

Safeguarding Children Policy

Adopted by Ballot

18 December 2025

Version 2.2

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The MCEC is a committee made up of delegates from the member ecclesias within Melbourne in accordance with its constitution. The MCEC administers several subcommittees tasked with arranging various inter ecclesial activities on behalf of the combined Melbourne Christadelphian ecclesias. These activities include programs designed for children and young people to attend and participate in.
- 1.2. The MCEC is committed to child safety across all its various oversight functions in relation to the inter ecclesial combined activities arranged by subcommittees on its behalf
- 1.3. The inter ecclesial combined activities should be a place of safety and spiritual development. In all matters relating to children, including addressing allegations of abuse, it is recognised that their welfare is of paramount importance. Relevant Bible teachings that provide a basis for the ecclesia's child protection policy and procedures appear in Table 1 below.
- 1.4. Child abuse can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and risk of harm. Relevant definitions appear in Appendix B. Possible indicators of child abuse appear in Appendix C.
- 1.5. This policy is designed to assist MCEC members and subcommittees by providing practical procedures that satisfy Scriptural and legal requirements. The legal requirements relate to the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, Working with Children Act 2005 Vic, and the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 Vic and recognizes the different requirements and obligations under the relevant legislation.
- 1.6. Through the implementation of this policy the MCEC aims to:
 - 1.6.1. protect children and young people against harm;
 - 1.6.2. provide guidance for MCEC and subcommittee members and others authorised by the MCEC when engaged in any activity where children and young people are involved;
 - 1.6.3. Ensure regular (at least biennial) training on policy and related procedural matters for those subcommittee members who work with children;
 - 1.6.4. provide guidance for victims of abuse and their families;
 - 1.6.5. provide guidance counselling for alleged perpetrators of abuse;
 - 1.6.6. outline the responsibilities of the MCEC Secretary, Subcommittees, and MCEC members when dealing with such issues;
 - 1.6.7. Meet the 11 prescribed safety Standards as specified by the Commission for Children and Young People; and
 - 1.6.8. abide by the law.

Table 1: Foundation Bible passages which form the basis of this Policy

Bible Teaching	References
The Bible teaches that children are God's heritage.	Matthew 19:14; Psalm 127:3
The Bible teaches that we should "do all to the glory of God". This provides the over-arching principle and guide for planning, managing, and deciding all matters within the Brotherhood.	1 Corinthians 10:31
The Bible teaches that we should practise the commandments of Christ and strive to develop the fruit of the spirit.	John 14:15; 15:14; Galatians 5:22-24; Ephesians 4:17-20; Philippians 4:8

The Bible teaches that we are to be holy and to abstain from all appearance of evil.	1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22
The Bible teaches that all forms of abuse, including child abuse, violate the commandments of Christ and are contrary to the fruit of the spirit.	Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-12; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
The Bible teaches that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbour as our selves.	Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; 22:37-39; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8
The Bible teaches that those who have an oversight role are responsible to care for, and protect the 'flock' from 'wolves'.	Acts 20:28-32

2. Emergency Contacts

Table 2: Emergency Contacts

Police	If any person believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse or harm, contact the Police, on 000 .
Child Protection Service	To make a report, you should contact the child protection intake service covering the local government area (LGA) where the child normally resides. If you are not sure which number to call, check the Child protection contacts page for details on the LGAs covered by each intake service (https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts) For after hours reporting call 13 12 78
The MCEC's Head of Organisation under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic): <i>Is the secretary</i>	

3. Scope

- 3.1. This Policy applies to all committee Members and sub-committee Members. This includes volunteers that are involved or engaged in a combined ecclesial activity of the MCEC.
- 3.2. This Policy extends to all combined ecclesial activities of the MCEC involving children or where children will be present including physical and online (virtual) environments. This includes the following subcommittees:
- Victorian Inter-Ecclesial Combined Activities Committee (VICA)
 - Melbourne Christadelphian Youth Circle ('CYC')
 - Victorian Christadelphian Family Bible Week (Anglesea)
 - Victorian Conferences (Main and Youth)
- 3.3. Each Member Ecclesia is an autonomous legal entity and has its own child safety policy and procedures covering activities of that Ecclesia. This policy does not apply to activities of Member Ecclesias and is limited to inter-Ecclesial activities organised by the MCEC.

4. Aim

- 4.1. This Policy aims to:
- (a) Prevent the abuse of children from occurring in at an MCEC activity environment;
 - (b) Work towards an organisational culture of safeguarding children;
 - (c) Ensure that all committee Members and Subcommittee members are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible risks of harm and abuse to children.
 - (d) Establish controls and procedures for preventing abuse and/or detecting abuse when it occurs;
 - (e) Provide guidance on actions that should be taken where there is suspected abuse against a child within the MCEC activity environment;
 - (f) Provide a clear statement to those engaged in combined ecclesial activities forbidding abuse against a child; and
 - (g) Provide assurance that any, and all, suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

- (h) Provide clear requirements for:
 - The safety and wellbeing of children at combined activities organized by the sub committees, and
 - The management of complaints.
- (i) Provide a framework for:
 - Supporting victims of abuse and their families; and
 - Appropriately managing alleged or convicted offenders and perpetrators; and
- (j) Demonstrate compliance with key child safety laws as relevant to the State of Victoria.

5. Principles

5.1. The MCEC affirms these principles which are the basis of this Policy:

- (a) The MCEC has zero tolerance for all forms of abuse against children.
- (b) The safety and wellbeing of children at MCEC activities is of paramount importance.
- (c) Child abuse violates Bible teaching (refer to [Section 1](#)) and is defined by law as criminal behaviour. The MCEC does not tolerate or condone criminal behaviour.
- (d) Protection of children is a shared responsibility amongst MCEC members and its subcommittees.
- (e) All children have a right to feel safe and be safe, and every person has an equal right to protection from abuse.
- (f) The MCEC will be sensitive, compassionate, objective, confidential, fair, truthful, and compliant in any matter related to the abuse of a child, alleged, or proven.
- (g) The MCEC will provide support and assistance to people affected by abuse, alleged or proven.
- (h) The MCEC supports the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (NP) which are based on the Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse¹. The requirements in [Appendix B](#) are grouped under sub-headings which relate to each of Victorian Child safe standards

6. Responsibilities

6.1. The MCEC and its Subcommittees

6.1.1. The relevant Subcommittee has responsibility for the implementation of this policy at MCEC activities organised.

6.1.2. The relevant subcommittee must:

- a) Implement safeguarding policies and procedures to promote the safety of children (in accordance with state of Victoria legal obligations, and insurance requirements);
- b) Provide leadership in child safety;
- c) Communicate the requirements of this Policy to all subcommittee members and volunteers who may be assisting to run activities;
- d) Ensure subcommittee members and volunteers involved with the care and supervision of children are suitable and supported;
- e) List Safeguarding Children as a standing agenda item at subcommittee meetings;
- f) Ensure child safety is discussed at all pertinent meetings with Activity Coordinators, Child

¹ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Making Institutions Child Safe: Vol 6, 2017, p 413.

- safe officers and all those delivering services to children;
- g) Ensure safeguarding complaints are managed appropriately and in accordance with the law;
- h) Provide support to the MCEC's Safeguarding Representative in responding to and handling complaints involving children;
- i) Implement risk management strategies to minimise risks of abuse to children (refer to [Appendix I](#));
- j) Conduct regular review of this Policy; and
- k) Ensure the Subcommittee is compliant with its record keeping responsibilities in accordance with Section 7 of this Policy.

6.1.3. The MCEC may appoint a person or persons to be the MCEC Safeguarding Representative/s to coordinate administrative requirements of this Policy under their direction. The MCEC main Committee is responsible for the functions outlined in Section 6.2 if it does not appoint a Safeguarding Representative(s).

6.2. MCEC's Safeguarding Representative

6.2.1. The MCEC's Safeguarding Representative is a person or persons appointed by the Main Committee.

Note: The MCEC's Safeguarding Representative does not carry sole responsibility for safeguarding children. MCEC Members and subcommittee members have a shared responsibility for safeguarding children as defined in Sections 4 and 5 of this Policy.

