

# Child Protection Policy - Summary

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is a summary of the more detailed Bayside Church Child Protection Policy which has been authorised by the Bayside Church Board and applies to all people who represent Bayside Church, be they employees, volunteers, contractors, members, Board and committee members.

Effective date: 5 December 2016. Review date: November 2018.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

**Child** means a person under the age of 18 years.

**Child abuse** has the meaning in the *Child Wellbeing And Safety Act 2005* (Vic), which includes:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving:
  - (i) sexual offences; or
  - (ii) an offence under section 49B (2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* [grooming a child under the age of 16 years for sexual conduct]; and
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of:
  - (i) physical violence; or
  - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- (c) the serious neglect of a child.

**CPO** means a Child Protection Officer.

**WWCC** means a Working With Children Check.

## 3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is:

- a) to facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Bayside Church;
- b) to establish an organizational culture of child safety that prioritises the best interests of a child;
- c) to ensure that all who represent Bayside Church are aware of and understand their responsibilities and obligations for identifying possible occasions for child abuse
- d) to establish controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs;
- e) to provide guidance to Bayside Church representatives as to the action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of Bayside Church;
- f) to provide a clear statement to Bayside Church representatives forbidding any such abuse;
- g) to provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

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### 4. POLICY MISSION STATEMENT

Bayside Church is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests and safety of all children who access our services, programs and activities. Bayside Church has zero tolerance for child abuse, and is committed to the prevention of all forms of child abuse including physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Bayside Church is committed to ensuring best practice screening, recruitment, supervision and training processes for all Bayside Church representatives working directly and indirectly with children under the age of 18. Bayside Church will seek to act immediately and appropriately upon becoming aware of any known or suspected incidences of child abuse.

Bayside Church will respect the opinions of children and provide opportunities for the participation and empowerment of children from all backgrounds including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and those living with a disability.

### 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Child safety and protection is a shared responsibility and representatives of Bayside Church are expected to take appropriate and reasonable action to:

- a) facilitate an organisational environment that is supportive of a child's wellbeing and safety, abstaining from all conduct that would not be in the best interests of a child;
- b) familiarise themselves and comply with the applicable law, this Policy and the Code of Conduct; and
- c) report reasonable suspicions of child abuse in accordance with this policy.

In addition to these broad expectations, specific role responsibilities are as follows:

#### 5.1 The Board of Bayside Church

The Board of Bayside Church is responsible for ensuring appropriate and effective internal control systems, policies, procedures and a code of conduct are in place to create a child safe environment.

#### 5.2 Bayside Church Senior Pastor

The Bayside Church Senior Pastor is required to ensure:

- a) that all Bayside Church representatives are aware of applicable laws, policies and the Code of Conduct;
- b) that all adults within Bayside Church are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse to the authorities by making the policy available to the public;
- c) support is provided to Bayside Church representatives in undertaking their child protection responsibilities through the child safety training program;
- d) that child safety is a part of their overall risk management approach.

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### 5.3 Bayside Church Child Protection Officers (CPOs)

Bayside Church CPOs will investigate reports of child abuse and communicate with the senior pastor on any alleged misconduct. They must make themselves available for consultation with any Bayside Church representative relating to matters of child safety and wellbeing.

### 5.4 Bayside Church Representatives

All Bayside Church representatives (who work directly with children) are responsible for:

- a) promoting child safety at all times by assessing and controlling the immediate area they are working in to provide a safe environment for children;
- b) reporting any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities and fulfilling their obligations to mandatory report;
- c) reporting any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to the relevant ministry leader;
- d) providing an environment that is supportive of children's safety and empowers children to be actively involved in their own safety and wellbeing;
- e) obtaining a WWCC and reading and understanding this Policy and the Code of Conduct;
- f) completing the child safety and protection training program.

All volunteers need to familiarize themselves with the Code of Conduct and confirm their understanding and willingness to abide by it.

### 5.5 Parents / Guardians / Carers

Parents, guardians and carers are to be advised of this Policy and/or have access to or on request be provided with this Policy and the Code of Conduct.

