

CHILD SAFETY: STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT AND POLICY

"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." I Peter 1:16

"...but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." I Timothy 4:12

"...whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:8

Our commitment to child safety

The Revival Centres Church (RCC) Melbourne Centres (Central, Southern and Western) are committed to the welfare and safety of children and young people at our church. We aim to create an environment where children and young people feel safe, have fun and enjoy coming to church and our family and child-specific activities. Children and young people are encouraged to be active participants in our church meetings and the Sunday School program (also known as "Kid's Church").

The church regards the protection of children and young people in its care as being of the utmost importance and we have a zero tolerance for any form of abuse.

We are committed to maintaining a child safe culture within our church by regular training of our church officers and volunteers in our child safe program.

Scope of Inclusion: While we welcome individuals from diverse religious backgrounds to participate in our community activities and events, it is important to note that our organisation's mission and activities are centred around the teachings of the Bible. Our commitment to cultural inclusion does not constitute an endorsement or promotion of religious beliefs outside of our own faith tradition.

Our children and young people

Children and young people are vital and active participants in our church. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

"...Jesus called unto them and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of Heaven. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." Luke 18: 16-17

Members of our church come from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds. Adult members of our church and many young people and children have received the Holy Spirit and been baptised by full immersion in water in accordance with Bible requirements.

We are committed to ensuring all children, regardless of their background or disability are safe, can participate equally in events relevant to their age and are safe from sexual and other abuse. Specific responses for specific subjects are covered in the table below "Our Alignment with Victoria's Child Safe Standards".

Our Alignment with Victoria's 11 Child Safe Standards

Child Safe Standard	Our Alignment
1 Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.	Within the <i>Scope of Inclusion</i> noted above, we are committed to promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal children and young people. This is demonstrated through emphasising the diversity of church membership and by including images and language within Kids Church and from our preaching platform that is not predicated on any dominant culture.
2 Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.	All events involving children follow our child safety <i>Risk Management plan</i> and practices which aim to ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people. All organisational leadership is trained every two years. This training includes the responsibilities for reporting. Notwithstanding the responsibility for anyone within the Church to report matters to government authorities, there is also a requirement to have leadership informed of suspicions so that immediate action can be taken in respect of church roles that may be withdrawn pending the outcome of police investigation. All communication on this subject (for example, for the training) are preceded by a statement from a pastor noting that we take this issue very seriously. Our Commitment to Child Safety (this document) is placed on our public website, to which all members (and the public) have access.
3 Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.	The most impactful areas for children and young people are Kids Church and Young Peoples – our two Church activities most aimed at these groups. The leadership of these groups discusses decisions to the level appropriate to the ages of the children or young people. Children and young people are encouraged to be aware that their views are important. Leadership are expected to lead in this way in their interactions with children and young people.

4 Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.	The issue of child safety forms an ongoing matter for information and involvement of church members. Through our published Commitment (this document) and through our regular training, the child safety and wellbeing is promoted. Further, public announcements on this subject are made from time to time, which make the point that child safety is the responsibility of every adult in Victoria, and that mandatory reporting applies to every adult in Victoria.
5 Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.	Within the <i>Scope of Inclusion</i> noted above, we are committed to promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and those with particular needs. This is demonstrated through emphasising the diversity of church membership and by including images and language within Kids Church and from our preaching platform that is not predicated on any dominant culture. In terms of sexuality and gender matters, Church leaders uphold the organisation's doctrinal principles while offering respectful, compassionate support, when sought by families. All children are included and treated with respect and care when attending church events. The rights of the child are prioritised and respected. The Church does NOT practice so-called "conversion" therapy.
6 People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.	All church members who work with children in any capacity (including as part of volunteer teams – eg the coffee cart) are required to have undertaken and keep up to date a Working With Children Check from the Victorian Government. All of these church members are also required to attend the biennial training on child safety held within the church. Named church leaders and experienced church members are formally nominated during the training to provide points of contact for support.
7 Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.	Processes are discussed at the biennial training. Processes include dealing with suspicions and mandatory reporting. This Commitment (this document) together with our training focus on a child-first approach. This means that any 'benefit of the doubt' is resolved in the child's favour. Mandatory reporting, as required by Victorian law, is undertaken without favour.

