Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy

GRACE CHURCH

CASTLEMAINE

Child, Young People and Vulnerable People Risk Management Strategy 2024-2025

This page left intentionally blank

Contents

PREAMBLE 6

Responsibilities relating to the Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy8

National Principles for Child-Safe Organisations 12

CHARTER OF COMMITMENT 13

OUR CHARTER OF COMMITTMENT 14

CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT 20

1.0 Values and Principles 20

2.0 Related Documents 20

3.0 Definitions 21

4.0 Who must comply with this Code of Conduct? 21

5.0 Standards Expected 22

5.1 Worker Standards 22

5.2 Children/Young People/Vulnerable Adults Standards 25

Policy and Procedures on the Provision of Safety and Wellbeing of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults 26

1.0 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF POLICY 26

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations 28

2.0 RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS 29

3.0 PERSONS WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO AND WHO MUST COMPLY WITH THIS POLICY 29

4.0 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY 30

5.0 PRINCIPLES GUIDING POLICY 33

5.1 Understanding the National Principles for Child-Safe Organisations that guide this policy . 35

5.2 Ministry to Vulnerable Adults 36

6.0 POLICY 36

6.1 Employees and Volunteers – Standards 36

6.2 Staff Roles and Responsibilities 37

6.3 Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities – Children and Young People's Departments 40

6.4 Young people Serving in Leadership Roles 40

6.5 Recruiting and Screening Children's and Young People's Group Volunteers 41

6.6 Induction and Training 41

6.7 Identification of Children's Ministry Team 42
6.8 Visitors to Children/Young People Ministries 42
6.9 Drop-off and Pick-up of Children and Young people 43
6.10 Transporting Children or Young people 44
6.11 Overnight Sleeping Arrangements 44
6.12 Toileting of Different Age Groups 44
6.13 Activities at Non-Church Venues 44
6.14 High-Risk Activities 45
6.15 Unacceptable Work Practices 45
6.16 Family Custody Matters 46
6.17 Disclosure or Suspicions of Harm, including Reporting Guidelines 47
6.18 Grooming 48
6.19 Photography Policy 48
6.20 Use of technology and social media 49
6.21 Managing Injury or Illness and Administration of Medication 49
6.22 Emergency Evacuation Procedures 50
7.0 Breaches of the Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy and Reporting Procedure 50
7.1 Workers 50
7.2 Children/Young people 51
7.3 Incident/Hazard Reporting 51
7.4 Feedback/Complaints Handling Process 51
8.0 POLICY ON KNOWN CHILD SEX OFFENDERS 55
8.1 Preamble 55
8.2 Definitions 56
8.3 Positions of employment 56
8.4 Positions of leadership and ministry 56
8.5 Congregational Participation 56
8.6 Procedures for Pastoral Staff Relating to Known Child Sex Offenders 57
8.7 Breaches 58
9.0 CONTACT DETAILS FOR REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE 60
10.0 IMPLEMENTING POLICY 60
11.0 EVALUATION AND REVIEW 60

12.0 AUTHORISATION OF POLICY 61

Appendix A 62

Guidelines for Identifying Harm, Physical Abuse and Neglect.....62

General Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect 63

Appendix B 64

Identifying Grooming 64

PREAMBLE

For the purposes of this document the Oversight Committee of **Grace Church, Castlemaine** comprises the Pastor, Associate Pastor, Children's Ministry Leader, Young People's Ministry Leader, and the Safe Ministries Coordinator, plus any other personnel invited to join the Committee either temporarily, or permanently. For the purposes of this document the Pastor and Associate Pastor shall be responsible for the care of any adult Vulnerable People.

Grace Church, Castlemaine Child, Young People and Vulnerable People Risk Management Strategy is made up of the following documents:

1) Policy for the Provision of Care and Safety of Children, Young People and Vulnerable People
2) Statement of Commitment
3) Code of Conduct and
4) Declaration by Workers

Purpose Statement –
Grace Church, Castlemaine Child, Young People and Vulnerable People Risk Management Strategy seeks to document our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all people who attend our ministry, but in particular, demonstrate how we fulfill that commitment to our children, young people and vulnerable adults. We are a ministry that seeks to fulfill the goals of the Kingdom of God, bringing transformation to our local community and showing those who make **Grace Church, Castlemaine** their spiritual home, the love, acceptance and care of Jesus Christ.

In writing this strategy, we have tried to embed the heart of the following frameworks and legislation:

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations,
- Excerpts from the Final Report Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse,
- The Australian Human Rights Commission
- National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030 (2021), The National Office for Child Safety.
- Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2021), SNAICC, Commonwealth of Australia
- Executive Summary, Our vision for an inclusive Australia and Recommendations, Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability
- Safeguarding Vulnerable People (and Governance Toolkit), ACNC
- Relevant legislation has been drawn from our state legislative body, including Working With Children's Checks and governance surrounding it.

Features of the Strategy also include:

Commitment

1. A child-focussed statement of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and the protection of children from harm that is readily available to all children, young people, families and our ministry community. Simplified forms that are child friendly will be publicly displayed in spaces where children, young people and families circulate.
2. A code of conduct for all stakeholders to effectively and respectfully interact with children, young people and vulnerable adults, listening to them, protecting them from harm and listening to how we can help them love being part of **Grace Church, Castlemaine.**

Consultation

3. Consultation with internal and external stakeholders, including children, young people, their parents/carers, vulnerable adults, our wider ministry family and members of the community shall occur both formally and informally to help us capture what is important to them in keeping children, young people and vulnerable adults safe and well. Our Oversight Committee members, staff and volunteers shall contribute their thoughts. As this is a living document, we intend to seek broader consultation with these stakeholders over the coming years to continue to hear the hearts of those we minister to and with.

Capability

4. Written procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers.
5. A table showing who carries specific responsibility for the implementation, operation and regular review of the **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Child, Young People and Vulnerable People Risk Management Strategy.

Concerns

6. Policies and procedures for handling complaints, disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines that are accessible by children, young people, families and our ministry community.
7. A plan for managing breaches of **Grace Church Castlemaine's** Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy.
8. Risk management plans for high-risk activities and special events.

Consistency

9. Policies and procedures for managing compliance with our state's Working With Children's Check system.
10. Strategies for communication and support that are clear, accessible and safe for children, young people, families and our ministry community so that together, we create a Child Safe Organisation.

Responsibilities relating to the Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy

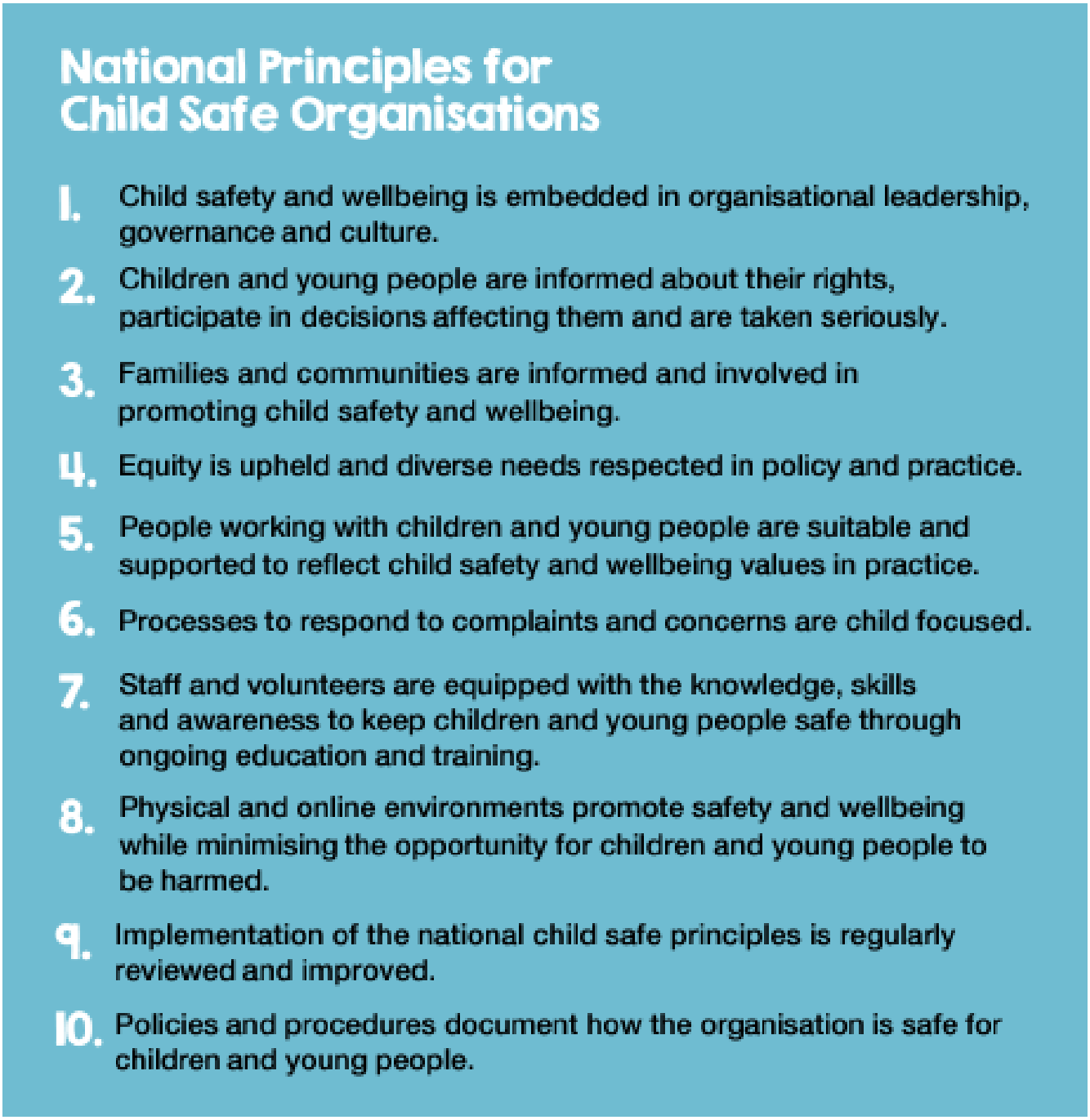
Position	Responsibility
Oversight Committee (Includes Pastor, Associate Pastor, Children's Ministry Leader, Young People's Ministry Leader, and the Safe Ministries Coordinator)	• Oversee Risk Management Strategy and take responsibility for implementation, monitoring and review of Safe Kids Framework; • Ensure that the Risk Management Strategy is a permanent part of the official Oversight Committee Agenda and that discussions regarding it are minuted each Oversight Committee Meeting; • Ensure compliance with Code of Conduct by the whole ministry family including the Oversight Committee; • Take responsibility for Duty of Care for all members of ministry family and visitors; • Take responsibility for Recruitment and Screening Practices; • Take responsibility for the selection and appointment of the Safe Ministries Coordinator and delegate authority to complete assessment, gap analysis and implementation of Safe Kids Framework; • Take responsibility for ensuring all mandatory disclosures have been properly reported to all regulatory bodies, participate openly in any resulting investigations and ensure that all parts of the organisation participate in a timely, respectful and transparent manner with both authorities and parents/carers of person harmed; • Ensure mitigations are in place including adequate insurance, Policy and Procedures and Code of Conduct; • Receive Incident and Investigation reports – coordinating a review of policies and procedures post hazard or near-miss occurrences; endorse changes to policies and procedures by management team to mitigate reoccurrence; • Ensure reports and supporting documentation around sexual abuse and harm are kept correctly for the legislated 45 years.
Safe Ministries Coordinator	• Ensure all parts of the Risk Management Strategy for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults are implemented and managed throughout the year from a whole of ministry point of view, including regular reviews;

