



Community Church Warragul

Safeguarding Children

A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

AND PROCEDURES

Review Date: 27/07/2023	Next review: September 2025 (Every two years or after any child safety incident)
Approved by: Board motion on 27/ 07/2023	Implemented as of: 27 / 07/ 2023

Section 1. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Policy Statement: A Commitment to Child Protection

The purpose of this Policy is to guide Community Church Warragul in developing a child-protective culture. Community Church Warragul is committed to welcoming children and their parents or carers and providing a 'child-safe'¹ environment, culture and programs for children and other vulnerable people who attend the services and other programs. We are committed to demonstrating our care and respect for every child and vulnerable person by protecting them from abuse of any kind. We see such a commitment as flowing naturally from our vision and mission to operate according to biblical, Christian principles for living and for recognising the unique value and potential of every person, regardless of race, age, gender, ability or disability.

Our priority is to:

- provide safe physical, emotional and online environments.
- develop and implement clear expectations to guide the behaviour of adults towards children, expressed in a Child-safe Code of Conduct that provides advice for managing relationships between adult and children.
- develop and implement strategies for identifying, mitigating or eliminating risks to children's wellbeing and safety.
- provide clear and accessible pathways for acting on observations, allegations and disclosures, including reporting abuse.

We recognise the particular need for sensitivity for those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including those with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage. We take into consideration the needs of children with disabilities and seek to include them and make them feel safe and welcome. All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse and discrimination. Our pastoral care and protection of all children expresses our love and commitment to their **wellbeing**, even if their statements and choices do not align with the beliefs and doctrines of this church community.

This Policy recognises both Federal and State legislation and commits workers to responsibly and reasonably cooperating with Government departments, law enforcement and child

¹It is recognized that no organisation can guarantee the safety of children and other vulnerable people who are on site at a venue. The term 'child-safe' means that child safety is paramount to this organisation, that it has compliant policies and procedural documents and that risk identification and mitigation practices are embedded in the culture.

protection agencies. The operational principles of our Code of Conduct support and facilitate the protection of children and young people.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

Scope:

The provisions and duties of care expressed in this Child Protection Policy apply to:

- **Ministers.** A minister of religion is: *A person defined or appointed as a recognised leader in an organised religious institution; or the appointed leader of a local religious congregation in an organised religious institution who has general authority.*
- The Elders
- all employees (including volunteers) members and adherents/regular attenders.
- All activities and programs organised by or with the approval of CCW, on the premises or off-site, including camps and day trips.
- *All guests or hirers of the venue and its facilities. Such temporary users of the church facilities will be provided with copies of this Policy Code of Conduct and relevant procedures, and the Hiring Agreement will include a signed commitment to complying with the expectations of these documents. (See notes)*
- *Contractors, subcontractors, delivery persons or others engaged to provide services on the premises, particularly if they have any contact with children whilst on site. Where possible, such temporary visitors to the church premises will be provided with an Induction Pack and required to sign their willingness to comply with the expectations outlined. (See notes)*

1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

- a. The Chair** of the Elders. The Chair, through the Board, has oversight of the policies, programs and activities of CCW. If an allegation is made against the senior leader (employed) then the Chairperson becomes the 'head of entity' for the purposes of reporting and investigating.
- b.** Unless personally accused of child abuse, the senior pastor is deemed the 'head of entity' for all the provisions of the Reportable conduct Scheme. The Senior Pastor appoints the Child Protection Officer.
- c. The Child Protection Officer.** The person appointed to this role undertakes to manage the church's child protection procedures, especially the process for making, receiving, secure storing and managing the initial responses to complaints or allegations of abuse or misconduct against or in the presence of a child. The CPO will

ensure that all those working with children have a Working With Children Clearance card that is active and that regular training is undertaken by all those who have interaction with children in the church community.

Authority

This Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct was revised and updated to reflect the most recent changes to State and Federal law and guidelines towards being a child-safe organisation.

It was approved by the Elders and adopted for use by CCW on _____

1.5 Policy Review

The Child Protection Policy and Procedures and Code of Conduct will be reviewed at least every two years, or to remain compliant with new legislation.

Any proposed changes or updates will be submitted to the Elders of CCW for approval at a properly convened meeting for approval before being adopted and implemented. The date of approval and implementation will be noted in the minutes of the Elders meeting and on the document that was approved.

1.6 Operating Principles

Duty of Care: Means any legal responsibility that CCW has to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those who participate in programs or activities of the church.

Vicarious Liability: Means any legal liability that CCW may be determined to have for the conduct of those who act on its behalf (e.g. its staff and approved voluntary leaders).

Reasonable Standard of Care: Refers to the level of care that a user may reasonably expect that CCW will take in providing any program, activity, service, or facility.