6.2.2. The MCEC's Safeguarding Representative is responsible for:

- a) Coordinating the administrative requirements of this Policy;
- b) Responding to, handling, and managing complaints relating to the safety of children;
- c) Escalating child safety complaints to the appropriate authorities, with support from the Main Committee and subcommittees, and in accordance with the Child Safety Complaints Handling Procedure (refer to [Appendix F](#));
- d) Overseeing the investigation process for child safety complaints;
- e) Providing support to anyone (child, parent or individual) who reports a safeguarding matter; and
- f) Communicating with affected parties involved in the complaint such as the child, the parents/caregivers of the affected child, or the affected individual and their family.

6.2.3. The MCEC's Safeguarding Representative must:

- a) Understand the child safety laws and procedures outlined at [Appendix K](#) as relevant to the State of Victoria;
- b) Understand the requirements and processes for Working with Children Checks (or the equivalent check in the State of Victoria);
- c) Keep records of all members and Subcommittee members Working with Children Checks (or the equivalent) on behalf of the MCEC;
- d) Maintain records of Working with Children Checks on behalf of the MCEC for all volunteers engaged in combined ecclesial activities to work with children in accordance with the legislative requirements, as relevant to the State of Victoria (refer to [Appendix K](#));
- e) Coordinate Child Safe Training for persons engaged by the MCEC to work with children (at

least on an annual basis as per the State of Victoria requirements); and

- f) Advise the MCEC if / when they become aware of changes in law or associated processes which may require a revision to this Policy.

6.3. Subcommittee secretaries

6.3.1. A Subcommittee secretary is a person appointed by the MCEC to coordinate a combined ecclesial activity for the Melbourne ecclesias through the MCEC.

6.3.2. For the activity they have been requested to coordinate, a subcommittee secretary must:

- a) Ensure persons working with children have Working with Children Checks;
- b) Develop and implement activity guidelines which identify risks to children and include appropriate risk management strategies;
- c) Report to the appropriate authorities (refer [Appendix K](#)) if they have a reasonable belief that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused.
- d) Keep records of all subcommittee members and Volunteers engaged to work with children along with their WWCC details.
- e) Keep records of all activity guidelines and risk assessments and provide these to the MCEC secretary prior to each activity for approval and or record keeping.

6.4. Child Safe officer

6.4.1. A Child safe officer is an adult person appointed by any of the subcommittees to coordinate a particular activity and/or child safety oversight of the activities of the subcommittee.

Note: A Child safe officer may be a Member of the MCEC, or a volunteer.

6.4.2. Child safe officers must:

- a) Comply with the standards of behaviour for interactions with children defined in the MCEC's Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (refer to [Appendix D & E](#));
- b) Be vigilant to signs of harm in children;
- c) Routinely check in on a child if they notice a possible sign of harm or if they have a concern for the child's safety or wellbeing;
- d) Maintain a current Working with Children Check;
- e) Attend regular Child Safety Training organised by the MCEC (at least on an annual basis or as per State of Victoria requirements);
- f) Follow child safeguarding policies, procedures, and activity guidelines that have been established for the activity; and
- g) Report to the appropriate authorities (refer to [Appendix K](#)) if they have a reasonable belief that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused.

6.4.3. Child Safe officers who are Activity Coordinators also have the responsibilities in Section 6.3.2

6.5. Volunteers (non- committee Members)

6.5.1. Volunteers who are not Members of the MCEC or its Subcommittees, but are engaged by any of the subcommittees, must:

- a) Comply with the standards of behaviour for interactions with children defined in the MCEC Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (refer to [Appendix E](#));
- b) Maintain a current Working with Children Check if engaging in work with children;

- c) Comply with the requirements of this Policy;
- d) Report to the appropriate authorities (refer to [Appendix K](#)) if they have a reasonable belief that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused.

7. Record Keeping

7.1. The MCEC secretary must complete and keep accurate records of:

- a) All child safety incidents for a minimum of 10 years; and
- b) Serious allegations of abuse for a period of 50 years.

7.2. The MCEC must ensure that records are:

- a) Dealt with in accordance with the relevant law such as the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)²;
- b) Maintained appropriately in a clear, logical, and secure manner;
- c) Preserved in a suitable physical and/or digital environment that ensures records are not subject to degradation, loss, alteration, corruption, or deletion;
- d) Available for individuals who have a right to access records which contain their personal information;
- e) Stored securely in a locked filing cabinet (physical records) or stored in a password-protected file (digital records); and
- f) Destroyed, de-identified and disposed of in accordance with legal requirements.

7.3. The MCEC Secretary ensures that all subcommittee Members are aware of and understand their rights regarding the collection of data, information sharing, and record keeping.

8. Breaches of this Policy

8.1. The MCEC responds promptly to all breaches and manages the process in a fair, unbiased, and supportive manner.

8.2. Depending on the nature of the breach, the MCEC may take the following actions:

- a) Conduct mediation between the parties involved in the incident (where appropriate);
- b) Provide specific education and training to MCEC Members and subcommittee Members with emphasis on the relevant component of this Policy that was the subject of the breach;
- c) Restriction of a person's duties, if the person involved in the breach was carrying out work or volunteering with the MCEC combined activities;
- d) Providing closer supervision; and/or
- e) Review of current policies and procedures, with updates and developments if necessary.

8.3. Any breach of this Policy may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to the suspension or termination of engagement or contract with the MCEC.

8.4. The details of the breach will be documented, recorded, and kept confidential (unless the MCEC is required to disclose by law).

9. Revision History

Table 3: Document Revision History

² See page 320 [Privacy Act 1988](#)

Version	Change Details	Date of Issue
1.0	Initial publication of Draft Policy	Jan 2025
2.0	Revision Draft Policy	August 2025
2.1	Additions and corrections following circulation to members	November 2025
2.2	Policy Adopted by Ballot of Members	18 December 2025
	Review scheduled November 2026	

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Appendix A: Definitions

- A.1. Terms used in the Policy have the meaning given in Table 5.
- A.2. Definitions which include '(Source: RCIRCSA)' are as given in the glossary in the final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.³
- A.3. Definitions which include '(Source: AIFS)' are as given by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.⁴
- A.4. Sources for other definitions are as given.

Table 5: Definitions

Term	Definition (Source)
adult	A person who is 18 years of age or older.
appropriate authorities	Government agencies authorised by law to receive, investigate, and respond to complaints of child abuse and/or have a responsibility for child safety.
breach	An action – or inaction – by a person which does not comply with this Policy.
caregiver	See 'parent / caregiver'.
child	A human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. (Source: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) ⁵
child abuse	Refers to acts or omissions (neglect) that result in, or have the likelihood to result in, harm to a child. The forms of child abuse are sexual abuse (including grooming), emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, and exposure to family violence. ⁶ Refer to Appendix C for definitions, examples, and possible signs of each form of abuse. (Source: AIFS)
Child safe officer	An adult who has volunteered or has been appointed to teach, lead, supervise or work with children or youth.
Combined ecclesial activity	An event that is organised, by a MCEC subcommittee on behalf of the combined ecclesias of Melbourne for their members and families to attend.

³ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Our Inquiry: Vol 1*, 2017, p 319.

⁴ Australian Institute of Family Studies, *What is Child Abuse and Neglect?*, 2018, <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/Policy-and-practice-papers/what-child-abuse-and-neglect>.

⁵ [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Retrieved 5 October 2018 from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>.

⁶ Australian Institute of Family Studies, *What is Child Abuse and Neglect* (2018), <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/what-child-abuse-and-neglect>.

