

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Drafted by	David Purnell	Version	1
Responsible person	David Purnell	Approved by board on	Jan 1 <sup>st</sup> 2017
		Scheduled review date	Feb 1 <sup>st</sup> 2017

## INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Churches Football Association (VCFA) is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at the VCFA is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within the VCFA.
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To prevent child abuse within the VCFA.
4. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. To provide guidance to volunteers and contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. To provide a clear statement to volunteers and contractors forbidding any such abuse.
7. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

## POLICY

The VCFA is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

The VCFA has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at the VCFA is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the VCFA, all volunteers, workers, contractors, referees, and members of the VCFA.

The VCFA will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop child protection policies.

The VCFA supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. The VCFA is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, Torres Strait Islander children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

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

## **AUTHORISATION**

VCFA Chairman: David Head

Date:

The Victorian Churches Football Association

# CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Date of Issue	Jan 1 <sup>st</sup> 2016	Version	1
		Contact:	David Purnell

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The Victorian Churches Football Association **Board** has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The Board will appoint a Child Support Officer(s) who are responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Dealing with the relevant legal and police bodies as applicable in any alleged cases of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all volunteers and contractors are aware of relevant laws and organisational policies and procedures regarding child protection.
- Ensuring that all adults (anyone not classified as a child) within the VCFA community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all volunteers and contractors are aware of their obligation to observe the child protection policy;
- Providing support for volunteers and contractors in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All **volunteers and contractors** share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws and the VCFA's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters;
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to the Child Support Officer(s) (or, if the Child Support Officer is involved in the suspicion, to the VCFA President or Vice President); and
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

## DEFINITIONS

**Child** means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

**Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

**Child abuse** means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

**Child sexual assault** is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

**Reasonable grounds for belief** is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) The child is in need of protection,
- (b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury",
- (c) The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a) A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- b) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- c) Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- d) Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

## **VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACTORS JOINING THE VCFA**

The VCFA undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers which aims to:

- Promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share the VCFA's values and commitment to protect children; and
- Prevent a person from working or volunteering at the VCFA if they pose a risk to children.

The VCFA requires all workers/volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with the VCFA.

The VCFA will require all volunteers, referees and contractors to have a valid Working With Children Check, or be in the process of receiving a valid Working With Children Check before they commence engagement with the VCFA.

The VCFA will cease the engagement of any volunteer or contractor who does not have a valid Working With Children Check. The Child Safe Officer(s) will maintain a record of all volunteers and contractors Working With Children Check information and report to the VCFA Executive any volunteers or contractors who do not have, or have an expired Working With Children Check.

The VCFA will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

Once engaged, workers/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

The VCFA will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

The VCFA will have a child safety sub-committee committed to identifying and managing child safety risks at the VCFA. The child safety sub-committee members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

## **REPORTING**

Any volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the appropriate Child Protection Service or the Police. They should also advise the Child Support Officer(s) about their concern.

In situations where the Child Support Officer is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the VCFA General Manager or a member of the VCFA Executive.

## **INVESTIGATING**

If the appropriate Child Protection Service or the Police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all volunteers, contractors and members must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the VCFA Executive will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the VCFA Executive may decide to conduct such an investigation. All volunteers, contractors and members must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

The VCFA Executive will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other VCFA Board Members or the VCFA General Manager may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the VCFA Executive shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and / or law enforcement officials.

## **RESPONDING**

If it is alleged that a volunteer or contractor may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation's child protection the person concerned may be stood down while an investigation is conducted by the VCFA Board, or the VCFA Executive in the board's absence).

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's child protection) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

## **PRIVACY**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. The VCFA will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

## **REVIEWING**

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the organisation's care.

## **AUTHORISATION**

VCFA Chairman: David Head

Date:

The Victorian Churches Football Association