



Maffra Community Church Incorporated  
A00948701  
ABN: 88 288 219 539

# Safe Church

## Policy, Procedure and Practice

### Manual

Every person has been made in the image and likeness of God  
and they are to be treated with the utmost dignity and worth  
Genesis 1:26-27

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## Disclaimer

*Maffra Community Church Safe Church Policy, Practice and Procedure Manual (MCC Safe Church)* is provided on the terms and understanding that the writer and Maffra Community Church are not responsible for the results of any action taken based on information in this document, nor for any error in, or omission from this document.

The information and advice is made available in good faith, reflects current knowledge, literature, legislation, regulations and standards and is derived from sources believed to be accurate at the time this document was produced. *MCC Safe Church* should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation and is not a substitute for it. The content will require updating in line with amendments or additions, which may supersede those cited, after the publication of this document.

## What is *MCC Safe Church*?

*MCC Safe Church* reflects the significant developments in child protection legislation, mandatory and protective reporting procedures, and government requirements surrounding child safety education in voluntary organisations such as churches.

In recent times there have been two significant changes that have resulted in voluntary organisations altering their operations in this area:

- A greater legal duty placed on churches due to increased compliance levels and legislative requirements set by government.
- A greater public moral duty placed on churches to proactively prevent abuse in churches rather than only responding to the occurrence of abuse.

The highest duty placed on the church is the duty required in all our thoughts, words and deeds by the Lord God.

### Context

Maffra Community Church (MCC) believes that those who profess Jesus Christ, along with their children are the visible Church - the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God.

Families are the place where parents under God, are the prime educators and teachers of the Christian faith to their children. When a Christian family participates in MCC they do so seeking the support of the church leaders (Elders, Deacons, ministry leaders) and church environment, to enable the children in the family to safely:

- worship God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
- grow in their knowledge of God and the gospel, through the teaching of the Word
- fellowship together with others, including families and children
- participate in children's and youth activities operated by MCC such as Sunday School

Families are encouraged to provide feedback to MCC leaders about the children's and youth ministries and child safe practices in their church.

Colossians 3:17 teaches: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." In Luke 18:16 Jesus said "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (NIV, 1994)

These are but two of the scriptures that highlight the central Christian values of love, mercy and justice. The Lord Jesus Christ set the example for Christians and the church to model life upon. MCC is committed to ensuring that our church is safe in every respect for everyone within it. *MCC Safe Church* is the churches expression of this commitment.

*MCC Safe Church* applies to every individual involved in any way with MCC. *MCC Safe Church* complies with Victorian child safety legislations.

- **Christians are required by God to think, speak and act in ways that are God-honouring, biblically obedient and motivated by the Christian values of love, mercy and justice**
- **MCC is committed to ensuring that church is a safe place for everyone**
- ***MCC Safe Church* is MCC's expression of this commitment**
- ***MCC Safe Church* applies to all individuals involved in any way with MCC**

## ***MCC Safe Church*** **Implementation**

The Maffra Community Church (MCC) Eldership is responsible for the implementation of *MCC Safe Church* in close consultation with the *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator (SCF). The implementation overseen by the Eldership includes ensuring the following services are provided to those involved with MCC:

- assistance in matters of compliance
- education and training in *MCC Safe Church* matters
- information and guidance in *MCC Safe Church* procedures and practice
- assisting and resourcing MCC in response to concerns/allegations and in compliance with the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme
- screening for those who work with children within MCC
- *MCC Safe Church* record keeping
- support, information, advice and referrals for *MCC Safe Church* matters
- liaison between MCC and relevant state government authorities and agencies regarding *MCC Safe Church* matters

The following describes the likely process to be followed in response to protective concerns about a child that may have arisen due to:

- receiving a disclosure from a child about abuse or neglect
  - observed indicators of abuse or neglect
  - being made aware of possible harm via an indirect contact
1. **If a concern relates to a child requiring immediate protection; or if it is thought the child is at significant risk of harm, contact Child Protection BH. 1300 655 795 / AH 131 278 and/or Vic Police 000**
    - Have notes ready documenting observations and child and family details
  2. **For all other child and family support concerns contact The Orange Door - 1800 512 358**

**The Step-By-Step Guide for Individuals Reporting a Child Safety Concern can be found on page 32 of this document.**

Regarding all concerns/reports within the terms of reference of *MCC Safe Church* the following process is followed:

1. All concerns will be reported to the *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator (SCF) to be documented. Any required external disclosures are made by the SCF. This includes reporting within the requirements of the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS) with reference to the Head of Entity under the Scheme. Where required, advice from external authorities and/or legal advice will be sought. Any RCS matters are referred for investigation as per the requirements of the Scheme.
2. All concerns/reports, including recommendations and any additional advice will be presented to the Eldership who will consider and endorse response decisions.

Any concerns or reports relating to a member of the Eldership (if, following investigation by the SCF do not meet the criteria for RCS) are first discussed with the 'accused' Elder. A report including all relevant documentation is prepared by the SCF and presented to a special meeting of the Eldership (initially including the 'accused' Elder). A proceeding meeting will take place (not including the 'accused' Elder) to determine a response, based on a thorough investigation and consideration of all the information provided.

It is the responsibility of the Eldership to decide how to proceed, acting within the Church Constitution, Code of Conduct, Safe Church Policy, the law of Victoria and any relevant law and or legal advice.

Individual members of leadership bodies are further subject to relevant Victorian legislation which has penalties for individuals in relation to their action or inaction, having regard to the protection of children from abuse in organisations, for example, mandatory reporting and 'Failure to Protect'.

The Eldership is not a Court of the Church and is not a place of jurisdiction. It is a place for the directing of concerns and reports to the right place for resolution. If a risk management plan is required in response to a reported *MCC Safe Church* matter, this will proceed in compliance with the relevant Victorian state laws.

**The Maffra Community Church (MCC) Eldership is responsible for all *MCC Safe Church* matters, acting within the church Constitution, *Safe Church Policy* and Code of Conduct, the law of Victoria and any relevant law and or legal advice.**

**Membership of MCC Eldership:**

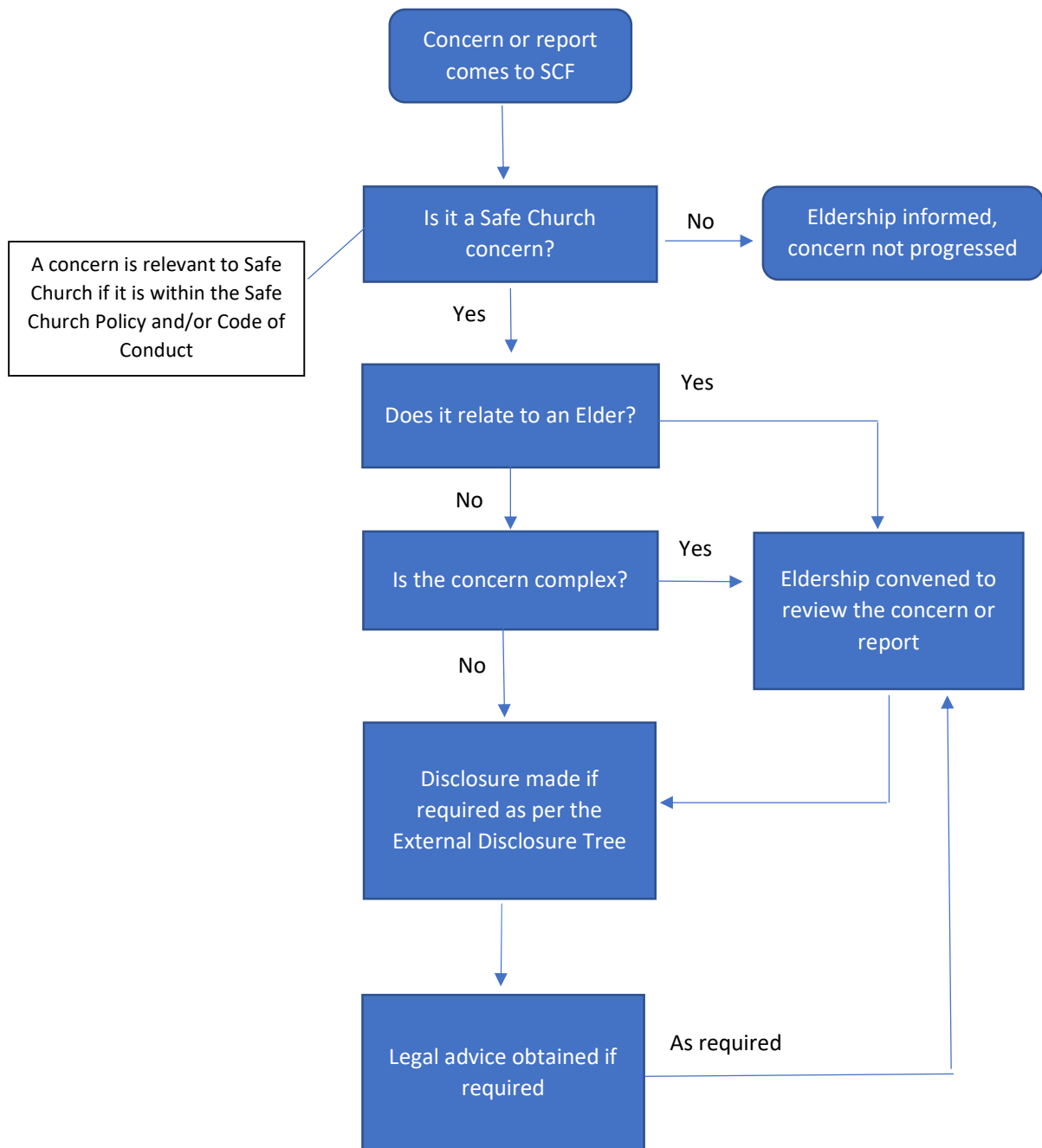
<b>Elders:</b>	Steve Messer – 0419 103 665	Chris Clarke – 0418 796 840
	Dave Butler – 0417 167 450	Nathan Rogers – 0429 724 718