Term	Definition (Source)
Complaint	<p>Includes any allegation, suspicion, concern, or report of a breach of this Policy or the MCEC's code of conduct. It also includes disclosures made to the MCEC that may be about or relate to child abuse in the MCEC environment.</p> <p>The MCEC may receive a complaint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly or through a redress scheme (should one exist); • From anyone – a child, adult survivor, parent, trusted adult, independent support person, employee, volunteer or community Member; • About an adult allegedly perpetrating child abuse or about a child exhibiting harmful behaviours; or • In writing, verbally or as a result of other observations, including behavioural signs. <p>A complaint may become a 'report' to an external authority or agency. (Source: RCIRCSA, with 'institution' replaced by 'MCEC')</p>
Contractor	<p>A person contracted by the MCEC to perform a function, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity.</p>
Disclosure	<p>A process by which a child conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused, or by which an adult conveys or attempts to convey that they were abused as a child.</p> <p>This may take many forms and might be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal disclosures using painting or drawing, gesticulating, or through behavioural changes, are more common among young children and children with cognitive or communication impairments. Children, in particular, may also seek to disclose abuse through emotional or behavioural cues, such as heightened anxiety, withdrawal, aggression or inappropriate behaviour.</p> <p>Disclosures can be intentional or accidental, and they might be prompted by questions from another person or triggered by a memory of the abuse. A disclosure may also become a 'complaint' when made to the MCEC or a 'report' when made to an external authority or agency. (Source: RCIRCSA, with 'institution' replaced by 'MCEC')</p>
Harm	<p>A detrimental effect to a child safety or wellbeing caused by abuse.</p>
Law	<p>The law of the Commonwealth of Australia or of a State or Territory. (Source: RCIRCSA)</p>
Legislation	<p>Acts and regulations. (Source: RCIRCSA)</p>
Main Committee	<p>The Ecclesial Representatives who has been appointed by their affiliated Ecclesia to the MCEC as provided in Clause 3.4 of the MCEC Inc Constitution.</p>
Mandatory reporting	<p>Refers to the legislative requirement of an individual of a certain profession, to make a report to Child Protection Authorities, if they form a reasonable belief that a child has experienced or is at risk of experiencing child abuse. There are differences in mandatory reporting requirements across the States and Territories, MCEC members should refer to Appendix K for guidance. (Source: AIFS)</p>

Term	Definition (Source)
MCEC Combined Ecclesial environment	The environment in which combined ecclesial activities take place. It includes both the physical and online environments.
Member	Ecclesial Delegates from MCEC member ecclesias listed on the MCEC register.
Offender	A person who is found by a court to have done something that is prohibited by law. (Source: RCIRCSA)
Parent / Caregiver	The child's mother, father, or someone else having or exercising parental responsibility for the child (e.g. a child's grandparents, aunty, or uncle). A parent of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child includes a person who under Aboriginal or Islander custom is regarded as a parent of the child.
Perpetrator	A person who has abused a child. (Source: RCIRCSA)
Reasonable Belief	Facts or evidence which would lead a reasonable person to think that there is a risk of harm to a child based upon indicators such as those outlined in Appendix C . It does not require certainty, but it should be more than suspicion (i.e. the individual has some objective basis for the belief).
Record	Information created, received, and maintained as evidence and/or as an asset by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business or for its purposes, regardless of medium, form or format. (Source: RCIRCSA)
Report	Where concerns relating to child abuse are notified to an authority or agency external to the MCEC – for example, where a person or institution notifies the police, a child protection agency, an oversight agency or a professional or registration authority. (Source: RCIRCSA, with 'institution' replaced by 'MCEC')
reportable conduct	Conduct that must be reported under legislation that obliges designated institutions to report allegations of reportable conduct to an independent statutory body. (Source: RCIRCSA)
Reportable Conduct Scheme	A scheme established under legislation in the State of Victoria to monitor, investigate and report on reportable conduct.
Risk of harm	Circumstance where there is a likelihood of harm to a child.
Secondary Victim	People who are affected by the abuse perpetrated against the primary victim (the child who is abused). Secondary victims can include partners, children (including children born as a result of the abuse), parents, siblings, and extended family. Trauma impacts can extend across generations and there may also be collective trauma impacts for whole communities or populations. The impacts of abuse can also be felt by a wider range of people, including whistleblowers and other people (including other children) within the institution where the abuse occurred. (Source: RCIRCSA)

Term	Definition (Source)
Sexual Offending	Sexual behaviours that fall within the definition of a sexual offence under Australian law, where the person could be held criminally responsible for their conduct. (Source: RCIRCSA)
Subcommittee Member	A person who is appointed or elected to one or more of the MCEC subcommittees.
Subcommittee Secretary	A person appointed by the combined ecclesias of Melbourne to coordinate a combined activity of the Melbourne ecclesias.
Training	Provision for those engaged with children in activities organised or conducted under the auspices of the MCEC to understand their responsibilities under this Policy.
Unity Basis	<i>Unity in Australia: The Accepted Basis</i> , ⁷ the basis upon which Christadelphian Ecclesias in the Central Fellowship in Australia agree to relate to each other and conduct some of their affairs.
Working with Children Check	A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a background check for people seeking to engage in child-related work. It aims to prevent people from working or volunteering with children if records indicate that they may pose an unacceptable level of risk to children. ⁸ Each State and Territory has its own WWCC scheme, see Appendix K: Child Safety Procedures for specific State requirements.
Work or Working with Children	Is any role or function which involves contact with children, including care, supervision, and teaching.
Youth (young person)	A teenager who is a child. <i>Note: This term is used in recognition that a teenager may not identify as being a 'child' (notwithstanding the definition).</i>

⁷ *Unity in Australia: The Accepted Basis*, with special reference to the work of the late Brother John Carter towards reunion in 1958. First Edited and Published by the Australian Christadelphian Central Standing Committee 1963. Reprinted by the Australian Christadelphian Committee 1999. Reprinted by the Association of Australian Christadelphian Ecclesias 2010.

⁸ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Working with Children Checks Report*, 2015, p 3.

Appendix B: Implementing the 11 Standards for Child Safe Organisations

1. Victorian Child Safe standards

- 1.1. To create and maintain a child safe organization the MCEC recognises and implements the following 11 mandatory Child Safe Standards:

1.1.1.

Standard 1	Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued
Standard 2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
Standard 3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Standard 4	Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
Standard 5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
Standard 6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
Standard 7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused
Standard 8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
Standard 9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
Standard 10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
Standard 11	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

Appendix C: Identifying the Forms and Possible Signs of Child Abuse

C.1. Child abuse includes:

(a) Any act committed against a child involving:

- A sexual offence; or
- Grooming.

(b) The infliction, on a child, of

- Physical violence; or
- Serious emotional or psychological harm.

(c) Serious neglect of a child

(d) Exposure to family violence.

C.2. People in contact with children, and their families should be aware of the possible signs of child abuse.

C.3. Sexual offenders exploit the dependency, vulnerability, and immaturity of children. They may use a range of tactics including force, threats, and tricks to engage children in sexual contact and to try to silence them. They may also try to gain the trust and friendship of parents or caregivers to obtain access to children. They may be family members or close family friends.

C.4. There are two different signs of abuse:

(a) **Physical Signs** are the injuries / visible harms that may occur as a result of abuse.

(b) **Behavioural Signs** are the actions, attitudes, and emotions of an individual that indicate abuse may have occurred.

C.5. A person should not assess individual signs in isolation, rather signs should be looked at in the context of other potential signs and the personal circumstances or history of the child.

C.6. The signs of abuse noted below are not exhaustive. The presence of these signs does not necessarily mean that abuse has been, or is, occurring.

C.7. **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse refers to the intentional or reckless use of physical force that results in, or has the likelihood of resulting in, harm to a child's health, survival, development and/or dignity. It may also include the threat of abuse where the child reasonably fears it may occur.

Unacceptable behaviour includes:

- Hitting, punching, kicking, or slapping;
- Choking or suffocating;
- Throwing items or using items to hurt a child;
- Dragging or pushing;
- Threatening to hurt a child through words or gestures;
- Restraining or locking a child up;
- Using hostile force towards a child;
- Engaging in rough physical games.

