



MCSI CHILD SAFETY POLICY

This document is the Child Safety Policy of Melbourne CSI Church (MCSI).

This child safety policy will be applicable to all who are part of the activities hosted/organised by the MCSI church indoors or outdoors. The church congregation should be made aware of the child safety policy of the church.

MCSI seeks to empower children

MCSI works to empower children by:

- involving them when making decisions about matters that directly affect them, as appropriate; and
- listening to them and respecting their views.

MCSI values Tolerance and Diversity

MCSI promotes diversity and tolerance. In particular, we work to:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Staff and volunteers

All MCSI representatives (including but not limited to staff, church members, volunteers, and contractors) who is involved in ministry or social / religious communication and contact with children need to possess their Working with Children Check card.

Fair procedures for personnel

- The safety and wellbeing of children is a primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action is thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.
- We record and securely store all allegations of abuse and safety concerns, including investigation updates.
- If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to affected families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take, subject to respecting people's privacy in accordance with the law.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.



Risk management

- In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.
- We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock to have glass opening), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media). Risk management strategies implemented by MCSI include obtaining mandatory working with Children Check card for all who are involved in the church and children's ministry, replacing solid door with new door having glass opening in the youth lounge of the church, obtaining consent for using children's photos and videos in social media from their parents, providing online Bible classes to children which are conducted in open living areas and supervised by their parents and having a child safety officer for the church.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

MCSI takes all allegations of child abuse and safety concerns seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed (example behaviour is available at the Victorian Department of Human Services website)
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Legislative responsibilities

MCSI takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- Failure to protect: People of authority in MCSI will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Reporting concerns

- To report any concerns regarding child safety, contact the child safety officer of MCSI.
- To report concerns that are life-threatening, ring Victoria Police 000.



- To contact a child protection office close to you, call a local office.
- To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child after hours, call:
 - After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service
Ph: 13 12 78 (5.00pm – 9.00am Monday – Friday, 24 hours on weekends and public holidays).
Note: this is an emergency service for week nights, weekends and public holidays only.

Policy breaching and complaints

Kooyoora Ltd has been appointed by the Melbourne Diocese to respond to all complaints of misconduct including sexual, physical, spiritual, or emotional abuse by clergy or Church officers. Kooyoora Ltd is an independent Professional Standards company which undertakes Professional Standards work for not-for-profit charitable entities. We encourage you to talk to the Vicar or warden at MCSI about your concerns so that they can support you through the reporting process. If your complaint is about a member of staff you can contact Kooyoora directly.

The first step in making a complaint is to call the recorded information line at any time on 1800 135 246.

All information provided to this service is strictly confidential. The person taking a message on this number will ask you to give a name and your phone number or address so that the Director can contact you as soon as possible. Alternatively, you can write to the Director:

Director of Professional Standards
Kooyoora Ltd
PO Box 329
Canterbury VIC 3126

Availability of this policy

A current copy of this guideline is available on the MCSI website. A hard copy will be provided free of charge upon request.

Review of the policy

The policy will be reviewed every two years by the pastorate committee based on the feedback from the congregation.

Amendment review

If there are any concerns raised or feedback received on this version of the policy, the committee will facilitate the review process and amend the policy accordingly.

Date of last review: May 2023

Date policy last updated: November 2020

Date of next review: April 2025