Reasonable Foresight: Refers to a responsibility that CCW has, when planning activities for children and young people, to identify any reasonably foreseen danger/risk and take reasonable steps to prevent or avert such risk.

Child Protection Reporting Obligations: This principle covers mandatory reporting, for those professions and roles that are defined by law, and the **moral and legal responsibility that all adults have to report all types of known or possible child abuse, where** there is a reasonable belief that a physical or sexual offence has occurred or may be committed against a child

Reasonable belief: A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds, through disclosure by the child or a third party or personal observation of indicators that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk.

2. Definitions (see Appendix 6)

3. The New Victorian Child Safe Standards

Standard 1. Culturally Safe Environments.

A culturally safe place for Aboriginal children** The practices and sensitivities that relate to Standard 5 apply here, even if there are no persons identifying as Aboriginal in the church. However, the spirit of this Standard is to take a stand against racism. Community Church Warragul **does not tolerate or promote racism.

Standard 2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in leadership, governance and culture.

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in the CCW culture at every level, from the Elders via the Senior Pastor. The Child-safe Code of Conduct is read and signed by all members of the church annually. Our statement of commitment to child safety and our policies are on the church website. Our risk management strategies and procedures are comprehensive and well-known.

Standard 3. Child and Student Empowerment.

Children and young people will be informed and empowered about their human rights: to be heard, consulted and included in decision-making processes that affect them and the strategies and procedures in place to keep them safe.

Standard 4. Family Engagement

The church community will be informed and involved in developing and implementing the practices and procedures that will protect our children and their wellbeing.

Standard 5. Diversity and Equity

The Church pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people, and will ensure that they are welcomed and supported within the community of the church.

Standard 6. Suitable staff and volunteers

People employed or approved to work with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. This will be evidenced by Working With Children clearance, and will be the

focus of recruitment, screening and interviewing processes and by our regular training and induction for new children's workers.

Standard 7. Complaints Management Processes

*Processes for making, managing and responding to complaints, including investigating complaints and child abuse concerns are visible, accessible and child focussed. The Church has a Complaints Management process that is outlined in several Policy documents and is illustrated with simple graphic flow charts. **Complaint Report Forms** are available from the Child Protection Officer.*

Standard 8. Child Safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Regular staff training will equip all staff members with the knowledge, skills and awareness required to keep children safe. Members of the children and youth teams will complete training and provide certification of completion. All members will read and sign off on key policies, manuals and the Child-safe Code of Conduct annually.

Standard 9. Child safety in physical and on-line environments

Physical and on-line environments promote safety and wellbeing, minimising the opportunity for children or young people to be harmed. Strategies for risk management and mitigation of physical and on-line risk are contained in relevant policies.

Standard 10. Review of Child Safety practices

The Church is committed to regular review and improvement of child safety and its implementation with the Church community.

Standard 11. Implementing Child Safe practices

This policy and the related documents show how the Church works to exercise its duty of care to all students, and to provide evidence that these child-safe practices and procedures are well-known and complied with.

Details on how these Standards are incorporated into the Policy and Procedures are outlined below.

4. Child Protection Policy

Child Safety and Wellbeing are embedded in Church governance, leadership and culture – CSS 2

Community Church Warragul will:

- Ensure the Church website has a clear statement that child abuse of any kind or harmful discrimination on the basis of identified attributes will not be tolerated. This statement is also a part of recruitment documentation and other Church publications.
- The Elders assign the responsibility for child safety education and practices to the Senior Pastor. This responsibility will be practically shared by members of the Elders and the Child Protection Officer. They will ensure that all staff and volunteers complete mandatory reading and training in Child Protection, Reporting, Risk Management and Duty of Care, as well as other policies which support these principles.
- Undertake annual Risk Assessment audits and review of procedures, at Board level.
- Ensure all members of staff, including casually employed staff and volunteers, read and sign the Child-safe Code of Conduct and the Ministry Declaration.
- Build Risk Management strategies into the planning of all activities of the church that involve children, including excursions, camps and special events. Each event will have a nominated Person-in-Charge who will complete risk assessment documentation and present it to MET/Senior Pastor for approval.
- Regularly (at least annually) provide all those involved with children with training and other forms of communication to ensure their understanding of obligations under the law regarding record keeping and information sharing.

Education and empowerment of children and young people (CSS 3 and CSS 7)

This element of the Child Protection Policy identifies the need for children to be educated and aware:

- of what is and what is not child abuse

- ways and opportunity to provide feedback to teachers about concerns or uncertainty relating to their safety in College programs and activities.
- of how to make a complaint or allegation about abuse to themselves or another child.