	• Report to the Oversight Committee on regular basis regarding overall status of all matters relating to the Risk Management Strategy • Sign off on risk assessments for out of the ordinary activities • Report to the Oversight Committee on breaches of the Risk Management Strategy and escalate to Oversight Committee and relevant regulatory bodies as appropriate – ensure that participation with any investigation into Mandatory Reporting matters is completed in a timely, respectful and transparent manner with both authorities and parents/carers of person harmed; • Conduct (or delegate to appropriate leader) all staff and worker induction and training; • Provide support to the Children's Ministry Leader, and the Youth Ministry Leader; • Receive and responds to complaints promptly; • Manages day to day activities in a child-safe way and in keeping with the Safe Ministries Framework; • Ensure record keeping and information sharing is appropriately managed, keeping records and supporting documentation secure for the legislated 45 years. Ask the Oversight Committee for support with this; • Take responsibility for review of complete strategy and implementation regularly, implementing changes and reporting to the Oversight Committee; • Ensure that Contractors (workmen or delivery people), Consultants and those hiring the church/ministry facility have received a copy of the Code of Conduct and signed an appropriate agreement before engaging with them.
Departmental Leaders (e.g. Children's Ministry Leader, Young People's Ministry Leader)	• Implement steps of Risk Management Strategy and Policy & Procedures as appropriate for your department; • Report on implementation, breaches and challenges to senior leadership team at least monthly; • Ensure all workers within your department adhere to the provisions of Risk Management Strategy, including safety procedures and attend training as scheduled;

	• Confirm that each worker has a valid WWCC before commencing work in your department; do not allow anyone without a WWCC to start duties – even in an emergency; • Ensure all staff have name tags; • Attend to complaints quickly and transparently, advising senior leadership, speaking with all parties concerned, writing or receiving Incident Reports and completing incident or accident Investigations as appropriate • Ensure that you and the workers (including paid staff, if any) for whom you are responsible understand how to report child abuse or suspected child abuse to your state regulatory body and follow through if necessary; • Ensure that participation with any investigation into Mandatory Reporting matters is completed in a timely, respectful and transparent manner with both authorities, parents/carers of person harmed and the church/ministry leadership.
Workers (Paid Staff, if any, Interns & Volunteers, Helpers)	• Follow the provisions of the Risk Management Strategy including the Code of Conduct, and Policies & Procedures; • Do not work without a valid WWCC; • Ensure you wear the appropriate ID for your department. • Attend training as requested. • Report any safety issues, breaches of the Policies & Procedures or Code of Conduct, concerns about hazards or suspicious behaviour to the Children's Ministry Leader, or the Young People's Ministry Leader as the case may be, as quickly as possible in writing. • Fill in incident reports as appropriate; • Ensure that you understand how to report child abuse or suspected child abuse to your state regulatory body and follow through if necessary; • Ensure that participation with any investigation into Mandatory Reporting matters is completed in a timely, respectful and transparent manner with both authorities, parents/carers of person harmed and the church/ministry leadership.
Parents/Carers of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	• Ensure you read and understand the Risk Management Strategy; • Engage in opportunities to provide feedback in informal and formal ways as requested; • Ensure that accurate and full information that may impact on the health and safety of the person you care for is provided to the Children's Ministry Leader, or the Young People's • Ministry Leader, as appropriate, in a written format before the person participates in any church/ministry program.

	• Ensure that any custody or safety issues are conveyed accurately. • Ensure that your contact details are always up to date. • Ensure that you understand how to report child abuse or suspected child abuse to your state regulatory body and follow through if necessary; • Ensure that participation with any investigation into Mandatory Reporting matters is completed in a timely, respectful and transparent manner with both authorities, parents/carers of person harmed and the church/ministry leadership.
Ministry Family (- the wider Church community)	• Participate in the ministry that is offered and be supportive of each other, including leaders. • Report anything that makes you feel unsafe to a leader as soon as possible. • Report anything that you see that seems inappropriate or unsafe to a leader as soon as possible. • Ensure that you understand how to report child abuse or suspected child abuse to your state regulatory body and follow through if necessary; • Ensure that participation with any investigation into Mandatory Reporting matters is completed in a timely, respectful and transparent manner with both authorities, parents/carers of person harmed and the church/ministry leadership. • Participate in all informal and formal opportunities presented to you to give constructive feedback on the Risk Management Strategy, Policies and Procedures or other areas. Don't forget to tell leaders what they are doing right as well.

National Principles for Child-Safe Organisations



Source: https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles; Accessed: 12/03/2024

CHARTER OF COMMITMENT

Grace Church, Castlemaine is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who participate in its services and activities. Our leaders and workers will treat them with respect and understanding at all times and will endeavour to model Christian virtues in their interactions with them.

We are committed to implementing the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations laid down by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and led by the National Office for Child Safety (https://www.childsafety.gov.au). In accordance with National Principle 1, we have created a risk management strategy which covers our whole organisation and describes how **Grace Church, Castlemaine** seeks to put into practice our commitment to child safety and wellbeing by building a Child Safe Culture which is modelled at all levels of our ministry.

This Charter of Commitment also lays out a set of promises that we make as a ministry community to create a safe community for our children, young people and vulnerable adults. These commitments are based on what children and young people have told the National Children's Commissioner during consultations on the National Principles about what they consider are the important characteristics of safety in an organisation.

OUR CHARTER OF COMMITTMENT

The Leadership, Oversight Committee, Children, Young People and Ministry family of **Grace Church, Castlemaine** promise that:

1) **RESPECT** - we will treat everyone with respect, no matter where they are from or who they are. We will make sure that everyone feels included and welcome.

2) **INFORM -** We will give you information about your physical, emotional and online safety, and what to do if you feel unsafe.

3) **GIVE YOU A VOICE -** We will make sure there are lots of ways for you to have a say and be involved.

4) **HELP -** We will listen and act on what you tell us. We will help you with your hopes and dreams as well as your worries and fears.

5) **TRUST -** You can trust that we will care about your needs and feelings and will support you. We will continue to get better at what we do.

6) **SAFETY -** We will make our place happy and comfortable for you.

The full form of our Charter of Commitment is part of our Risk Management Strategy and available in the locations listed below. Simplified versions of our Charter of Commitment (shown in the blue box above) that are child friendly will be displayed in areas where our church family circulate. All leaders, workers, children, young people, families, ministry family will receive training on our Charter of Commitment, and our policies and procedures so that together we create a child safe environment that includes cultural and diversity safety.

We agree that Child Safety and Wellbeing is everyone's responsibility.

Our Risk Management Strategy will be available in full in our Children's and Young People Ministry Areas, as well as on our website, and is available to our children, young people, families and ministry community at all times. Posters showing the essence of our commitment in simplified format will be available in all areas so that they are accessible to children, young people, families and our ministry community.

Grace Church, Castlemaine is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and vulnerable adults in its care. The promotion and protection of Children's rights is a matter of organisational priority for our ministry by our Leadership, Oversight Committee, Departmental Leaders, staff and Workers.

The following actions will be taken:

- In response to our biblical responsibility, we will endeavour to provide quality ministry to all our children, young people and vulnerable people.

- Our Leadership, Oversight Committee and Workers[1] are responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing of the children/young people/vulnerable people in their care. We will do all in our power to protect them from harm, abuse, or molestation while on the premises or on a **Grace church, Castlemaine** organised activity. All activities will be risk assessed and managed. Regular reviews will be completed on the implementation and management of our standard operating procedures for regular activities and special events/activities.

- In accordance with National Principle 2, we commit to listening to our children and young people and giving them opportunities to give their opinion about areas of our organisation. We commit to training and educating our children and young people about their value to God and to **Grace Church, Castlemaine,** including teaching them about their rights, including to safety here in our ministry and how to find help in staying safe.

- **Grace Church, Castlemaine** commits to a communication policy which provides accessible, child-friendly and culturally safe information to children and young people about the support and complaints processes available

- All workers, including parents and relatives of children/young people in **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** activities will obtain a **Working with Children's Check.** Staff members and volunteers with senior leadership positions will also obtain a **National Police Check**. Staff members and volunteers will not commence work for any reason unless they are in receipt of a card or certificate from their relevant state authority.

- In accordance with National Principles 1 and 5, all staff and workers will attend an introductory briefing in which they will be required to read and agree to **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Child Safe Code of Conduct and all policies regarding children/young people/vulnerable adults. They will sign and date a declaration stating they understand and will abide by **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Child, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy, including its commitments, policies, procedures, and Code of Conduct.

- There will be no unauthorised activities with children or young people.

- In accordance with National Principle 3, Parents and the general ministry community will be invited to be involved in all aspects of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** ministry to children/young people. Their input, participation, and feedback about children's safety, relevant policies and procedures

[1] *For the purposes of this Statement, a* worker *is defined as someone who has regular, rostered duties. People who assist on a casual basis, and who are not rostered, will not be required to follow the formal steps listed above. However, they will wear a visitor badge and have limited contact with the children/young people. This stipulation will be explained to them verbally by the Children's Ministry Leader/Young People's Ministry Leader before they join in. The appropriate Leader or their delegate will be responsible for supervising the casual assistant.*

through informal discussions, meetings and surveys will be actively invited and valued. Church leaders and Oversight Committee members are also encouraged to attend activities from time to time and follow the same safety principles that staff and workers do.

- While in the care of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**, children and young people will be provided with adequate supervision. Parents remain primarily responsible for their children and their children's guests.

- Church workers will wear appropriate identification while ministering to children/young people.

- Oversight Committee and leadership involvement with the creation, implementation, evaluation and review of culturally and diversity safe strategy, including the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults will be scheduled as a permanent item on Oversight Committee agendas. All Oversight Committee members and leadership team members will complete child-safe training and specific training in **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Child, Young People and Vulnerable People Risk Management Strategy.

- **Grace Church, Castlemaine** commits to the regular review and reflection of the implementation of the National Child Safe Principles, Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures and all associated policies.

- The leadership of **Grace Church, Castlemaine** will have an open-door policy regarding feedback, raising concerns, complaints and safety issues.

- The Pastors and the leaders of **Grace Church, Castlemaine** will ensure the reporting of any alleged harm to children/young people to the appropriate authorities; however, this does not override any right or responsibility a parent/carer feels he or she may have to report such matters. The wishes of a child/young person or their parent/carer to NOT report a mandatory reporting incident will not supersede any legislated reporting requirement by the organisation. Any suspicion of, or complaint of harm will be handled in accordance with appropriate federal and state government services (Family Services, Police, etc.) and their requirements. The privacy of all parties involved will be protected by **Grace Church, Castlemaine** as far as the law allows/requires. *Children and Young People* and the police.

- **MANDATORY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS** – In the State of Victoria
- **Legislation:** *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)*
- **Mandated reporters:** Any person 18 years or older
- **When must a report be made?**
- A mandated reporter must make a report to the police if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child by another person of or over the age of 18 years.
- NB: exceptions may apply. Refer to the *Act,* seek legal advice if necessary.
- **Who is a child?** A person under 16 years old

- **Legislation:** *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*
- **Mandated reporters:** The head of an entity that is affected by the Reportable Conduct Scheme. (i.e., the Pastor who is the head of the local church.)
- **When must a report be made?**
- A mandated reporter must make a report to the *Commission for Children and Young People* if they become aware of a reportable allegation against a Pastor, leader, volunteer or member of the congregation.
- **Who is a child?** A person under 18 years old

- **VOLUNTARY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS** – In the state of Victoria
- **Legislation:** *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)*
- **Voluntary reporters:** Any person
- **When can a report be made?**
- A voluntary reporter may make a report to a protective intervener (i.e. the police or the Department of Health and Human Services) if: - the person believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.
- **Who is a child?** A person under 17 years old

- **Legislation:** *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*
- **Voluntary reporters:** Any person
- **When can a report be made?**
- A voluntary reporter may disclose a reportable allegation to the *Commission for Children and Young People*
- **Who is a child?** A person under 18 years old

REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME

Victoria is one of three Australian jurisdictions that place specific obligations on the head of Grace Church Castlemaine (in our case, the Pastor), to make reports under the Reportable conduct scheme. The Pastor is required to make a report to the *Commission for Children and Young People* if he, or she, becomes aware of a child abuse allegation being made against a Pastor, leader, volunteer or member of the congregation.