Table 6: Possible Signs of Physical Abuse

Physical signs	Behavioural signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruising • Fractured bones • Burns / scalds • Lacerations and welts • Sprains and dislocations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covering up injuries • Fear of adults • Unable to explain an injury • Being aggressive towards others • Avoiding physical contact

C.8. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse refers to any act that exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes that the child does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to and/or is not developmentally prepared for. It also includes acts that are contrary to acceptable community standards.

Unacceptable behaviours include:

- Sexual touching of a child;
- Sexual contact with a child;
- Possessing or creating child abuse material;
- Sharing explicit photos of a child;
- Exposing a child to pornography or other indecent material;
- Using a camera to record a child while they are dressing or bathing;
- Using sexual language or gestures in the presence of children;
- Sexual comments, conversations, or communications with a child;
- Comments that express a desire to act in a sexual manner with a child.

Table 7: Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

Physical signs	Behavioural signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain or bleeding in the anal or genital areas • Bruises and/or bite marks to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen • Difficulty walking or sitting • Unexplained pain in genital area • Bed-wetting beyond usual age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children describing sexual acts • Sexual behaviour beyond healthy development • Self-destructive behaviour • Withdrawn behaviour • Regression in development

C.9. Child Grooming

Child grooming is a form of sexual abuse. It refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing a personal connection with a child, to prepare the child for sexual abuse.

Table 8: Possible Grooming Strategies

Possible Grooming Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering a child gifts, money, attention, or affection with the intention of making it easier to access the child for sexual activity • Spending inappropriate one-on-one time with a child • Actively isolating children from other adults or children • Violating personal boundaries in the context of intimate care. This includes bathing, toileting and changing clothes. • Insisting on physical affection with a child such as hugging, kissing, tickling even when a child does not appear to want it⁹ • Sharing details with a child of personal sexual experiences • Communicating privately with a child via social media. • Making close physical contact, like inappropriate tickling and 'play' wrestling • Forming relationships with parents, guardians, and family members of children to build trust and ease their ability to access the child.

C.10. Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Emotional or Psychological Abuse refers to inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child. It can also refer to a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. It is behaviour towards a child that is likely to damage their self-esteem or social competence.

Unacceptable behaviour includes:

- Teasing or bullying
- Yelling
- Persistent criticism
- Refusing to acknowledge a child's worth and the legitimacy of their needs
- Persistent rejection of or hostility towards a child
- Deliberately preventing a child from forming friendships
- Encouraging a child to engage in destructive antisocial behaviour
- Making a child feel worthless, unloved, alone or frightened
- Exposing a child to family violence

Table 9: Possible Signs of Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Physical signs	Behavioural signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical development is delayed • Delayed speech • Bed-wetting beyond usual age • Extreme weight loss • Signs of self-harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overly compliant behaviour • High levels of anxiety or depression • Avoids interaction with other children • Demonstrating low self-esteem • Lack of trust in people • Extreme attention seeking • Eating disorders

⁹ Tickling a child is strongly discouraged. If a child is being tickled and says to stop but tickling continues, it is preparing the child to accept they don't have bodily autonomy and may not feel they can object to more serious behaviours.

C.11. Neglect

Neglect refers to when a person responsible for the care of a child, fails to provide them with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their growth, development, and wellbeing. Neglectful behaviours can be an act of omission or undertaken by willful choice.

Unacceptable behaviour includes:

- Depriving a child of necessities such as food, drink, clothing, medical care/treatment, or shelter;
- Failing to protect a child from abuse such as failure to report abuse when a child makes a disclosure;
- Exposing a child to a harmful environment;
- Failing to adequately supervise a child, resulting in injury or harm.

Table 10: Possible Signs of Neglect

Physical signs	Behavioural signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low weight for age • Poor standards of hygiene • Untreated physical problems • Poor complexion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stealing food • Indiscriminately seeks out adult affection • Being constantly tired • Frequently late or absent • Being withdrawn

C.12. Exposure to Family Violence

Refers to any form of abusive behaviour by a person towards another family member. The abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, economical, threatening, or coercive type behaviour. It is also a form of abuse when a child is exposed to, hears or witnesses any of the effects of the abusive behaviours.

Examples include:

- Experiencing fear for self, another person, a pet, or belongings;
- Seeing, hearing, or sensing violence against another family member;
- Attempting to prevent or minimise the violence;
- Being blamed for not preventing the violence.

Table 11: Possible Signs of Exposure to Family Violence

Physical signs	Behavioural signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech disorders • Delays in physical development • Physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches • Being easily startled • Injuries as a result of harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in emotional development • Fear of and avoiding going home • Depression, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts • Violent or aggressive behaviour and language • Demonstrated fear of parents or guardians

Appendix D: Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct for MCEC

- D1 The MCEC Members can help create a child safe environment by:
- Reading and adhering to this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and associated guidelines.
 - Attending the training sessions on this policy at least once every two years and on induction.
 - Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
 - Treating everyone with respect including listening to and valuing other members inputs.
 - Praying for God's guidance for all members but especially those with leadership roles and roles that involve interaction with children.
 - Being role models for appropriate adult behavior.
 - Maintain an up-to-date Working with Children Check.

Appendix E: Implementation of Child safe policies within the Sub committees and activities.

E-1 For any combined ecclesial event arranged by an MCEC subcommittee, the following principle is to apply:

1. The parents of children who are in attendance must be informed that the activity is arranged on the basis that "**parents have the primary responsible for the safety and wellbeing of their children at all MCEC and MCEC subcommittee events**". If neither parent can be present, a child shall be given into the direct responsibility of another adult acting as the child's guardian. Where there are events where parents or guardians cannot be present, then the MCEC subcommittee for that event shall ensure that the children will be supervised on the basis that there will be at least one adult Brother or Sister meeting the requirements of this appendix.

E-2 All subcommittees are required to implement the MCEC safeguarding children policy including the actions prescribed in sections 6.3 - 6.5. In addition, Sub committees are encouraged to prepare relevant guidelines for those in leadership roles for each activity and to conduct a post event review to record any system and or policy improvements that may enhance future events. The post event review must include details of how any risk management strategies were implemented.

E-3 All subcommittee members and Contractors must adhere to the code of conduct in appendix D above, and the specific code of conduct listed below.

Code of conduct for all subcommittees and volunteers:

Conduct that is encouraged for subcommittee members and contractors

DO...

- Reflect the ethos of the MCEC at all combined ecclesial events and affiliated activities.
- Behave as a positive role model to children and young people.
- Treat all children with respect without showing favouritism.
- Use positive and affirming language toward children and young people.
- Intervene if children or young people are engaging in inappropriate behaviour towards others or acting in a bullying, humiliating or derogatory way.
- Help provide an open, family-friendly environment for children to worship, interact, and socialise, where children have a voice in an age-appropriate way.
- Always ask a child's permission before physically touching them, even when responding to an injury. This is especially true of any areas that would usually be covered by a t-shirt

and/or shorts. If an injury is in this area, make sure another adult works with you when providing care.

- Always have at least one other adult assisting you with supervising children. Do your best to avoid being alone with any child (other than your own). Where possible move to where there are other people.
- Affirm children with appropriate touch by keeping hugs brief and side-by-side or shoulder-to-shoulder. Always keep hands at (not below) the shoulder level. For small children who like to sit on laps, encourage them to sit next to you.
- Provide extra care when taking young children to the toilet. Where possible encourage parents to fulfil this responsibility, or take another adult with you, or if none of these are possible ensure 1 the door is open.
- Alert the subcommittee secretary or MCEC secretary if you observe an apparent breach of this code.
- Report suspicions of child abuse or neglect to the Subcommittee secretary or the MCEC secretary.
- Seek advice about suspicions and disclosures of child abuse or neglect by contacting relevant State, or local government child-protection Services in your region and report apparent alleged criminal conduct to Police.
- Cooperate with the screening process for contractors who work with Children & Youth and keep all WWCC information up to date.
- Stay up to date with regular training provided by MCEC and be familiar with the most up to date safeguarding children policy of the MCEC.
- Endeavour to be loving, kind, firm and thoroughly professional as a volunteer, contractor, mindful of the deep responsibility and privilege of working with our children and young people.

**Conduct that is not condoned within subcommittees and volunteers:
DO NOT...**

- Leave children you are responsible for unattended. Do endeavour to provide appropriate supervision at all times.
- Engage in inappropriately rough physical play with a child or young person (not your own).
- Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a child, other than reasonable restraint such as by holding a child to mitigate injury. "Time-outs" or "Sit-in-that-chair" might be helpful tools to use when disciplining a child.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle, or touch a child (not your own) in an age/culturally inappropriate manner OR in a manner considered inappropriate by reason of the nature of the program / activity / occasion / event, except for appropriate touch (for example to comfort distress).
- Assist children (not your own) to do things of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.
- Spend time alone or remain in a confined or secluded space with a child or young person (not your own) at ecclesial events or other venues.
- Work with children or youth in rooms with no visibility from outside ie glass panels in door etc. If unavoidable, ensure that the door is left open to allow observation from outside.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person.
- Make offensive or inappropriate comments to a child/ren regarding their appearance, abilities, or sexuality.
- Give personal gifts or favours that target a particular child (not your own).
- Cultivate online and social media 'friendships' with children and young people (who are not your own) without parental/guardian permission for communication and parents / guardians / leaders being included on messaging lists. Any private messaging to a child or young person should be sent / returned during pre-approved times.
- Share or send sexually suggestive or explicit material to a child in any form such as e-mail, text, movie, sound, or picture file.
- Use profane language near or around children.
- Take a child or young person (not your own) to your home/ residence, or encourage private meetings outside of MCEC activities, unless authorised to do so by their parents or with approval from the Child Protection Officer and suitable guidelines are in place.

- Take unauthorised photos, movies or recordings of a child at a MCEC event or affiliated activity, without MCEC authorisation and the parental / guardian consent.
- Publish unauthorised photos, movies or recordings of a child or young person, including online, without parental/guardian consent, nor post online unauthorised private information about a child or young person that may identify them such as their: full name; age; e-mail address; telephone number; residence; school; or details of a club or group they may attend.

E-4 All subcommittees are required to complete activity guidelines and risk assessments and provide these to the MCEC secretary prior to each activity for approval. (See Appendix J.)

E-5 All Subcommittee secretaries must notify the MCEC secretary of any breach of this policy including the codes of conduct, any report made, compliant or allegation related to child abuse or the risk of child abuse in relation to the MCEC's activities.

Appendix F: Child Safe Complaints Handling Procedure

Step 1: Identifying a Child Safety Complaint

(a) A complaint may include the following:

- An **Allegation** that has been made against a person concerning their behaviour towards a child.
- A **Concern** that has been raised about a child's safety or wellbeing.
- A **Suspicion** that abuse may be occurring, or that a child may be at risk of abuse.
- A **Disclosure** of abuse made by either a child, or other adult (includes disclosures about historical child abuse).
- A **Breach** of the *Safeguarding Children Policy* or the *Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct*.

(b) Complaints relating to children may involve (refer to [Appendix C](#) for help in identifying the forms and possible signs of child abuse):

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Emotional / Psychological abuse
- Neglect
- Exposure to family violence.

Step 2: Receiving a Complaint

When receiving a safeguarding complaint, the following process should be followed:

(a) Listen

When a child is making a disclosure, you should:

- Allow the child to use their own words
- Consider whether the child's parent, guardian or carer should be present
- Remain calm, patient and be supportive
- Do not ask suggestive or leading questions
- Do not interrogate the child. You should avoid asking too many questions that may overwhelm them.

(b) Reassure

Reassure the child that:

- They have done the right thing by voicing their concern
- What has happened is not their fault
- You are taking their concern seriously
- You believe them.

(c) Respect

- Respect that it may take the child time to disclose information
- Explain what the next steps will be (using language appropriate to the child's age and capability)

- Avoid making promises that you cannot keep, for example that you will not tell anyone about what has happened
- Ask the child what kind of support they would like from you.

Note: If a person initiates a child safety complaint on behalf of a child and the affected child is not present, you should adopt the same process outlined above.

Step 3: Reporting a Child Safety Complaint

- If any person believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse or harm, or the complaint involves a serious criminal offence, contact the Police, on **000** (request an Ambulance if required).
- For all non-emergency related matters, contact the Police, on **131 444**.

Note: Further guidance on reporting child abuse or harm is outlined at [Appendix K](#). Refer to the procedure that is relevant to Victoria.

- Report the matter to the appropriate authority as required by the Victorian legislation (see [Appendix K](#)) and request direction from them concerning the child's immediate welfare;
- Report all child safety complaints to the Secretary/Safeguarding Representative or other relevant member of the MCEC Main Committee who has no conflict of interest.
- Take immediate action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Note: To effectively identify child safety complaints, you should be aware of the different forms of child abuse, as well as the possible physical and behavioural signs (see [Appendix C](#)).

A member of the MCEC Main Committee must not be involved in any matter related to a complaint or disclosure where there may be a real or perceived conflict of interest.

The aim of advising the MCEC Main Committee is to enable them to act effectively in implementing risk mitigation measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child. This may involve appropriately restricting a person against whom an allegation has been made, by for example, removing a person from rostered duties or attendance at youth activities.

Actions taken by the MCEC Main Committee and subsequent communication must not compromise legal confidentiality requirements. Police or other authorities may wish to speak to a child before other interviews occur. The child should not be questioned further about the disclosure until relevant external authorities such as the police have been provided with the opportunity to speak with the child and have confirmed that further inquiries can be made.

- A decision by the MCEC Main Committee not to report a complaint or disclosure to the appropriate authorities does not prevent any other person from reporting it to the appropriate authorities. Individuals may still have a legal obligation to make a report in accordance with the legislation in Victoria (see [Appendix K](#)).

Support and Protection for Reporters

- The MCEC Main Committee informs parents / caregivers of progress and actions relating to any complaint process and discusses matters with parents / caregivers in accordance with the law and the direction of the relevant Authorities.
- The MCEC Main Committee must provide support to a child, or other person who makes a complaint or disclosure.

Note: Support may include – without compromising the confidentiality and conflict of interest requirements of this section – assistance with the reporting process and pastoral and/or professional counselling.

- (c) The MCEC will not penalise anyone who makes a complaint in the best interest of the child. Individuals are entitled to the protections outlined in the Victorian legislation relevant (see [Appendix K](#)).

Reportable Conduct

- (a) If the MCEC Main Committee is informed of a complaint or disclosure that may be reportable conduct under the applicable Reportable Conduct Scheme and which has not yet been reported to the appropriate authorities, they must determine if the circumstances constitute reportable conduct within the meaning of applicable legislation within Victoria.
- (b) If the MCEC Main Committee determines that an individual has engaged in reportable conduct, the complaint or disclosure must be reported to the appropriate authorities. In forming a view the Secretary will liaise with the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People for guidance.
- (c) If the MCEC Main Committee determine the conduct is not reportable conduct within the meaning of the applicable legislation, and that they are not required to report to relevant authorities, the decision and the reasons for that decision must be clearly documented in writing.

Step 4: Investigation

- (a) Members of the MCEC must fully cooperate with an appropriate authority exercising a lawful power such as the Police and Child Protection Authorities.
- (b) If a report has been made to an external authority e.g. the Police and/or Child Protection Authorities, the MCEC Committee should communicate with the relevant authority prior to initiating an internal investigation.
- (c) Where an investigation is required, the MCEC Committee must engage an external investigator to ensure the independence and integrity of the investigation.

Notes: Reportable Conduct legislation in Victoria requires an investigation into reportable allegations. (refer to the Child Safety procedures in [Appendix K](#)). The MCEC Committee must ensure that such an investigation occurs and is undertaken by an independent person with appropriate expertise.

The appropriate authorities have professional personnel who are specialised in investigating child abuse and minimising the possible detrimental effect detailed questioning may have on alleged victims. For the same reason, qualified external investigators are recommended where internal investigations are required.

Step 5: Recording Complaints

All child safety complaints must be recorded using the *Child Safety Incident Report Form* (refer to [Appendix H](#)) regardless of whether the complaint meets the statutory reporting threshold. The completed form must be provided to:

- (a) The Safeguarding Representative
- (b) The MCEC Committee Secretary
- (c) The appropriate authorities (such as the Police, Child Protection Authorities if requested) and;
- (d) The relevant insurer.

Step 6: Risk Assessments

When the MCEC Main Committee become aware of a complaint or disclosure, they must conduct a risk assessment to identify, assess and minimise any risks to the child, and secondary victims.

Note: This risk assessment should be conducted in a manner that does not interfere with any investigation by external authorities. It is an assessment of risk not an investigation of the veracity of a complaint or disclosure. After the level of risk and type of allegation is determined, the MCEC Main Committee will consider what actions are necessary to safeguard children.

Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- *Removal of the individual from work with children*
- *Additional supervision of the individual*
- *Removal and/or ban of the alleged perpetrator from MCEC events*
- *Provision of ongoing monitoring of and support for the affected child*
- *Delivery of training to MCECI Members and non-Member volunteers.*

Step 7: Disciplinary Action

Where the subject of a complaint involves a person associated with the MCEC, the following actions may be taken to maintain a child safe environment:

- (a) Increased supervision
- (b) Removal or suspension from attendance at MCEC activities
- (c) Removal or suspension from MCEC sub-committees
- (d) Removal of MCEC membership

Step 8: Debrief

At the conclusion of the complaints process, the MCEC Main Committee and/or Safeguarding Representative will debrief the affected parties on the final outcome and reasons for the decision. All information shared in debrief sessions must comply with the confidentiality requirements of this Policy.

- (a) The affected child and their parent/guardian:
 - Follow up with the child and/or their family and inform them of the outcomes and resolution.
 - If appropriate, connect the child and/or their family with support services.
 - Document all communications.
- (b) The subject of the complaint:
 - Debrief with the subject of the complaint and inform them of the outcomes and resolution.
 - Provide referrals to external agencies for additional and ongoing support such as counselling services (if required).
 - Document all communications.
- (c) Members and non-Members
 - Debrief with affected Members and non-Members and offer counselling services if required (and if appropriate).
 - Debrief all relevant Members and non-Members and provide relevant information (if appropriate)
 - Document all communications.
- (d) External Authorities:
 - The MCEC Committee and/or Safeguarding Representative may also be required to communicate with the external bodies including the Police, Child Protection Services and the Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP).

Additional Considerations**A. Confidentiality**

A complaint or disclosure must remain strictly confidential to the extent permitted by law. The circumstances, the identities of the child, the person making the complaint and the subject of the complaint must remain confidential other than is necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child and for:

- (a) Communicating with the appropriate authorities;
- (b) Communicating with persons approved by the appropriate authorities (such as the child's parents or caregivers); and
- (c) Advising the MCEC Main Committee

B. Disclosures

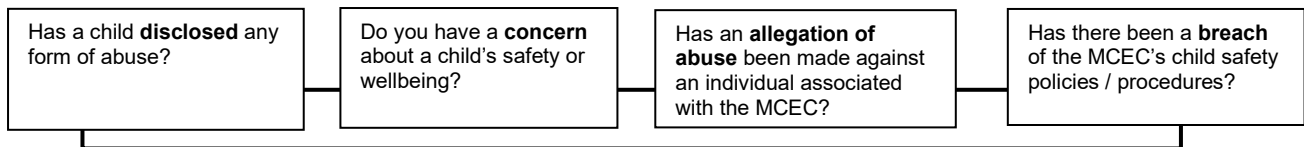
- (a) The MCEC Main Committee must advise the MCEC's insurer of any complaint or disclosure reported to the appropriate authorities.
- (b) A person who attends an activity of MCEC and who is the subject of a complaint, whether related to activities of the MCEC or not, must:
 - Immediately inform the MCEC secretary;
 - Cooperate with the appropriate authorities in their investigation of the complaint;
 - Comply with the MCEC Committee directions regarding that person's participation in MCEC activities and interactions with children; and
 - Keep the MCEC Committee informed of the status of the investigation into the complaint and its resolution.

C. Referral and Support Services

(<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts>)

Appendix G: Child Safe Complaint Handling Flow Chart

1. IDENTIFY AND RECEIVE



2. REPORT

YES

- (a) If a child is at immediate risk of abuse or harm, or the complaint involves a serious criminal offence, contact the Police, on **000** (request an Ambulance if required).
- (b) For all non-emergency related matters, contact the Police, on **131 444**.

THEN

Immediately:

1. Complete the Child Safe Incident Report Form
2. Report to the appropriate external authorities in accordance with your child safe legal obligations:
 - **Has a child abuse offence been committed against the child?** If **YES**, report to the Police **DIAL 000**. (refer to [Appendix K](#)) or **Child protection Authorities** (<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts>)
 - **Does it meet Mandatory Reporting requirements?**
 1. If **YES**, REPORT to Child Protection Authorities (<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts>)
 2. If **NO**, call the Child Protection Authorities to seek further guidance and clarification. (refer to [Appendix K](#)) (<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts>)
 - **Does the allegation constitute reportable conduct?**
If **YES**, notify the MCEC Committee who will comply with legislative requirements in Victoria.
3. Report to the Safeguarding Representative/s or Secretary of the MCEC Main Committee.

THEN

3. INVESTIGATE AND RECORD

1. The MCEC Main Committee to appoint external investigator for internal investigations (in accordance with Police direction) and take appropriate action.
2. Record and store:
 - The Child Safe Incident Report Form
 - All information relating to the investigation findings, reasons and outcomes
 - Advice received from Child Protection Authorities and case reference number (if reported)
 - All other relevant information including about referral and support services.

In relation to Reportable Conduct: Document all information relevant to the allegation, investigation progress, findings and action taken. Comply with legislative requirements in Victoria

THEN

4. DEBRIEF

The MCEC Main Committee and/or the Safeguarding Representative/s:

- Debrief affected child (and/or their family)
- Provide information about support and referral services to affected parties (if appropriate)
- Continue to monitor the situation
- Continue to communicate with the Police and Child Protection Authorities (as required)

Appendix H: Child Safety Incident Report Form

This form should be completed for all child safety complaints. Before completing this form, please ensure that all requirements outlined in the *Safeguarding Children Policy* have been followed and advice has been sought from external authorities where appropriate.

This record and any notes must be kept in a confidential place and stored in accordance with record keeping guidelines outlined in the *Safeguarding Children Policy*. The MCEC should provide any records to the relevant external authorities should they require them.

Child Safety Incident Report Form	
Complainant's Details	Name: Phone: Email Address:
Classification of Complainant <i>e.g. Member, non-Member, Activity Coordinator, Child safe officer, Member of the Public etc.</i>	
Date Complaint received:	
Child's Details	Name: Age: Address:
Does the child identify as a child from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or First Nations background?	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
Does the child have a disability?	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please provide relevant details:.....
Does the child come from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds?	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please specify.....
Does the child require communication support?	<input type="checkbox"/> No

<p><i>Communication support may include an interpreter, a support person, family member etc.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p>If yes, please provide any information relating to the child's preferred communication methods, support needs and involvement in the complaints process:</p>
<p>Category of the Incident</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Emotional or psychological abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Neglect <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Grooming <input type="checkbox"/> Physical abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Exposure to Family violence <input type="checkbox"/> Breach of the Safeguarding Children Policy/Code of Conduct. <input type="checkbox"/> Other inappropriate behaviour. Please detail: _____ _____ _____</p>
<p>Name of person complained about (Respondent)</p>	
<p>Classification of Respondent</p> <p><i>e.g. Member, non-Member, Activity Coordinator, Child Safe Officer, , Member of the Public etc.</i></p>	
<p>Date of incident</p>	
<p>Time of incident</p>	
<p>Location of incident</p>	
<p>Witnesses (if more than 3 witnesses, attach additional details to this form)</p>	<p>Name (1): Contact details:</p> <p>Name (2): Contact details:</p> <p>Name (3): Contact details:</p>
<p>Details of complaint / reason for suspecting abuse</p>	