To this end, Community Church Warragul will:

- Make this Policy and related documents available to all members of the Church community, as PDF documents on the website or by email.
- **Inform and educate students** about the importance of self-protection, personal safety, strategies for finding support and help if concerned. Information posters are displayed throughout facility.
- Encourage students to complete Feedback Forms at the end of units of study or activities where personal safety could be an issue.
- Provide age-appropriate **Sexuality and Relationships Education** for students that gives them opportunity to discuss and process such information and safety concerns, in a safe, open context. In this context the teacher will also outline key Biblical teaching about moral and behavioural choices.
- Ensure **Student Codes of Conduct** (Primary and Secondary Behaviour Matrices), **Four Critical Actions** posters and other helpful materials are displayed in classrooms and other open spaces.
- Ensure important information about **making a complaint** about alleged abuse to the Child Protection Officer, Wellbeing officers or other pastoral carers will be available for students.

We will listen to and act on any concerns children or their parents/carers raise with us.

We are committed to protecting children from abuse. 'Abuse', as used in this policy, includes all the following types of abuse or neglect of children and young people:

physical; sexual; emotional/psychological; racial/cultural or spiritual/religious, or neglect.

Family Engagement – CSS 4

A central principle of Christian Education is that it is a partnership between the parents and the Church – and, ideally, the church family. This involves all aspects of the education and pastoral care of every student. This Policy affirms the right of parents to:

- have opportunity to comment on arrangements, policies and procedures in place for the safety and well-being of their children
- be fully informed of activities and the risk assessment and mitigation that has been undertaken
- have access to all the policies that guide governance and leadership decisions around child safety. These documents will be available on both the website and 'the hub'.

Upholding Equity and Respecting Diversity CSS 5

CCW is blessed to have families from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and language backgrounds. We value and uphold this diversity and are enriched by it. Our beliefs - relating to the value of every child, regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, ability or disability – underpin our policies and practices in ministry, behaviour management and pastoral care.

We pay particular attention to the needs of children with physical or intellectual, or learning disabilities and for those with English as a second language or other cultural differences.

Children who identify as LGBTIQ+ or who have gender dysphoria or anxiety or confusion about any of these identifications are protected from discrimination and cared for with the same consideration as offered to all children.

Employment of Staff and Volunteers CSS6

Recruitment, screening and selection practices (Ref: Staff Recruitment and Induction Procedures)

CCW will be vigilant in the recruitment, selection and screening of all staff, contractors, activity leaders and volunteers to ensure they are safe and suitable to work with children and young people. It is important that every person who works with children under the auspices of this Church upholds and exemplifies our Christian beliefs and values, as expressed in this Policy, especially in their interaction with children and other vulnerable people.

1. Our statements of commitment to child safety and our behavioural expectations of employees and volunteers are included in all advertisements and Position Descriptions.
2. We will conduct thorough screening to determine whether a prospective staff member, contractor, volunteer or leader may pose a risk to children. This will include making reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:
 - a. Child-related Employment Screening Clearance, that is, the Working With Children Check, the National Criminal Record Check and, for teachers, **current registration** with the V.I.T.
 - b. proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
 - c. the person's history of work involving children; and
 - d. references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.

3. The type of evidence that an applicant is required to provide to the Church will vary depending on the type of position that they are applying for. However, the Church will not offer any applicant a position of responsibility until they provide the required evidence to the Senior Pastor.

Any person with a record of child abuse, either sexual or physical, will not be offered a role that involves working with children or being in contact with children in the conduct of their duties.

4. Short-listed applicants will be interviewed by at least two church representatives prior to appointment being made official. Interviews will include specific questions relating to allegations or complaints made against the applicant involving misconduct against a child. The applicant will sign the questionnaire verifying the truthfulness and accuracy of the statements.

Induction, Training and Annual Certification

The Church provides a system of induction, support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. This system will train and guide our staff and volunteers in their interactions with children and clear procedures for managing programs and activities.

1. All staff are provided with a copy of this **Child Protection Policy and Procedures** and the **Code of Conduct** that defines unacceptable conduct, boundaries and expectations for behaviour. Staff will sign a declaration stating they have read, understand and will comply with guidelines and follow procedures faithfully.
2. Any person new to the children's or youth work team will complete a Child-safe Induction process as part of their orientation to the College. (Normally this would be done by the Child Protection Officer)
3. **'Refresh, Renew, Update'** sessions are run for all staff and volunteers, to ensure staff awareness of the risks to child safety and familiarity with the church's child-protective practices and reporting expectations, and where there have been changes to legislation or practice.

