

Child Safe Policy



DATE ADOPTED: May 2026

RESPONSIBLE POSITION / MINISTRY AREA: Diaconate

REVIEW DATE: May 2028

Purpose

Mooroolbark Baptist Church is committed to being a safe place for all people who engage with us or participate in our programs, ministries and events; including children, young people, and vulnerable adults. We are affiliated with the Baptist Union of Victoria, and our policy has been developed to uphold this commitment to safeguarding and to adhere to National and State legislation.

We are committed to promoting the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults who participate in any of its ministries or activities by protecting their rights and also protecting them from harm. We do this through fostering a culture of child and adult safety through constant communication and reinforcement of this commitment at all levels and ministries in our church.

The Child Safe Policy (the Policy) was written to outline how Mooroolbark Baptist Church in prioritising the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. The Policy outlines the child safe positions and practices that MBC will implement to create a culture where the safety of children and young people is promoted, where all people can be safe from any harm, and any allegations of abuse are taken seriously and acted upon.

Scope

This Policy applies to all employees, leaders, volunteers, parents and children, and individuals connected to Mooroolbark Baptist Church. The Policy is applicable irrespective of whether they directly work with or have direct contact with children or young people.

Under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic), for the purposes of child safety and reportable conduct under this Policy, employees are defined as including all persons engaged directly or indirectly by Mooroolbark Baptist Church, including labour-hire personnel, secondees, contractors under supervision, and volunteers supplied by third parties.

Commitment to Child Safety

All children who come to Mooroolbark Baptist Church have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero tolerance to child abuse.

Document Control Schedule

Document Title: <i>Child Safe Policy</i>		Document Ref: <i>November 2022</i>	Document Responsibility: <i>Diaconate</i>
Document Creation Date: <i>July 2016</i>	Current Version Approved: <i>TBC</i>	Current Version Number: <i>2.0</i>	Review Date: <i>April 2030</i>

We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe. We are committed to principles of cultural safety and inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds and to the safety and inclusion of children with a disability. We recognise that these principles support the safety of all children.

Children's Rights to Safety and Participation

Mooroolbark Baptist Church actively seeks to include the voices of children in our organisational planning, worship services, management of facilities and other activities. Mooroolbark Baptist Church actively seeks to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We regularly communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe. Mooroolbark Baptist Church value the voices of children and encourage children to express their views. We teach children about what they can do if they feel unsafe. We will listen and act on any concerns raised by children, or their parents, in regard to their safety.

Valuing Diversity

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

- Support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families,
- Support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/ or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families,
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equitably,
- Ensure our facilities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

Mooroolbark Baptist Church is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, ensuring they feel safe, supported, and empowered to express their culture and rights within our community. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

In alignment with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, we maintain a zero-tolerance approach to racism and actively work to create an inclusive environment that values the strengths of Aboriginal culture, along with cultural and language diversity within our broader community, and its vital role in child wellbeing.

Recruiting Employees and Volunteers

Mooroolbark Baptist Church applies the best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of employees and volunteers. Mooroolbark Baptist Church recruitment and selection of employees and volunteer leaders ensures that child safety requirements are addressed in the recruitment process. Mooroolbark Baptist Church carefully assesses the level of contact and responsibility each role will have in regard to children.

For roles which involve contact or responsibility for children, or influence or authority over children, such as leadership positions, the following are required:

- Attendance at Mooroolbark Baptist Church for at least 6 months (except paid pastoral roles),
- Appropriate Working With Children Checks,
- Suitable referee checks,
- An interview with a church leader, including questions addressing their experience and previous engagement with children to gauge the applicant's attitudes and values toward children,
- Applicants to have read the MBC Child Safe Policy and signed the MBC Code of Conduct,
- Suitable qualifications, experience and training for the role
- National Police Checks (for identified leadership roles).