***MCC Safe Church* Facilitator:** Glenys Butler - 0418 127 101

**Contact the Safe Church Facilitator to access *MCC Safe Church* resources**

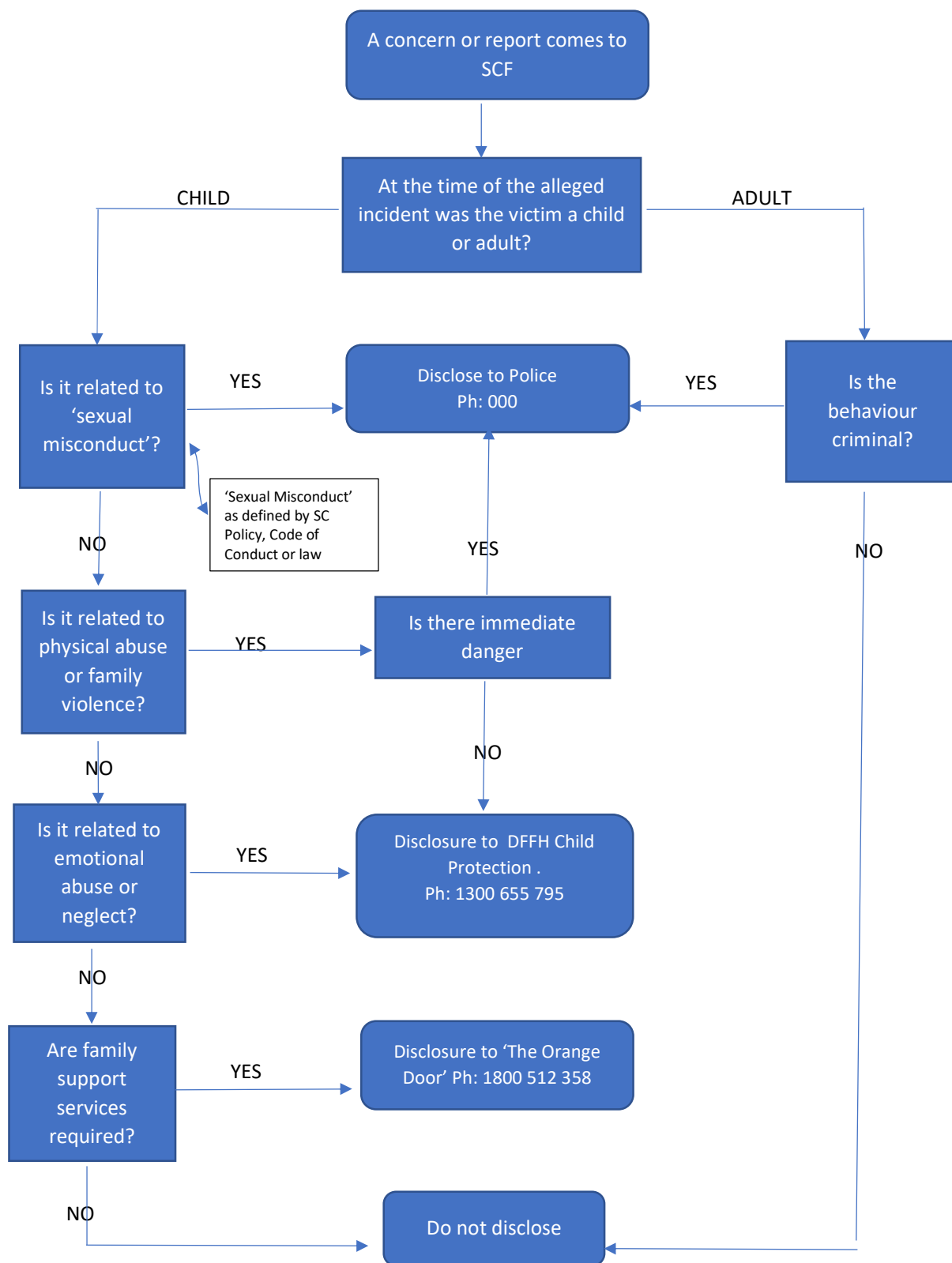
## MCC Safe Church Concerns/Reports Process

The following diagram describes the likely process to be followed when a concern or report is raised. Steps may vary at the discretion of the Eldership, depending on the specifics of the case.



## External Disclosure Decision Tree

In addition to this process all concerns that relate to the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme are reported to the Commission for Children and Young People in compliance with the requirements of the Scheme





## **Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS) – MCC Report Process**

Upon receiving a report that is, has the appearance of, or possibly is a RCS report, the Safe Church Facilitator (SCF) will contact the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) and confirm with CCYP that the matter is reportable under the RCS.

Once advised by CCYP that the allegation is reportable, the SCF will contact the MCC Eldership and notify them of the need for MCC to make the 3-Day RCS report and also provide detailed information in the phone call. The Eldership has delegated the authority to report RCS matters to the SCF. The SCF must keep the Eldership informed of all aspects of the matter as it progresses.

The SCF makes the RCS 3-Day Report and provides this report via email to the Eldership. The SCF makes the 30-Day Update Report and any subsequent additional updated reports in the same way.

Upon receipt of advice from the CCYP that MCC must progress to a RCS investigation the SCF, in consultation with the Eldership, will appoint a suitably qualified RCS investigator. The SCF will keep the Eldership informed at each stage of the process.

The investigator conducts the RCS investigation and the SCF makes delegated MCC reports to the CCYP as per the legislative requirements.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigation report will be provided to the Eldership.

The Eldership will closely consider the findings and recommendations of the investigation report and take any actions necessary.

Following any actions taken by the Eldership, a final updated report will be made by the SCF to CCYP. The SCF will ensure the Eldership is involved and informed regarding all aspects of the process.

## ***MCC Safe Church*** **Privacy**

*MCC Safe Church* complies with the Privacy Act (1988), the federal law which regulates the handling of personal information about individuals. This includes the collection, use, storage and disclosure of personally identifiable and sensitive information.

The Eldership and SCF collects personally identifiable and sensitive information to implement its function within the MCC and in accordance with the 'Australian Privacy Principles' as described in the Act.

- **The MCC complies with the Commonwealth *Privacy Act* (1988) and the Australian Privacy Principle.**

## ***MCC Safe Church*** **Training**

*MCC Safe Church* training is a key part of the commitment of MCC to abuse prevention and response in the Church.

As part of the *MCC Safe Church* commitment, people at MCC who hold leadership/governance positions, who minister to children under 18, or are involved in pastoral care with the responsibilities listed below are required to complete *MCC Safe Church* training appropriate to their role:

- Elders (includes Pastor)
- Deacons
- Bible Study Leaders
- Music Ministry Leaders
- Camp Committee Leaders
- All those who work with children under 18

There are 3 forms of *MCC Safe Church* Training:

1. Basic Training (completed first and once only)
2. The Online Refresher Course (a short online presentation to be viewed once every twelve months)
3. Advanced Training (for designated leaders only)

There is no cost for the individual for course participation.

### **Training delivery**

MCC (while not a Presbyterian Church) has a close relationship with Warragul Presbyterian Church and the people from MCC who have ministry responsibilities (as listed above) have access to PCV Safe Church Training.

This training has been adapted to align with the MCC Safe Church Policy, Procedure and Practice Manual. It is the responsibility of the SCF to ensure people attending MCC undertake the Safe Church training relevant to their roles and responsibilities within MCC.

### **Basic Training**

The Basic Training course covers the procedures, practice and implementation of the *MCC Safe Church* Policy and Code of Conduct. Paid staff and volunteers will not be permitted to take part in any child related ministries without completing the *MCC Safe Church* Basic Training.

Basic Training is available via in-person training run by the *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator.

### **Training content**

#### ***MCC Safe Church* Basic Training**

The Safe Church Basic Training Kit (including registration and notification forms, advice, instructions, material to print and links to the Basic Training videos) enables the SCF to hold a training event and is accessed by contacting the SCF.

#### ***MCC Safe Church* Refresher Course - Online**

As stated in *MCC Safe Church*, the people involved in the roles listed above are required to complete the *MCC Safe Church* Refresher Course every 12 months and is accessed by contacting the SCF.

**Advanced Training**

Advanced Training is more scenario-driven than Basic Training. It is delivered to those in leadership roles with responsibility for leading and delivering ministry in both general and specific areas. Advanced training is accessed by contacting the SCF.

- **As part of the *MCC Safe Church* commitment, people at MCC who hold leadership/governance positions, who minister to children under 18, or are involved in pastoral care, are required to complete *MCC Safe Church* training appropriate to their role.**
- **MCC mandated personnel must keep their training up to date by annually viewing the online *MCC Safe Church* Refresher Course.**
- **People in leadership roles within MCC are required to complete the *MCC Safe Church* Advanced Training.**

**Position title: *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator**  
**Reports to: Maffra Community Church Eldership**

**Role Description**

Maffra Community Church (MCC) has established *MCC Safe Church* which includes the *MCC Safe Church* Policy, Procedure and Practice Manual.

The *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator is responsible for the implementation and compliance of all aspects of *MCC Safe Church*, providing relevant information and support to MCC broadly and MCC Eldership specifically as they hold ultimate organisational responsibility for *MCC Safe Church* outcomes.