Support and Supervision for Staff, Contractors and Volunteers:

CCW provides support and supervision so that people feel valued, respected and fairly treated in the following ways:

- The church CPO checks WWCCs for all employed or volunteer staff annually. The WWCC authority regularly checks the suitability of staff for child connected work throughout period that the registration / check is held.
- Staff are accountable to read and familiarise themselves with Church policies annually, as available on **the website** and as directed by the leadership.
- Those who work with children are aware that they are accountable to their peers, supervisors and ultimately, God for the safety and wellbeing of children in their care. Awareness, vigilance and conferring with colleagues and supervisors are important strategies that are encouraged in protecting our children.

Risk Management CSS 9

The Senior Pastor and the Elders are responsible to identify and manage risks in all environments, including physical and online. *(Needs specific detail here, as to how this is managed)*

Risk assessment and management practices are embedded in our procedures for all services, programs or activities organised or authorised by the Church. We use these practices to inform our planning and implementing of all aspects of operation at the Church.

Risk identification and mitigation is part of the planning process for all activities, especially community events that involve travel.

Online safety

Risk Management also applies to Occupational Health and Safety generally and is covered in more detail in OH&S Policy. The Church **OH&S committee will identify and manage risks within the meeting place and its environment.**

Record Keeping CSS 7, 8 & 11

Record keeping is an essential element of our Child Protection strategies.

- Ministry leaders of children and other volunteers should keep personal notes of concerns, observations and disclosures regarding child abuse during the process of forming a reasonable belief.
- Notes should be saved as a personal record, but in form that can be accessible to church leadership and external authorities, if required.
- When a 'reasonable belief' has been established, these notes can be recorded as an Child Abuse Complaint Report Form, available from the CPO. The CPO can assist and support filling this out, if required. If it is clear that the belief requires a mandatory report, the notes and the Report Form can be supplied to the Police of the Child Protection Unit of DFFH.
- If a report is made, then all notes and the Report Form will be saved to a **case file**, which will be kept by the CPO with all subsequent correspondence and materials relating to investigations, determinations and further actions.

Notes and forms will record places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours or evidence of harm. Reports must be securely stored by the CPO. They provide valuable legal documents for any investigations and demonstrate the Church's due diligence.

Privacy and Confidentiality CSS 11

The Church will collect, use, disclose and hold personal information of all people who fulfil a role within the Church, in accordance with relevant privacy legislation. Such data will be securely stored and protected. Greater detail is provided in the Church's Privacy Policy.

As much as is reasonably possible, an individual's confidentiality is to be protected where allegations of child abuse are made.

Both those who are making reports and those about whom accusations are being made are entitled to confidentiality.

Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, staff members, leaders, volunteers and contractors must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act in a way consistent with the Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure, and relevant statutory requirements.

Review CSS 10

All policies, procedures and practices for keeping children safe will be reviewed:

- every three years or,
- after every reportable incident
- following changes to the law.

The policy review will assess whether the Church's Child Protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under its care. CCW undertakes to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers.

Reporting and Investigation of Suspected Child Abuse

Child abuse, especially sexual abuse of a child must be reported, where a reasonable belief is held that the child concerned has been abused, is being or is likely to be abused. A responsible adult can come to a reasonable belief through:

- i. Disclosure by a child about abuse to his or her self.
- ii. Disclosure by another child or an adult about abuse to a child, or
- iii. Direct observation of the abuse or evidence of it by the reporting adult.

The identity of the abuser and the circumstances of the event determine the procedure that should be followed by the leadership, employees or volunteers of CCW.

A. Abuse of a Child Outside of the Church

If a child attending a CCW program discloses abuse against them or to another child by a person **outside of the CCW community**, then the procedures outlined in **Reporting Procedure 1** (Appendix 1 and 1A) must be followed. All such disclosures should be written up on a **Complaints Form** (Appendix 3) and the Child Protection Officer/Senior Pastor informed.

However, it is the duty of the person to whom the disclosure was made to report the matter to either the Police or Child Protection Services (DHHS), following the Reporting Procedure 1. The church leadership may also decide to make a report.

In this case, ***no further investigation by the church is required***. However, all reasonable steps to protect the child from harm should be taken.

B. Abuse of a Child by a CCW employee, volunteer or member.

In the case of an allegation being made against staff member, volunteer, leader or contractor at CCW the Senior Pastor will follow the Reporting Procedure in **Procedure 1** (Appendix 1 and 1B) to notify both the church leadership team and either the Police (if the matter is deemed severe or criminal) or the Child Protection Unit of DHHS.

In this case, then the additional requirements of the **Reportable Conduct Scheme** (See Appendix 3) must also be followed by the Chairman of Elders, summarised here:

CCW will take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount.