The status of Working with Children's Checks are actively monitored and any adverse changes to a person's status through these Checks, including checks not being renewed within required timeframe, may result in an immediate suspension of an individual's role and activities at Mooroolbark Baptist Church.

Supporting Employees and Volunteers

MBC provides support and supervision for all staff and volunteers. We have developed a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers, all of whom receive training on the requirements of the Code and other associated policies and guidelines. All staff and volunteers are required to attend a Safe Church workshop and refresher workshop every three years and additional ministry-specific training as provided.

Mooroolbark Baptist Church is committed to ensuring that all leaders, employees and volunteers receive relevant training and are provided with support to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety.

Mooroolbark Baptist Church assists its leaders, employees and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decision-making and to promote a culturally safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

Mandatory training requirements for all Mooroolbark Baptist Church leaders including the following:

- Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct
- Attend a Safe Church workshop and refresher workshop every four years
- Identifying indicators of child abuse,
- Responding to disclosures of child abuse, and
- Code of Conduct breach and child safety incident reporting procedures.

As this training is essential to support Mooroolbark Baptist Church's zero tolerance of child abuse approach, employees, leaders and volunteers are required to undertake all of these components before being allowed to work in a child-related role.

Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone associated with Mooroolbark Baptist Church has some responsibility for providing a safe environment for children.

Who:	Document Reference:
Individuals	- Take personal responsibility for their own and others' safety; raise any issues of concern. - Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.
Volunteers	- Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures. - Encourage program participants to take responsibility for their own and others' safety and advise how to report any issues of concern.
Employees	- Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures. - Encourage program participants to take responsibility for their own and others' safety and advise how to report any issues of concern. - Carry out responsibilities in accordance with employment contract/position description.
Diaconate	- Take responsibility for what happens in our church or agency. - Identify, assess and control risks, and review the effectiveness of control measures. - Ensure appropriate insurance arrangements are in place. - Adopt appropriate policies and review them regularly. - Ensure the relevant policies are widely communicated and lived out in the church or agency. - Ensure the church or agency is compliant with regulatory obligations. - Seek help from the Baptist Union of Victoria where needed. - Accept help from Baptist Union of Victoria where necessary.

Safe Church Officer

Mooroolbark Baptist Church has a Safe Church Officer role who has specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children. If a person does not feel comfortable making a report to a Safe Church Officer, they may report their concern to the Lead Pastor. The Safe Church Officer is introduced to children and families to ensure they understand who the appointed person is, and how and when they may contact them.

Reporting a Child Safe Concern or Complaint

Mooroolbark Baptist Church has a formal procedure in place for responding to any complaints made by employees, volunteers, parents or children. This process is outlined in Appendix A.

Record Keeping and Incident Monitoring

Mooroolbark Baptist Church is committed to best practice record keeping. All reports of child abuse shall be recorded within the incident reporting system. Mooroolbark Baptist Church, in maintaining records on reports of child abuse, will maintain confidentiality and privacy for children and families in accordance with legislation. Records will be retained in line with the recommendations from the Office of Public Records. Reports of child abuse and complaints about child safety will be monitored by the leadership team to ensure that they are appropriately managed. Risks to child safety that are identified in complaints and reports of abuse will be reviewed and acted upon appropriately.

Risk Management

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

As part of our risk management approach, all existing and new activities and facilities are assessed for risks of harm including:

- Physical risks,
- Environmental risks (e.g. areas that might obscure a line of sight), and
- Vulnerability risks (such as activities that may foster personal relationships between leaders and children who have an increased risk of being exploited).

As part of our risk management approach:

- Identified risks are actively reduced by designing and implementing appropriate preventative measures,
- Leaders are made aware of their responsibility for identifying risks of child abuse,
- Families and children are made aware of how to report on identified risks of child abuse, and
- Risk management plans are updated as required, referred to regularly and reviewed periodically.