The Pastor is also required to provide updates to the external authority.

When should the Pastor tell the Commission?

Within three business days of becoming aware of a reportable allegation, the Pastor must notify the Commission that a reportable allegation has been made against a Pastor, leader, volunteer, or member of the congregation.

Within 30 calendar days, the Pastor must provide certain detailed information about the allegations and their proposed response.
It is a criminal offence for the Pastor to fail to comply with the three-day and 30-day notification obligations without a reasonable excuse.

MAKING A REPORT
Any person who believes that a child is in immediate danger should contact the police immediately. This is in addition to reporting responsibilities to the *Commission for Children and Young People* and is the most immediate responsibility.

After hours and to report concerns about the immediate safety of a child:

In Victoria ring the Child Protection Crisis Line (24 hours) on 13 12 78.

In addition, contact Victoria Police – Sexual offences and Child Abuse Investigation team.

The appropriate local office for Grace Church Castlemaine is *Western Victoria* phone number 5448 1420.

With respect to the *Commission for Children and Young People* fill out the notification form on line (Pastors, please note, a requirement for you) or via phone on 1300 78 29 78 for anybody else.

INVESTIGATING
If the *Commission for Children and Young People* or the police decide to investigate a report, all Pastors, leaders and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Pastor will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an

investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Pastor may decide to conduct such an investigation. All Pastors, Children's Ministry Leaders, volunteers and any members of the congregation must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

The Pastor will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time-to-time other Pastors, Children's Ministry Leaders, and, or, volunteers may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Pastor shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and/or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, if deemed appropriate.

RESPONDING

If it is alleged that a Pastor, Children's Ministry Leader, or volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached Grace Church Castlemaine's policies or its Code of Conduct the person concerned will be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

The rules of natural justice shall be observed. An investigation shall not be unduly delayed.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of Grace Church Castlemaine's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action will follow, up to and including the possibility of dismissal or excommunication from the church. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

- People who do not have a valid reason to be present at child-related activities will be asked to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

1.0 Values and Principles

Grace Church, Castlemaine is a Christian ministry wholly dedicated to carrying out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Members espouse values of acceptance, belonging, responsibility, stewardship and multiplication, all for the love and worship of God. Members seek to be an example of Christian love, kindness and generosity.

Interaction with Children, Young people **and Vulnerable Adults**
Grace Church, Castlemaine seeks to be a positive agent in the lives of children, young people and vulnerable adults by leading them to Christ, blessing them and helping to establish them in the Christian life and community in accordance with our scriptural mandate (Mark 10:14-16, Joel 2:28, Isaiah 59:21).

Grace Church, Castlemaine considers the following aspects of the care and safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults as paramount.

1) That they feel safe and protected from spiritual, physical, emotional and online harm in a culturally safe and diversity safe manner.

2) That they are informed, listened to, respected, valued and have a genuine voice in the life of our ministry.

3) That their best interests are considered and upheld in every aspect of our ministry and that they are surrounded by trustworthy and safe members of our ministry family and wider community.

These scriptures and principles guide **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Code of Conduct.

2.0 Related Documents

1) ***Grace Church, Castlemaine's*** *Volunteers Policy*

2) ***Grace Church, Castlemaine's*** *Risk Management Strategy, including communication aspects*

3) ***Grace Church, Castlemaine's*** *Privacy Policy, including the sharing of information and knowledge*

4) ***Grace Church, Castlemaine's*** *Complaint Form*

3.0 Definitions

For definitions of terms in this Code of Conduct, please refer to 4.0 Definitions of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Policy And Procedures On The Provision Of Care And Safety Of Children And Young People

4.0 Who must comply with this Code of Conduct?

Everyone who has any contact with children/young people must comply with this Code of Conduct including:

1. All Leaders and Oversight Committee Members of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**
2. Employees of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**, including Interns and Trainees
3. Volunteers at **Grace Church, Castlemaine,** including Interns and Trainees
4. Parents/Carers whose children/young people are being ministered to or cared for by **Grace Church, Castlemaine**
5. Children/Young People/Vulnerable Adults who attend **Grace Church, Castlemaine**
6. All members of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** ministry family and community
7. Guest speakers and their affiliates
8. Procurement and other contractors (Grocery deliveries, Bus drivers, etc.) and consultants
9. People who hire the church facilities
10. Visitors and spectators

and applies to all activities which involve or result in or relate to contact with children.

5.0 Standards Expected

Grace Church, Castlemaine expects all parties in the children's ministry and young people's activities to live up to the following standards:

5.1 Worker Standards

5.1.1 Confidentiality of Information

All workers should be aware of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Privacy policy and the need to maintain the confidentiality of information regarding children and young people. The Children's Ministry Leader and the Young People's Ministry Leader are to be consulted about disclosure of any private information.

5.1.2 Language

Language should be wholesome and uplifting to everyone. Swear words, curses, coarse or suggestive language are not permitted, nor are words that are demeaning or in any way damaging to self-esteem such as

- Inappropriate language or conversation of a sexual nature or that which demeans any person (child or adult) about their age, gender, disabilities, fat shaming or body image issues, cultural heritage or any other perceived or real diversity marker
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature
- Suggestive gestures or remarks
- Jokes of a sexual nature
- Inappropriate literature (e.g. PG, M, MA, R or X rated material used with young children)

5.1.3 Physical Contact

Touch must be limited to only that which is uplifting for the child/young person/vulnerable adult and appropriate for the situation. A pat on the back, a rub on the head, a hand on the shoulder or a "side hug," are examples of safe, acceptable physical contact. Any contact which could be misinterpreted or confusing to the child/young person/vulnerable adult must be avoided. Examples of inappropriate or easily misinterpreted/accidental contact include cuddles, "full-front hugs", pats on the backside, stroking, hand-holding, sitting the child on one's knee[2], kissing, etc.

Any acts of violence or aggressive behaviour committed by any worker (such as hitting, slapping, kicking or pushing) during an activity are inappropriate and will be dealt with by immediate intervention and reporting as set out in **Grace Church Castlemaine's** Policy for the Provision of Care and Safety of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

[2] *A very young child such as a toddler is acceptable. Older than 5 is not advisable.*

Physical contact may be necessary for injury management, ensuring the safety of the child/worker, demonstrating a skill or for instructional purposes such as part of an activity. It will be explained to the child before engaging in the instruction or activity. Physical contact may also be necessary to assist with toileting of young children.

Age and gender appropriate change rooms and toilets will be used by children/young people.

Any child/young person/vulnerable adult who is injured or ill will receive appropriate first aid and be adequately supervised. Parents/Carers will be notified immediately.

Workers will respect a child's feelings and privacy when engaging in appropriate physical contact.

Adults and children are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Leaders will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No leader will be alone in a room with a child/young person/vulnerable adult while either is changing.

5.1.4 Relationships

Clear personal and professional boundaries must be set in all relationships with children not related to the worker and should be defined by the role of the worker or volunteer (e.g. teacher/student or leader/disciple). The relationship must be contained to that role and carried out within the scope of the church's activities.

Favouritism and exclusive friendships between teachers or leaders and children/young people are unacceptable and in breach of this Code of Conduct.

Any visits/meetings/social occasions with children/young people must be with the knowledge of the departmental head. Parents must be informed and their consent must be obtained. Home visits must only be made where at least one parent/guardian is present.

Other interaction between workers and children/young people must always be in full public view. Workers are not permitted to drive a child/young person under the age of 18 years home alone[3] without the express permission of the parent/carer AND the Children's Ministry Leader/Young People's Ministry Leader.

Gift giving to children must be authorised by the appropriate leader. Adults must refrain from any activity which could be considered as grooming behaviour. Please refer to **Grace Church, Castlemaine's Policy** for the Provision of Care and Safety of Children, Young people and Vulnerable Adults, and Appendix "B" of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy which contain guidelines for identifying grooming behaviour.

[3] *Please refer to* ***Grace Church, Castlemaine's***
Policy for the Care of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults for further detail on this matter.

5.1.5 Behaviour Management

Behaviour management must be positive, proactive, and appropriate. A child should never feel singled out, humiliated, scorned or harmed. All behaviour management must be administered with gentleness, fairness and with a view of leading to positive repentance and restoration.
Behaviour management should follow all acts of disobedience, disruption, and destruction/ harmful behaviour. [4]

Acceptable behaviour management is to take the form of:

- verbal persuasion
- time out
- withdrawal of rewards
- parental intervention and withdrawing child/young person from group activities

Unacceptable behaviour management includes, but is not limited to:

- corporal punishment, such as hitting or slapping
- aggressive behaviour such as pushing or kicking
- handling the child/young person/vulnerable adult roughly
- words that demean.

If a child/young person does not abide by the rules set down by the leader, is an obstruction to the care of other children/young people or may cause harm to other children/young people, the child/young person will be removed and referred to their parent/carer. At no time, will a leader administer any form of behaviour management which could be reasonably construed as spiritual, physical, emotional, sexual or mental abuse.

All one-on-one time is to be carried out within sight of another leader. **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** workers are not trained, professional counsellors which carries legal connotations, but rather they offer pastoral insight from a biblical perspective. If counselling is required, the child/young person and their parents (if age appropriate) should be referred to a professional counsellor.

[4] *Obviously, the methods of discipline should be age appropriate. For example, "time out" may be suitable for a 9-year-old but not for a 17-year-old.*

5.1.6 Smoking, alcohol consumption and the use of medications and drugs

Any person influenced by, or whose judgment may be impaired by, alcohol or drugs is not permitted to work with children or young people. In all states and territories of Australia, smoking (including the use of electronic cigarettes) is illegal in public places that are enclosed or substantially enclosed (i.e. Has a roof) whether or not it is a permanent or temporary structure. Smoking via e-cigarettes (vapes) are banned in Australia if they are not prescribed by a doctor. Smoking is not permitted on the premises within 4 metres of eating areas and building entrances, and 10 metres of any outdoor activity specifically organised for children/young people.[5] Smoking in the immediate presence of children is illegal, including in private cars in all states of Australia and may be considered a criminal act.

Please refer to Appendix "A" and Appendix "B" of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy for further information relating to standards of behaviour.

5.2 Children/Young People/Vulnerable Adults Standards

5.2.1 Language

Language must be wholesome and uplifting to everyone. Swear words, curses, coarse or suggestive language are not permitted; nor are words that are demeaning to any person (child or adult) about their age, gender, disabilities, fat shaming or body image issues, cultural heritage or any other perceived or real diversity marker or is in any way damaging to anyone's self-esteem.

5.2.2 Physical Contact

Children/young people under the age of 18 years are not permitted to touch each other in any way that is contrary to normal, childlike interaction. They are not permitted any contact that is harmful. Children/young people under the age of 18 years should be gently steered away from being overly demonstrative with hugs, cuddles and kisses with adults and each other.

5.2.3 Bullying

Children/young people/vulnerable adults, parents, family members and all other people at **Grace Church, Castlemaine,** are not permitted to engage in any type of bullying activity. Any victim of bullying is encouraged to report the offense to leadership so the behaviour can be managed.

5.2.4 Behaviour

Children, young people and vulnerable adults are expected to behave in a polite manner, displaying respect for their peers and for the leaders. Disruptive, destructive/harmful, and disobedient behaviour will be addressed with the appropriate discipline[6].