Appendix I: Child Safe Situational Prevention Strategies

Table 13: Child Safe Situational Prevention Strategies

Child Safe Situational Prevention Strategies		
Increase the Effort	Decrease the Risks	Remove Excuses
<p>Deflect Offenders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish on the website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MCEC's commitment to child safety Child safe policies Ensure job advertisements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the MCEC's commitment to child safety Include a requirement for WWCC 	<p>Extend Guardianship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and support the inclusion of parents, families, and children in MCEC activities and in decision making Encourage and support children to have a voice and speak up if they do not feel safe Create a child-centered culture. 	<p>Set Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement child safe policies, procedures, and codes of conduct Role descriptions and expectations outlining the duties of MCEC Members and non-Members (Volunteers) Implement child safe policies and guidelines Provide regular feedback opportunities
<p>Screen Applicants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verify Working with Children Checks Thorough reference checks to confirm prior employment history and any instances of inappropriate behaviour with children Robust interview process to understand the applicant's child safety values 	<p>Assist Natural Surveillance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design open plan spaces where children interact with adults to allow for natural surveillance and line-of-sight supervision Ask children to identify areas where they do not feel safe Ensure windows are not obscured with posters or frosted glass Ensure children are not in isolated areas unless accompanied by more than 1 adult 	<p>Display Instructions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make child safe policies, procedures, and codes of conduct accessible
<p>Modify Physical Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent access to concealed and secluded areas Implement rules to make the concealed areas 'out of bounds' Use clear glass in doors and windows to assist natural surveillance Install surveillance equipment in high-risk environments. 	<p>Reduce Anonymity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all MCEC Members and non-Members who work with children are easily identifiable to parents and caregivers Provide feedback mechanisms on all areas of the MCEC including Members and non-Members, the environment, and the culture 	<p>Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> see Appendix D
<p>Governance & Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disciplinary policies outline consequences of breaching the <i>Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct</i> Provide ongoing support and guidance about Child Safe Best Practices Provide support for people who make complaints or allegations 		

Appendix J: Safeguarding Risk Assessment Template

Date reviewed	[insert date]
Next review due	[insert review date, no longer than one year from date reviewed]
Activity	<p>[What activity are you applying this to? Where and when is it taking place? Who is involved?]</p> <p><i>Example: Sunday School at the (Location) Date and Time children aged 6 – 10 years</i></p>
Completed by:	
Completion date:	

Refer to the Risk Assessment Tools overleaf to determine the Likelihood, Consequence and Risk Rating for each identified risk.

Potential Risks	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Rating	Existing Risk Controls	New controls required
	Almost Certain Certain Possible Unlikely Rare	Insignificant Minor Moderate Major Catastrophic	Low Medium High		
<i>Identify the risk</i>	<i>Refer to the Likelihood table</i>	<i>Refer to the Consequences table</i>	<i>Refer to the Risk Matrix Tool</i>	<i>What does the MCEC currently have in place to minimise the identified risk?</i>	<i>Are there any gaps in the MCEC's existing controls?</i>

Risk Assessment Tools

Table 14: Consequence of Risk Table

Consequence Table		
Category	Consequence	Description
1	Insignificant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor injury, altercation, or mishap No first aid or support for stress/ trauma required.
2	Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental surroundings may contribute to child being at risk Minor behavioural issues Minor first aid and support for stress/trauma event required.
3	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serious injuries and/or illness requiring medical attention Complex welfare and/or health issue Serious stress/trauma event requiring professional support.
4	Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Injuries requiring hospitalisation Child missing from main group A child is at risk of abuse Stress/trauma requiring ongoing clinical support.
5	Catastrophic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical incident Death or disability of child Stress/trauma event requiring extensive clinical support for multiple individuals High level of distress to other parties.

Table 15: Likelihood of Risk Table

Likelihood Table		
Category	Level	Probability
A	Almost Certain	Almost certain to occur in most circumstances
B	Likely	Likely to occur frequently
C	Possible	Possible and likely to occur at some time
D	Unlikely	Unlikely to occur but could happen
E	Rare	May occur but only in rare and exceptional circumstances

Risk Matrix Tool

Once the appropriate category of consequences and the likelihood of risk is determined, you can use a risk matrix tool to determine a risk score.

Results		LIKELIHOOD					Risk
		Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain	
CONSEQUENCE	Catastrophic	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	
	Major	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme	
	Moderate	Low	Medium	High	High	Extreme	
	Minor	Low	Low	Medium	High	High	
	Insignificant	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High	

Tolerance Levels

The risk score determined using the Risk Matrix Tool can provide an indication of the priority level of the risk, indicating the urgency to take remedial action.

Table 16: Risk Tolerance Table

Risk Rating	Risk Treatment
Extreme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities must be suspended immediately until risks can be eliminated, controlled, or reduced to a lower level. • Report risk to the MCEC Main Committee and seek further advice.
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks are considered significant. • Ensure all controls identified are in place and review processes regularly. • Activities must not proceed without authorization from the MCEC Main Committee.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks are considered acceptable. • Ensure all controls identified are in place and schedule regular review.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant risks exist. • Ensure controls are in place and monitor progress.

Appendix K: Child Safety Procedures

(a) This appendix contains Child Safety Procedures relevant to Victoria. These procedures provide supporting information about:

- Screening requirements for adults who will work with children;
- Who is defined as a child;
- Who must report child abuse;
- Who can report child abuse;
- Child protection and related legislation;
- Appropriate authorities; and

Note: The MCEC should liaise with relevant authorities in implementation of this Policy.

- Where to access information and support services for children and their families.¹⁰

(b) These Child Safety Procedures do not remove any obligations of the MCEC to operate in accordance with its *Safeguarding Children Policy*.

Child Safety Procedures – Victoria

1. The Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards

1.1. In Victoria, child-related organisations must comply with the Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards, under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*.

1.2. The Standards require organisations to embed the Standards throughout systems and processes, which may include, but is not limited to:

- (a) Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- (b) Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- (c) Child Safe Code of Conduct
- (d) Child Safe Complaints Handling Policy
- (e) Child Safe Recruitment Procedure
- (f) Child Safe Risk Management Plan
- (g) Delivery of child safe training to staff and volunteers

1.3. The MCEC should refer to [Commission for Children and Young People \(CCYP\) – Child Safe Standards](#) for guidance on how to comply with the Child Safe Standards,

1.4. The CCYP has powers to take action where an organisation may not be compliant with the Standards which may include issuing a notice to produce or notice to comply.

2. Recruitment obligations

2.1. Victoria has a Working with Children Check (WWCC) system under the *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic).

2.2. The MCEC is required to ensure that people in child-related work hold a WWC Clearance.

¹⁰ Information on resources is as published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies - <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/practice-guides>

- 2.3. Child-related work means work at, or for a service, body, or place, or that involves an activity, that usually involves direct contact with a child (under 18 years). Relevantly to the MCEC, child-related work includes the following services, bodies, places, or activities:
- (a) religious organisations
 - (b) clubs, associations, or movements (including of a cultural, recreational, or sporting nature) that provide services or conduct activities for, or directed at, children or whose membership is mainly comprised of children
 - (c) counselling or other support services for children
 - (d) overnight camps for children regardless of the type of accommodation or of how many children are involved.
- 2.4. Direct contact in relation to child-related work, means any contact between a person and a child that involves:
- (a) Physical contact; or
 - (b) Face to face contact; or
 - (c) Contact by post or other written communication; or
 - (d) Contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
 - (e) Contact by email or other electronic communication.

2.5. The MCEC is required to:

- (a) Check the validity of each personnel's WWC Check by using the online [Status Checker](#).
- (b) Record the WWC check numbers, expiry and verification information for each personnel.