The role of the *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator is to:

- support MCC in all *MCC Safe Church* matters
- receive and respond to *MCC Safe Church* related concerns and reports
- be responsible for *MCC Safe Church* promotion, training and compliance
- ensure MCC Eldership has all information and support to make *MCC Safe Church* decisions

**Personal attributes**

The *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator:

- Must be a member of MCC
- Must exemplify Christian beliefs and values as stated in the MCC Statement of Faith
- Have an interest and genuine loving concern to work towards making MCC a safe place for all

**Knowledge and skills**

The *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator:

- Must have an in-depth knowledge of all aspects of *MCC Safe Church*
- Must have completed all levels of *MCC Safe Church* training and have an understanding of:
  - child abuse and its impact on children and young people
  - the responsibilities of MCC within the current Victorian Child Safe legislative context
  - a Safe Church culture that promotes the safety and empowerment of children and young people
  - the requirements to implement *MCC Safe Church* Policy and Code of Conduct
  - the importance of screening and recruitment
  - the procedures that encourage effective response to concerns, allegations or incidences of child abuse
  - relevant and current Privacy legislation and process

**Specific responsibilities of the role**

The *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator will:

- ensure people participating in all MCC activities are aware of *MCC Safe Church* and understand its context
- provide appropriate support to anyone who has a child safe concern. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - reflective listening and documentation of concerns
  - assisting in the documentation of a concern
  - making contact with / or disclosure to a relevant authority as required
  - ensuring the MCC Eldership is fully informed at each stage
- \*\*ensure people appointed to child related leadership roles are appropriately screened including:
  - completing the Volunteer Approval Process (VAP)
  - having a current WWCC
  - having received the relevant level of training
  - having signed the *MCC Safe Church* Code of Conduct
  - having completed the required forms
  - conducting and documenting the referee checks

- ensure all relevant training is undertaken in a timely manner
- ensure there are opportunities provided to access feedback from all participating in *MCC Safe Church* activities
- ensure up-to-date record keeping is maintained in accordance with Privacy laws
  - all WWCC recorded and monitored
  - all *MCC Safe Church* training recorded and monitored

**\*\* All Volunteer screening documentation can be obtained by contacting the SCF.**

### **Accountability**

The *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator reports to the MCC Eldership.

Reporting will include:

- immediate notification of a *MCC Safe Church* concern / report
  - written report including all concern / report information received
  - written report covering all stages of concern / report process
- a quarterly general report to the Administration Committee including an:
  - update on *MCC Safe Church* training
  - update on the Working with Children Checks status
- any other relevant information associated with *MCC Safe Church*

**The *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator (SCF) has an important role in the implementation of *MCC Safe Church*.**

- **The SCF is the first contact for all *MCC Safe Church* concerns and reports.**
- **The SCF role is to ensure *MCC Safe Church* concerns and reports are directed to the appropriate place(s) within MCC and externally.**
- **The SCF works closely with the WCC Eldership, keeping them well informed about all aspects of *MCC Safe Church*.**
- **The WCC Eldership is ultimately responsible for *MCC Safe Church* decision making.**
- **A quarterly report on *MCC Safe Church* matters is made to the MCC Administration Committee (Elders and Deacons).**

## ***MCC Safe Church***

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

- We commit ourselves to respect other people's minds, emotions and bodies. We have established *MCC Safe Church* as the public criteria according to which the community may judge the resolve of the church to address issues of abuse within the church.
- We acknowledge and accept the trust granted to us by those who are taking part in church activities, their families, and the wider community. We therefore commit ourselves to striving to ensure that all our actions are morally upright.
- We acknowledge that as 'a church', our responses to victims in the past may have varied greatly. We express regret and sorrow for any hurt that may have been caused whenever the response appeared to be inappropriate or inadequate.
- We are committed to establishing a process that strives for truth and confidentiality. We will ensure as far as possible that a compassionate response is the priority in all allegations (even at a time when it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate) through offering assistance, protection and care without passing judgment or prejudicing the rights of the alleged offender. We acknowledge that concealing the truth is contrary to the character of God, unjust to victims and a disservice to offenders.
- We understand and value the need for support to all parties involved in an allegation, including the aggrieved person and the alleged offender, and we actively seek to provide this support.
- We acknowledge the personal and public difficulties that a false, misconceived, malicious or vexatious allegation can cause for the person accused. We will take whatever steps are possible to address these difficulties.
- We desire to better understand the problem of abuse and the causes of such behaviour within the church. We will strive to be aware of our legal responsibilities and obligations in relation to prevention, reporting and processing requirements and seek to meet them at all times.
- We acknowledge that we have had to make changes in the way we relate to children, young people and others. As a result, some good things have been lost, however we will bear this loss to ensure as far as possible that the vulnerable are safe.
- We will ensure as far as possible that all people in positions of authority within the church and/or working with children and young people are aware of the appropriate standard of conduct and boundaries. We require those who work on behalf of the church to indicate their agreement with this policy statement and work towards providing an environment that prevents abuse.
- We believe that churches ought to be places of safety and refuge for children, young people and others, where they should be safe and feel safe from any threat when on church property or involved in activities operated by the church, or accessing services provided by the church. We believe that the church should be a place where people can disclose abuse and have it dealt with effectively.
- We will establish a prevention strategy that includes screening, sound recruitment and selection procedures, clear boundaries, risk identification and management, education, support, supervision and training.
- We acknowledge that the age of consent for sexual activity is determined by legislation. However, we are mindful that this must be read in the light of our moral and spiritual responsibility. All people in a position of authority within the church, be it real or perceived, paid or unpaid, have a moral and spiritual responsibility towards those over whom they have authority. In this situation it is never appropriate to take part in sexual activity of any kind, regardless of the person's age. We affirm that sexual behaviour belongs in a marriage relationship only and that in this context it is a good gift of God.
- All allegations will be notified to the appropriate external authorities, overseen by the Safe Church Facilitator, investigated thoroughly and determined as described in *MCC Safe Church*.

## ***MCC Safe Church***

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

The following constitutes the church's Code of Conduct for behaviour for a person in a position of authority within the church:

1. As a person in a position of authority within the church you must always be concerned about the integrity of your position, likely perceptions of the church and the wider community, and the need to acknowledge the real or perceived power given to you because you hold this position. You should avoid situations where you are vulnerable to temptation or where your conduct may be construed to be a breach of this Code of Conduct. You will make yourself familiar with all the provisions of *MCC Safe Church*.
2. You must not fail to take action to prevent to the best of your ability and report as required any of the following:
  - child abuse
  - a child or young person at risk of significant harm
  - Reportable Conduct
  - sexual misconduct
  - conduct that breaches the *MCC Safe Church* Code of Conduct
3. Sexualised behaviour is any behaviour that may reasonably be perceived to be of a sexual nature according to the standards of the time by the person to whom it is directed. Sexualised behaviour is only permitted as set out in the Bible. Except with one's own marriage partner, all sexualised behaviour is forbidden. If you are not married, you must abstain from all sexual or sexualised behaviour.
4. You must not engage in or condone any behaviour that could be considered:
  - child abuse
  - putting a child or young person at risk of significant harm
  - reportable conduct
  - conduct that breaches this MCC Safe Church Code of Conduct
5. You must not engage in or condone any behaviour that could be considered sexual misconduct, understanding that sexual misconduct is contact or invitation, via any means, of a sexual nature which is inconsistent with the integrity of a person in a position of authority within the church. Sexual misconduct includes any behaviour that could be reasonably considered sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, coercion or grooming of an adult or a child or young person.
6. Sexual exploitation refers to any form of sexualised behaviour with an adult, child or young person, whether or not there is consent and regardless of who initiated the behaviour, where that behaviour is contrary to the Bible. Therefore, you will not among other things engage in or condone any of the following:
  - behaviour or a pattern of behaviour aimed at the involvement of others in sexual acts, including but not limited to coercion or grooming behaviour
  - sexualised behaviour with a person below the age of consent
  - sexualised behaviour with a person with whom there is a supervisory, pastoral care, or counselling relationship
  - the production, distribution, possession of or accessing of pornographic material of any kind
  - taking advantage of the conscious or unconscious use of sexually provocative behaviour that some victims of abuse display

- engaging the services of a prostitute, or soliciting or providing such services
  - visiting, without legitimate reason, a brothel or any place maintained for the abuse-of-sex industry
  - viewing or reading, in print or otherwise, material of a sexually explicit nature, except for a legitimate purpose
  - participating in sexually explicit conversation via social media, chat rooms, gaming or any other means
  - asking, without legitimate reason, any questions about the intimate details of a person's sexual life or providing details of your own sexual life
7. Sexual harassment means unwelcome sexualised behaviour, whether intended or not, in relation to an adult, child or young person where that person reasonably feels in all circumstances offended, belittled or threatened. Such behaviour may consist of a single incident or several incidents over a period of time. Therefore, you will not, among other things engage in or condone:
- implicit or explicit demands or suggestions for sexual activities
  - making any gesture, action or comment of a sexual nature to a person or about a person in their presence
  - making jokes containing sexual references or innuendo using any form of communication
  - exposure to any form of sexually explicit or suggestive material, including but not limited to pornography of any kind
  - physical contact that is inappropriate to the situation or uncomfortable or confusing for the receiver, including kissing, hugging, touching, pinching, patting or aggressive physical conduct
  - touching any sexual part of the body, including the "only kidding" or accidental occasions of sexual touch
  - generating or participating in inappropriate personal correspondence (including electronic communication) in respect of sexual or romantic feelings or in breach of the Code of Conduct
  - inappropriate giving of gifts, including those of a sexual, suggestive or romantic nature that is in breach of the Code of Conduct
  - inappropriate or unnecessary discussion of, or inquiry about personal matters of a sexual nature,
  - inappropriate intrusion of personal space or physical privacy, including being alone in a bedroom or bathroom or allowing inappropriate exposure during activities that require dressing or changing clothes
  - voyeurism
  - persistent following or stalking
8. Coercion or grooming behaviour refers to physical or psychological actions intrinsic to initiating or hiding abusive behaviour, which involves the manipulative cultivation of relationships with vulnerable adults, children and/or young people, their carers and others in authority. You will not exhibit any behaviour that could be considered coercion or grooming behaviour.
9. With regard to children and young people:
- You will not visit a child or young person in their own home unless a parent is present or you visit another person in a position of authority within the church with parental permission.
  - You will not conduct a camp or other activity involving overnight accommodation without appropriate "camp parents" (ideally a married couple over the age of 25 years, of known maturity and Christian commitment) approved by the supervising body.
  - You will not provide any form of accommodation for any reason where there is not strict segregation by sex, with the exception of married couples and families. Supervision of children and/or young people must be provided by a person of the same sex.