[5] *Source: https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-tobacco-strategy-2023-2030; Accessed 12/03/2024*
[6] *As listed above.*

Policy and Procedures on the Provision of Safety and Wellbeing of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

1.0 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF POLICY

In accordance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2019) the purpose of this policy is to provide for the protection and safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults in the care of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**. It gives guidance on the processes and procedures that aim to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults across all areas of the organisation's work.

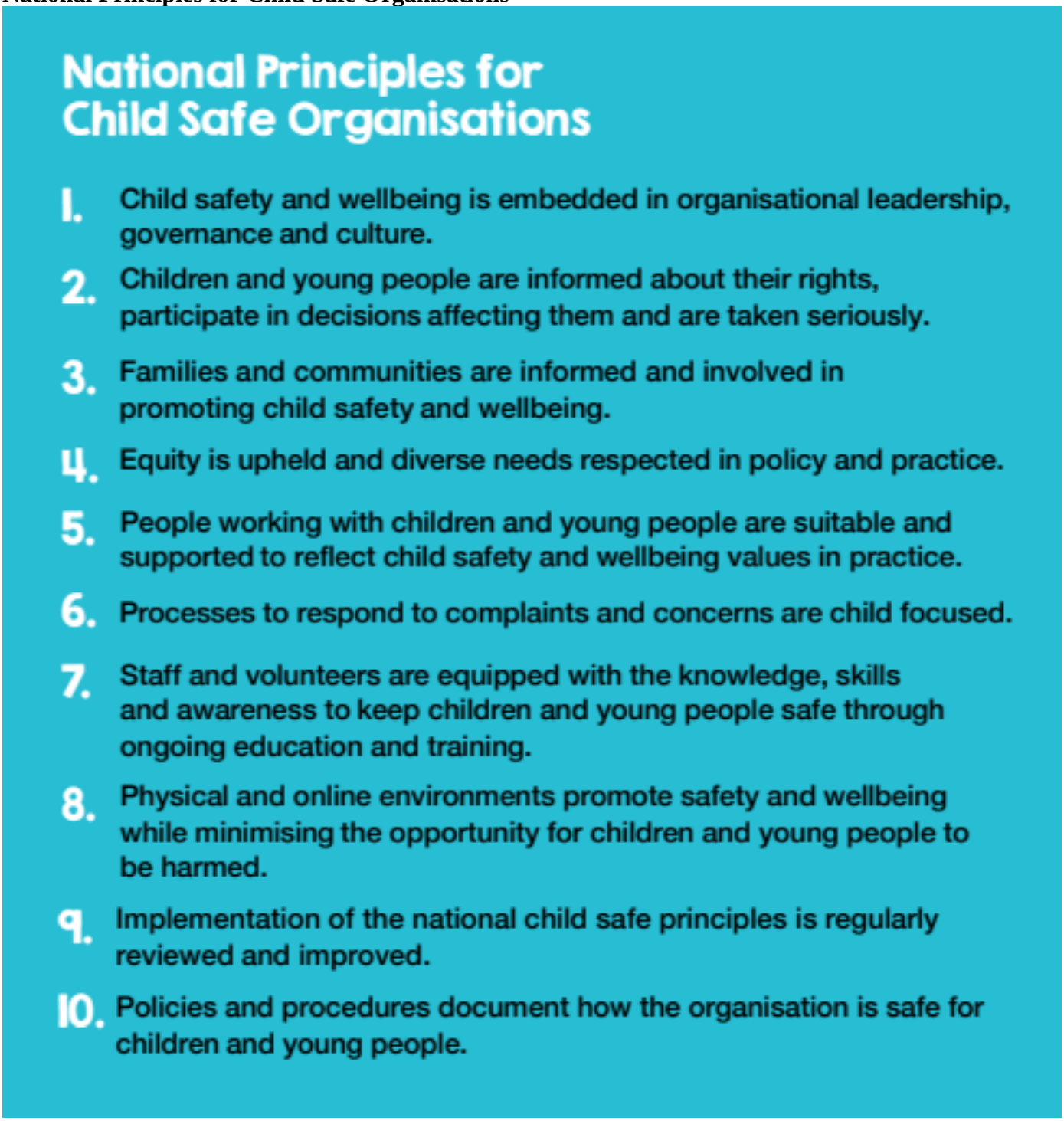
This policy seeks to clearly demonstrate the organisation's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and inform all leaders, staff and volunteers of their obligations to act ethically towards them. It addresses the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, together with our policies on recruitment, selection, and screening, practices and procedures, training, and acceptable and non-acceptable work practices. It also includes the way in which we will handle complaints, share information and knowledge, and communicate child-safe policy and procedures with our children, young people, ministry family and wider community.

Grace Church, Castlemaine's Policy for the Provision of Safety and Wellbeing of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults is informed by the following documents:

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations; https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles/about-national-principles; last accessed 14 March, 2024
- Final Report Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse; https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/recommendations; last accessed 12 March, 2024
- The Australian Human Rights Commission; https://humanrights.gov.au/; last accessed 20 January, 2024
- National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030 (2021), The National Office for Child Safety; https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/national-strategy-prevent-and-respond-child-sexual-abuse-2021-2030; accessed 20 February, 2024
- Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2021), SNAICC, Commonwealth of Australia; https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/keeping-our-kids-safe-cultural-safety-and-national-principles-child-safe-organisations-guide-0 ; accessed 2 March 2024
- Executive Summary, Our vision for an inclusive Australia and Recommendations, Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability: Final Report (September 2023); https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report-executive-summary-our-vision-inclusive-australia-and-recommendations ; accessed 14 March, 2024

- Safeguarding Vulnerable People (and Governance Toolkit); https://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/topic-guides/vulnerable-people; accessed 9 March, 2024
- Relevant legislation has been drawn from our state legislative body, including Working With Children's Checks and governance surrounding it.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations[7]



[7] *Source: https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles; Accessed: 12 March, 2024*

2.0 RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

This policy should be read together with the following documents:

1. **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Code of Conduct
2. **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Statement of Commitment
3. **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Incident form
4. **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Volunteer Policy
5. National Principles for Child-Safe Organisations (https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles)
6. **Grace Church, Castlemaine's "**Our Commitment to You" poster

3.0 PERSONS WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO AND WHO MUST COMPLY WITH THIS POLICY

The following parties must comply with **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Policy for the Provision of Care and Safety of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

1. All Leaders and Oversight Committee Members of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**
2. Employees of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**, including Interns and Trainees
3. Volunteers at **Grace Church, Castlemaine,** including Interns and Trainees
4. Parents/Carers whose children/young people are being ministered to or cared for by **Grace Church, Castlemaine**
5. Children/Young People/Vulnerable Adults who attend **Grace Church, Castlemaine**
6. All members of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** ministry family and community
7. Guest speakers and their affiliates
8. Procurement and other contractors (Grocery deliveries, Bus drivers, etc.) and consultants
9. People who hire the church facilities
10. Visitors and spectators

and applies to all activities which involve or result in or relate to contact with children.

A copy of this document will be made available to new employees and volunteers, and parents/carers via the church website. Additionally, people who hire the church facilities will receive a copy of this document which they must abide by as part of their hire of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** facilities. This document will also be read as a supporting document to **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** employee, volunteer and Oversight Committee/Governance manuals and/or Charters.

4.0 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY

1. **Grace Church, Castlemaine's**, *ministry* and *church* refer to **"Grace Church, Castlemaine"** located at 30 Buckley Street, Harcourt, Victoria 3453.

2. **Grace Church, Castlemaine**, *ministry* and *church* refer to the premises (including all activities held at external locations) and the congregation, and includes **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Leaders, Pastors, staff and volunteers, unless specifically stated otherwise.

3. *Abuse* can consist of one or more of the following but is not restricted to:

   (a) *Physical abuse* is any non-accidental physical injury.

   (b) *Sexual abuse* is any sexual act or threat to perform such act upon another person when the offender 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.

   (c) *Psychological abuse*[8] is behaviour that aims to cause emotional or mental harm. It may not hurt your body but can be just as painful and distressing in other ways. No one behaves perfectly in their relationships all the time. However, when someone deliberately hurts you repeatedly it becomes abusive. Behaviour from others that aims to make you feel scared or bad about yourself is not OK.

   Psychological abuse can include someone regularly:
   - Embarrassing you in public or in front of family, friends, support workers or people with whom you work;
   - Calling you names;
   - Threatening to harm you, your pets, children, or other people who are important to you;
   - Treating you badly because of your personal attributes - for example, your religion, race, past, disability, gender, sexuality, or family;
   - Ignoring you or pretending you aren't there
   - Doing and saying things that make you feel confused. This might include someone moving or changing things and then denying they have done this.

[8] *Source: https://www.1800respect.org.au/violence-and-abuse/psychological-abuse; Accessed: 20 March 2024*

- Always correcting what you say with the aim of making you look or feel foolish.

There may be a pattern to the behaviour that happens again and again. Sometimes other types of abuse are going on at the same time.

(d) *Spiritual abuse*[9] is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it.

Spiritual abuse may include:

- Manipulation and exploitation;
- Enforced accountability;
- Censorship of decision making;
- Requirements for secrecy and silence;
- Coercion to conform, (inability to ask questions);
- Control through the use of sacred texts or teaching;
- Requirement of obedience to the abuser;
- The suggestion that the abuser has a 'divine' position;
- Isolation as a means of punishment;
- Superiority and elitism.

(e) *Neglect* is any serious omission or commission which jeopardizes or impairs a person's development.

(f) *Grooming* is a process of preparing a person – usually a child or other vulnerable person – for sexual assault. It includes establishing a 'special' friendship with a child. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents, other adults and church leaders to think that the relationship with the child is 'normal' and positive.

4. *Belonging to the church* means attending ministry activities or church services and/or taking part in **Grace Church, Castlemaine** led sessions and/or identifying on a personal level that **Grace Church, Castlemaine** is the individual's spiritual 'home'.

5. A *Breach* is any action or inaction by any member of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**, including children and young people, that fails to comply with any part of the Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy, Code of Conduct or Policy and Procedures.

6. *Child or children* are all those aged twelve (12) years or younger who affiliate themselves with or participate in any of the organisation's ministries and/or activities.

7. *Children's Ministry/ies* and *Young People's Ministry/ies* include all children's or young people's ministry/ies or activity/ies which **Grace Church, Castlemaine** may run.

[9] *Source: https://www.christianitytoday.com/scot-mcknight/2020/december/what-is-spiritual-abuse-working-definition.html; Accessed: 20 March, 2024*

8. *A Child-safe organisation*[10] is one which puts the interests of children and young people first. It is one that creates a culture, adopts strategies and takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people.

A child safe organisation consciously and systematically:

- Creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing
- are at the centre of thought, values and actions.
- Places emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children and young people.
- Creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people. Creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm.

- Responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.

9. *Culturally safe* within Grace Church, Castlemaine means providing quality, age-appropriate ministry that celebrates the many different demographics and people cultures in Australia in a way that considers the familiar cultural values and norms of the person accessing the ministry, and understanding that this may differ from your own and/or the dominant culture.

10. *Diverse backgrounds and needs* means ensuring that the needs of Children, Young People and Vulnerable adults are met including those with disability, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and those who are from sexually diverse backgrounds.

11. *Employed/employment* means fulfilling any function in the church where financial or in-kind remuneration is paid by **Grace Church, Castlemaine**.

12. *Harm* to a child

(a) is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being;

(b) it is immaterial how the harm is caused;

(c) can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect or sexual exploitation or abuse;

(d) can be caused by a single act, omission or circumstance; or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

13. *Mandatory Reporting* are laws requiring specified individuals to report known or suspected cases of specified types of child abuse and neglect to government authorities. The laws usually specify these individuals on the basis that they work in an occupation dealing with children in the course of their work. Although laws differ slightly in each state, people who have positions in religious institutions (churches, ministries, para-church organisations) like Pastors are listed as mandatory reporters in every state. For further information, please refer to Section 9 for contact details for your state.

