



warrandyte
community
church

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ChildSafe Policy

Our Statement of Commitment

This Child Safe Policy was approved by the Church Leadership in January 2017 and is reviewed annually. It has been written to comply with the guidelines set out by the Commission for Children and Young People (2016).

Warrandyte Community Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its members, leaders, and particularly for children and young people. This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the leadership, staff and volunteers to child safety, and to provide an outline of the policies and practices we have developed to reduce the risks of abuse taking place, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is made in the event of an allegation of abuse being made.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, children and individuals involved in our organisation.

Commitment to child safety

We believe that churches ought to be places of safety and refuge for children, young people and others, where they should be safe, and feel safe from any threat when on church property or involved in activities operated by the church.

We acknowledge the responsibility we have towards those who are taking part in church activities and in the wider community. We therefore commit ourselves to striving to ensure that all our actions are above reproach. All people in a position of authority within the church have a moral and spiritual responsibility towards those they lead and serve, as well as the legal responsibilities that everyone must disclose and report any abuse or risks of abuse that they are aware of.

All primary school aged children and younger will be signed in and out of their programs each week by a parent or guardian unless prior arrangement has been made in writing. We will also keep records of the adults who are assisting in all our primary school aged and younger programs each week. Our 'Wired,' group and their leaders, for school years 6 to 9, will sign themselves in each week, so we have a record of who attended.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our

priority and we have a zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel secure and have fun.

Children's rights to safety and participation

We encourage children to express their views. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all children in our church community to 'have a say' about things that are important to them. We teach children about what they can do if they feel unsafe. We listen to and act on all concerns children, or their parents, raise with us. We ask parents or appropriate adults to sign their children in and out of their programs (up to school year 5), and for all leaders to be listed on the sign in sheets. If children arrive unaccompanied by an adult, we ask them to sign themselves in and out of programs (primary school age) and for them to sign younger siblings in and out of Jellybeans. We have written permission from the parent in this instance. Older children/youth and their leaders will sign a roll each week, so we have a record of attendance.

Behaviour Management

Children are encouraged to behave courteously towards one another, and towards adults. They are expected to take turns, listen, and respect the thoughts and opinions of others. They will be encouraged, but never forced or coerced into joining in with an activity when they do not want to. However, we make a clear distinction between having fun and enjoying time with others and disrupting the group. Our general guide is to kindly and respectfully ask the child to stop whatever disruptive behaviour they are exhibiting and explain the preferred choice of behaviour. If the negative behaviour continues, the child will be given two further, kind but fair and firm warnings, with explanation, after which the child may be asked to join their family in the main service.

This is not our preferred outcome, and we will always make it clear that it is the behaviour, not the child that is unacceptable. We then speak to the parent/s and child afterwards, explaining how much we value them and want them to be in our programs, but that their behaviour stopped others from learning or doing an activity. We also ask the child how they feel about the situation, whether there was a reason for the described behaviour and if there is anything, we could do to help them to join in more effectively in the future. If appropriate there may be a need for children to apologise to each other and/or to leaders. We end on a positive note, saying that we look forward to seeing the child next week, and to please let us know if there's anything else we can do to help.

If a child is physically hurting another child, we will ask their parent to come and deal with the situation. If another child is in immediate danger from a child's actions, we will reduce

the risks as far as we are able to, speaking calmly and removing others from the situation while we wait for assistance from the parent/s.

Valuing diversity

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families
- welcome children with a disability and their families and act to promote their participation

Recruiting & supporting staff and volunteers

We seek to attract and retain the best staff and volunteers. We require Working with Children Checks and police checks for relevant positions and interview and conduct referee checks on all staff. Our commitment to Child Safety is included in all documentation.

All our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

We provide support and supervision, so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated.

Training & supervision

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone in our church understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Claire Lambert and Clinton Hartley have been appointed as Child Safety Persons with the specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children. Our complaints processes are outlined in the Flowchart: CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCESS.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

Our church takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- **The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme:** seeks to improve organisations' responses to allegations of child abuse and neglect by their workers and volunteers.

Further information about these can be found at the end of this document.

Risk Management

We recognise the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and use this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

Reviewing this policy

This policy will be reviewed every year and we undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers.