

# **REDGUM CHURCH INCORPORATED**

## **Safeguarding Children**

### **A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

#### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

#### **AND PROCEDURES**

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Policy Statement: A Commitment to Child Protection

The purpose of this Policy is to guide REDGUM CHURCH INC in developing a child-protective culture. REDGUM CHURCH INC is committed to welcoming children and their parents or carers and providing a 'child-safe'<sup>1</sup> environment, culture and programs for children and other vulnerable people who attend the services and other programs. We see such a commitment as flowing naturally from our vision and mission to operate according to biblical, Christian principles for living and for recognising the unique value and potential of every person, regardless of race, age, gender, ability or disability.

All children who come to REDGUM CHURCH INC have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of children in our care will be our first priority. The authorised leaders accept the responsibility of providing a safe and friendly environment where children are listened to, feel safe, have fun, accept challenges, learn and grow. This duty of care applies at all times, although when children attend church and remain with their parents, then the parents have the primary duty of care.

We recognise the particular need for sensitivity for those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including those with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage. We take into consideration the needs of children with disabilities and seek to include them and make them feel safe and welcome.

This Policy recognises both Federal and State legislation and commits workers to responsibly and reasonably cooperating with Government departments, law enforcement and child protection agencies. The operational principles of our Code of Conduct support and facilitate the protection of children and young people.

### 1.2 Scope:

The provisions and duties of care expressed in this Child Protection Policy apply to:

- Ministers. A minister of religion is: *A person defined or appointed as a recognised leader in an organised religious institution; or the appointed leader of a local religious congregation in an organised religious institution who has general authority.*
- The (Board), pastors, all employees (including volunteers) members and adherents.
- All activities and programs organised by or with the approval of REDGUM CHURCH INC, on the premises or off-site, including camps and day trips.

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<sup>1</sup>It is recognized that no organisation can guarantee the safety of children and other vulnerable people who are on site at a venue. The term 'child-safe' means that child safety is paramount to this organisation, that it has compliant policies and procedural documents and that risk identification and mitigation practices are embedded in the culture.

- All guests or hirers of the venue and its facilities. Such temporary users of the church facilities will be provided with copies of this Policy Code of Conduct and relevant procedures, and the Hiring Agreement will include a signed commitment to complying with the expectations of these documents.
- Contractors, subcontractors, delivery persons or others engaged to provide services on the premises, whether or not they have direct contact with children whilst on site. Where possible, such temporary visitors to the church premises will be provided with an Induction Pack and required to sign their willingness to comply with the expectations outlined.

### **1.3 Authority**

This Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct was revised and updated to reflect the most recent changes to State and Federal law and guidelines towards being a child-safe organisation.

It was approved by the Board and adopted for use by REDGUM CHURCH INC on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019.

### **1.4 Policy Review**

The Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Code of Conduct will be reviewed at least every two years, or to remain compliant with new legislation.

Any proposed changes or updates will be submitted to the Board of REDGUM CHURCH INC for approval at a properly convened meeting for approval before being adopted and implemented.

### **1.5 Operating Principles**

*Duty of Care:* Means any legal responsibility that REDGUM CHURCH INC has to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those who participate in programs or activities of the church.

*Vicarious Liability:* Means any legal liability that REDGUM CHURCH INC may be determined to have for the conduct of those who act on its behalf (e.g. its staff and approved voluntary leaders).

*Reasonable Standard of Care:* Refers to the level of care that a user may reasonably expect that REDGUM CHURCH INC will take in providing any program, activity, service, or facility.

*Reasonable Foresight:* Refers to a responsibility that REDGUM CHURCH INC has, when planning activities for children and young people, to identify any reasonably foreseen danger/risk and take reasonable steps to prevent or avert such risk.

**Child Protection Reporting Obligations:** This principle covers mandatory reporting, for those professions and roles that are defined by law, and the moral and legal responsibility that all adults have to report all types of known or possible child abuse, where there is a reasonable belief that a physical or sexual offence has occurred or may be committed against a child

Reasonable belief: A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds, through disclosure by the child or a third party or personal observation of indicators that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk.

## **2. Children's Rights to Safety and Participation**

The staff and leadership of REDGUM CHURCH INC encourage children to feel a part of the church by seeking their feedback regarding children's programs, and through listening to them when they speak about matters that directly affect their sense of safety or wellbeing.

Part of our work with children is to *teach and inform* them of what they can do if they feel unsafe, threatened or upset by the behaviour of adults or other children. *We will listen to and act on* any concerns children or their parents/carers raise with us. We value diversity and do not tolerate discrimination in our words or practices or in those of others.

*We are committed to protecting children from harm.* 'Harm', as used in this policy, includes any and all of the following types of abuse or neglect of children and young people: physical; sexual; emotional/psychological; racial/cultural or spiritual/religious. (See Appendix 2)

### **2.1 Feedback from Children**

Children and young adults will have the opportunity to reflect on their experience of church programs and to make comments regarding the standard of planning for and delivery of programs for their age-group. We will invite comments on other aspects of wellbeing, including staff conduct. Such feedback will inform REDGUM CHURCH INC and guide adjustments to practices, programs and training.

## **3. Employment of Staff and Volunteer Leaders**

### **3.1 Recruitment, screening and selection practices**

REDGUM CHURCH INC will be vigilant in the recruitment, selection and screening of all staff, contractors, leaders and volunteers to ensure they are safe and suitable to work with children and young people. It is important that every person who works with children under the auspices of this church upholds and exemplifies our Christian beliefs and values, especially in their interaction with children and other vulnerable people.

1. Our statements of commitment to child safety and our behavioural expectations of employees and volunteers are included in all advertisements and Job Descriptions.

2. We conduct reference checks prior to engagement, using an agreed set of questions. Conversations will be documented and kept as part of the employment file of successful applicants.
3. Short-listed applicants will be interviewed by Board Members, prior to appointment being made official. The Senior Pastor will make appointments to a specific role in the form of an Employment Contract. Such an Employment Contract will include a commitment to the church's Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Code of Conduct.
4. All workers who do not have a current written employment contract are to enter into a ministry/organisational covenant dealing with their suitability to be workers and agreeing to these child protection policies, procedures and the Code of Conduct.
5. We will conduct thorough screening to determine whether a prospective staff member, contractor, volunteer or leader may pose a risk to children. This will include REDGUM CHURCH INC making reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:
  - a. Child-related Employment Screening Clearance;
  - b. proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
  - c. the person's history of work involving children; and
  - d. references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.
6. The type of evidence that an applicant is required to provide to REDGUM CHURCH INC will vary depending on the type of position that they are applying for. However, REDGUM CHURCH INC will not offer any applicant a position at REDGUM CHURCH INC until they provide the required evidence to the [insert applicable person]. We have a clear staff and volunteer induction process that includes providing them with a copy of this Policy, the Code of Conduct and other relevant documents detailing standard operating procedures.
7. All staff and volunteers are trained annually to refresh their knowledge of our policies and expectations in terms of conduct and protocol, especially where there has been document review.

## **3.2 Support and Training**

*We provide a system of support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. To this end we have developed a **Code of Conduct** to guide our staff and volunteers.*

1. Staff and volunteers are provided with a copy of this **Child Protection Policy** and the **Code of Conduct** that defines unacceptable conduct, boundaries and expectations for behaviour. Staff will sign a pledge stating they have read, understand and will comply with guidelines.
2. Annual 'Refresh, Renew, Update' sessions are run for all program staff and volunteers, to ensure staff and volunteers awareness of the importance of child safety and familiarity with child protective practices and expectations.

Paid staff and the leadership team will attend workshop/training sessions organised by the denomination or other Registered Training Organisations.

## **4. Investigation of Suspected Child Abuse**

In the case of an allegation being made against staff member, volunteer, leader and/or contractor at REDGUM CHURCH INC the Child Protection Officer will follow the Child Protection Procedure. REDGUM CHURCH INC will take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount.

The first step is to withdraw the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down (with pay, where applicable), re-assignment to other duties that do not have direct contact with children, or to work under increased supervision while the matter is being investigated.

### **4.1 Case management**

In the event of a child disclosing an incident of abuse to someone they trust it is essential that it is dealt with swiftly, sensitively and professionally.

### **4.2 Investigations**

REDGUM CHURCH INC will appropriately investigate all allegations relating to an incident of abuse in accordance with its obligations and to the extent reasonably practicable. In some

circumstances, it may be necessary for REDGUM CHURCH INC to conduct an investigation in addition to any investigation conducted by authorities (e.g. the police).

REDGUM CHURCH INC may conduct an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by the Department or the police, and will co-operate with the authorities as required. ‘

All people covered by the Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure must co-operate fully with any investigation by the Department, the police or REDGUM CHURCH INC

REDGUM CHURCH INC will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other employees, leaders, volunteers and contractors may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation (e.g. to provide witness statements).

An investigation conducted by REDGUM CHURCH INC will be conducted in accordance with procedural fairness to protect the integrity of the investigation and the interests of all the participants involved in the investigation. REDGUM CHURCH INC will also handle the allegations in a confidential manner to the greatest extent possible.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for REDGUM CHURCH INC to engage a person (or persons) from outside REDGUM CHURCH INC to conduct an independent investigation in relation to allegations.

The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but may include withdrawal from active duty, re-assignment to duties with no contact with children, increased supervision, disciplinary action, dismissal or criminal prosecutions.

## **5 Risk Management**

REDGUM CHURCH INC will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall approach to risk management.

Risk assessment and management practices are embedded in our procedures for all services, programs or activities authorised by the church. We use these practices to inform our planning and implementing of all aspects of operation at REDGUM CHURCH INC

Risk management applies to Work Health and Safety generally and is covered in more detail in REDGUM CHURCH INC. This policy applies specifically to the minimising of risks of abuse of

any kind to children who are in our care and to ensuring their physical safety in the buildings or activities of the church.

In situations where a person seeks to attend or join REDGUM CHURCH INC with a record of offending in child abuse of any kind, the leadership will put in place appropriate boundaries restricting access, to ensure the safety of children. This is not to say that such a person, with a proven reformed attitude, cannot be received into fellowship and benefit from the pastoral care of the church.

REDGUM CHURCH INC will have a risk and compliance sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks within REDGUM CHURCH INC and its environment.

If the risk and compliance sub-committee identifies risks of child abuse occurring in REDGUM CHURCH INC or its environment the committee will make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the Church will take to reduce or remove the risks (i.e. risk controls).

As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the risk and compliance sub-committee will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

A **Child Protection Officer** is appointed by the leadership for responding to complaints made by staff, contractors, volunteers, children or other attendees and members of the congregation.<sup>2</sup>

The Child Protection Officer (CPO) will be identified and their role explained at appropriate times in the church year. Guests, staff and volunteers are expected to use either the **Complaints Form** or the **Incident Form** to note concerns arising from observations or experience. (See Appendix 4 and 5) Copies of these forms will be kept in the Church Office by the CPO.

## 6 Record keeping

All reports of alleged abuse or harm, or risk thereof, must be recorded in the form of an Incident Report. Places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours or evidence of harm are what is recordable. Reports must be to be securely stored by the Child Protection Officer.

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<sup>2</sup>This person is mature, experienced and readily accessible during those times children are on site, but does not directly work with children. The Child Safety Officer is appointed by the church leadership is accountable to the Senior Pastor. The CPO has access to the Complaints and Incident Forms and is familiar with the legal requirements applying to the reporting of abuse against children.



## **7 Privacy and Confidentiality**

REDGUM CHURCH INC will collect, use, disclose and hold personal information in accordance with relevant privacy legislation.

As much as is reasonably possible, an individual's confidentiality is to be protected. Both those who are making reports and those about whom accusations are being made are entitled to confidentiality. Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, staff members, leaders, volunteers and contractors must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act consistent with the Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure, and relevant statutory requirements.

# CODE OF CONDUCT

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose:

REDGUM CHURCH INC is a group of followers of Jesus Christ in BAIRNSDALE seeking to reflect the teachings of Christ and of the New Testament with integrity and humility. Beyond personal faith in the redeeming work of Christ in His death and resurrection, we accept that this faith is worked out and expressed in the quality of relationships we develop as a church community and all those with whom we interact in our daily lives. Jesus summarised God's expectation for the conduct of His people into one famous and succinct sentence: *'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbours as yourself.'* He reinforced this 'law of love' by adding, *'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples; you love one another!'* Jesus also taught and demonstrated the importance of truth and honesty, of justice and mercy as essential to healthy relationships.

This **Code of Conduct** seeks to apply to the ministerial, or pastoral relationship those ethical standards that God expects of all people. People in various forms of recognised ministry are therefore expected to be examples and models of Christian faith and practice. It is the duty of any person in a ministry position not to use the influence or authority of their position for personal gain, whether that gain is financial or in terms of power, sexual gratification, or otherwise. This includes any action, verbal, written or electronic, physical or emotional that could be interpreted as emotional, sexual or spiritual abuse, and applies especially when working with children.

The adoption of this Code of Conduct and the related Procedural Documents for investigating breaches of the Code, reflects a deep desire to follow an open, accountable process that seeks to express justice, acceptance and compassion to all parties, rather than to protect the organization.

This Code has been written in recognition of the power differential between people in ministry roles and the people they serve. The potential for this power imbalance to impact detrimentally on relationships is high. These guidelines have been established to help inform the conduct expectations in all aspects of personal relationships between people in ministry and those they serve.

## 1.2 Our Commitment

Our commitment to expressing the love of Christ leads us to the view that all people should be able to live, work and learn in an environment that is free from abuse of any kind. Our commitment is to cultivate an environment where a diversity of people, regardless of age, gender, race and culture can thrive and grow holistically. That is, we are committed to < the church> being a safe place for all people, with a special focus on the safety and wellbeing of children.

This Code of conduct aims to detail the standards of conduct expected by staff (paid and voluntary) in the performance of their duties and to provide guidance in areas where there is a need to make personal and ethical decisions.

The **Code of Conduct** recognises and is aligned with all statutory and compliance requirements enshrined in State and Federal law. REDGUM CHURCH INC is committed to operating in accordance with the law in all its operations, so that it provides a safe, ethical and caring place for all users and activities.

## 1.3 Complaints regarding child abuse

Where there is a complaint made regarding child abuse, especially child sexual abuse, **the procedures for reporting such abuse outlined in the below will be followed.**

## 2. Specific Expectations to Protect Children from Abuse

All those who minister or work under the auspices of the church with children should be fully aware of our **Child Protection Policy** and this **Code of Conduct**. Abusive behaviour towards children will not be tolerated and any and all allegations will be investigated and reported if found to be substantially true.

### **DO:**

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of, or in connection with, REDGUM CHURCH INC must:

- contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone '000');
- adhere to the Child Protection Policy and Procedure and uphold the the Church's statement of commitment to child safety at all times;
- take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse;

- conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as an employee, volunteer, leader or contractor of REDGUM CHURCH INC and as a positive role model to children and young people;
- work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of REDGUM CHURCH INC;
- be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area;
- maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities;
- establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
- be fair, considerate and honest with others;
- treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas, opinions and backgrounds;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island child's self-identification);
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination);
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability;
- listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they are or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child;
- ensure (as far as practicable) that adults are not alone with a child;
- comply with all reporting obligations as they relate to reporting under legislation;
- raise concerns about suspected abuse with the Child Protection Officer as soon as possible;
- record and act upon all allegations or suspicions of abuse, discrimination or harassment;
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe;
- be professional in their actions;
- maintain strict impartiality;
- respect confidentiality when sharing information about children in accordance with the Child Protection Policy and Procedure and your reporting obligations;
- maintain a child-safe environment for children and young people; and
- operate within the policies and guidelines of REDGUM CHURCH INC

## **DO NOT:**

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of REDGUM CHURCH INC must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- put a child at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors for an improper reason);
- speak to a child in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Some examples are:
  - swearing or using inappropriate language in the presence of a child;
  - yelling at a child, except in an emergency situation where the a child's safety may be in danger;
  - dealing with a child while the adult is angry with the child; and
  - using hurtful sarcasm.
- discuss sexual activities with a child unless it is a specific job requirement and the person is trained to discuss these matters;
- have contact with a child outside of church activities without the knowledge and/or consent of REDGUM CHURCH INC'S leadership;
- have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary);
- use any personal communication channels/devices such as a personal email account to communicate with a child without parental knowledge;
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child unless necessary;
- use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol while in the presence of or while supervising a child (unless your contact with the child is accidental/incidental and you are not performing your duties as directed by <the church>);
- use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs while in the presence of or while supervising a child;
- provide or allow a child to consume alcohol;
- provide or allow a child to consume illegal drugs;
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves;
- engage in rough physical games, hold, massage, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate and or/culturally insensitive way ;

- engage in any sexual contact with a child for any purpose;
- take a child to your home or encourage meetings outside program activities (unless parental permission has been provided);
- be naked in the presence of a child;
- possess sexually explicit printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of children;
- sleep in the same bed, sleeping bag, room or tent with a child;
- discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender identity, sex, race, culture, sexuality, or disability;
- engage in any activity with a child that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
- be alone with a child unnecessarily and for more than a very short time;
- develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child for their own needs;
- show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians;
- do anything in contravention of REDGUM CHURCH INC'S policies, procedures or this Code.

## DECLARATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read the Code of Conduct and the Child Protection Policy and Procedures that express the intent of the church to protect and nurture children and other vulnerable people.

I agree to comply with these rules and expectations. I am aware that if I breach these, and/or break the law, that my actions will be reported to the Police or the Child Protection agencies.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / 20\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / 20\_\_

Employer or Senior officer of the Church



# CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURE

## 1. Handling of Complaints and Allegations

### 1.1 Steps to respond to an Allegation of Abuse

#### Step 1.

Where possible, any person (including a child) making an allegation should be encouraged to fill out a Complaints Form and give this to the CPO, who **may**, if appropriate, share the allegation with the senior leader of REDGUM CHURCH INC. A copy of this Form **must** be kept by the CPO. The complainant may keep the original. This is an essential record of the event.

#### Step 2.

If a person is concerned about their own safety or the safety of another person, the person may speak to the **Child Protection Officer (CPO)**. The CPO will meet with the complainant, and hear the story, taking notes and seeking clarification, ensuring that the complainant feels listened to, understood and protected. (Some complaints may be able to be dealt with at this time, where there is misunderstanding, a lack of evidence of any abuse or no reportable act has been committed.)

#### Step 3.

Any person who believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse should telephone 000.

Certain professions are referred to as 'mandatory reporters'. This includes medical practitioners, nurses (including school nurses), members of the police force, counsellors and primary and secondary teachers and principals (VIC). Penalties may be incurred by those named as 'mandatory reporters' if they fail to notify DHHS if they have reasonable grounds for a belief (not proof!) that a child or young person is in need of protection, because they have suffered, or are likely to suffer significant harm particularly physical or sexual abuse.

In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, may disclose that information to the Police or the DHHS.

#### When is a child in need of protection?

A child is in need of protection if any of the following grounds exist—

- a) the child has been abandoned by his or her parents;
- b) the child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person willing and able to care for the child;
- c) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;



- d) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- e) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- f) the child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be, significantly harmed and the child's parents have not provided, arranged or allowed the provision of, or are unlikely to provide, arrange or allow the provision of, basic care or effective medical, surgical or other remedial care.

REDGUM CHURCH INC encourages all persons with concerns about the safety of a child involved in the activities of the <the Church> to raise these concerns directly with the Child Protection Officer (CPO), who can assist the person to make the report to DHHS and/or the police as required.

However, a person is not required to consult with REDGUM CHURCH INC, or gain the support of REDGUM CHURCH INC, prior to making a report. The accused person (staff member/volunteer or carer) may be stood down from duties and any access to children on the property, until the matter has been investigated and resolved.

The STATE AUTHORITY must be notified of the allegations, no later than 30 days after the church leadership becomes aware of the allegation or conviction. REDGUM CHURCH INC will fully co-operate with the STATE AUTHORITY and be directed by the investigation process.

Ring DHHS on the Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78 (24 hours 7 days)

AND/OR

Ring the police on 000.

Information for making a report:

- name, age and address of child;
- the reason for suspecting that the behaviour or injury is a result of abuse;
- an assessment of the immediate danger to the child;
- a description of the injury or behaviour observed;
- the current whereabouts of the child;
- any other information about the family; and
- any specific cultural details, e.g. English speaking, disability, etc.

The Child Protection Officer will conduct an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by DHHS or the police, and will cooperate with the authorities as required.

Where an allegation is made against a senior minister or member of the leadership staff, the Child Protection Officer should engage at least one independent investigator, to handle the case.

Where an allegation has been made, REDGUM CHURCH INC will make, secure, and retain records of the allegation of child abuse and REDGUM CHURCH INC's response to it.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in this Procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

**Step 4.**

When a report is made, the leadership will contact the insurer, GJ Insurance Consulting Pty Ltd.

## 1.7 General Principles for making a Report regarding Child Abuse

### a. Clarifying, Recording Evidence and Specific Information about the Child

*A Report is required if you believe, based on reasonable grounds, that a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm as a result of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect AND that the child's parents or caregivers have not, or are unlikely to, protect the child from such harm.*

The following information will be required when making a formal report to Child Protection Services:

- The child's name, age (date of birth is preferable) and address
- The name, age and address of any known siblings
- Your reasons (observations or disclosures) for believing that the child is at risk of abuse, or actually being abused or neglected
- Your assessment of the immediate danger to the child
- Current whereabouts of the child or vulnerable person (if not in the home)
- Your description of injuries or 'sign' behaviours you have observed
- Any other information you may have of relevance to the investigation

***N.B. You do not have to be given permission by church authorities to make such a report. Your identity as notifier will remain confidential unless you choose to inform the child or family.***

**b. Reporting.** Making a report is to lay a serious allegation of a criminal offence against another person, so clarify your perceptions (talk to the child or your colleagues) and decide the best method of reporting. You can make your report to:

- **REDGUM CHURCH INC Child Protection Officer**, using a Complaint Form. Attach your notes to the form, keeping a copy. The CSO may decide to take the concern to the Senior Pastor or to act unilaterally or on your behalf. You may still make an independent report.
- **The Police.** The police are the most appropriate first responders if the report is regarding behaviour taking place on church premises. Again, fill out a Complaint Form, attach your notes and call 000. The Child Safety Officer may also decide to call the police as a first step.  
In Victoria:
  - **Child First (Family Information and Support Team)** – is a family-focussed and community-based intake and referral service.
  - **Child Protection Services** (1300 655 795 BH, or 13 12 78 AH) is a statutory service provided by DHHS to protect children and young people at risk of harm and to work with families to ensure these risks are mitigated.

## **APPENDIX 1 Definitions of Abuse against Children**

### **Child abuse includes:**

- a. any act committed against a child involving
  - i. a sexual offence; or
  - ii. an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
- b. the infliction, on a child, of-
  - i. physical violence; or
  - ii. serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- c. serious neglect of a child.

“Child” means a person under the age of 17 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child. Collective term for “child” is “children”.

There are five common types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and racial/cultural

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:

- Hitting, punching, kicking, beating (marks from belt buckles, fingers).
- Shaking (particularly babies).
- Burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair.
- Alcohol or other drug administration.

### **Sexual Abuse, including ‘grooming’**

**Sexual abuse** is any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another’s trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.

**Sexual grooming** is a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child, as a precursor to sexual abuse. Examples include inappropriate special time with the child, inappropriately giving gifts, ‘accidental touching’, allowing the child to sit on lap, having secrets. In isolation, such behaviours may not indicate the risk of abuse occurring, but if there is a pattern of behaviour occurring, it may indicate grooming. Grooming behaviours often mimic the kind of relationship-developing strategies that Christian ministries use for the benefit and wellbeing of children, that is, gaining the trust of the child, demonstrating care and concern, spending time, visiting in the home, finding out about family, friends and hobbies. However, grooming to involve a child in sexual activities for the personal gratification of an adult is a crime.

### **Emotional or Psychological Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person, which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child’s development, self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child’s presence.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. And includes any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's development. Examples include the failure to provide food, shelter, adequate hygiene or schooling for a child.

## **Bullying**

Bullying can be defined as repeated, unreasonable, unwanted behaviour conducted by an individual or group against another person, which has a negative impact on health and wellbeing. This includes aggression, verbal, emotional/psychological or physical acts that intimidate or threaten. It often involves an abuse of a power differential between the bully and the victim.

## **Other Forms of Abuse**

### **Racial, cultural or religious abuse**

Racial abuse is any harmful conduct that discriminates against, or demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, ethnic origin, skin colour or other evidence of 'difference'. It may be overt, such as racial vilification or discrimination, or covert, such as demonstrating a lack of cultural sensitivity or positive ideas about a different ethnicity.

Religious or cultural abuse is similar to racial abuse, but is directed towards expressions of religious faith or practice or cultural dress, identifying styles of cultural expression or practices. *'The harm that is caused by racial, religious or cultural abuse targets the child's **identity**.'*

### **Spiritual abuse**

This involves the perpetrator using their position of authority in the church or higher understanding of biblical teaching or God's will to manipulate a child for their own use or benefit, or to pressure a child using guilt, shame, or a strong "works" based ethic. This is not reportable to a Government Child Protection agency, although in extreme circumstances can be classified as emotional abuse.

### **Cyber-bullying**

Cyber-bullying occurs when a person uses any form of telecommunication to sexually groom, bully, suggest an inappropriate relationship be formed, or engage a child in sexual language or behaviours. The explosion of electronic communications (Facebook and other social media sites, text-messaging, internet chat rooms etc.) has seen a sharp increase in cyber-bullying.

## **Statistics of Abuse**

It is very difficult to know precisely the amount of child abuse that occurs in Australia, as many acts go unreported. Statistics of reported acts, though, are available through government agencies. Child Protection Australia 2010-11 report reported that there were 237, 273 notifications of child abuse involving 163,767 children in Australia.<sup>3</sup> The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2002) revealed the following breakup of perpetrators: 74% natural parent, 10% step-parent or de facto, 7% other relative or sibling, 5% friend or neighbour, 4% others (including strangers).<sup>4</sup> The reality of abuse in Australia is a lot worse than the statistics. There are estimates that as many as 1 in 20 men in Australia may sexually offend against a child. As many as 1 in 5 children will be sexually abused during

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<sup>3</sup> NSW and Act Baptist Churches, *Creating Safe Spaces Manual 2012 v1.3, p11*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

their childhood. On average, it takes a girl 7 years to tell someone about such abuse, and for men the average is well over 25 years, if they ever do.

**APPENDIX 2 Feedback Survey of Children. Name: \_\_\_\_\_**

This survey is your chance to have a say about the children’s programs. Think about each statement and mark on the line, somewhere between “Not at all!” and ‘Absolutely!’.

**1. I feel welcomed and looked after when I come to this church..**  
| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

**2. My parents like the log-in process and arrangements for my care.**  
| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

**3. I know which toilets to use and feel safe when using them.**  
| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

**4. There are good spaces for activities and learning times.**  
| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

**5. The activities are fun, challenging and well-organised.**  
| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

**6. I feel safe and relaxed while I am in the children’s programs.**  
| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

**7. I feel that the leaders know what they are doing and are looking after me.**  
| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

**8. The leaders are friendly and respectful of my friends and me.**  
| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

**9. If I am worried or upset, I know who I can go to for help.**  
| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

**10. I would recommend this church program as great for kids.**  
| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

### APPENDIX 3. Complaint Form

Please use this Form to make a Formal Complaint regarding discrimination or abuse of any kind towards yourself or another person, including a child.

**Please read the Code of Conduct Document before using this form.**

**COMPLAINT FORM (Private and Confidential) Date: / /201\_\_ Time: \_\_:\_\_\_ am/pm**

<b>Your Name:</b> _____	<b>Role at REDGUM CHURCH INC: -</b> _____
Is the complaint about offending behaviour: a. directed towards you? <b>Yes / No</b> b, concerning a child? <b>Yes / No</b> c. about a vulnerable person? <b>Yes / No</b>	<b>Who was the victim of the behaviour?</b> <b>Name:</b> _____  <b>Date of Birth:</b> ___ / ___ / _____ <b>Age:</b> ___  <b>Address:</b> _____
<p>Please briefly, but accurately, describe the alleged behaviour about which you are lodging this Complaint Form. (Keep to the facts, without interpretation or opinion.)</p> <p><b>Who was the offending person:</b> _____</p> <p><b>What abusive behaviour did you observe or come to hear about?</b>          _____          _____</p> <p><b>Is the abuse still happening or was it a past event?</b> _____ -          _____</p> <p><b>Where did the event/behaviour take place?</b> _____          _____</p> <p><b>Were there other witnesses? If so, provide name(s)</b> _____          _____</p> <p><b>What is the level of risk to the victim now? (Low – High; Immediate – possible;</b>          _____</p> <p><b>Any other comments:</b> _____          _____</p>	
<p><b>Statement of Intent:</b> I make this complaint in all sincerity, recognising that such a complaint may have a serious or long term impact on all those involved. I will act in good faith in the process and accept the ruling of the ‘investigator’ where I believe it is fair and transparent.</p> <p><b>Signed:</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____ / _____ / 20____</p> <p><b>Witness: (Print name)</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____ / _____ / 20____</p> <p><b>Signature:</b> _____</p>	