[10] *Source: https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/about/what-child-safe-organisation; Accessed: 10 March, 2024*

Please also see Pg's 18-20 "Mandatory Reporting Requirements – in the State of Victoria," "Voluntary Reporting Requirements – in the state of Victoria," "Reportable Conduct Scheme," "Making a Report," "Investigating," and "Reporting."

14. The *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* reflect 10 child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and aim to provide a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing.

15. *Serving* means fulfilling any function in the ministry in a voluntary capacity.

16. *Vulnerable Adults*[11] are defined as people aged over 18 or other individuals who may be unable to take care of themselves or are unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation.

17. *Worker* means anyone who has regular, rostered duties and includes volunteers and employed staff.

18. *Young people* are all those aged thirteen (13) to eighteen (18) years of age who affiliate themselves with or participate in any of the organisation's ministries and/or activities.

5.0 PRINCIPLES GUIDING POLICY

The safety of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults is everyone's responsibility.

1. **Grace Church, Castlemaine** is a Christian Church/Ministry wholly dedicated to carrying out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

2. **Grace Church, Castlemaine** seeks to be an example of Christian love, kindness and generosity through its core values of acceptance, belonging, responsibility, stewardship, multiplication and worship.

3. Specifically, regarding children, **Grace Church, Castlemaine** seeks to be a positive agent in children's lives in leading them to Christ, blessing them and establishing them in the Christian life and community, in accordance with our scriptural mandate (Mark 10:14-16, Joel 2:28, Isaiah 59:21).

4. Every child, young person and vulnerable adult is a valued member of society.

5. Every child, young person and vulnerable adult has a right to be protected from harm or risk of harm.

6. Every child, young person and vulnerable adult has a right to feel safe.

7. Every child, young person and vulnerable adult is entitled to be treated in a way that respects their dignity and privacy.

[11] *Source: https://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/topic-guides/vulnerable-people; Accessed: 10 March, 2024*

8. It is the priority of all staff, volunteers and visitors to ensure the safety, well-being and best interests of children, young people and vulnerable adults entrusted to our care.

9. **Grace Church, Castlemaine** aims to create a child safe and child friendly environment where all children are respected, valued and feel safe. This applies equally to young people and vulnerable adults. Education and engagement with children and young people about their rights, safe environments, protective strategies for staying safe and seeking help if needed will be embedded into every part of our organisation. Specific education sessions and posters regarding child safety and how to get help will be placed in areas where children, young people and families circulate.

10. **Grace Church, Castlemaine** will listen to and act on any concerns children or young person and their parents raise with us and have them dealt with in a way that is fair, timely and promotes the participation of the child or young person.

11. In decisions involving a child under the age of 18 years or a vulnerable adult, the views of the child or vulnerable adult and wishes will be considered in a way that has regard to their age and ability to understand.

12. The safety, well-being and best interests of children, young people and vulnerable adults are of paramount concern to **Grace Church, Castlemaine**. If a decision is being made where there is a conflict between their safety, well-being and best interests and the interests of any adult caring for them, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the safety, well-being and best interests of the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

13. The child's or young person's family has the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of its children and young person. They will be supported by **Grace Church, Castlemaine** in that role.

5.1 Understanding the National Principles for Child-Safe Organisations that guide this policy [12]

All children and young people have the right to be safe and cared for.
Most children and young people feel safe and protected – at home, in their neighbourhood, at school, in church, at the doctor or at their local sports club or youth group.

But some children and young people don't feel safe. They might feel hurt, afraid, uncomfortable, anxious or confused. They might not feel they will be believed or listened to by the adults in charge.

People who work with children and young people should understand their rights and needs. They should treat children and young people fairly and with respect, and make sure that children and young people can have a say about the things that affect them. Physical and online spaces need to be safe, so that children and young people can't be hurt or bullied. And it is important that children and young people are able to speak up if they are feeling unsafe or worried.

The National Principles aim to make sure that all organisations working with children and young people in Australia - like schools, childcare centres, churches, sports clubs and others - keep children and young people safe and well.

There are ten National Principles, explained in full in the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations document (https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles/download-national-principles).

In child-friendly language, the ten National Principles[13] say this:

1. All people in the organisation care about children and young people's safety and wellbeing, and make sure they act that way.
2. Children and young people are told about their human rights, have a say in decisions and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities know about and are involved in the organisation's child and safety and wellbeing activities.
4. Everyone is treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and are taught how to keep children safe and well.
6. Children, young people, families, staff and volunteers are listened to and can share problems and concerns.
7. Staff and volunteers keep learning all the time so they know how to keep children and young people safe and well.
8. Children and young people are safe in online and physical spaces.
9. The organisation keeps reviewing and improving its child safety and wellbeing practices.
10. The organisation writes down how it keeps children and young people safe and well, and makes sure that everyone can see it.

---

[12] *Source: https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/children-young-people/understanding-national-principles-child-safe-organisations; Accessed 12/03/2024*
[13] *Source: https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/children-young-people/understanding-national-principles-child-safe-organisations; Accessed: 12/03/2024*

5.2 Ministry to Vulnerable Adults

While all people must be protected from harm, there are additional legislative and ethical considerations for protecting vulnerable people. [14]

Vulnerable people can include:

- children and seniors
- adults and children who are victims of domestic violence
- people with disabilities who may have impaired intellectual or physical functioning
- people with gender dysphoria and/or same sex attraction – gender dysphoria is defined as a state of severe distress or unhappiness caused by feeling that one's gender identity does not match one's sex registered at birth
- people from a low socio-economic background
- people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders
- people who are not native speakers of the local language
- people with low levels of literacy or education
- people subject to modern slavery, which involves human exploitation and control, such as forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking, and child labour.
- **Grace Church, Castlemaine** recognises that vulnerable people may also include our staff, volunteers, and people who are contractors, consultants, or external ministry partners.

We commit to safeguarding vulnerable people as part of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** primary duty of care by protecting the welfare and human rights of adults that are, in some way, connected with our ministry – particularly people that may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

We recognise that incidents of harm to vulnerable adults may include:

- sexual harassment, bullying or abuse
- serious sexual offences, such as rape
- threats of violence or actual violence
- verbal, emotional or social abuse
- cultural or identity abuse, such as racial, sexual or gender-based discrimination or hate crimes
- coercion and exploitation
- abuse of power.

The protections and strong provisions of this Risk Management Strategy are extended to vulnerable adults where appropriate.

6.0 POLICY

6.1 Employees and Volunteers – Standards

All employees and volunteers are expected to be mature believers in Jesus Christ. Maturity is not necessarily measured in years as a believer, but rather one's commitment to obeying the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ and demonstrating an active faith in His Word. That commitment may be

[14] *Source: https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities/manage-your-charity/governance-hub/governance-toolkit/governance-toolkit-safeguarding-vulnerable-people; Accessed 16 March,2024*

demonstrated by participating in the vision of **Grace Church, Castlemaine,** participating in **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** discipleship journey and any training required by the church. Their lives should show evidence of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and spiritual maturity.

The Leadership and Oversight Committee of **Grace Church, Castlemaine,** together with all employees and volunteers must behave and interact with children, young people and vulnerable adults in a manner that is befitting a Christian and that honours the Lord Jesus Christ. They are expected to put the interest of children first and foremost in all organisational decisions and developments. A wholesome love for children, young people and vulnerable adults must be evident.

An obligation to enforce this policy will be written into the contract of every Leader (employee or volunteer) who has significant responsibility for supervising those who lead children or young people.

Please refer to **Grace Church, Castlemaine's Code of Conduct**, Section 5.0, 'Standards Expected' for a complete list of standards expected of those who serve or work at **Grace Church, Castlemaine**.

6.1.1 Use of Grace Church, Castlemaine Facilities by External Users

External parties using **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** facilities will be required to comply with **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Child and Young People Protection Policy. At the time a contract is signed with a non-**Grace Church, Castlemaine** group or person to use the facility, it shall be the duty of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** relevant leader or their delegate to obtain written confirmation from the user/s of their agreement to comply with this policy.

6.2 Staff Roles and Responsibilities

6.2.1 General Safety

General safety is a Duty of Care of **Grace Church, Castlemaine** to children, young people and vulnerable adults, as well as the wider ministry community. This includes:

- Any risks posed by the physical environment or equipment used
- The security of the physical premises used - including emergency evacuation and lock down procedures
- Safe play places and equipment, a shared responsibility with the owner of the property, the Harcourt Uniting Church
- Sun safety
- Ensuring parents administer medication where required to children
- Ensuring parents manage allergies and other medical conditions
- Ensuring online safety in activities where **Grace Church, Castlemaine** is actively involved, including away from the premises.

6.2.2 Children's Ministry Leader

The Children's Ministry Leader has an obligation to enforce **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Policy for the Provision of Care and Safety of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

Duties include, but are not limited to:

1) Appoint Second-in-Charge and delegate to cover responsibilities when not available.

2) Create and run a program for primary school aged children that is full of life and teaches children how to live Christ-centered lives, ensuring that they are taught about their value as a person and their right to be safe, including how to tell someone if they don't feel safe.

3) Lead team leaders for Crèche, Preschool and Primary groups.

4) Organize purchase of supplies for each area, in conjunction with the Treasurer.

5) Primary Space – familiarise all leaders with program and responsibility prior to Sunday.

6) Ensure Attendance Sheets are sent to the Pastor via email each Monday morning.

7) Ensure the Oversight Committee are across and have approved of all leadership changes.

8) Consult with the Pastor and Treasurer on the financial needs of department.

9) Ensure all workers throughout **Grace Church, Castlemaine** Children's Ministry have current **Working with Children's Checks** and facilitate renewal as appropriate.

10) Organise purchase of food etc. for morning teas as required.

11) Maintain and be aware of confidentiality of information and consult with workers over any disclosures of sensitive information.

6.2.3 Young People's Ministry Leader

The Young people Pastor/Leader has an obligation to enforce **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Policy for the Provision of Care and Safety of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

Duties include but are not limited to:

1) Appoint Second-in-Charge and delegate to cover responsibilities when not available.

2) Responsibility for the overall health, direction and administration of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Young People's ministry/ies.

3) Care for and organise a team of leaders to assist in the running of the young people's ministry/ies. This includes mentoring and engaging them so that they can mentor young people, run segments of the services and help with clean ups, set ups and pack downs etc.

4) Plan and execute vibrant, engaging program/s for young people, ensuring that they are taught about their value as a person and their right to be safe, including how to tell someone if they don't feel safe.

5) Facilitate discipleship outside of designated young people services.

6) Engage young people and provide emotional support in times of grief.

7) Model and teach a biblical worldview to young people.

8) Support the Pastoral team at **Grace Church, Castlemaine** by being involved in pastoral & staff meetings as well as doing segments in the main services as required.

9) Maintain and be aware of confidentiality of information and be consulted by workers for any disclosure.

10) Ensure all workers throughout **Grace Church, Castlemaine** Young People's Ministry have current **Working with Children's Checks** and facilitate renewal as appropriate.

6.3 Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities – Children and Young People's Departments

1) All volunteers in the Children's and Young People's Departments MUST have a current **Working with Children's Check** as per requirements of the relevant state government authorities. Application and detail updates can be made at **Grace Church, Castlemaine**. No Card/Certificate-No Start rules apply.

2) All volunteers MUST have a current Volunteer Role Agreement in place, which includes a position description. The Pastor or his/her delegate will co-ordinate the completion of these forms on an annual basis in accordance with **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Volunteers policy.

3) Volunteers in the Children's and Young People's Departments will be given a copy of the **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Volunteer Handbook, together with induction upon commencing duties with the respective departments. They will be required to complete general compliance training annually, together with department specific training as directed by the Children's Ministry Leader and the Young People's Ministry Leader.

4) Volunteers in the Children's and Young People's Departments will have skills in line with the **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Volunteer's policy. These are:

   1) Ministry Team roles – Volunteers must be over 18 years. Volunteers for these roles will have received training and will be part of active discipleship training. In this role, volunteers are required to hold a current **Working with Children's Check** and may be required to train on the use of equipment.
   (If exceptions are granted by the Children's Ministry Leader, or the Young People's Ministry Leader, then someone under 18 can work and minister alongside an experienced volunteer who is over 18 who will mentor them and ensure they are safe in the role they are undertaking.)

   2) Ministry Leadership/Administration roles - These roles involve collecting details (e.g. finance, personal details). They may also involve the developing and implementing of rosters. This role may be filled by volunteers with a current **Working with Children's Check** who have completed **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** discipleship training.

   Volunteers serving in the Children's and Young People's Departments should have a passion to see children and young people grow in Christ and be friendly, reliable and flexible.

6.4 Young people Serving in Leadership Roles

All young people serving in leadership roles must:

1) Be involved in the life of the church including regularly attending worship services, leadership training and other meetings organised by the Children's Ministry Leader and / or the Young People's Ministry Leader.

2) Submit to and support the Children's Ministry Leader and the Young People's Ministry Leader, as the case may be, and the Pastor and Associate Pastor of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**, and assist **Grace Church, Castlemaine** achieve its vision and carry out its mission.

6.5 Recruiting and Screening Children's and Young People's Group Volunteers

All children and young people ministry volunteers must complete an application that identifies prior experience with children/young people work and why the applicant wants to work with children/young people. No one will be permitted to work with children or young people without the endorsement of the Pastor.

All children's/young people's ministry workers, including parents or relatives of children/young people in **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** activities, whether they are volunteers or paid employees, will obtain a **Working with Children's Check** from the Commission for Children and Young People. (Refer to Volunteer Policy compliance requirements of the **Working with Children's Check** System.)

All new children/young people's workers will be required to submit two written character references with contact numbers. All referees will be contacted by telephone and followed up. A file will be kept for each individual worker and private information will be protected.

All workers will advise **Grace Church, Castlemaine** if there is any change to their suitability status for working with children and/or young people.

Grace Church, Castlemaine will connect to the relevant WWCC portal for their state, link their workers to it and maintain a suitability register for all staff and volunteer workers. They will refer to it at the beginning of every **Grace Ministry, Castlemaine** term to ensure that **Working with Children's Checks** are valid. The file will hold electronic or paper copies of letters and information from the relevant state authority, ensuring that security of private information is addressed.

It is the responsibility of every worker to ensure that their **Working with Children's Check** is current and to apply for a renewal before the current card/certificate lapses.

Initial placements in the children's and young people's departments are probationary for three months. At the end of the three-month period, the worker and **Grace Church, Castlemaine** Leaders will assess the situation and decide if a permanent posting is appropriate.

6.6 Induction and Training

All new workers (volunteers and paid employees) will be required to attend an induction, receive training and read this document before commencing duties. They will sign and date a declaration stating they understand and will abide by all elements of the **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy.

Workers who continue their duties from year to year will sign a compliance declaration each year as part of their Volunteer Agreement form.

Grace Church, Castlemaine will hold an electronic or paper copy of all declarations and volunteer agreements for past and present workers.

The induction procedure will ensure that staff and volunteers understand their duties, rights, responsibilities, health and safety issues including risk management and notification of prohibited activities, use of equipment, orientation of the site, record keeping responsibilities, accident and emergency procedures and supervision arrangements.

All staff and volunteers will be provided with training relevant to their position. Training may comprise an induction, specialised training or continuing training as required.

6.7 Identification of Children's Ministry Team

All leaders and workers of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Children's or Young People's Ministry, whether volunteers or paid staff, will be rostered on for their shifts and will sign on before their shift and off after their shift, recording their times and signing their name. No worker will sign on or off for another worker.

All leaders and workers of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Children's or Young People's Ministry, whether volunteers or paid staff, will wear name tags when involved in children's ministry or any activity outside of usual ministry times. No leader or worker shall serve without clear identification showing that they are a recognised Children's or Young People's team worker.

6.8 Visitors to Children/Young People Ministries

Visitors will sign a guest register. The register will be filed at the end of the year and archived with other attendance and worker records.

People who assist on a casual basis and/or who are not rostered (e.g. Parent sitting in or helping their child to settle in or a person visiting to observe ministry) will be required to wear a visitor's badge. These should be prepared ahead of time by the Children's Ministry Leader or the Young People's Ministry Leader, and be ready for use by visitors so that it is apparent who is a visitor and who is a worker by all children and adults.

Visitors will have limited contact with the children/young people and will have NO unsupervised contact at all. This stipulation will be explained to them verbally by the Session/Activity leader before they join in.

An adult member of the Children's/Young People's ministry team will be responsible for supervising visitors.

Leaders have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at child-related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

6.9 Drop-off and Pick-up of Children and Young people

6.9.1 Children

A parent/carer must accompany their child/children to the venue. Parents/Carers will sign the child in on the paper or electronic register, entering all details required by **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** system.

Parents/carers must collect their child/children. Children will not be released into the care of anyone else without the prior written notification of the parent/carer.

Parents/carers must collect their child/children promptly at the specified finishing time, so that workers are not waiting unduly.

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to notify the Children's Ministry Leader and session/activity leaders of any custody issues that could pose a problem with the protection or pick-up of their child/children.

While **Grace Church, Castlemaine** will do everything possible to ensure a safe environment for children, **Grace Church, Castlemaine** assumes responsibility for children DURING children's service/activity times only. At all other times, children are considered to be in the care of their parent/carer.

Parents/carers are advised to instruct their children on the risks associated with running or playing

- in the church where electrical and/or heavy equipment is present
- out in the street
- in the Coffee area where people are serving and carrying hot food and drinks
- on or around any works or building site on **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** property

and any other place not mentioned with which an adult would reasonably be expected to understand the risks associated.

Parents/carers must ensure that their child/children are safe at all times.

6.9.2 Young People

Young people are permitted to be on the premises only when there are at least two of the workers for their group present.

Parents should be punctual in picking up young people under the age of 18 years so that workers are not detained unnecessarily.

6.10 Transporting Children or Young people

Grace Church Castlemaine or its representatives will not provide transport to children or young people under the age of 18 years, and leaders must never be alone with a child/young person in a car. It is the responsibility of parents / carers / guardians to ensure that children and young people are transported safely to and from Children's Ministry and, or, Youth, whether the program is being run at the Church, or elsewhere.

6.11 Overnight Sleeping Arrangements

Males and females must be segregated whenever children/young people activities require overnight sleeping arrangements.

A minimum of two adults who are the same sex as the children/young people are to sleep in each area.

6.12 Toileting of Different Age Groups

Parents who leave their children in the care of Crèche workers, give implied consent for their child's nappy to be changed by the staff.

Pre-school aged children will be accompanied to the restroom by one of their teachers who will wait at the door for the child. If a pre-school age child needs assistance in the toilet, the teacher will provide the assistance necessary after first encouraging the child to handle as much of the process as he/she can.

Primary school aged children may choose a same sex 'buddy' to accompany them to the bathroom. The room leader should be informed of their destination on the way to the restroom and the children should report to the room leader again upon their return.

6.13 Activities at Non-Church Venues

Any off-premises activity must be risk assessed prior to the day the activity is to take place. Insurance cover must be in place prior to all activities.

Age-appropriate ratios of adults to children/young people must be maintained.

All children/young people must supply a liability release form signed by a parent/carer BEFORE the activity. Participants will not be permitted to join in the activity without a COMPLETED and SIGNED form.

Documentation containing the names of all participants, workers and parents must be kept and filed in hard and/or soft copy. Copies of incident reports must be attached and an electronic copy will be kept for seven (7) years post the incident first being reported.

6.14 High-Risk Activities

Grace Church, Castlemaine's Policy for the Provision of Care and Safety of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults will only apply to day-to-day activities.

Any high risk or special events will require prior approval of the Pastor following a full risk assessment of the activity.

Staff must provide a detailed risk management assessment and mitigating strategy beforehand. Risk Management assessment should begin at least two months prior to the event, giving sufficient time for the event organiser/s to develop, write, receive approval for and implement the risk management strategy.

If it is a paid activity, a Certificate of Currency for the Public Liability cover of the third party will be sought and held on file as part of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Risk Management process.

High risk activities should not proceed without notifying the church/ministry insurer and gaining written acknowledgement that the activity will be covered.

6.15 Unacceptable Work Practices

There will be no unauthorised activities with children or young people under the age of 18 years.

Children/Young People's workers must not arrange activities with the children/young people under the age of 18 years off the church property without discussing the matter AND receiving prior approval from the Pastor or Associate Pastor. Parents must be notified and signed, dated permission slips obtained prior to the event taking place.

Children/Young People workers must not visit children/young people under the age of 18 years alone at home. Workers must ensure that their time with children/young people under the age of 18 years is always in public view.

Secret or unauthorised clubs are strictly prohibited.

Initiations and secret ceremonies are strictly prohibited.

All aspects of programmes or activities for children/young people under the age of 18 years will be open to observation by parents/carers.

Workers must not give children/young people gifts without the prior knowledge and permission of the Children's Ministry Leader/Young People's Ministry Leader. Any gifts given should never be personal gifts but may be small gifts approved by leadership on behalf of the church/ministry to all children/young people for birthdays, Christmas and similar occasions.

Workers must be circumspect about their conduct with children/young people at all times. Conduct that may be wrongly perceived or interpreted must be eliminated. Excess affection, touching and strong feelings are inappropriate.

Any problems, suspicions or difficulties concerning a worker's relationship and behaviour with any child/young person must immediately be brought to the attention of the Pastor.

6.16 Family Custody Matters

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to notify the Children's Ministry Leader and/or the Young People's Ministry Leader of any custody issues that could pose a problem with the protection or pick-up of their child/children/teenagers. This information must be given in written form only, signed and dated by the parents/carer and the appropriate Ministry Leader. It is the responsibility of the Ministry Leader to disseminate this information to the workers involved in caring for the children/young people and advise the senior leaders of the church/ministry in writing.

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to clearly notify the Children's Ministry Leader and/or the Young People's Ministry Leader of any identifying or sensitive information which should NOT be disclosed to other people in the case of a child/young people in protection OR where legal proceedings are current in a custody dispute OR where court orders have been issued regarding custody of a child/young person. This information must be given in written form only, signed and dated by the parents/carer and the appropriate Ministry Leader. It is the responsibility of the Ministry Leader to disseminate this information to the workers involved in caring for the children/young people and advise the senior leaders of the church/ministry in writing.

Staff and volunteers will respect the confidentiality of family custody matters that a child/young person under the age of 18 years in their care may share with them.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from disclosing information regarding family custody matters to the family group of a child/young people in their care.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from disclosing information which could lead to the identification of a child in protective care (foster care).

6.17 Disclosure or Suspicions of Harm, including Reporting Guidelines

Where a worker reasonably believes that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm or a child, young person or vulnerable adult alleges that they are being harmed or are at risk of harm, the staff member or volunteer must inform the Children's Ministry Leader/Young People's Ministry Leader and the Pastor forthwith.

A decision will be made by the Children's Ministry Leader/Young People's Ministry Leader and the Pastor as to whether the disclosure constitutes harm as defined in Section 4.0 (3, 12) (Definitions *Abuse* and *Harm*) of this document.

All reportable issues of child abuse, including suspicions of child abuse, will be passed directly to law enforcement authorities as required by the relevant Child Protection legislation for this state.

SEE SECTION 9, Pg's 18-20, "Mandatory Reporting Requirements – in the State of Victoria," "Voluntary Reporting Requirements – in the State of Victoria," "Reportable Conduct Scheme," "Making a Report," "Investigating," and "Responding."

Where necessary the relevant department for the protection of children and families will be advised for follow up of the risk of harm or alleged risk of harm. Contact details are contained in this document.

All disclosures or suspicion of harm or risk of harm to a child, young person or a vulnerable adult in **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** care must be documented in writing by the worker making the report. Action taken must be included and the report must be signed and dated by the worker and Children's Ministry Leader/Young People Ministry Leader, escalated to the Pastor/Associate Pastor.

All reports of suspicious or actual harm to a child, young person or vulnerable adult will be escalated to the Oversight Committee by the Pastor. The Oversight Committee shall review risk management strategies with the leadership of the Children's Ministry, and the Young Peoples's Ministry, and make appropriate changes.

All parties shall cooperate with authorities at all times.

All parties shall be mindful of the privacy or the vulnerable people and families involved as per the organisation's privacy policy.

Appendix 'A' to the Code of Conduct is a guide to identifying harm, child abuse and neglect.

6.17.1 Media Attention

A disclosure of suspicion or harm may attract media attention. All contact with the media is to be managed by the Pastor, as it may involve the privacy of children and families or vulnerable adults.

6.18 Grooming

Grace Church, Castlemaine has the following safeguards in place:

- A Code of Conduct for all adults and volunteers who interact with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- A requirement that any suspicions of child abuse be reported to Church, Government and Community Based Services.
- A screening process for all staff and workers who are involved with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Policy for the Provision of Safety and Wellbeing of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults
- Appendix 'B' to the Code of Conduct, identifying Grooming behaviour.

Parents, members and Church leaders should be AWARE of grooming, recognising that the conduct of most people towards children is of pure and noble intent.

- Grooming is a process of preparing a person – usually a child or other vulnerable person – for sexual assault. It includes establishing a 'special' friendship with a child. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents, other adults and Church leaders to think that the relationship with the child is 'normal' and positive. Please refer to the Policy for the Provision of Safety and Wellbeing of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults for more detail.

- If an adult feels a sense of unease or concern about a person's conduct towards a child, they should immediately report their concern to a senior leader of **Grace Church, Castlemaine** who will follow the concern up with other leaders. More information is provided in Appendix B to the policy, Grooming, mentioned above.

- Grooming is generally subtle and is usually clearly seen in hindsight. For this reason, it is important that any breach of policy or generalised concern is reported. This will allow for seemingly minor matters to be linked to identify a pattern of behaviour which may lead to abuse being prevented, or early detection.

- A report should be filed for each incident by the Children's Ministry Leader, or the Young People's Ministry Leader and escalated to the Pastor and the Oversight Committee.

6.19 Photography Policy

The permission of parents/carers must be obtained before any photographs of children/young people are used in **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** publicity.

Children or young people in protective care (foster care) may not be used at any time in publicity photographs or videos.

After parents/carers have been given full understanding of the nature of the photographs and consented, the following processes will apply before any photographs/videos are taken:

- Photographers will be required to adhere to **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Child, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy and will work in conjunction with a staff member.
- Written permission will be sought from parents/carers before publishing any photographs and if it is appropriate to include identifying information about a child with their photograph.
- The staff member will ensure that children are appropriately clothed and that the photos are appropriate for the child's age.
- Where possible, the ability for photographs to be copied or redistributed will be limited.

6.20 Use of technology and social media

Unsupervised use of the internet, computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices by children and youth is not ordinarily permitted while in the care of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**. However, children may be permitted to view child friendly G rated content on their tablets, or mobile phones, quietly, on a Sunday morning, when no Children's Ministry is available.

6.21 Managing Injury or Illness and Administration of Medication

Grace Church, Castlemaine will ensure that an adequate number of qualified first-aid officers are rostered for every church activity.[15] All workers are to be familiar with the location and contents of the First-Aid kit.

Leaders of children's/young people's activities must have a current first-aid certificate, including annual renewal of CPR component. A copy of the certificate must be kept in the worker's file.

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to advise **Grace Church, Castlemaine** of illnesses and/or conditions which may impact upon the care and safety of their children/young people under the age of 18 years. This

[15] *Fair Work Australia provides the following ratios for qualified first aiders to workers - 1:50 for low risk environments, 1:25 for high risk environments and 1:10 for remote high risk environments. Duty of Care must be considered including the age of the people involved in the activity as those <18 years or vulnerable adults require lower ratios. https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/managing-health-and-safety/first-aid*

must be documented in writing and kept on file. A copy must be kept in the space that the child/young person under the age of 18 years is being ministered to and all workers must be trained in specific First Aid required for that position.

The Children's Ministry Leader or Young People's Ministry Leader must inform all workers involved in ministry to any child or young person where there is a risk of anaphylaxis.

Grace Church, Castlemaine staff and volunteers must not give medication to children or young people in their care at any time. They may however, assist a child to take an Asthma puffer or administer an EpiPen if First Aid is required and they are qualified First Aiders.

Any injury or illness is to be reported to parents and to the Children's Ministry Leader or the Young People's Ministry Leader.

Any child who is injured or ill will have supervision until the parents arrive.

6.22 Emergency Evacuation Procedures

Emergency evacuation procedures have been developed and are practised regularly.

The leader in charge of the children's/young people activity will act as Fire Warden and give direction at the time. A roll of those participating in each activity will be kept on paper or electronically via mobile device, and used as a check list should it be necessary to move children/young people under the age of 18 years. Should it be necessary to move children/young people under the age of 18 years, leaders are to take their rolls and a pen with them and move children/young people in an orderly fashion to the designated Assembly Area outside. A head-count and check of children/young people by roll-call or by face recognition if children are too young must be completed to ascertain safety of all children, young people and adults.

Evacuation drills are to be practised regularly with all workers and leaders.

7.0 Breaches of the Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy and Reporting Procedure

7.1 Workers

The nature of the event will determine the course of action. An incident report must be completed with any breach of the Code of Conduct, including near-misses. Incident and accident investigations must be carried out following the event and any learnings used to improve processes.

Serious issues will be passed directly to law enforcement authorities, as required by the relevant child protection legislation in this state and must be escalated to the Oversight Committee.

For less-serious issues[16] workers who act in breach of the Code of Conduct will be counselled informally first by the department leader. The incident report and a written report will be completed, lodged with **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** leadership and filed. In the event of a second breach of the same or related nature, a formal counselling session will take place. The session will take place between the department head, the Pastor or Associate Pastor, and the person allegedly in breach. A written report signed by all present will follow.

7.2 Children/Young people

Children and young people who act in breach of the Code of Conduct will be counselled informally first by the department head. Any other people, parents/carers, and children/young people involved will be debriefed. A written report countersigned by the person in breach or their carer and in the presence of the carer, is to be submitted and filed.

In the event of a second breach of a same or similar nature, the child/young people will be counselled in conjunction with their parent/s. If similar breaches occur and they are of a nature that puts other people at risk of harm, it may be necessary—and best for all involved—to formally exclude the child/ young people from further activities.

Depending on the seriousness of the breach, the senior leader should seek advice from the relevant department for their state and escalate the matter to law enforcement authorities if appropriate. The matter should be documented and the Oversight Committee notified.

7.3 Incident/Hazard Reporting

In the event of an incident occurring that results in harm, injury or destruction of property (**Grace Church, Castlemaine** or otherwise), all parties involved will be interviewed and asked to fill in an incident/hazard report as soon as is reasonably possible after the event.

Reports must be completed by all people involved, signed and dated. A photocopy must be taken and handed to the appropriate staff member of **Grace Church, Castlemaine** who will determine the subsequent steps. The original must be filed in **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Incident/Hazard Report register and file. An electronic copy will be kept permanently.

7.4 Feedback/Complaints Handling Process[17]

Complaints may be submitted to the Pastor, Associate Pastor, Children's Ministry Leader, or Young People's Ministry Leader. In each case the complaint will be passed on to the Oversight Committee.

---

[16] *Serious issues include harm of a negligent, physical or sexual nature. Less serious issues include inappropriate language, harsh discipline, small safety issues, etc.* ***Grace Church, Castlemaine*** *leadership (in conjunction with the departmental head) are permitted to discern the seriousness of an issue.*

[17] *Source: https://www.childsafety.gov.au/system/files/2022-09/nocs-complaint-handling-guide-appendix-b.pdf; Accessed: 16 March, 2024*

The **Grace Church, Castlemaine** ministry family, including all children, young people and vulnerable adults are encouraged to provide feedback and submit complaints by using the following process. All complaints will be handled promptly, sensitively and thoroughly with the complaint being acknowledged and the subject matter investigated quickly, transparently and openly. Privacy of the person making the complaint will be protected as much as possible unless otherwise required by the law.

The following complaints process shall be followed:

7.4.1 Receive the complaint

Complaints may be received in various ways, including:

- in person,
- by phone,
- via **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** complaint form which can be accessed at the Church on Sundays or as an online complaint form
- by email

Grace Church, Castlemaine has provided multiple avenues for complaints to be made and has ensured that our children and young people understand how to make complaints. Unless the complaint is resolved at first point of contact, details of the complaint will be recorded along with other relevant information.

7.4.2 Record the complaint

Record the key complaint details, including:

- details about the complainant,
- any additional communication or support required;
- details about the subject of the complaint,
- the complaint issues,
- how the complaint was resolved/investigated;
- What risks were managed, how they were managed and
- the complaint outcome.

These records must be kept securely for 45 years.

7.4.3 Acknowledge the complaint

- Complaints should be acknowledged at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterwards. Children and young people are often wary about making a complaint, and want to be assured they are being listened to straight away.
- Acknowledge the complaint by using the preferred communication method nominated.
- Identify a contact point for the child or young person and their parent or carer.
- Provide the child, young person or vulnerable adult and their parent or carer with information about the complaint-handling process, the likely next steps and expected timeframe.

7.4.4 Assess the complaint and address immediate risks

The initial assessment of a complaint should involve the following questions being asked:

- Does the complaint raise any immediate risks to the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person or other person?
- What other issues does the complaint raise?
- What steps need to be taken to address and manage risks throughout the complaints process?
- Does the child or young person affected by the complaint (or other children involved or impacted) require any additional supports during the complaints process?
- What evidence needs to be immediately secured/protected/kept confidential?
- How serious, complicated or otherwise urgent are the issues raised in the complaint (from both the perspective of the complainant, involved child, young person or vulnerable adult and **Grace Church, Castlemaine**?)
- Are the issue/s raised within **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** control?
- Are the outcomes sought by the complainant viable?
- If more than one issue is raised, will they need to be separately addressed?
- What other authorities or agencies (e.g., police, health services) need to know about the issues raised by the complaint or be involved in the response?
- What type of information should the complainant be provided with following assessment of the complaint?
- Is further information needed from the complainant in order to properly assess and resolve the complaint?

If the complaint is not about something **Grace Church, Castlemaine** can respond to, you ensure that the complainant is told this and (wherever possible) referred to a person or organisation that can help as quickly as possible.

7.4.5 Plan the involvement of the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Once the issues raised by the complaint have been assessed, develop a plan for involving the affected child or young person and their parent or carer at key stages of the complaint, including when and how information will be communicated to them throughout the process and how they will be supported. Record your rationale for all decisions in this area.

It is critical that rapport is established with the child or young person early on by those involved in the complaints process. For example, with the contact person and the person undertaking an interview with the child or young person. It should also cover how the child's parents or carer will be involved in the process.

7.4.6 Resolving the complaint

After assessing the complaint, plan the actions required to manage and resolve it. Wherever possible, **Grace Church, Castlemaine** will try to resolve complaints promptly with a complainant and—particularly where the matter is minor—as soon as possible after the complaint is made. However, where the complaint relates to a serious allegation or incident, this may not be appropriate. It is critical that the complainant is kept

adequately informed about what is happening with their complaint and clarify timeframes where there are delays.