- You will ensure that any activity involving children and/or young people is open to observation by parents and other adults with a legitimate interest.

10. With regards to adults, children and young people:

- You will not condone or participate in bullying behaviour where bullying is the repeated seeking out or targeting of an adult, child or young person to cause them distress and humiliation or to exploit them, including exclusion from a peer group, intimidation and extortion.
- You will not participate in or allow nude swimming or other such activities.
- You will not participate in or allow initiations and secret ceremonies.

11. With regards to adults, children and young people:

- You will take care to ensure an appropriate balance of transparency and confidentiality so that the private concerns of others are not disclosed or revealed improperly. In ordinary circumstances, when you are providing pastoral care to, or working with members of the opposite sex, you will strive to do so in an environment that allows visual surveillance and where reasonable, have other people within hearing distance.
- You will not allow a child to sleep in close proximity to an adult, other than a parent or guardian, unless there is a significant separation, and privacy of all parties is respected.
- You will not allow an adult to share accommodation with one child or young person unless they are a parent or guardian of that child or young person.
- You will not drive a child or young person unaccompanied.
- Where specified provisions cannot be followed in an emergency, the circumstances of the emergency and the actions taken should be reported to and approved by the supervising body. Where the actions taken are not approved they will be considered to be a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Any breaches of this Code of Conduct for any reason will be reported to the Eldership as soon as possible. The Eldership will determine the outcome based on the information received.

## Relevant legislation

### Relevant legislation and legislated requirements:

*Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) Victoria*

*Worker Screening Act (2020) Victoria*

*Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) Victoria*

*Crimes Act (1958) Victoria*

*Privacy Act (1988) (Cth)*

*Summary Offences Act (1966) Victoria*

*Fair Work Act (2009) (Cth)*

*Sex Discrimination Act (1984) (Cth)*

*Australian Human Rights Commission Act (1986) (Cth)*

The Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme

### The Victorian Child Safe Standards

In July 2022 new standards were in place in Victoria. For further details visit: [www.ccyp.vic.gov.au](http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au)

### Mandatory Reporting - *Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) Victoria*

The Victorian Parliament, on 10 September 2019 passed amendments to the Children, Youth and Families Act, which means that people in religious ministries are added to the list of mandated reporters to Child Protection Services.

The legislation states that a:

*"person in religious ministry means a person appointed, ordained or otherwise recognised as a religious or spiritual leader in a religious institution;"*

The law makes it mandatory for ministers and other appointed religious leaders to report child abuse, including when it is revealed to them during a confession. Under the law, ministers and religious leaders face up to three years jail if they do not report child physical and sexual abuse allegations.

Mandatory reporting refers to the legal requirement for nominated groups to report a reasonable belief of physical or sexual child abuse to authorities.

*The Victorian Child Safe Standards - Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) Victoria*

The Victorian Child Safe Standards (the Standards) are a direct result of the 'Betrayal of Trust' Victorian State Government Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse in Religious and Non-Government Organisations, held in 2012-13.

There are eleven Child Safe Standards. The standards are designed to drive cultural change in organisations, so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff and volunteers.

MCC endeavours to meet all eleven Child Safe Standards through the implementation of the *MCC Safe Church Policy, Procedure and Practice Manual*.

For detailed information about the Victorian Government Child Safe Standards see [www.ccyp.vic.gov.au](http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au)

In accordance with the Standards, making people welcome and practising hospitality to all (including Aboriginal children) is a key biblical value.

MCC pays particular attention to the needs of diverse children by:

- Acknowledging that families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children.
- Strengthening the parents/guardians in raising their children as Christians.
- Showing children God's love.
- Showing children understanding.
- Teaching and encouraging children to follow God's word in guiding their behaviour.
- Affirming the value of all children as people made in the image of God.
- Engaging in open, two-way communication with families about the particular needs of their children - especially in the case of children with diverse needs and circumstances – in order
- to create a children's ministry environment that seeks to be free of abuse and encourages
- the participation of children with diverse needs and circumstances.

MCC recognises that Aboriginal families who participate in MCC children's ministries will be doing so as people who find their identity in Christ Jesus and who also identify as Aboriginal, or who are seeking to find out more about Christianity. MCC is committed to actively supporting and facilitating Aboriginal children to be welcomed, included, treated fairly, respected, encouraged to participate in the children's ministries and feel free to talk about, and have acknowledged, their differences and culture.

MCC acknowledges that all racism is unbiblical, sinful and will not be tolerated.

#### **The Working With Children Check - Worker Screening Act (2020) Victoria**

All people working with children under 18 years old in MCC are required to have a current Victorian Working With Children Check (WWCC) OR, in the case of Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers, notify Working With Children Check Victoria (via the website) of their role with MCC. No person will be permitted to work with children under 18 in any MCC ministry or activity without a current WWCC.

See [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)

#### **Other appointed church leaders**

In October 2014 the State Government of Victoria enacted changes to the Victorian Working With Children Check (WWC Check). For the purposes of the legislation a minister of religion is anyone ordained or appointed as a recognised religious leader in an organised religious institution or an appointed leader of a local religious organisation in an institution who has general authority over operations or some of the operations of the congregation in the institution.

MCC interprets the broadened scope of the WWC Check to mean the following people in the MCC require a WWC Check in addition to those already holding a WWC Check due to participation in child-related activities:

- All members of the Eldership
- Appointed leaders of all MCC ministries – this includes music leaders and Bible study leaders regardless of whether their ministry area includes ministry specifically to children or not
- Relieving / guest Preachers
- *MCC Safe Church Facilitator*

The message from Government is that the WWCC is the minimum standard and organisations should be careful to ensure that all appointed leaders have a WWCC.

The WWCC application form is now only available online – see [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply)

### **Why WWCCs are required in appointed leadership roles that do not involve children**

The Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse have revealed two key areas of concern that the broadening of the Victorian WWC Check seeks to address:

- The need to change culture from "Child sexual abuse could never happen in my church" to "Child sexual abuse can and does happen in churches and everyone needs to be mindful of preventing it and ready to report it".
- The need to remove "blocks" when a concern is raised with a leader in a church and that leader is either not mindful of the possibility of child sexual abuse occurring, perhaps even disbelieving about this or doesn't believe it is their responsibility to take the concern further.

By legislating that all appointed leaders in churches and organisations have WWCCs the state government is seeking to both broaden awareness of child sexual abuse and assist individual leaders at all levels of church authority in taking responsibility to report concerns, suspicions or known child sexual abuse.

### **Interim WWC Exclusion notices and WWC Exclusion**

If an individual receives an Interim WWC Exclusion Notice upon applying for a WWC Check this means that the Department of Justice and Community Safety (the Department) intends to reject the application and issue a WWC Exclusion Notice. The Interim WWC Exclusion Notice means that the Department has not yet made a final decision on the application and the individual may make a submission and explain why they believe they should be granted a WWC Check.

MCC will receive a copy of the Interim WWC Exclusion Notice. Under the legislation, the individual must notify the local church within 7 days of being given an Interim WWC Exclusion Notice. If the local church receives notification that an individual in the congregation has received an Interim WWC Exclusion Notice this information must be immediately disclosed to the Safe Church Facilitator for follow up.

Any employee or volunteer of MCC who is issued with an Interim WWC Exclusion Notice or WWC Exclusion Notice must cease working with children and/or stand aside from their role until the matter is resolved by the Department of Government Services. This is to allow MCC to fulfil its duty of care to children in the Church, as well as to the person to whom the Interim WWC Exclusion Notice or WWC Exclusion Notice has been issued.

Post 1 August 2017 the legislation allows for "non-conviction" charges to be considered by the Department of Justice and Community Safety in terms of granting a WWCC to individuals, including to those who are renewing their WWC Check. This means that some individuals who currently have a WWCC may have their WWCC withdrawn.

Further, the term "unsupervised work with children" has been removed, meaning the WWCC applies to all contact with children, whether supervised or not.

### **The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme - (Part 5A) *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)* Victoria**

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme legislation states at Part 2 16B (1) (a) that "the protection of children is the paramount consideration in the context of abuse or employee misconduct involving a child". ["employee" is defined as both paid and volunteer workers in the organisation]

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS) is further evidence of the seriousness with which the State and community of Victoria treat the safety of children from abuse. The RCS forms part of a concerted effort to build a culture of child safety in Victoria across all organisations that interact with children. The main emphasis of the RCS is to ensure that all organisations are clear about their reporting duties, risk assessment and risk management.

MCC must comply with the RCS. This means that any historical and current child abuse allegations relating to employees and volunteers who work for MCC must be reported by the Head of Entity (this is any member of the Eldership for the purposes of the RCS) to the Commission for Children and Young People.

**Any allegations of criminal conduct will be reported to Victoria Police as the first priority.**

MCC must also provide evidence to the Commission for Children and Young People of a legislative-compliant investigation and appropriate response to the allegation(s).

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

The RCS requires MCC to risk assess and risk manage known risks to children's safety from abuse in the church. This legislative requirement aligns with the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards

For more details, please see the Commission for Children and Young People information sheet "What is reportable conduct?" – at [www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/What-is-reportable-conduct.pdf](http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/What-is-reportable-conduct.pdf)

Please contact the Safe Church Facilitator with any RCS enquiries, concerns or allegations – phone: 0418 127 101

Alternatively anyone may report directly to the Commission for Children and Young People - phone: (03) 8601 5281 – and then advise the Safe Church Facilitator.

## Online and smart phone usage guidelines

### For people in ministry roles

The following guidelines are to assist all people who work with young people and all people who are in positions of authority within MCC. Where the phrase “young person” or “young people” is used it is always defined as a person or people under 18 years of age. This is because a “child”, within the child safety legislation in Victoria, is a defined person under 18 years of age. This advice provides useful general guidance in regard to online and smart phone communication (i.e. all electronic communication).