Step 1. Ensure that the details of the allegation are recorded on a church **Complaint Form**, and the Senior Pastor or Leadership Team is informed. Report the matter to the Police or DHHS.

Step 2. Withdraw the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down (with pay, where applicable), re-assignment to other duties that do not have direct contact with children, or to work under increased supervision while the matter is being investigated.

Step 3. Notify the ***state appointed agency to receive Reportable Conduct notifications*** in accordance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme guidelines, that is, within three (3) working days.

Step 4. The investigation process should be completed within 30 days of notification, and the report of the investigation, including findings and actions taken (or decision not to act) will be sent to the relevant Agency In some cases it may be appropriate to bring in an investigator from outside the church, to avoid conflicts of interest.

Step 5. When a report is made, the leadership will contact the insurer via GJ Insurance Consulting Pty Ltd. Ph 1300 384 799 or insure@gjic.com.au

C. Investigations

CCW will appropriately investigate all allegations relating to an incident of abuse in accordance with its obligations and to the extent reasonably practicable.

In some circumstances, as described by the **Reportable Conduct Scheme**, it may be necessary for CCW to conduct an investigation *in addition to* any investigation conducted by authorities (e.g. the police). CCW may conduct an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by the Department or the police and will co-operate with the authorities as required. All people covered by this Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure must co-operate fully with any investigation by the Department, the police or CCW.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for CCW to engage a person (or persons) from outside CCW to conduct an independent investigation in relation to allegations.²

CCW will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other employees, leaders, volunteers and contractors may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation (e.g. to provide witness statements).

D. Case management

In the event of a child disclosing an incident of abuse to someone they trust it is essential that it is dealt with swiftly, sensitively and professionally.

An investigation conducted by CCW will be conducted in accordance with procedural fairness to protect the integrity of the investigation and the interests of all the participants involved in the investigation. CCW will also handle the allegations in a confidential manner to the greatest extent possible. The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but may be (but not limited to):

- withdrawal from current role;
- re-assignment to duties with no contact with children;
- increased supervision;
- disciplinary action, dismissal or criminal prosecution.

² It is important to have an arrangement in place. The investigator must be a person of experience and qualification, maybe with a role in the wider church association or sourced through GJIC Insurance.

Section 3. CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES & FORMS

3.1 Complaints and Allegations

Any person who believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse should telephone 000.

Certain professions are referred to as 'mandatory reporters'. This includes medical practitioners, nurses (including school nurses), members of the police force, counsellors and primary and secondary teachers and principals. Penalties may be incurred by those named as 'mandatory reporters' if they fail to notify the Child Protection agency if they have reasonable grounds for a belief (not proof!) that a child or young person is in need of protection, because they have suffered, or are likely to suffer significant harm, particularly physical or sexual abuse.

In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, **any person** who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, should disclose that information to the Police or the Child Protection. In Victoria 'Failure to Report' is a crime!

3.2 When is a child in need of protection?

A child is in need of protection if any of the following grounds exist—

- a) the child has been abandoned by his or her parents;
- b) the child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person willing and able to care for the child;
- c) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- d) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- e) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- f) the child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be, significantly harmed and the child's parents have not provided, arranged or allowed the provision of, or are unlikely to provide, arrange or allow the provision of, basic care or effective medical, surgical or other remedial care.

3. Making and Managing an Allegation of Abuse

1. Where possible, any person (including a child or parent) making an allegation of child abuse should be encouraged to fill out a **Complaints Form** (Appendix 2) and give this to the CPO. If they are not willing or able to fill out the Form, the CPO (or other leader) may take notes and fill out the form at a later time. The CPO **will** share the allegation with the senior leader of CCW. A copy of this Form **must** be kept by the CPO. The complainant may keep the original. This is an essential record of the event.

If a child is concerned about their own safety or the safety of another person, the child may speak to the **Child Protection Officer (CPO)**. The CPO will meet with the complainant, and hear the story, taking notes and seeking clarification, ensuring that the complainant feels listened to, understood and protected. (Some complaints may be able to be dealt with at this time, where there is misunderstanding, a lack of evidence of any abuse or no reportable act has been committed.)

2. Any responsible adult should, if they have come to a reasonable belief that abuse of a child has happened, is or is likely to happen, follow the steps outlined in **Reporting Procedure 1** (Appendix 1A) below. This includes senior leadership, or any concerned member of the church.

3. If the allegation is made against an employee, volunteer or worker in a church program or activity, then the Chairman of Elders & Senior Pastor must ALSO follow the steps outline in **Reporting Procedure 2:** (Appendix 1B)

Reporting Child Abuse – External to your Workplace

The chart below outlines the process that a person working with children in a specific setting should follow to protect a vulnerable child from actual or possible abuse, from someone **with no relationship or connection with the organisation**.

Disclosure	By a child who is being abused.	By another child or adult	By personal observation
'Reasonable Belief'	Through observation, listening, checking with other adults you come to a reasonable belief that a child has been abused, is being or in danger of being abused. (See definitions of abuse)		
Recording/ Documenting	Make notes of observations and information gathered. Record date on the name, age, gender, current location or address of the child; describe any visible injuries or relevant behaviours; any info on the abuser (if known). Do not interrogate the child! Fill out a Complaint Report Form, if possible.		
Severity	Criminal – sexual or physical abuse, grooming.	Misconduct : physical, emotional abuse, bullying or severe neglect.	
Report to:	The Police Risk of immediate harm or risk to life: Call 000	Child Protection Services For relevant numbers see the following pages	

Lodge Complaint Report Form with **Child Protection Officer** or <Head of entity>.
These officers may also report to the appropriate agencies.

There is nothing else you need to do, as a responsible adult.

Your identity as notifier will remain confidential unless you choose to inform the child or family.

Appendix 1. Reporting Procedure 1

1. Clarifying, Recording Evidence and Specific Information about the Child

A Report is required if you believe, based on reasonable grounds, that a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm as a result of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect AND that the child's parents or caregivers have not, or are unlikely to, protect the child from such harm.

The following information will be required when making a formal report to either the Police or Child Protection Services.

Appendix 1 A Reporting Procedure 1

Appendix 1 B Reporting Procedure 2.

Reporting Child Abuse – In your Workplace

The chart below outlines the process that a person working with children in a specific setting should follow to protect a vulnerable child from actual or possible abuse, from someone who is an employee, volunteer, member or adherent of the church or organisation. Even if you know the person as a colleague, your first duty of care is to safeguard the child.

Disclosure	By a child who is being abused.	By another child or adult.	By personal observation.
'Reasonable Belief'	Through observation, listening, checking with other adults you come to a reasonable belief that a child <u>has been</u> abused, <u>is being</u> or <u>in danger of being</u> abused. (See definitions of abuse)		
Recording/ Documenting	Make notes of observations and information gathered. Record data: the name, age, gender, current location or address of the child; describe any visible injuries or relevant behaviours. Note the identity of the abuser. Do not confront this person, unless to protect a child from immediate danger. Do not interrogate the child! Fill out a Complaint Report Form if possible, even if you wish to also make a verbal complaint.		
Severity	Criminal – sexual or physical abuse, grooming.	Misconduct : sexual, physical, emotional or severe neglect.	
Report to:	The Police Ring 000 Immediately!	Child Protection Services (1300 655 795 BH, or 13 12 78 AH)	
	Lodge Complaint Report Form with Child Protection Officer or <head of entity>. These officers may also report to the appropriate agencies.		

There is nothing else you need to do, as a responsible adult. Your identity as notifier will remain confidential unless you choose to inform the child or family.

Reporting Obligations of the 'Head of Entity' under a Reportable Conduct Scheme:

Notify:	Head of entity has 3 working days to notify the Agency responsible for of a reportable conduct allegations.
Investigate:	You must investigate an allegation (subject to Police clearance on criminal matters); advise the Agency as to who is investigating, manage the immediate risks to children (e.g. remove alleged offender from any contact with children)
Update:	Within 30 days, provide a report which updates the Agency with information and actions you have taken.
Outcomes:	Notify the Agency of findings and actions (or why non action was taken).

APPENDIX 3. Managing Complaints and Investigations

COMPLAINT REPORT MANAGEMENT and INVESTIGATION PROCESS

	On <u>Complaints Report Form</u>		
Complaint or allegation received	Provided as a written text		
	Received verbally, recorded as notes		
Complaint registered in system	(in a Complaints Register) Identify the complainant.		
Initial assessment by Senior <Leader>	Is the complaint low level : misconduct, non-sexual, non-criminal; dispute between students or student-teacher	Is the complaint medium level : reportable misconduct; sexual, physical, emotional or spiritual; negligence; abuse of power; Risk to reputation of College	Is the complaint high level : criminal, sexual or physical abuse; between students, teacher-student; other adult. Risk to person or company (College)
	A	B	C
Allocation to Investigator	Senior <Leader> or Delegate¹	Senior <Leader> or delegate	Police or Child Protection Agency
Acknowledge complaint	Formal letter, from the Senior Leader / Board Chair acknowledging complaint and advising of steps the College will take in investigation, or that the matter has been referred to the Police or another agency.		
Investigation and Report	The investigation must be timely (immediate, if possible), thorough, fair and impartial. Interviews may be audio recorded or, if notes only are taken, signed off by the interviewee as fair and accurate. For criminal matters, clearance must be given by Gov't agencies before investigation.		
	Written report to the <Board> by the Investigator. 00000000		
Findings (for A or B)	Complaint substantiated or partially substantiated.	Complaint not substantiated No case to answer.	
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Criminal Justice decision b. Consequences (Internal) – fair and appropriate, all things considered. c. Communication – to the church community, respecting privacy regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clear and immediate exoneration of the accused person; b. Letter to the complainant re Findings, and further options open, should they dispute the Findings; c. Restorative actions – promoting forgiveness, healing and growth. 	