**APPENDIX 4 INCIDENT REPORT**

This form is to record the details of any incident involving the writer of the report, especially where there was an accident, near miss or emotional reaction involving another person.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/201\_\_ Time of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_am /pm

Location of Incident on Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (s) of anyone else involved in the incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Provide the name of any witnesses of the incident who can provide additional evidence or view.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe what happened, your actions and/or words and the actions and/or words of others involved. Do not give your opinion about other's motives or intentions. (PTO if necessary)

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I, (name: \_\_\_\_\_) hereby declare that what I have written is true and accurate in the details I have provided.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/201\_\_

## Appendix 5

### MEDICAL & HEALTH INFORMATION – SPECIAL EVENT (EXAMPLE)

.....( REDGUM CHURCH INC)

Child's Name:.....  
(Surname) (Christian name) Date of Birth

Is your child taking any regular or currently prescribed medication? YES / NO

If so, please name the medication and provide details of dosage and administration. ....

.....  
.....

Your child's leader will administer medication to your child as directed by written instructions from you. Please clearly mark your child's name on all medication along with the dosage and administration procedures.

Is there anything about your child's health which means that s/he should engage in only limited physical activity? YES / NO

If so, please give details.....

Does your child require a special diet because of health problems? YES / NO

If so, please give details.....

Is there any other information which may help us care for your child? YES / NO

If so, please give details.....

Emergency contact 1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact 2. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Medical Centre/ Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have private medical insurance? Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

#### AUTHORISATION

'In the event of an accident or sudden illness, I authorise the person in charge to call an ambulance or to seek medical attention at my expense, should I not be contactable.'

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/20\_\_\_

Parent/guardian/caregiver [Print name if not one of the above] \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 6

### PERMISSION TO ATTEND EVENT/CAMP FORM (EXAMPLE)

.....(REDGUM CHURCH INC)

As a parent/caregiver of: .....

I, ..... give my consent for him/her to take

part in the (special activity or camp) to be held at the ..... (event site)

from ..... to..... (or on..... )  
(date) (date) (date)

I have seen the attached copy of the programme for the .....(event) and acknowledge that risk of injuries is inherent in physical activities. While I am aware that staff will take all due care I recognize that accidents may occur.

The staff and supervisors have my authority to take whatever action they think necessary to ensure the safety, wellbeing and successful conduct of the participants as a group or individually in the above-mentioned activity.

If my child becomes ill or is accidentally injured, I authorise the person-in-charge to obtain on my behalf whatever medical treatment my child requires. I will agree to pay all such medical expenses.

I have attached information as asked concerning my child's health including any relevant details of his/her limitations for the planned activity. My child's own local doctor or medical specialist may be contacted in an emergency.

I also acknowledge that the .....(\*\*Insert organisation name) and all its representative leaders or other helpers at .....(event) can accept no liability for any personal injury or property loss suffered by my child during the period of the ..... Event.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/20\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian/Care-giver

**Appendix 7      MINISTRY/ORGANISATIONAL COVENANT**

**Of REDGUM CHURCH INCORPORATED**

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print name)

1. Declare that, except as is stated below,
  - (1) have not been guilty of any sexual misconduct against any person;
  - (2) have never committed any criminal offence involving fraud, violence or drugs;
  - (3) am of good character and suitable for ministry within REDGUM CHURCH INCORPORATED.

(If exceptions to the above give details and if insufficient room place them in an attachment).
2. Acknowledge I have read and agreed to the REDGUM CHURCH INCORPORATED Child Protection Policies, Code of Conduct and the Child Protection Manual of Procedures.
3. Agree I will cooperate with REDGUM CHURCH INCORPORATED in any investigation undertaken in relation to a complaint or allegation of impropriety made against me.
4. Agree I will attend and take part in education courses to fit me for ministry with children.
5. Acknowledge that by signing this covenant no legal contract is created between myself and REDGUM CHURCH INCORPORATED but accept that it acts as a consent for the operation of the Child Protection Policy and the Child Protection Procedure Manual and that legal consequences may follow if I have knowingly given false answers to any of the questions 1 – 4 above.

Signature: ..... Witness: .....

Full name: ..... Name: .....

Address:..... Date: .....