Outside of formal Children's and Youth Ministry Programs, the child is clearly the responsibility of the parents, guardians and carers. At such times, it is the expectation of Bayside Church that parents/guardians/carers take full responsibility for the continual supervision and safety of their children and are aware of their whereabouts whilst on Church Property and at informal Church gatherings.

It is most important that children not be allowed into rooms in the church building that may cause danger to them e.g. kitchen, rooms with stacked chairs and electrical equipment.

## 6. RECRUITMENT, SCREENING AND PREVENTATIVE PROCEDURES

### 6.1 Recruitment and screening

Bayside Church undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all Bayside Church representatives in order to identify the safest and most suitable people who share Bayside Church's commitment to protect children.

The screening process prevents any person from working as a Bayside Church representative who may pose a risk to children.

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The recruitment process will require all applications to complete:

- a) an application form;
- b) OH&S form; and
- c) deed of confidentiality.

They will also be required to provide a valid WWCC.

Bayside Church will undertake a thorough reference check.

Once engaged, Bayside Church representatives must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy and, where necessary, undergo the child safety and protection training program.

### 6.2 Safety ratios

#### *Younger children (pre-schooling)*

Children's Ministry	Age Group	Carer : Child Ratios
Bayside Buddies (combined)	>1 year and walking to pre-school (<5 years)	1 to 5

#### *Primary and Secondary ages*

Children's Ministry	Age Group	Carer / Child Ratios
Kidz Rock, Intensity and Youth	Primary and Secondary age	1 to 15

In the event that child ratios are exceeded:

- At the discretion of the children's ministry leader responsible at the time, the next parent signing in their child would be requested to remain for the duration of the service.
- If the parent is unwilling to remain, then the parent will be asked to take their child with them into the main service.

### 6.3 Toileting procedures

#### *Procedures for the toileting of children under 5 years of age*

- All parents must ensure that their children have been toileted / and or had nappies changed before being signed in.
- Nappies will not be changed by leaders or volunteers. The child's parent will be called to attend to their child in the event that their nappy requires changing.

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**When a child requires toileting during the Buddies Program or similar ministry, the following procedures should be adhered to:**

- Only Children's Ministry leaders or volunteers who have been adequately screened are permitted to assist in the toileting of children. No parent helpers are to assist with the toileting of children unless the child is their own.
- The leader or volunteer must check the inside of the cubicle first to ensure it is safe for the child.
- The child should be encouraged to manage him/herself to the fullest possible extent, according to ability.
- The leader or volunteer is to wait outside the door of the cubicle and assist the child only if required.
- When a leader or volunteer is needed to assist in the toileting of a child, they must inform another leader or volunteer upon their leaving and returning.
- If children are required to use toileting facilities outside of the Bayside Buddies area, at least two children should be accompanied at any time where possible.
- In instances where there are insufficient staff or volunteers to toilet a child (i.e. Frankston Buddies), a parent helper will be sent to collect the child's parents/caregiver to toilet their own child.

### ***Procedures for the toileting of children 5 – 12 years of age***

- Parents must ensure their children do not need to go to the toilet prior to attending any children's programs.
- Children must inform their room leader when they need to go to the toilet.
- The leader or volunteer must remain aware of the child's whereabouts during this time.
- No children's ministry leaders or volunteers are to be involved in ablutions or toileting of children between 5-12 years of age.
- At the commencement of the children's program the toilet area needs to be checked by a designated leader or volunteer to ensure they are safe for children.
- If children are required to use toileting facilities, outside of the children's area, at least two children should be accompanied by a leader, who is over 18 years old and who is to remain outside the cubicle whilst it is in use.

### ***Procedures for the toileting of children 13 years and over***

- No ministry leaders or volunteers are to be involved in ablutions or toileting of children above 13 years of age.
- At the commencement of the youth program the toilet area needs to be checked by a designated leader or volunteer to ensure they are safe for children.
- Children must inform their ministry leader or volunteer when they need to go to the toilet.
- The ministry leader or volunteer must remain aware of the child's whereabouts during this time.

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### 7. RAISING AND REPORTING REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR BELIEF OF CHILD ABUSE

#### 7.1 Reasonable grounds for belief

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed.

Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) the child is in need of protection;
- (b) the child has suffered or is likely to suffer “significant harm as a result of physical injury”;
- (c) the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A “reasonable belief” or a “belief on reasonable grounds” is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A “reasonable belief” is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a “reasonable belief” might be formed if:

- (a) a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- (b) a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- (c) someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- (d) professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- (e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

#### 7.2 Privacy and Confidentiality

All information regarding children and their families is to be treated in a sensitive, respectful and confidential manner except where a child’s safety may be at risk. Any information regarding concerns/allegations of abuse or misconduct will be treated in a sensitive, respectful and confidential manner. Confidentiality is limited if a child’s safety is at risk. However, where possible the identity of the reporter will be kept confidential. The information will be documented and will follow a formal reporting and investigation process. Information will only be disclosed to and sought from the relevant persons and authorities both internally and externally to enable a thorough investigation and appropriate action to be undertaken.

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### 7.3 Managing a child disclosure of abuse

In the event a child makes a disclosure of abuse to an employee, contractor or volunteer of Bayside Church, the following guidelines are to be followed:

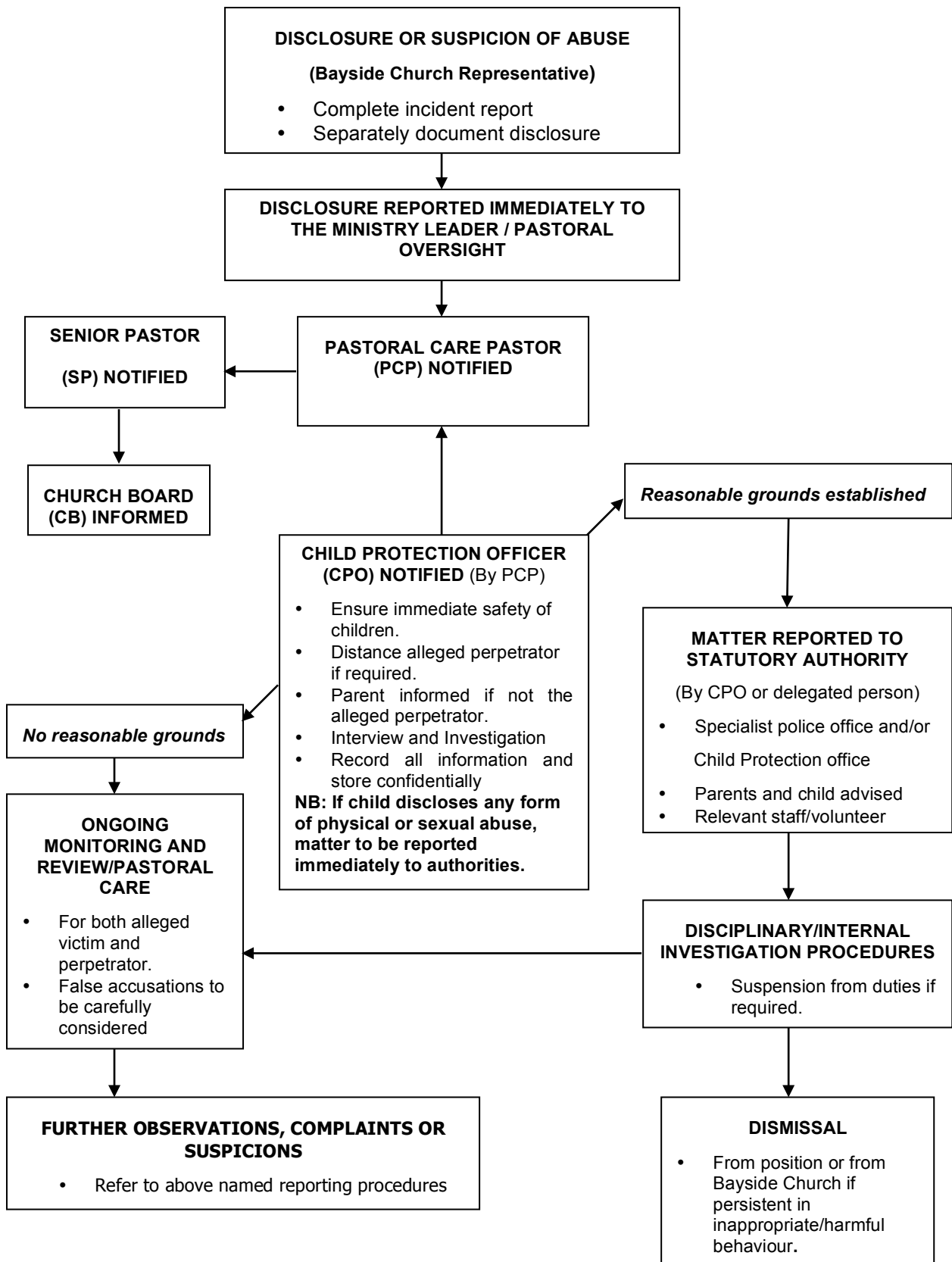
- **Importantly:** Throughout the process do not seek to gain any further information other than what is being disclosed as this may hinder the investigative process.
- Accept what the child says and tell them that you believe them.
- Tell the child that they are not to blame.
- Do not press the child for information and be aware not to ask any leading questions i.e. how, when and where.
- Reassure the child that it was good that they told you and that you have taken what they said seriously.
- In an age appropriate manner let the child know that you will inform the appropriate people, who will help to stop the abuse.
- As soon as possible afterwards, make written notes of exactly what the child said and the date and time of the meeting.