In cases where ministry outcomes are in part effected through the use of social media then it is recommended that particular practice guidelines pertaining to that ministry are developed and clearly communicated to the leaders. The SCF is available for assistance in establishing such guidelines.

### *MCC Safe Church*

The *MCC Safe Church* Code of Conduct states at Point 1: “As a person in a position of authority within the church you must always be concerned about the integrity of your position, likely perceptions of the church and the wider community, and the need to acknowledge the real or perceived power given to you as a result of holding this position. You should avoid situations where you are vulnerable to temptation or where your conduct may be construed to be a breach of this Code of Conduct. You will make yourself familiar with the provisions of *MCC Safe Church*.”

This point has application to your use of all electronic communications as a person of authority or person working with young people in MCC.

### Basic Principles

There are three basic principles when having any type of conversation with a young person:

- 1) Remember God is listening:
  - The ‘God test’ – is this conversation honouring God?
  - The ‘parent test’ – if this young person’s parents were listening/reading this, would they feel comfortable with this conversation?
- 2) Seek transparency in conversations with young people and do not converse where you can’t be observed by others.
- 3) Don’t get in deeper than you can handle – if issues arise that are greater than your ability or in an area of your weakness refer the young person to others who are better equipped to deal with it. When in doubt, ask for help.

Online and smart phone communications can create an intense, relational situation because of the ease of access, the comfort of distance and its unobserved nature. A relationship can be developed far more quickly than was possible before online communication was common. Therefore, the church considers talking with young people online and via smart phone to be the same as talking to them face to face.

The same code of conduct for leaders interacting with young people face to face applies to all types of online and smart phone communication.

### Specific conduct guidelines:

#### Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/blogs/websites

If your church ministry establishes any of the above social media platforms as a method of communication within the group this is the best place for leaders to converse with members of the group as all conversations may be held in public. Ensure there is no option for private conversations to take place on this facility.

Best practice is for leaders **not** to be individual friends on social media with young people within the church. This is due to the risks inherent in private relationships which may develop over social media. These risks affect both young people and leaders.

However, it is recognised that leaders may be individual friends on social media with young people where the relationship is pre-existing or established via other connections, for example they may be related or may have formed the friendship via knowing each other external to the leader/group member relationship. In circumstances where leaders are individual friends with young people on social media leaders are at all times to adhere to the basic principles above.

#### SMS Text messaging/emails

Best practice is to only use the above methods of communication as a “one-way” avenue for communicating within the group. Make it clear to all members of the group that while SMS texts/emails will be used for communication leaders will not reply individually to any response from group members, unless a matter of urgency arises and, in every case, with a fellow leader copied in on the reply. Give parents the option of always being copied in on any communication from the ministry leaders and add those parents to the contacts list.

**When sending group emails always remember to send the email to yourself first and put all contacts into the blind copy (BCC) field to ensure you do not distribute email addresses without permission. Always copy in fellow leaders. Follow the same privacy protocols if using SMS texts to do mass communication within the group.**

#### Zoom or other group meeting software

If Zoom or other group meeting software is to be used for online ministry to people under 18 years of age, the Eldership must authorise the commencement of this ministry and instruct that the safety of children and young people is prioritised in the implementation of the ministry. There must always be two adult leaders present in every online ministry event with children and/or young people. This is as much to protect our leaders as to protect our children.

Every meeting with children and/or young people must have a password to prevent non-authorised, uninvited participants joining the meeting. Use a meeting password to ensure the meeting is secure.

Enable the “waiting room” facility so that the meeting host can check the identity of each person wishing to enter the meeting and be confident that only invited attendees are admitted to the meeting.

If using break-out rooms for smaller groups with children and young people, there must be two adult leaders in each break-out room.

Whichever platform is used in ministry to children and young people, there must be a disabling of the direct messaging/chat facility so that all interactions are transparent to all users. The platform must not be a “public” event on the internet and instead must be by invitation only, sent by the meeting host/administrator/moderator, directly to the parent of the child’s email, so that parents can choose whether or not their child participates in this ministry.

It is essential that parents of children participating in the online ministry are provided with information about:

- the platform being used for the ministry
- who will be monitoring the ministry (this must be two leaders as a minimum)
- who parents can contact if they have any questions or concerns (for example, how to contact the ministry leader or SCF if parents wish to raise a concern)
- the need for Safe Church Online and Smart Phone Usage Guidelines to be provided to parents
- conducting the ministry in accordance with the Safe Church Policy, Code of Conduct and in compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards
- the ministry’s strict “no cyber bullying” rule and be aware that any child found to be engaging in inappropriate or bullying conduct within the ministry will be removed from access to the ministry
- best practice for access to the ministry (in an open part of their home for maximum safety).

Parents of children participating in the online ministry must provide permission for their child either via email or letter to the MCC Eldership, Ministry Leader(s) or SCF. A recommended permission slip for use is available from the SCF.

Ministry leaders must read and implement the Safe Church Online and Smart Phone Usage Guidelines.

Ministry leaders must ensure that a clear “no cyber bullying” message is conveyed to the children participating and inform them that as the ministry has a strict “no cyber bullying” rule, any child found to be engaging in inappropriate or bullying conduct within the ministry will be removed from access to the ministry and their parents informed.

Children must be advised that they are only to use their first name for their profile (unless parents give permission otherwise).

If there is a decision to record online ministry, any recordings made during the ministry must **not** be posted to the internet. Recordings must be stored securely in case any concerns are raised at a later date. If recordings are to be made, then parents must document permission for children under 18 years of age. Permission must also be obtained from any adults participating. Permission can be provided by an email (which is also stored in case it is needed at a later date) to the ministry leader.

#### Phone/Skype/FaceTime/Messaging Apps/In-game messaging

In the main, seek to avoid where possible individual contact with young people via online and smart phone communication. Aim to have 100% of communication with young people via group communication. Should a need arise to use phone/Skype/FaceTime you should be accountable – always get parental permission before you talk with a young person over the phone and tell a co-leader that you are conversing with a young person by phone. If using Skype or FaceTime, again, always get parental permission before you talk with a young person using this facility. Ensure both you and the young person are using this form of communication in an open area where people can see you or there are others present, e.g. not alone in your room.

Do not use messaging apps or in-game messaging to communicate individually with children or people under your pastoral care in your Church role.

**In the case where an inappropriate message or image is sent to a leader by a child or a person under pastoral care/leadership via any online or smart phone communication, whether publicly or privately, the leader must not reply under any circumstances. Do not delete the image or message. The leader must immediately notify the SCF that this has occurred. The SCF will provide advice on how to proceed.**

#### Cyber bullying and image-based abuse

Sadly, there is an increase in the prevalence of cyber bullying and image-based abuse targeting both adults and children in Australia, mostly via social media. Both State and Federal governments have begun to address this societal problem through legislation and the provision of assistance to Australians via the Office of e-safety – [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)

If you become aware of cyber bullying or image-based abuse within the church context visit [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au) and contact SCF for assistance and reporting.



#### **General Advice:**

- Online and smart phone communication fosters relationships that feel like a deeper level of intimacy than would occur in normal communication between people, in less time than it would take face-to-face.
- This is why online and smart phone communication has significant potential risk involved for all users in a ministry setting.
- People can find themselves “getting in deeper” than they intended and struggle to exercise self-control or healthy boundaries when they engage in online and smart phone communications with people they minister to.
- It is not unusual for people to find they have over-stepped appropriate boundaries almost without realising.
- If this happens to you – simply stop, do not delete the messages or images but instead seek help from the SCF or a trusted senior leader and speak up sooner rather than later about what has happened.
- Remember – there are sexting laws in Victoria which make certain types of electronic communication criminal – you must be aware of this!
- Adhering to these guidelines will help minimise risk.
- Always seek transparency in online and smart phone activities.
- Practice online and smart phone behaviour that demonstrates a true witness to the Christian faith.
- In ministry, as much as possible, adopt an approach that uses electronic communication as a ‘broadcast’ communication tool to a group rather than an individual.
- If a situation develops online that you need advice or guidance about contact the *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator : 0418 127 101

## ***MCC Safe Church*** **Children**

*MCC Safe Church* applies to all interactions between adults and children within MCC. Within the Victorian legislative environment, a child is always defined as a person under 18 years of age and the *MCC Safe Church* Policy and Code of Conduct adhere to this definition. In this manual the following terms are interchangeably used to describe a person or persons under the age of 18 years: child/children, young person/young people.

Guided by *MCC Safe Church*, MCC ensures they are compliant with Victorian government child-related legislative requirements that are applied to voluntary organisations including churches.

In particular *MCC Safe Church* ensures MCC is compliant with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and can demonstrate this to the Victorian Government.

See the following website for the information about the standards:

[www.childsafestandards.org.au](http://www.childsafestandards.org.au)

Contact the SCF for further information about MCC compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards

## **What is child abuse?**

Child abuse is an act by a person or persons that endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. In Victorian legislation and in the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct a child or young person is a person under 18 years of age.

There are different kinds of child abuse:

### **Neglect**

Failure to provide the basic necessities of life, such as love and affection, safety, food, clothing, hygiene, medical care and education.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Depriving a child or young person of love and attention which can include but is not limited to constant criticism, isolation, excessive teasing or terrorising. These actions and others are used by a person in a position of power to make the child feel worthless. It may also include actions that cause serious mental anguish without any legitimate disciplinary purpose as judged by the standards of the time when the incidents occurred.

### **Physical Abuse**

All non-accidental physical injuries. This can include but is not limited to hitting, beating, burning, scalding or shaking, and actions that cause serious pain without any legitimate disciplinary purpose as judged by the standards of the time when the incidents occurred.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse includes involvement in sexual activities with anyone who is older, bigger, in authority or perceived authority or more powerful where a child or young person is unable to give informed consent. It also includes sexual activities with a person under 18 years of age (such as another child or sibling) where a child or young person is unable to give informed consent. These activities may be initiated by either party. This includes but is not limited to:

- touching in a sexual way
- masturbating
- flashing
- oral sex
- sexual intercourse
- eroding the sexual boundary between two people through sexual innuendo
- kissing
- unwanted or unnecessary touching
- overly long hugs
- online child exploitation (the grooming of children online to create online material that is sexually exploitative of a child)

It can involve apparently consensual intercourse or sexual activity, but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential or the fact that one person has a moral and spiritual responsibility towards the other.

