member
- hostage situations or incidents resulting from child custody issues
- incidents involving the use of drugs, illegal substances, unsanctioned substances
- public displays of aggression or physical violence towards members of the Catholic school community
- unauthorised incursions into school property or functions.



Most critical incidents occur unexpectedly and can find people unprepared. When large numbers of people are faced with an unexpected crisis, special strategies need to be put in place to ensure that all concerned can be assisted in processing their individual and collective reactions to the crisis.

As Catholic schools, we are committed to supporting all people in our communities, most importantly in times of crisis. A comprehensive, pastoral response to such critical incidents will assist the immediate and long-term recovery of those affected.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

1. Key personnel will be identified, designated responsibilities and given appropriate preparation and training to enable them to support members of the Catholic school community when needed.
2. Catholic School communities should be aware that an effective approach to critical incidents would include:
 - appropriate education programs
 - sound prevention practices to minimise risks and potential harm
 - clear guidelines and strategies for interventions
3. All staff will be made aware of the critical incident policy as part of the induction process and in ongoing staff development.
4. Critical Incidents Management Guidelines are reviewed annually.

4. REFLECTION MATERIAL

CATHOLIC EDUCATION POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- *Critical Incident Management*

RESOURCES

- CCH School Health & Safety *Guide to Crisis Care & Counselling*