## 8. REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR OBSERVATIONS, SUSPICIONS AND COMPLAINTS, AND CONSEQUENCES FOR BREACH OF POLICY OR CODE OF CONDUCT

The following diagram illustrates the procedures to be followed for responding to observations, suspicions and complaints regarding inappropriate behaviour or possible child abuse, to determine whether there are reasonable grounds for belief:



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### CODE OF CONDUCT

All employees, contractors, volunteers, board members, members and committee members of Bayside Church are required to observe and comply with the following Code of Conduct when involved in the care of children under the age of 18. These are to be strictly adhered to at all times.

#### DO:

- Adhere to the child safety and protection policy
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent children from abuse or harm
- Treat everyone with respect, including listening to and valuing the opinions and ideas of others
- Welcome all children and their families and make them feel included and accepted
- Respect cultural, religious and political differences and act in a culturally sensitive way
- Use positive and affirming language towards children
- Comply with guidelines on physical contact with children
- Help provide a safe, supportive environment for all children to interact and fellowship
- Intervene when children are displaying inappropriate behaviour towards others
- Report any breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the ministry leader
- Report concerns about child safety and protection to the child protection officers and ensure that any legal obligations to report allegations are met
- Call the Police on 000 regarding any immediate concerns for a child's safety
- Respect the privacy of children and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know

#### DO NOT:

- Seek to use children to meet the needs of adults
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with children
- Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality
- Engage in open discussion or behaviour of an adult nature in the presence of children
- Engage in any inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact including doing things of a personal nature that the child can do for themselves such as toileting or changing clothes
- Engage in any form of physical violence or corporal punishment towards children including inappropriate rough physical play
- Engage in any form of behaviour that can potentially cause children emotional or psychological harm
- Develop special relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism or grooming

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- Take photos without parental consent
- Do not post photos of children on social media without parental consent and never post photos of children on your personal accounts
- Exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking or email addresses with children without parental consent
- Have unauthorized contact with children and young people online or by phone
- Drive a child anywhere without parental consent

**If you breach this Code of Conduct, you will face disciplinary action, including and up to termination of employment or cessation of engagement with Bayside Church.**