¹ If there is **any** conflict of interest, an investigator should be appointed by the Governing body, especially if the matter was cleared by the Police after their initial investigation.

Appendix 4. THE REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME (Victoria)

THE REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME outlines a series of responsibilities for the ‘head of entity’ (Senior Pastor) to undertake, where an allegation has been made about child abuse against a person who is acting for the church or participating in activities run by the church. The following information is provided by the **Commission for Children and Young People**.

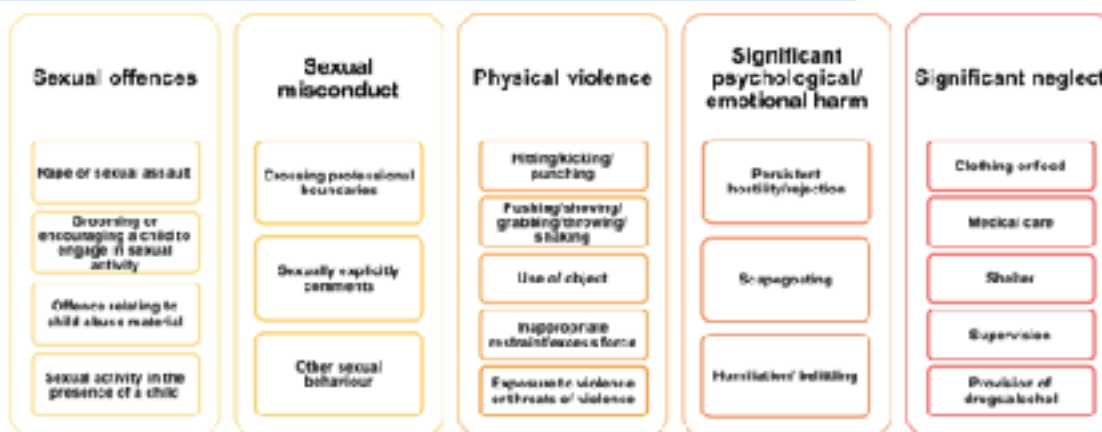
What is the head of an organisation required to do?

The head of the organisation is required to:

- have systems in place to:
 - prevent reportable conduct from being committed
 - enable reportable allegations to be made
 - investigate and respond to reportable allegations
 - report allegations of criminal conduct or suspected criminal conduct to police
- ensure allegations are appropriately investigated
- notify the Commission of reportable allegations and provide updates and outcome of the findings.



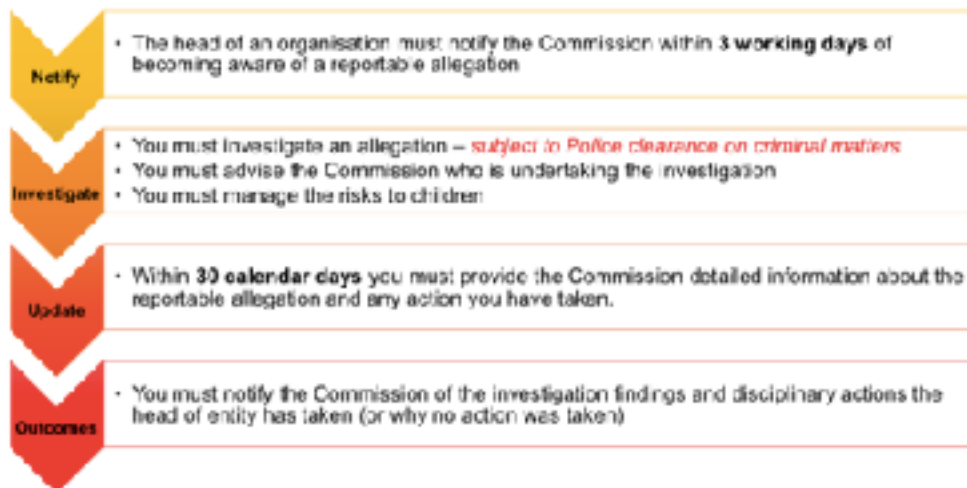
Types of reportable conduct



committed against, with or in the presence of, a child



What are you required to do?