It also includes permitting another person to undertake these activities with your knowledge or in your presence. It is not possible for a person under the age set by legislation (16 years) to legally consent to sexual activity.

## Domestic and family violence and children under 18

Statistics indicate that children who witness abuse are at least twice as likely to continue the cycle of domestic and family abuse into adulthood. In fact, witnessing abuse from one caregiver to another is the strongest risk factor for the transmission of violent behaviour from one generation to the other. Children who have been abused are also 15 times more likely to be abused by others.

These are just some of the many reasons why domestic and family abuse cannot be tolerated and must be acted upon. Child protection is everybody's business and we all have a responsibility to ensure that children are safe.

(Source: [www.breaking-the-silence.org.au](http://www.breaking-the-silence.org.au) )

In Victoria reports are made to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFS) - Child Protection, where there is family violence in a home where there are children under 18. For further information, contact the Safe Church Facilitator.

While it can be emotionally tough for church leaders and pastoral carers to consider making a report under such circumstances it is essential to remember that family violence situations can escalate very quickly and children are at real risk of harm when left living with family violence. Children cannot change their own circumstances and are entirely vulnerable to the adults around them. That is why, even though it is difficult, and church leaders and pastoral carers can feel emotionally conflicted and torn, a report must be made. Making a report also assists in the provision of guidance and resourcing for the Eldership and any other people ministering in the situation.

- **Child abuse is an act by a person or persons that endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development.**
- **It is imperative that MCC understands and recognises the different forms of child abuse.**
- **Family violence involves violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour carried out by a partner, carer or family member to control, dominate or instill fear. This includes physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial or other types of abuse. If a person has an immediate concern that a child is exposed to, or subject to family violence, an urgent report must be made.**
- **Mandatory Reporting of child abuse applies.**
- **Contact the *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator with any child abuse concerns or reports or to seek advice.**

## Signs of abuse

The following chart gives examples of possible indicators of child abuse. Note it is not an exhaustive list. Note that the presence or absence of any indicators listed does not necessarily mean the child is or is not experiencing abuse.

Form of Abuse	Possible Indicators
Sexual Abuse	<b>Verbally reports or discloses sexual abuse</b> , aggressive, overt, sexual behaviour, age-inappropriate knowledge of sexual acts, wary of physical contact (especially with an adult), physical signs of injuries, poor self-esteem, poor peer relations, inappropriate expressions of friendship between a child and an adult, self-harm, discloses online sexual behaviour as a result of online grooming or coercion.
Physical abuse	<b>Verbally reports or discloses physical abuse</b> , unexplained welts, bruises, burns, fractures, lacerations, abrasions, head injury, appears frightened of carer, seeks affection from any adult with no discrimination, extreme aggression or withdrawal or other behavioural extremes, complaints of soreness or injuries.
Emotional Abuse	<b>Verbally reports or discloses emotional maltreatment</b> , speech disorders, lags in physical development or 'failure to thrive', attempted suicide, low self-esteem, toileting problems, apathetic, withdrawn, habit disorders (eg. rocking, biting, sucking)
Neglect	<b>Verbally reports there is no carer / parent at home or there is a consistent lack of supervision</b> , consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress, chronically unclean, unattended physical problems, medical or dental needs, underweight, developmental delays, begs or steals food.

- **Child abuse is not usually a single incident but rather takes place over time.**
- **People attending MCC must be aware of and look out for all forms and indicators of child abuse.**
- **Online sexually exploitative abuse of children is growing exponentially in Australia due to the popularity of online activity and in particular, social media use by children.**
- **Always report online sexually exploitative abuse of children to:**
  - **Police: 000**
  - **SCF: 0418 127 101**

## Abuse disclosure process - What to do if a child discloses abuse

It is possible for any person in the church, whether in a position of authority or not, to have a child disclose abuse. In such circumstances it is extremely important that the situation is not compromised in any way. The following process is intended to assist if a child discloses abuse to someone in the church:

### What to do if a child discloses abuse

1. Listen, listen, listen...and do not add anything.
2. When listening to a child remember:
  - that children often talk about difficult or painful things in a roundabout way
  - that children need assurance from adults that it is OK to talk about upsetting things
  - children often feel ashamed and frightened and find it hard to find the right words to explain
  - being observant will help you pick up non-verbal clues about what is wrong
  - a child may drop hints when something is wrong, for example, "I don't like so and so. Do you like him/her?"
3. Tell the child, "You are not to blame".
4. Do not press the child for information or push the child to reveal the details of the abuse.
5. Do not ask leading questions, rather listen carefully and if possible take notes of what the child states, including any dates, times or locations of the alleged abuse.
6. Reassure the child, "You are right to tell and I take what you say very seriously."
7. Tell the child that you and the church are there to help and you will only tell someone else so that the child can receive help.
8. Do not promise *not* to tell anyone else. Rather, say "There are people who can help you and I will tell them."
9. Finish on a positive note and tell the child "I am pleased you told me this. You are not alone."

**If you consider the child is in immediate danger call Victoria Police 000. Stay with the child and then call the SCF 0418 127 101.**

If there is no immediate danger, then as soon as possible after the disclosure make handwritten notes of exactly what the child said and the date and time of the meeting.

See 'When to make a report' (page 29) for further details about the next step.

- **A child will disclose abuse to a person they feel safe with or trust. In this situation listen carefully, reassure the child and tell them you will help them.**
- **Make notes of exactly what the child has said and note the date and time.**
- **Contact Victoria Police if you consider the child is in immediate danger and then contact the SCF.**
- **If the child is not in immediate danger contact the SCF as soon as possible OR alternatively contact DHHS Child Protection and then contact the SCF.**
- **Remember – Mandatory Reporting law applies. MCC must report all child abuse disclosures to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police**

## When to make a report

A report to Victoria Police, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection is to be made when an individual within MCC forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from abuse. A separate report must be made to the Commission for Children and Young People in matters that fall under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Contact the SCF for assistance.

### Forming a Belief

To form a belief, the reporter must be aware of matters and hold any opinions in relation to those matters that lead them to reasonably believe a child is in need of protection (s.186 Children, Youth and Families Act Victoria).

### Reasonable Grounds

A belief on reasonable grounds is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds (s.184 (4) Children, Youth and Families Act Victoria).

For example, there may be reasonable grounds when:

- A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- A child states that they may know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- Someone who knows the child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- Signs of physical or sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been abused

Other kinds of child abuse are also reportable – for example, neglect.

### Suspicious of Harm

Further to the above, suspicions of harm to children must be reported. Reporting is necessarily and intentionally victim focused. Where a child's welfare is at stake, it is always better to act and report than to fail to do so.

A suspicion of harm exists when someone has a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm. The DFFH descriptions in the bullet points above also apply to determining whether there is a suspicion of harm. Any person who witnesses abuse of a child by an adult must also report this.

### The 'Betrayal of Trust' Laws

Three pieces of legislation relating to child protection issues have been added to the Victorian Crimes Act (1958). The following information is extracted from the Department of Justice and Community Safety fact sheets for each offence.

#### Failure to Protect:

The offence will apply 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. 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.

A relevant child is a child who is, or may come under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation. The child does not need to be identified. This means that the risk is not that a particular child will become the victim of sexual abuse. Instead, the substantial risk could be posed to any child who is, or who may be in the future under the organisation's care, supervision or authority.

The maximum penalty for failing to protect a child is five years imprisonment for each individual who failed to protect children in the organisation from a known substantial risk to their safety from sexual abuse in the organisation.

### Failure to Disclose:

Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to Victoria Police or DFFH - Child Protection. Failure to disclose the information to the relevant authorities is a criminal offence.

The maximum penalty for failing to disclose child sexual abuse is three years' imprisonment.

This law has in effect made every person aged over 18 years in Victoria a mandatory reporter of child sexual abuse.

### The 'Grooming' offence

The offence of grooming concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.

The offence can be committed by a person aged 18 years or over.

The maximum penalty for grooming is ten years' imprisonment.

### **The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme**

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.

Please contact the Safe Church Facilitator with any RCS concerns or allegations -phone 0418 127 101

Alternatively, **anyone may report directly to the Commission for Children and Young People:**

PH: (03) 8601 5281 / [www.ccyp.vic.gov.au](http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au)

Please advise the Safe Church Facilitator of any report.

### **Child / family services**

If an individual within MCC forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or family attending MCC require material support or child and family services, contact the SCF: 0418 127 101 or they can directly contact The Orange Door: 1800 512 358 and then let the SCF know the contact has been made.