8 Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.	Our church runs biennial training (in February of each ‘even’ year). This training covers all essential components of our policy and government requirements. It is a requirement that all members of the church who have any contact with children and young people, in any organised way, attend this training. Members register for the training, and material and information is sent to these registered attendees after the training has completed. The website of the Commission for Children and Young People (https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/) is also noted in our training material and in our Commitment document (this document).
9 Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.	The physical environments of our church are subject to risk management planning and inspection regularly. Matters noted as presenting a danger (both to adults and children, or just to children) are cordoned-off and dealt with. There are few online environments mediated by the church. Those that are focused publicly do not include images or names of children. Some internally-focused online environments (eg private Facebook group) may include photos of children or young people but only with parent/guardian consent, or have children in such sufficient distance that their features are not recognisable.
10 Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.	This table represents the current review of the Child Safe Standards. Opportunities for improvement will be undertaken as needed, but at least every two years. The versions of this document are noted at the end of the document, including the next scheduled review date.
11 Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.	This document (and particularly this table) documents ALL Child Safe Standards and how they operate within our church. The Church’s <i>Child Safety Risk Management Plan</i> comprehensively outlines the practices and procedures across physical and digital environments where children are present. They have been designed to be easily understood, and to back up the regular training provided. These documents are sent to all registered participants in our Child Safety Training, as well as our Commitment (this document) being publicly available to all members of our church through being on our website.

Our officers and members – child safety code of conduct

Officers and adult members first and foremost should ensure their conduct is at all times appropriate to that of a Spirit-filled person and in accordance with New Testament teachings.

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” Ephesians 5:15

All officers and adult members of our church must abide by this policy document. Officers and adult members must respect and keep safe all children and young people in attendance at our church and church activities. This includes:

- treating all children and young people with respect and valuing their opinions, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status, etc;

- being an example and exercise good conduct and judgment around children and young people by:
 - being mindful of actions, behaviour and conversation with and around children and young people;
 - ensuring all contact and communication with children and young people is appropriate.
- actively promote and take responsibility for the physical and emotional safety of children and young people in attendance at our church;
- encouraging open communication with children and young people and allowing children and young people to participate in decisions which affect them;
- taking responsibility to ensure accountability and not placing him/herself in a situation where a risk of an allegation being made could occur. For example, it is prudent to ensure at least two adult members of the church are present in any situation involving the supervision of children or young people;
- being transparent in actions and whereabouts;
- encouraging children and young people to feel they are in a caring environment and can actively speak out about situations about which they feel uncomfortable;
- challenging unacceptable behaviours and abiding by this policy to report any concerning behaviours or suspicions regarding abuse by any church member or visitor;
- ensuring programs and activities are made accessible to children or young people with a disability;
- respecting the privacy and confidentiality of children, young people and their families and only disclosing information to persons who need to know;
- at all times, complying with Commonwealth and State government laws regarding child safety and protection.

Officers and adult members must **not**:

- engage in behaviour or conversation which could shame, belittle or humiliate children or young people, including using inappropriate, discriminatory, sarcastic or sexually provocative language;
- act in a way which shows unfair or deferential treatment of certain children or young people;
- condone or participate in behaviour with children or young people which is unsafe or physically or emotionally abusive;
- hit or physically discipline a child or young person;
- seek to make inappropriate conduct or spend one-on-one time with a child or young person;
- take images (photographs or video) of a child or young person or post images online without the consent of a parent or guardian;
- make contact online with a child or young person without the consent of a parent or guardian;
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person or assist a child or young person with things of a personal nature (such as dressing, toileting or showering) where the child or young person is capable of doing those things him/herself.

Officers are to recognise that particular caution is required when discussing sensitive issues with children or young people.

Young adults looking after Young Peoples' groups in particular should be mindful of relationships with young people under the age of 18 which could be perceived to be one of a 'power-imbalance'.

Awareness of child safety and supervision of members

Education of our church officers and members is important to ensure that everyone understands that **child safety is everyone's responsibility**.

We train our officers and members to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. We also support all church officers and members to understand and promote the safety and participation of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal children and young people, the safety of children and young people with a disability and that all children are safe from sexual and other abuse.

Officers and members involved directly with the supervision of children and young people, including in Sunday School, crèche, Young Revivalists and Young Peoples' activities, will be supported and supervised to ensure they understand that everyone has a role to play in keeping children and young people safe and protecting them from abuse.