Policy Implementation

The Policy is to be implemented through the following items:

1. A policy committing the organisation to providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults. (This policy)
2. A Code of Conduct covering all pastors, employees, church leaders and volunteers who may come into contact with children and vulnerable adults.
3. A process for screening applicants for ministry, employment and volunteering, including referee checks and working with children / criminal record checks.
4. A process for handling allegations of sexual abuse. (See Appendix A)
5. A process for complying with mandatory reporting obligations. (See Appendix A)
6. Training for pastors, employees and volunteers in the above policies /procedures.

These policies and procedures are to be read and implemented alongside relevant legislation related to the protection and welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

Reviewing this Policy

This policy will be reviewed every **two** years and we undertake to seek the views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, employees and volunteers as a part of this process.

Legal Framework

This Child Safe Policy includes recent legislative requirements, including:

- Victorian Child Safe Standards (outlined in Appendix B)
- Reportable Conduct Scheme (outlined in Appendix C)
- Criminal Law Offences including the Grooming, Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect offenses (outlined in Appendix D)

Non-Compliance with this Policy and the Code of Conduct

Mooroolbark Baptist Church will enforce this policy and the Code of Conduct. Following any report of non-compliance, we will instigate a review that may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or other corrective action.

Definitions

- The words '**child**' and '**children**' in this policy refer to children and young people up to the age of 18 years.
- **Children's ministry** means any activity or program where any of the participants are under 18 and not accompanied by parents or carers authorised by the parents.
- **Leaders** are all those in some level of leadership in our church. This includes not only the Pastors, Elders, Deacons and Ministry Leaders but also those appointed to some level of leadership role in the church, and includes those under the age of 18.
- **Volunteers** are all those who are involved in ministry activities, including under the age of 18.
- **Employees** are defined as all persons engaged directly or indirectly, including labour-hire personnel, secondees, contractors under supervision, and volunteers supplied by third parties.

Appendix A - Child Safety Reporting Process

If a leader becomes aware of an incident or allegation of abuse, the first responsibility is to ensure that the child or children are safe and the risks of further abuse or harm are mitigated. If there is any ongoing risk to a child or children, then the staff member or volunteer should immediately call 000.

If the incident or allegation of abuse could involve criminal conduct, the matter must be immediately reported to Victoria Police. It may also be appropriate to notify the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing if there is a belief that a child is in need of protection. This may involve notifications to Victoria Police or the Office of Child Protection.

All reports of child abuse will be treated as serious, whether they are made by an adult or a child.

When an allegation of child abuse is received, all mandatory reporting requirements must be met, including reporting to police, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Social Services Regulator under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, or other government departments or regulators as appropriate.

Who can report?

Any parent, child, staff member or volunteer

What to report?

Any child safety concerns, including:

- A disclosure of abuse or harm
- An allegation or suspicion or observation
- A breach of the Code of Conduct, or

How to report?

A choice of face-to-face verbal report, letter or email, telephone call, or a meeting

Who to report to?

Safe Church Officer (Child Safety Person), Ministry Coordinator, Lead Pastor, or Church staff member or leader

What happens next?

The Safe Church Officer (Child Safety Person) or other leader will offer support to the child, the parents, the person who reports and the accused person; initiate internal processes to ensure the safety of all children including an alleged victim, clarify the nature of the complaint and commence disciplinary process and investigation (if required), and decide, in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should or must be reported to Victoria Police, Child Protection and/or the Social Services Regulator. Such reporting will be made as soon as possible if required.

Outcome

Following an investigation and determination of an outcome; all relevant staff, volunteers, parents and child will be notified and required disciplinary action taken. Policies and procedures may be reviewed and updated where necessary.

Child Safe Reporting Process

Who can report?

Parent

Child

Staff Member

Vulnerable Adult

Volunteer

Any Person

What to report?

Any abuse or safety concerns towards any person involved with Mooroolbark Baptist Church, including:

- disclosure of abuse or harm
- allegation, suspicion or observation of abuse or harm
- breach of Code of Conduct or other misconduct by a leader

Call 000 if someone is in immediate danger.