- **Mandatory Reporting laws apply to MCC.**
- **When an individual forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from abuse contact must be made with either:  
DFFH – Child Protection: BH: 1300 655 795 / AH 13 12 78 or Victoria Police: 000**
- **Any individual can make a report to the relevant authorities in the first instance with follow-up contact with the SCF. If the child is not in immediate danger and you are unsure what to do, contact the *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator 0418 127 101**
- **If an individual believes a child or family attending MCC require material support or child and family services, contact the SCF or directly contact The Orange Door 1800 512 358**
- **The SCF will disclose all child abuse concerns/reports to either:  
DFFH - Child Protection or Victoria Police and follow their guidance.**
- **MCC complies with the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme.**
- **Disclosure of abuse, witnessing of abuse or concerns of abuse must be reported to the SCF and relevant authorities.**
- **If there has been a breach of the *MCC Safe Church* Code of Conduct during MCC activities involving children, it must be reported to the SCF.**
- **The ‘Betrayal of Trust’ laws are critically important.**

**MAFFRA COMMUNITY CHURCH STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO REPORTING CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS**

<b>Protective concerns</b> You are concerned about a child because you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Received a disclosure from a child about abuse or neglect</li><li>Observed indicators of abuse or neglect</li><li>Been made aware of possible harm via indirect contact</li></ul>				<b>At all times remember to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Record your concerns / observations</li><li>Follow appropriate protocols / process</li><li>Consult with the Safe Church Facilitator (SCF)</li><li>Consult with support agencies if necessary</li></ul>			
STEP 1	RESPONDING TO CONCERNS	STEP 2	FORMING A BELIEF ON REASONABLE GROUNDS	STEP 3	MAKING A REFERRAL TO THE ORANGE DOOR	STEP 4	REPORTING
<p>1. If your concerns relate to a child requiring immediate protection; or you have formed a belief the child is at significant risk of harm*. <b>GO TO STEP 4</b></p> <p>2. If you have concerns that a child and their family require family services support / assistance; speak to the SCF or contact or contact The Orange Door directly on 1800 512 358 <b>GO TO STEP 3</b></p> <p>3. In all other situations <b>GO TO STEP 2</b></p> <p><i>*Refer to MCC Safe Church page 25 – What is Child Abuse</i></p>		<p>1. Consider the level of immediate danger to the child. Ask yourself: a) Have I formed a belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm? <b>YES / NO</b> and b) Am I in doubt about the child’s safety and the parent’s ability to protect the child? <b>YES / NO</b></p> <p>2. If you answered yes to a) or b) <b>GO TO STEP 4</b></p> <p>3. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need support, speak to the SCF or report directly to The Orange Door – 1800 512 358 <b>GO TO STEP 3</b></p>		<p>Child Wellbeing Referral:</p> <p>1. If the child is not in immediate danger but you have significant concerns that the child and their family need support / assistance, speak to the SCF or report directly to The Orange Door – 1800 512 358</p> <p>2. Have notes ready outlining your observations and child and family details.</p>		<p>If you have reason to believe a child requires immediate protection:</p> <p>1. Contact police on 000</p> <p>2. Contact Child Protection BH 1300 655 795 AH 13 12 78</p> <p>Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</p>	

## ***MCC Safe Church***

### **Adults**

The *MCC Safe Church* Policy and Code of Conduct apply to all interactions between adults at MCC. Everyone at MCC has the right to feel safe as they worship God and fellowship with one another. *MCC Safe Church* aims to ensure that MCC is a place of spiritual, emotional, mental and physical safety for everyone.

In the life of the church, however, issues and circumstances may occur where an adult feels unsafe in any one of these aspects through their interactions with other adults. Examples include where an adult may be a victim of sexual or indecent assault or be harassed in the church environment.

In these and other such situations adults at MCC may choose to contact the SCF for information, support, advice or assistance. The SCF is a resource for MCC in such matters.

### **What are adult-related Safe Church issues?**

The following list includes the sort of situations that if experienced by adults at MCC may be described as Safe Church issues. Note that this is not an exhaustive list but is indicative only. If uncertain about a particular circumstance, contact the SCF for further clarification.

- Indecent assault
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual assault
- Disclosure and/or allegations of past sexually abusive behaviour
- Disclosure and/or reports of previous convictions for sex offences
- Disclosure and/or reports of being on the Sex Offender Register
- Rape
- Threatening behaviour
- Violent behaviour
- Assault
- Duress
- Fraud
- Domestic and Family Violence
- Grooming
- Online coercion behaviour towards children for the purposes of sexual exploitation
- Stalking
- Inappropriate relationships
- Bullying
- Possession or dissemination of pornography or child abuse material
- Illegal sexting (sexting between an adult and a child)
- Image based abuse of adults via digital communications
- Conduct, behaviour or speech that is sexually threatening or inappropriate

In the case of employees and volunteers who work for MCC, any conduct defined as 'Reportable Conduct' within the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme is also a *MCC Safe Church* issue. Contact SCF for enquiries relating to this.

## What must be reported?

In the context of adult related Safe Church issues conduct or behaviour within MCC that is classified as criminal under the Victorian Crimes Act (1958) or as misconduct under the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme must be reported. If a person is in immediate danger always contact Victoria Police and then contact the SCF to report. If there is no immediate danger but an allegation or evidence is brought that indicates a criminal act has occurred, then contact Victoria Police and the SCF. If in doubt or unsure about contacting the police, then call the SCF in the first instance. The SCF can then follow up as necessary with reporting to the police. All crime or reasonable beliefs that a crime has occurred are reported to Victoria Police.

The following must be reported:

- Indecent assault
- Sexual assault (including sex offences against children)
- Rape
- Threatening or enacting violence (including within Domestic and Family Violence)
- Assaults (including in a Domestic and Family Violence situation)
- Stalking
- Grooming
- Illegal sexting (sexting between an adult and a child)
- Accessing and/or disseminating online child abuse material
- 'Reportable Conduct' (as defined within the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme) by any employee or volunteer working for MCC
- Sexual harassment
- Conduct, behaviour or speech that is sexually threatening or inappropriate
- Domestic and Family Violence and Abuse
- Disclosure and/or allegations or complaints of previous misconduct with children (including as discovered through due diligence/reference checks and/or screening processes) –
- whether or not this occurred within MCC or another organisation.

Where there is uncertainty if a concern is reportable contact the SCF for advice.

### Disclosures of past abusive behaviour

If an adult in the church makes a disclosure that they have sexually abused a child in the past, whether they were under 18 years of age or not, and whether the abuse was familial or not, this is not information that the listener can keep to themselves. This kind of disclosure must be reported to the SCF, as individuals with sexual abuse behaviour in their background are understood as individuals who carry risk to the safety of children.

*"There is a tendency to minimise or dismiss young people's sexually abusive behaviour as experimentation or play, or as a 'phase' that will pass with age...Such minimisation belies the seriousness of the abuse and the harm that is caused to the victims...[There are well-established] clear boundaries about what constitutes sexual abuse by young people - coercive or forceful sexual behaviour with children (or with peers) is always abusive, and should not be regarded as 'normal' adolescent behaviour."* ('Young People who sexually abuse: Key Issues' by Cameron Boyd and Leah Bromfield, 2006, Australian Institute of Family Studies).

When it comes to these kinds of disclosures it is no longer the case that church leaders can keep such information to themselves and take no action in the form of risk management measures. When church leaders know such things about people in the church and take no risk management measures, churches become places where children are at greater risk from sexual abuse. This approach led to thousands of children being sexually abused in churches across Australia. Further, legal duty of care and specific Victorian legislation make this approach such that the Church will be legally exposed.

It should be noted that disclosure and risk management are not inherently inconsistent with pastoral care and ministry if the process is handled well and with compassion.

### **Domestic and Family Violence**

The presence of Domestic or Family Violence in a marriage or a family falls short of the abundant life God promises us in Christ. It deprives victims of the peace, comfort, safety and joy that God intends for marriage and family.

Where it exists in the body of Christ it undermines the truth and love of the Gospel, with devastating effect on the victims, those who love and care for them and the witness of Christ in both the Church and the world.

Maffra Community Church is firmly opposed to all forms of Domestic and Family violence. Husbands are specifically told "...Love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph.5:25) and are warned, to love their "...wives and not be harsh with them..." and to live with them "...in an understanding way" (Col. 3:19; 1Pet. 3:7).

Therefore, any attempt to twist the biblical teaching to tacitly sanction domestic violence or abuse is a gross perversion of the Bible's teaching. Domestic and Family Violence is repugnant to God and an anathema to the biblical model of sacrificial love and service.

The Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* has the following explanation of family violence:

"Family violence is any behaviour that in any way controls or dominates a family member and causes them to feel fear for their own, or other family member's safety or well-being".

It can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or economic abuse and any behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of that behaviour."

A violent family member may use several forms of abuse and violence over time. An ongoing pattern of control, intimidation and fear is the most usual pattern of family violence that police respond to.

Family violence where there are children in the household is child abuse. Abuse where there are children involved must follow child protection procedures as the priority is the protection of children and their need to live and grow in a safe home.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Federal legislation relating to sexual harassment was altered by the Commonwealth Government in 2021. Volunteers in organisations, as well as paid employees, are subject to sexual harassment legislation provisions.

The Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct govern the response of all concerns raised about, or complaints of sexual harassment within MCC. This includes any complaints relating to those within the church holding positions of leadership (for example: Elders and Deacons).

Any allegations, concerns or complaints within MCC relating to sexual harassment are to be reported to the Safe Church Facilitator to ensure that the church responds appropriately within legislative requirements.

Contact the Safe Church Facilitator for further clarification or to discuss any sexual harassment allegations, concerns or complaints.

## **What may be reported**

The following list gives examples of what kind of conduct and/or behaviour may be reported or be the subject of complaints to the SCF. Note this is not a definitive list but rather indicative. Contact the SCF for further clarification or to discuss any concerns or complaints.

Adult behaviour that may be reported:

- Bullying
- Inappropriate relationships
- Misuse or abuse of authority
- Professional misconduct
- Spiritual abuse
- Elder Abuse
- Financial Abuse

## Volunteer approval process and appointment process

### Volunteer approval process

Volunteers are very important in sustaining the life and ministry of the church. It is critical however, that volunteers abide by *MCC Safe Church* to ensure a safe ministry environment, especially for children. Further, paid workers with children under 18 must also abide by *MCC Safe Church* practice to ensure a safe ministry environment.

Best practice for appointing people in volunteer roles working with children under 18 years is to only appoint people who have been in the congregation for more than a year. By adhering to this practice, the church reduces vulnerability to being targeted by potential abusers as providing an avenue to groom and access potential victims.

All people (paid and volunteers) wishing to work with children under 18 in MCC must undergo the screening and approval process known as Volunteer Approval Process (see page 37) prior to commencing in such a role. This process was initially established under the 'Breaking the Silence' protocols and continues under *MCC Safe Church* – as a result MCC is compliant with the relevant standard relating to screening of workers with children in organisations in Victoria under the Child Safe Standards.