All people engaged in the supervision of children and young people are required to hold a 'Working with Children' Check and to provide evidence of this Check to Pr Simon Longfield or his nominated officer for this purpose.¹

Fair procedures for our officers and members

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to our officers and adult members. The decisions we make when assessing incidents, and when undertaking disciplinary action will always be Bible-based, in accordance with any Commonwealth or State laws, and thorough, transparent and based on evidence.

Any allegations of abuse and safety concerns are recorded by Pr Simon Longfield, including any action taken. All records are securely stored and the privacy of individuals involved is respected. Personal information of all persons involved will be protected, unless there is a risk to someone's safety.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to the child, young person and family involved (as appropriate) on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Legal responsibilities and reporting of incidents

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an **incident of abuse has occurred** or **observes inappropriate behaviour** towards a child or young person, they **must** fulfil the mandatory reporting requirements set out under "Mandatory Reporting" below.

They also **must** report the circumstances or incident to Pr Simon Longfield (or acting Senior Pastor if he is unavailable), stating whether or not the incident and/or observed inappropriate behaviour has already been reported. This is for the purposes of ensuring the safety of other children in relation to an alleged perpetrator and also because, as head of the organisation, Pr Simon has specific reporting requirements and risk management requirements himself. The circumstances of the event may give rise to changes needed in policy, physical arrangements and/or other risk management arrangements within the church.

¹ Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website for further information: www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au.

Forming a Reasonable Belief

A “reasonable belief” includes:

- a child or young person states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child or young person may in fact be referring to themselves);
- observing behaviour of a child or young person consistent with that of an abuse victim;²
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it; or
- observing suspicious or inappropriate behaviour.

Mandatory Reporting

We take seriously requirements for mandatory disclosure.

Victorian law requires mandatory disclosure:

- **ANY ADULT:** Any adult in Victoria who has a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to the police. This should be reported immediately by calling triple zero (000)³
- **LEADERSHIP of the Church:** Any person of authority in our church will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.⁴
- **Mandatory Reporters:** Any persons in our church who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their legal duties.⁵

Head of Organisation - obligations to investigate and report

Pr Simon Longfield will report any incident or reportable allegation through appropriate channels, including to the Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People. If not already reported (see Mandatory Reporting above), or if he is unsure whether a report has been made, he will also report the matter to the police.⁶

A reportable allegation⁷ must be reported to the Commissioner for Children and Young People by Pr Simon Longfield within 3 business days of becoming aware of the allegation.

It is the responsibility of Pr Simon Longfield to investigate and respond to incidents and provide updates and outcomes of findings of investigations to the Victorian Commissioner for Children and

² For example behaviour, please see further resources at: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/child-safe-standards/>

³ A person will not commit the offence of ‘failure to disclose’ if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

⁴ Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

⁵ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

⁶ The head of an organisation is required to have systems in place to prevent reportable conduct being committed, enable reportable allegations to be made, investigate and respond to reportable allegations and report allegations of criminal conduct or suspected criminal conduct to police. The head of an organisation must ensure allegations are assessed and notify the Commissioner for Children and Young People of reportable allegations and provide updates and outcomes of the findings of any investigation.

⁷ There are five types of ‘reportable allegations’: 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; and significant neglect of a child.

Young People, in accordance with the time frames set out by the Commissioner. Within 30 calendar days of becoming aware of a reportable allegation, Pr Simon Longfield must provide the Commissioner with detailed information about the allegation, disciplinary or other actions taken and the response of the individual to the allegation. **It is a criminal offence to not comply with these timeframes without a reasonable excuse.**

Risk management

In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children and young people.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no officer or member is to have contact with a child or young person on social media without parental or guardian consent).

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families, children and young people have the opportunity to contribute.

This Document

Original version: January 2018

Reviewed: March 2021: no substantive changes.

Reviewed: June 2023: no substantive changes, website addresses updated.

Reviewed: February 2024: Mandatory reporting updated to make clear that reporting to Pr Simon was not a replacement for an adult being required to make their own mandatory report.
Version 2024b - February 2024: Scope of Inclusion statement added.

Reviewed: June 2025: reference to “Kid’s Church” added for clarity; baptism by immersion *in water* added for clarity.

Reviewed: February 2026: a point-by-point response has been added as a table, detailing our response to the *11 Child Safety Standards* issued by the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People

Due for next review: February 2028