This aligns with the MCEC's *Safeguarding Children Policy* which requires the MCEC to implement a register of the status of WWC Clearances of Members and non-Members working with children.

3. Criminal Offences – *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)*

3.1. Table 30 outlines key criminal offences that apply to MCEC Members and non-Members.

Table 30: Criminal Offences in Victoria

<p><u>Failure to Disclose Sexual Offence Committed Against a Child</u></p>	<p>An adult commits an offence if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adult has information that leads them to form a reasonable belief; • That another adult has sexually offended against a child (under 16 years) in Victoria; and • The adult fails to report the information to police as soon as possible (unless they have a reasonable excuse for not reporting the information). <p>A reasonable excuse may include fear for safety or where the information has already been reported.</p> <p>If you fail to report the information, you may be charged with a criminal offence. The maximum penalty is three years imprisonment.</p>
<p><u>Failure by a person in authority to protect a child from a sexual offence</u></p>	<p>An adult in child-related work in an organisation, will commit an offence if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they know another adult associated with the organisation poses a substantial risk of abusing a child (under 16 years), and • they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, and • they negligently fail to do so. <p>The maximum penalty is five years imprisonment.</p> <p>A person negligently fails to reduce or remove a risk if that failure involves a great falling short of the standard of care that a reasonable person would exercise in the circumstances.</p> <p>A person associated with the organisation may include, but is not limited to, an officer, employee, manager, owner, volunteer, or contractor.</p>

4. Mandatory reporting

4.1. Table 31 defines mandatory reporting requirements in Victoria.

Table 31: Mandatory Reporting Requirements in Victoria

Key legislation	<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)</i>
Who is a child?	A person under the age of 17 years old (or if there is a child protection order, a person who is under the age of 18 years)
Child Protection Authority and contact	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) – refer to their child protection contacts (https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts) or, if after hours, call 13 12 78
Mandatory reporters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A registered medical practitioner; • A registered nurse; • A registered teacher; • The head teacher or principal; • A member of the police force; • The proprietor of, or a person with a post-secondary qualification in the care, education or minding of children who is employed by, a children's service to which the Children's Services Act 1996 applies; • A person with a post-secondary qualification in youth, social or welfare work who works in the health, education or community or welfare services field; • A person employed under Part 3 of the Public Administration Act 2004 to perform the duties of a youth and child welfare worker; • A registered psychologist; • A youth justice officer; and • A youth parole officer.
When reporting is required	A mandatory reporter who, in the course of practising his or her profession or carrying out the duties of his or her office forms the belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection must report to the DHHS that belief and the reasonable grounds for it as soon as practicable— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) After forming the belief; and (b) After each occasion on which he or she becomes aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.
When is a child in need of protection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child has been abandoned by their parents and the parents or another suitable person cannot be found;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Physical injury; (b) Sexual abuse; or (c) Emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged, <p style="text-align: center;">and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;</p> • 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.
<p>What is a belief on reasonable grounds?</p>	<p>A belief is a belief on reasonable grounds if a reasonable person practising the profession or carrying out the duties of the office, position or employment, as the case requires, would have formed the belief on those grounds.</p>
<p>Additional Notes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a person is unsure whether they have reasonable grounds to make a report, they should speak to the MCEC Main Committee or the MCEC's Safeguarding Representative. • In accordance with good practice, a person should also be encouraged to report outside of the MCEC if they so wish. Reporters are protected in that if a report is made in good faith, this will not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics or make the person subject to any liability in relation to the report. <p>Any person may make a report to Child Protection Services (East Division - 1300 360 452) if they form a reasonable belief that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To report life threatening concerns, call Victoria Police on 000 • To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child after hours, call the after hours Child Protection Emergency Service on 13 12 78, or East Division - 1300 360 452 during business hours. (https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts)

5. The Orange Door (formally called Child FIRST)

5.1. If you have a significant concern for the wellbeing of a child, but do not believe they are at risk of significant harm, a referral to The Orange Door may be appropriate. A referral would be appropriate where families:

- Are experiencing significant parenting problems that may be affecting the child's development
- Are experiencing family conflict, including family breakdown
- Are under pressure due to a family member's physical or mental illness, substance abuse, disability or bereavement
- Are young, isolated or unsupported
- Are experiencing significant social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact on a child's care or development.

5.2. Contact numbers to make a referral in each local government area are listed on the [Child and family services information, referral and support teams \(The Orange Door\) page](#).

6. Organisational Liability for Child Abuse - *Wrongs Act 1958* (Vic)

6.1. The duty to prevent¹¹ applies to organisations that exercise care, supervision, or authority over children. Relevantly, the duty applies to all Ecclesia in Victoria and therefore to the MCEC.

6.2. Under the legislation, the MCEC owes a duty to:

- (a) take the care that, in all the circumstances of the case, is reasonable to prevent the abuse of a child (under 18 years)

Note: Child abuse includes physical abuse or sexual abuse.

- (b) by an individual associated with the organisation

- (c) while the child is under the care, supervision, or authority of the organisation.

6.3. An individual is associated with an organisation if they are an officer, office holder, employee, volunteer, or contractor of the organisation. If the organisation is a religious organisation, it also includes a minister of religion, a religious leader, an officer, or a member of the personnel of the religious organisation.

7. Reportable Conduct

7.1. Victoria has a Reportable Conduct Scheme (**the Scheme**), established under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*. The Scheme requires the head of organisation to notify the Commission for Children and Young People (**CCYP**) if they become aware of a reportable allegation.

7.2. Religious bodies are included in the Scheme. A religious body means a body established for a religious purpose, or an entity that establishes, or directs, controls, or administers, an educational or other charitable entity that is conducted in accordance with religious doctrines, beliefs or principles.

7.3. A reportable allegation means any information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that an employee has committed:

- (a) Reportable conduct; or
- (b) Misconduct that may involve reportable conduct whether or not the conduct or

¹¹ A statutory duty of care has been created under the Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017 (see Part XIII of Wrongs Act 1958) to ensure there is a clear legal duty placed on organisations to take reasonable steps to minimise the risk of child abuse, perpetrated by organisational representatives. See <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new>

misconduct is alleged to have occurred within the course of the person’s employment (i.e. includes conduct before the person was an employee).

7.4. Reportable conduct includes:

- (a) A sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, whether or not criminal proceedings in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded;
- (b) Sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of, a child;
- (c) Physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child;
- (d) Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child; or
- (e) Significant neglect of a child.

7.5. Relevantly, to the MCEC , an employee is a person over 18 years, who is a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee, volunteer, contractor, or officer of the MCEC.

7.6. Under the Scheme, the MCEC Committee is responsible for:

- (a) Ensuring systems are in place to enable anyone to notify their concern or allegation relating to reportable conduct
- (b) Notifying the CCYP of reportable allegations
- (c) Investigating reportable allegations. Refer to the CCYP’s [investigation guide](#) for more information about the investigation requirements under the Scheme.

7.7. The process for reporting to the CCYP is as follows:

8. Information and support services

Three business day notification	30 calendar day update	Advice on investigation	Outcomes of investigation	Additional documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of the worker or volunteer • Date of birth • Police report • Organisation contact details • Head of organisation's name • Initial advice on the nature of the allegation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the allegation • Details of your response to the allegation • Details about any disciplinary or other action proposed • Any written response from the worker or volunteer about the allegation and the proposed disciplinary or other 	<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 for the findings • Details about any disciplinary or other action proposed • Reasons for taking or not taking action • As soon as practicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commission may request further documents from the head of the organisation

8.1. Table 32 contains information on support services available to children and families in Victoria.

Table 32: Information and support services available in Victoria

For children:	Kids Helpline : call 1800 55 1800 for free counselling and advice for young people between the ages of 5 and 25.
For adults:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifeline: call 13 11 14 for this free Australia-wide crisis support and suicide prevention service. • See this page for a contact list of information and support services for parents, families and young people in Victoria.
Resources:	The resources listed on this page have a practice focus, and are designed to assist practitioners, managers and service providers in their work.

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