The following guidelines apply to all people who wish to work with children within MCC:

- Only people with a current Victorian Working With Children Check or VIT Registration (registered with Working With Children Check Victoria) are permitted to work with children within MCC.
- A Working With Children Check does not automatically entitle a person to work with children in MCC as it is not a test of character or suitability, rather it is an instrument that prevents people with known serious convictions from working with children in Victoria. MCC reserves the right to remove or refuse a person from any role working with children based on other criteria such as Safe Church related concerns/reports.
- MCC is to ensure that no new person commences work with or ministers to children in their operations if they have not undergone the Volunteer Appointment Process (VAP) followed by screening and approval by the SCF.
- Children who have grown up in MCC, including those who have served as a helper in the church, must undergo the VAP if they wish to work with children in the church after they have turned 18 (i.e. as an adult). There is no exemption under the law from this required process, even for these people.

### Exemptions for Teachers and Police volunteering at MCC

Under Victorian legislation teachers and police are exempt from requiring a Working With Children Check. Currently serving police and teachers holding a current registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching are exempt from requiring a Working With Children Check. At MCC, having provided proof of their employment/registration they are however required to complete all other steps in the Volunteer Approval Process.

In September 2019 the Victorian Government and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) introduced a new requirement whereby people holding VIT Registration must also link their VIT Registration number to organisations outside of their employment, where they work with children.

VIT Registration holders involved in MCC ministry are required to link MCC to their VIT Registration

If a person who is exempt from requiring a Working With Children Check is either suspended or dismissed from their employment they must inform the church (Eldership or SCF). This must take

place to comply with sections 113 and 114 of the Worker Screening Act Victoria (2005). Failure to do so will result in police prosecution and a fine for the person who has failed to inform. Such a person is no longer exempt from the Working With Children Check and must apply for a check and discontinue in their role with MCC while awaiting approval in the form of a current Working With Children Check.

**For further details see:**

[www.vit.vic.edu.au/news/news/2019/changes-to-vits-teacher-registration-scheme](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/news/news/2019/changes-to-vits-teacher-registration-scheme)

[www.service.vic.gov.au/services/teachers-notifications/](http://www.service.vic.gov.au/services/teachers-notifications/)

### **Visiting mission and ministry teams**

From time-to-time MCC has visiting mission or ministry teams. These teams come from another Christian organisation and there are Safe Church requirements that must be met by MCC. Contact the SCF for further details.

### **Volunteer approval process (VAP)**

The following process must be followed when a new person volunteers to work for MCC with children under 18 years of age.

#### STEP 1:

A person has a desire to join a ministry that involves working with children under the age of 18 years.

#### STEP 2:

The person must:

- complete the 'Initial Registration' form, giving two referees and personal information details (name, address etc.). Referees should ideally be people who have known the person for a significant amount of time (years rather than months) and who are not relatives.
- Have a current Victorian Working With Children Check
- read and sign the 'Role Description' form
- agree to attend *MCC Safe Church* Basic Training

#### STEP 3:

It is the responsibility of the *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator to:

- contact the referees and complete the 'Confidential Record of Reference Checks' form
- site the current WWCC
- ensure copies of all relevant documents are kept on file in an appropriate manner.

The *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator must treat as strictly confidential all applications and records of contacts with referees. Such information may only be accessed by the *MCC Safe Church* Facilitator or an Elder (if necessary). The information should be marked "confidential", and all personnel files should be kept in a secure facility (for both electronic and paper records) for purposes of confidentiality. Access is limited to those so authorised.

#### STEP 4:

Upon receiving the completed forms the applicant is screened. If through screening the applicant is approved then the person is registered with the MCC (as a persons approved to work with children under 18). The person is then required to attend an orientation session that includes:



- information concerning the role they will have
- an overview of the *MCC Safe Church* Policy, Practice and Procedure Manual
- reading and signing the Code of Conduct

The person is required attend *MCC Safe Church* Basic Training within the first 12 months of being approved

If the applicant is not approved through the screening process the person cannot minister or work with children under 18.

### **Questions to ask referees**

When completing the "Conversation summary" section of the Confidential Record of Reference Checks Form, the following are recommended questions to ask each referee:

1. Are you related to the applicant or the other referee? *(if the person answers yes, you cannot proceed with this referee check – another referee needs to be obtained from the applicant)*
2. In what capacity have you known the applicant and for what length of time?
3. How would you describe the applicant's reliability and competency to work with children under 18 years of age?
4. How would you describe the applicant's general maturity as a person?
5. Do you have any reasons to believe the applicant is not suitable to work with children and if so what are they?

Always inform referees that the information supplied by them will only be used for assessment of the applicant under the MCC Volunteer Approval Process and all information provided remains strictly confidential.

### **Supporting material**

In order to complete the process above a series of forms are to be completed. These forms will be collected and collated by the SCF:

1. Initial Registration with MCC form
2. Signed copy of the Role Description appropriately tailored for the role
3. Confidential Record of reference checks form
4. Evidence of holding a current Victorian Working With Children Check (ideally a photocopy of the Working With Children Check card)

### **Privacy**

All VAP documentation must be kept securely to ensure privacy for the applicant. Secure storage entails keeping the VAP documentation in a secure facility (for both electronic and paper records) that can only be accessed by authorised people.

The Victorian Child Safe Standards – Standard 4 – requires that organisations with children have an employment process that includes due diligence and screening. Hence *MCC Safe Church* requirements for the employment of a person as a volunteer ministry worker in MCC are in place to ensure the church complies with Standard 4.

MCC provides the following employment process for use when the church seeks to appoint a paid ministry worker.

**The components of the Child Safe Standard 4 compliant MCC employment process for pastoral ministry workers are:**

- Provision of a role description (also known as "duty statement") to the applicant

- Provision of a minimum of two referees by the applicant
- Current National Police Check and Working With Children Check
- Proof of qualifications – specifically any theological studies or a certificate of ordination
- Reference checking of the applicant by contacting the two referees
- An interview with the applicant

Victoria Police advises that a National Police Check can only be used for a single purpose and must be applied for that specific purpose – hence the applicant requires a new Police Check for the process.

For details see the Victoria Police FAQs fact sheet.

A standardised form is available for use for this employment process by contacting the SCF.

- **All people (paid staff and volunteers) who work with children at MCC are required to have a current Victorian Working With Children Check**
- **MCC is committed to undertaking screening and reference checking of all people (paid staff and volunteers) who work with children, through the means of the Volunteer Approval Process**
- **All paid pastoral ministry workers must undergo the Appointment Process prior to being offered a position at MCC**
- **MCC must comply with the VAP requirements prior to allowing a person to commence in a role working with children**
- **All VAP and Appointment Process documentation is to be forwarded to the Eldership to ensure appropriate information sharing and storage**
- **The VAP information and forms are available by contacting the SCF**

## ***MCC Safe Church***

### **Forms for ministries to children**

The following forms are available from the SCF to assist MCC with compliance with Victorian government requirements, *MCC Safe Church* Policy and the Safe Church Code of Conduct:

#### **Useful ministry forms**

A number of useful ministry forms, including parental/guardian permission forms for children and youth ministries are also available from the SCF. Responsible local church leaders are encouraged to review and use these forms prior to the relevant ministry commencing.

#### **Child Safe Organisations - Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment tool for churches to undertake a child safety risk assessment within the local church children's ministries is available from the SCF.

MCC is to annually review the risk assessment tool considering the children's and youth ministries operating at the church. Once reviewed any alterations to the risk assessment must be approved by the Eldership.

- **MCC should use *MCC Safe Church* forms to secure parent/guardian permission relating to the participation of children under 18 in programs.**
- **Permission forms must be used for camps and holiday clubs.**
- **Working With Children Check records are to be updated annually.**
- **Risk Assessments for child abuse and child safety are to be undertaken annually.**

## ***MCC Safe Church*** **Audit**

To ensure compliance with Victorian government legislated requirements, MCC will annually complete the '*MCC Safe Church* Compliance Checklist' (accessed from the SCF). The completed checklist will accompany the *MCC Safe Church* Report completed annually by the SCF as part of the annual reporting process.

- The *MCC Safe Church* Compliance Checklist will be completed by the SCF
- The completed checklist will be forwarded to the Eldership for review and then included in the reports tabled for the Annual General Meeting.

- **A Compliance Audit is a crucial part of ensuring MCC is compliant with *MCC Safe Church* relevant Victorian Government legislation, including the Victorian Child Safe Standards.**
- **A Compliance Audit is undertaken annually by the SCF and the completed audit is included as a report to the MCC Annual General Meeting.**
- **The *MCC Safe Church* Compliance Checklist can be accessed by contacting the SCF.**

## References

*Breaking the Silence Procedures for dealing with and preventing abuse within the church*, Conduct Protocol Unit, Presbyterian Church of NSW, July 2011

### **Relevant legislation and legislated requirements:**

*Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)* Victoria

*Worker Screening Act (2020)* Victoria

*Children, Youth and Families Act (2005)* Victoria

*Crimes Act (1958)* Victoria

*Privacy Act (1988)* (Cth)

*Summary Offences Act (1966)* Victoria

*Fair Work Act (2009)* (Cth)

*Sex Discrimination Act (1984)* (Cth)

*Australian Human Rights Commission Act (1986)* (Cth)

### **Other publications:**

*A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation (2018)* Victorian Government - Commission for Children and Young People

*A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child First* State Government of Victoria, Department of Human Services – Child Protection

*Child Protection Practice Manual* State Government of Victoria, Department of Human Services

*Young people who sexually abuse: Key Issues (2006)* Cameron Boyd and Leah Bromfield, Australian Institute of Family Studies

[www.childsafestandards.org.au](http://www.childsafestandards.org.au)

[www.ccyp.vic.gov.au](http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au)

[www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)

[www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)

[www.safechurchpcv.org.au](http://www.safechurchpcv.org.au)