What information will the Commission receive?

3 day notification	30 day update	Advice on investigator	Outcomes of investigation	Additional documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of employee Date of birth Report to Police Details about your organisation Initial advice on nature of allegation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of allegation Details of your response Details about any disciplinary or other action proposed Written response from employee relating to disciplinary or other action (if any) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of investigator Contact details As soon as practicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copy of findings and reasons Details of disciplinary or other actions and reasons Reasons for taking or not taking action As soon as practicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any request made by CCYP in writing for information or documents



A more complete outline of the elements of the Reportable Conduct Scheme can be found at:

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/resources/reportable-conduct-scheme-information-sheets/>

APPENDIX 6 Definitions of Abuse against Children

Child abuse includes:

Any act committed against a child involving

- a. a sexual offence; or
- b. an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
- c. the infliction, on a child, of
 - i. physical violence; or
 - ii. serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- d. serious neglect of a child.

“Child” means a person under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child. Collective term for “child” is “children”.

There are five common types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and racial/cultural

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:

- Hitting, punching, kicking, beating (marks from belt buckles, fingers).
- Shaking (particularly babies).
- Burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair.
- Alcohol or other drug administration.

2. Sexual Abuse, including ‘grooming’

2.1. **Sexual abuse** is any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another’s trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.

2.2. **Sexual grooming** is a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child, as a precursor to sexual abuse. Examples include inappropriate special time with the child, inappropriately giving gifts, ‘accidental touching’, allowing the child to sit on lap, having secrets. In isolation, such behaviours may not indicate the risk of abuse occurring, but if there is a pattern of behaviour occurring, it may indicate grooming.

Grooming behaviours often mimic the kind of relationship-developing strategies that Christian ministries use for the benefit and wellbeing of children, that is, gaining the trust of the child, demonstrating care and concern, spending time, visiting in the home, finding out about family, friends and hobbies. However, grooming to involve a child in sexual activities for the personal gratification of an adult is a crime.

3. Emotional or Psychological Abuse

Emotional abuse is the chronic attitude or behavior of one person, which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child’s development, self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child’s presence.

4. Neglect

Neglect is characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. And includes any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's development. Examples include the failure to provide food, shelter, adequate hygiene or schooling for a child.

5. Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated, unreasonable, unwanted behaviour conducted by an individual or group against another person, which has a negative impact on health and wellbeing. This includes aggression, verbal, emotional/psychological or physical acts or the use of social media or other forms of communication that intimidates, humiliates or threatens. It often involves an abuse of a power differential between the bully and the victim.

Other Forms of Abuse

6. Racial, cultural or religious abuse

Racial abuse is any harmful conduct that discriminates against, or demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, ethnic origin, skin colour or other evidence of 'difference'. It may be overt, such as racial vilification or discrimination, or covert, such as demonstrating a lack of cultural sensitivity or positive ideas about a different ethnicity.

Religious or cultural abuse is similar to racial abuse, but is directed towards expressions of religious faith or practice or cultural dress, identifying styles of cultural expression or practices.

'The harm that is caused by racial, religious or cultural abuse targets the child's identity.'

7. Spiritual abuse

This involves the perpetrator using their position of authority in the church or higher understanding of biblical teaching or God's will to manipulate a child for their own use or benefit, or to pressure a child using guilt, shame, or a strong "works" based ethic. This is not reportable to a Government Child Protection agency, although in extreme circumstances can be classified as emotional abuse.

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying occurs when a person uses any form of telecommunication to sexually groom, bully, suggest an inappropriate relationship be formed, or engage a child in sexual language or behaviours. The explosion of electronic communications (Facebook and other social media sites, text-messaging, internet chat rooms etc.) has seen a sharp increase in cyber-bullying.

STATISTICS OF ABUSE

It is very difficult to know precisely the amount of child abuse that occurs in Australia, as many acts go unreported. Statistics of reported acts, though, are available through government agencies. Child Protection Australia 2010-11 report reported that there were 237, 273 notifications of child abuse involving 163,767 children in Australia.³ The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2002) revealed the following breakup of perpetrators: 74% natural parent, 10% step-parent or de facto, 7% other relative or sibling, 5% friend or neighbour, 4% others (including strangers).⁴ The reality of abuse in Australia is a lot worse than the statistics. There are estimates that as many as 1 in 20 men in Australia may sexually offend against a child. As many as 1 in 5 children will be sexually abused during their childhood. On average, it takes a girl 7 years to tell someone about such abuse, and for men the average is well over 25 years, if they ever do

³ NSW and Act Baptist Churches, *Creating Safe Spaces Manual 2012 v1.3, p11*

⁴ Ibid.