How?

Face-to-face verbal report, email, telephone call, meeting.
Complete a Safe Church Concerns Form as soon as possible

Who to?

Safe Church Officer, Head of Organisation (Diaconate Chairperson) Person or Lead Pastor.

In the case that the an allegation involves the Lead Pastor, directly contact the BUV Professional Standards Consultant.

For general enquiries, advice or resources you may contact the BUV Safe Church Consultant.

What happens next?

The person receiving the report will:

- offer to provide (or organise) support to the victim, their family, the person who reports and the accused staff/leader/volunteer
- initiate internal processes to ensure the safety of the victim and any other vulnerable person
- Decide, in accordance with legal, insurance and ethical requirements, whether the matter should/must be reported to: Victoria Police, Child Protection, Social Services Regulator, BUV and make report as soon as possible if required
- Observe privacy and confidentiality while investigations are undertaken

Outcome

Investigation; outcome decided; relevant parties notified of outcome of investigation; disciplinary action taken (if applicable); policies, procedures reviewed and updated where necessary.

Appendix B - Child Safe Standards

In 2013, the Victorian Parliament's Betrayal of Trust: Inquiry into Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations led to 15 recommendations aimed at enhancing organisational effectiveness in protecting children from abuse.

The Victorian Child Safe Standards (the Standards) are a result of these recommendations and were introduced via amendment to the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.

From January 2017, all Victorian organisations that provide services and facilities specifically for children were required to comply with the Standards.

Children are defined in the Standards as anyone aged under 18 years.

The Standards are a compulsory framework that support organisations to promote the safety of children by requiring them to implement policies to prevent, respond to and report allegations of child abuse and harm, whether caused by adults OR by other children.

They are designed to drive cultural change and embed a focus on child safety by placing children's rights and wellbeing at the forefront of everything an organisation does.

The Child Safe Standards aim to:

- Promote the safety of children
- Prevent child abuse
- Ensure organisations and businesses have effective processes in place to respond to and report all allegations of child abuse.ⁱ

Child Safe Standards work by:

- Driving changes in organisational culture – embedding child safety in everyday thinking and practice
- Providing a minimum standard of child safety across all organisations
- Highlighting that we all have a role in keeping children safe from harm and abuse.ⁱⁱ

In 2017, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended each state and territory move to introduce similar schemes, in line with nationally agreed principles – since titled the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

The Victorian Government updated its Child Safe Standards to create greater consistency with the National Principles. From 1 July 2022, eleven new updated Standards replace the previous seven Standards and principles.

The new Standards provide greater clarity for organisations on the minimum actions required to meet each Standard, by setting out 50 new minimum requirements that organisations must meet.

In April 2022, the Victorian Government released an updated version of 'A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation' in relation to the new Standards, which include new compliance indicators that the Social Services Regulator will look for when assessing an organisation's compliance.

The Eleven Victorian Child Safe Standards:

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

Appendix C - Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations found that there was a need for independent scrutiny of organisations' systems and processes to respond to allegations of child abuse.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme (the Scheme) was set up as a system to independently oversee responses to suspected child abuse in organisations. In 2017, the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 was amended to give power to the relevant regulatory body (the Social Services Regulator from February 2026) to oversee the Scheme. Churches came under the Reportable Conduct Scheme from January 1, 2018.

The Scheme is focused on employee and volunteer conduct (both within and outside of work) and how organisations investigate and respond to suspected child abuse.

The Scheme:

- Requires organisations within the Scheme to respond to allegations of child abuse (and other child-related misconduct) made against their workers and volunteers, either within work or outside of work, and to notify the Commission of any allegations.
- Enables the Commission to independently oversee those responses.
- Facilitates information sharing between organisations, their regulators, Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and Community Safety and regulates the Working with Children Check Unit and the Commission.ⁱⁱⁱ

There are five types of Reportable Conduct:

- Sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- Significant neglect of a child.^{iv}

The Scheme requires heads of organisations (e.g. Diaconate Chairperson or Lead Pastor) to:

- Respond to a Reportable Conduct allegation made against an employee or volunteer from their organisation, by ensuring that allegations are appropriately investigated
- Report allegations which may involve criminal conduct to the police
- Notify the Commission of allegations within 3 business days after becoming aware of the allegation
- Provide the Commission with certain detailed information about the allegation within 30 days after becoming aware of the allegation
- After the investigation has concluded, provide the Commission with certain information including a copy of the findings of the investigation
- Ensure that their organisation has systems in place to:
 - Prevent reportable conduct from being committed by a worker or volunteer within the course of their employment
 - Enable any person to notify the head of a reportable allegation
 - Enable any person to notify the Regulator of a reportable allegation involving the Headhead of Organisation.
 - Investigate and respond to a reportable allegation against a worker of volunteer from that organisation.^v

Following the change of regulator in February 2026, notifications under the Reportable Conduct Scheme are now made to the Social Services Regulator (SSR) via the SSR online reporting form available at:

<https://rcs.ssr.vic.gov.au>

Appendix D - Criminal Law Offences

Three criminal offences have been introduced in Victoria to improve responses to child sexual abuse within organisations and the community. These new laws impose a clear legal duty upon all adults to protect children from sexual abuse and to report their concerns to police.

These offences relate specifically to sexual abuse of children under 16 years of age which reflects the general age of consent (16 years) recognised by the criminal law in relation to sexual offences. They do not relate to other forms of abuse, harm or neglect, which are reported under existing mandatory reporting (child protection) laws and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Grooming Offence

This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by someone aged 18 years and over to prepare a child under 16 years of age for later sexual activity.

The offence applies where an adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child, or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child, with the intention of facilitating a child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.

Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity – for example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with the child, parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.

Failure to Disclose Offence

The 'failure to disclose' offence applies to adults (18 years and over) who form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 in Victoria and fails to disclose that information to police.^{vi}

The offence applies to all adults in Victoria, not just professionals who work with children, unless they are exempt from the offence or have a 'reasonable excuse' for not reporting to police. For details of exemptions to this offence, and what are considered 'reasonable excuses', see:

<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence>

Otherwise, if an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Victoria Police as soon as possible by calling 000 or going to their local police station.^{vii}

Failure to Protect offence

The 'failure to protect' offence applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation.^{viii}

A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.^{ix}

A person in a position of authority within the organisation is not restricted to employees and leaders, but applies to any individual who by reason of the position they occupy has the power, responsibility or extent of authority to identify, reduce or remove a risk posed.

Appendix E - In Text References

- i. Commission for Children and Young People, *Being a child safe organisation* (website page)
<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/being-a-child-safe-organisation/>
- ii. Commission for Children and Young People, *Being a child safe organisation* (website page)
<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/being-a-child-safe-organisation/>
- iii. Commission for Children and Young People, *About the Reportable Conduct Scheme* (website page)
<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/>
- iv. Commission for Children and Young People, *About the Reportable Conduct Scheme* (website page)
<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/>
- v. Commission for Children and Young People, *For organisations* (website page)
<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/for-heads-of-organisations/>
- vi. Victorian Government, Department of Justice and Community Safety, *Failure to disclose offence* (website page)
<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence>
- vii. Commission for Children and Young People, 2022, *A guide for creating a child safe organisation* (version 5.0)
- viii. Victorian Government, Department of Justice and Community Safety, *Failure to protect: a new criminal offence to protect children from sexual abuse* (website page)
<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to>
- ix. Victorian Government, Department of Justice and Community Safety, *Failure to protect: a new criminal offence to protect children from sexual abuse* (website page)
<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-protect-a-new-criminal-offence-to>

Please note that whilst the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme moved to the Social Services Regulator from February 2026, at present, the website of the Commission for Children and Young People continues to host guidance materials and resources related to the Standards and Scheme.