The more promptly a complaint is resolved, the more likely that the complainant will be satisfied with the outcome and have a better regard for **Grace Church, Castlemaine**. Dissatisfaction tends to increase with time, especially if progress and/or reasons for delay are not communicated. During the initial assessment (noted above), you may have identified some issues that can be responded to more quickly than others. Staff are to keep records of any reasons for delays in responding to complaints, and any communication with the person making the complaint.

To resolve the complaint:

- work with the person making the complaint to see how the issues can be appropriately addressed
- make inquiries with the person or departmental team/unit who is the subject of the complaint, and/or
- conduct an investigation into the issues raised in the complaint, in cooperation with police/child protection authorities where relevant.

The nature and scope of any action taken will depend on a number of factors including:

- the circumstances of each case
- any statutory requirements
- the issue(s) complained about
- the parties involved
- the likely outcome.

More serious complaints will require an evidence-based approach.

7.4.7 Conduct an investigation if appropriate

The following steps will be taken should an investigation be appropriate:

- Action the relevant issues identified through the assessment process, starting with any immediate safety risks posed to a child, young person, class of children, or vulnerable adult and undertake any risk management associated with the subject of complaint.
- Select the appropriate investigative approach by looking at any statutory requirements, consulting relevant external bodies (e.g. police and child protection agencies) and considering the nature of the issue or allegations raised and the likely outcome of the investigation.
- Develop an investigation plan, ensuring that, where appropriate, relevant authorities are consulted and involved in its design and implementation to ensure an organisation's actions do not compromise a police or child protection investigation.
- Obtain and protect evidence, including identifying relevant witnesses and putting the allegations to the subject of complaint at the appropriate point in time— affording them fairness.
- Analyse, assess and weight all of the evidence gathered.

- Make findings about the allegations, and explain them to the subject of complaint and the complainant.

Should a complaint be reportable to legislated authorities, all internal investigations will cease so as not to interfere with the proper investigation of the relevant authorities. In this case, queues and next steps should stem from the authorities involved.

7.4.8 Provide regular updates through the complaints process to all stakeholders, ensuring privacy is maintained to the extent of the law.

Let the complainant and—depending on the complainant's needs, also their family, guardian and/or support person—know what is happening with their complaint, when they can expect to hear from **Grace Church, Castlemaine** and who to contact for more information or if they have questions about the process.

The frequency of updates and the nature and quantity of information provided to the complainant should be determined in accordance with their specific needs and wishes, and privacy and confidentiality obligations.

7.4.9 Provide the final outcome.

Report final findings to the complainant and their parent/carer, the subject of complaint and other stakeholders, considering privacy, confidentiality and procedural fairness obligations. Explain to the complainant, their parent/carer and the subject of complaint—using the most appropriate communication channel and putting in place any necessary supports—the key steps taken to investigate the complaint, the outcome (including the reasons for the decision), and available avenues for review and/or appeal if they are dissatisfied with the outcome and/or the complaints process.

7.4.10 Close the complaint and record the outcome

Close the complaint and keep comprehensive records about:

- How the complaint was managed
- The outcome
- Any recommendations and/or outstanding actions and how they have been addressed.
- Record of any systemic issues identified.
- Invite people to provide feedback at the conclusion of the complaints process.
- Ensure final report is submitted to Oversight Committee

8.0 POLICY ON KNOWN CHILD SEX OFFENDERS

8.1 Preamble

This section details the policy and procedures of **Grace Church, Castlemaine** regarding treatment of persons who are known to have previously committed offences of a sexual or aggressive nature against children or young people.

Grace Church, Castlemaine, and its Pastoral Staff have a redemptive view of past errors and wish to encourage all people to enjoy Christian worship and fellowship, and to enjoy the fulfilment of belonging to the church and serving in a meaningful way. Nevertheless, the protection of children and young people in our care is of utmost importance, takes pre-eminence, and is paramount.

The following policy and related procedures should not be seen as ostracism or punishment of known child sex offenders but as protection for all parties concerned.

8.2 Definitions

Refer to definitions listed on in Section 3 on page 22 of this policy.

8.3 Positions of employment

A known child sex offender may not be employed in any position by **Grace Church, Castlemaine**.

8.4 Positions of leadership and ministry

A known child sex offender may not hold any position of leadership at **Grace Church, Castlemaine**, even in areas/departments that do not relate specifically to children.

A known child sex offender may not minister, preach or pray for others at **Grace Church, Castlemaine** in any capacity.

A known child sexual offender may not volunteer at **Grace Church, Castlemaine** in any capacity.

Approval and /or covering will not be given for known child sex offenders to teach or be involved in Religious Education/Instruction classes in local schools in any capacity.

8.5 Congregational Participation

A known child sex offender is welcome to attend services or meetings run by **Grace Church, Castlemaine** excluding Relational Networks/Connect Groups where children are present and excluding all meetings specifically run by the church for the benefit of children, young people or families.

Known child sex offenders may attend meetings or activities run by the church/ministry for the benefit of the general congregation, provided they do not undertake volunteer activities. They may not be involved in any activity which includes organising, participating and running children's games, giving rewards/gifts/prizes to children, caring for children, etc, even as an observer.

Should a known child sex offender be seen to become friendly with a family in the church, that family will immediately be informed of the child sex offender's history by the Pastor, the Associate Pastor, the Children's Ministry Leader, or the Young People's Ministry Leader, and the Oversight Committee shall be advised of the matter.

8.6 Procedures for Pastoral Staff Relating to Known Child Sex Offenders

When a staff member becomes aware of an allegation that a church member or regular church attender has previously committed offences of a sexual nature against children or young people, they will immediately inform the Pastor.

The Pastor will inform the Oversight Committee in writing and make an appointment to meet with the alleged child sex offender at the earliest possible opportunity. The Pastor and one other member of the Oversight Committee must be present at the meeting.

The allegation will be presented and details of the history of the offence, including convictions should be ascertained and recorded in writing on an incident form. Details of the meeting will be recorded whether a criminal conviction has been recorded or not.

All parties present must sign and date the form and a copy given to the person. The church must retain a copy which will be filed in a locked/secure cabinet and/or a secured electronic filing system.

The alleged child sex offender will be notified of the security of their information.

In order to continue in the fellowship of **Grace Church, Castlemaine,** the confirmed child sex offender must enter into a written agreement with **Grace Church, Castlemaine** and its Oversight Committee that they will:

1) agree to the notification of key personnel of the situation. These will include but not be limited to the pastoral staff, including the Pastor, Associate Pastor, Leader of the Children's Ministry, and the Leader of the Young People's Ministry, and other persons as deemed appropriate by the Pastor.

2) agree to a monthly meeting with the Pastor or their nominee to monitor the spiritual progress of the child sex offender, compliance with guidelines implemented by the Oversight Committee and Pastor, and to review the situation in general. All meetings will be documented and signed by both parties. A copy will be given to the person and one retained in the original file in a locked/secure cabinet and/or a secure electronic filing system.

3) agree to a monthly report being forwarded to the Oversight Committee of **Grace Church, Castlemaine** detailing the above

4) agree to use an individual toilet that admits one person at a time and the entrance is in clear view of other adults; and

5) agree to any other guidelines that the Oversight Committee or the Pastor may deem appropriate in the individual situation.

8.7 Breaches

Please refer to the **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Code of Conduct for additional information on breaches of conduct.

When an allegation of a breach of conduct is made regarding the conduct of a known past offender the Pastor and Oversight Committee is to be immediately informed.

The Pastor or their nominee, together with one other member of the Oversight Committee of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**, is to make an immediate appointment with the past offender. They will present the allegation, ascertain the person's response to the allegations made, and review the guidelines previously agreed to.

The seriousness of a breach will determine the course of action. The Pastor, in conjunction with one other member of the Oversight Committee, will discern the seriousness of the issue and determine the course of action.

The person should be advised of the intended action of the Pastor and the Oversight Committee of **Grace Church, Castlemaine.**

8.7.1 Serious Breaches

Serious breaches will be passed directly to law enforcement authorities, as required by the relevant child protection legislation for this state.

The Oversight Committee will be immediately notified.

The parents or carers of the child concerned will be immediately notified by the Pastor.

A full written report of the incident must be signed by all concerned and filed in the original file in a locked/secure cabinet.

The insurers of **Grace Church, Castlemaine –** ACS Mutual Limited, P 1800 646 777 - must be notified at the earliest opportunity.

A known child sex offender who commits a serious breach i.e. reoffends, in a serious fashion, may be excommunicated from the fellowship.

8.7.2 Less Serious Breaches

A matter judged to be less serious by the Pastor will be dealt with in the following way:

1) The person will be allowed to respond to the allegation

2) The agreed procedure will be re-iterated and the correct behaviour stated

3) Amend the procedure if necessary

4) Elicit agreement for compliance with the procedure from the person.

The meeting must be documented in writing, signed and dated by all parties. A copy must be given to the person and the original held by **Grace Church, Castlemaine** in the original file in a locked/secure cabinet. The members of the Oversight Committee and pastoral staff must be notified.

It should be understood that the margin for error here is very small and the gravity of the risk to the children and young people in the church should be understood and strongly managed.

9.0 CONTACT DETAILS FOR REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or a life-threatening situation, call **Triple Zero (000).**

Victoria

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Free call: 13 12 78

URL: https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse

PLEASE SEE ALSO SEE Pages 18-20 FOR DETAILS OF THE **Reportable Conduct Scheme** which applies to Pastors in Victoria and obligates them to make a report to the *Commission for Children and Young People* if he, or she, becomes aware of a child abuse allegation being made against a Pastor, leader, volunteer, or member of the congregation.

10.0 IMPLEMENTING POLICY

Grace Church, Castlemaine's staff, leaders and volunteer workers will be required to undertake annual compliance training including a module on the Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Strategy upon commencement of duties.

All workers will be required to attend an Induction, at which the policies and procedures will be presented and explained.

Each worker will receive a copy of all documents and be required to sign a Declaration form. Every worker completing induction and training will be entered into a Compliance Training Register

The **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Child, Young People and Vulnerable People Risk Management Strategy will be published on the **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** website and updated as changes are made. A copy of this Strategy is also to be held by the Children's Ministry Leader and the Young People's Ministry Leader. It shall be available to be seen by the Ministry Family and general community at the Church, in the Children's space and in the Young People's space.

11.0 EVALUATION AND REVIEW

An annual review of this policy will be undertaken and agreed to by the Oversight Committee and Pastor of **Grace Church, Castlemaine**. This will be conducted prior to the annual renewal of **Grace Church, Castlemaine's** Church Insurance Policy.

Should a disclosure of suspicion of harm be actioned, the Child, Young People and Vulnerable People Risk Management Strategy, including all Policies and Procedures, will be reviewed, to consider any necessary changes or additional training required. Consideration will be given as to whether this interferes with legal process before commencing the review in this instance.

The Children's Ministry Leader and Young People's Ministry Leader will report on the effectiveness of this policy. They will comment on the volume of paperwork, willingness of workers to comply and any feedback from relevant stakeholders. As a group, they will discuss suggestions for amendments, future actions and solutions.

Steps for changes will be mapped out in writing and submitted to the church leadership.

12.0 AUTHORISATION OF POLICY

This policy is authorised by Roger Thurecht (Pastor, **Grace Church, Castlemaine)** on behalf of the Oversight Committee of **Grace Church, Castlemaine** at **Grace Church, Castlemaine**, 30 Buckley Street, Harcourt, Victoria 3453.

……..

Roger Thurecht Date
Pastor
Grace Church, Castlemaine

Appendix A

Guidelines for Identifying Harm, Physical Abuse and Neglect

Physical abuse	**Physical** - *Refers to the body*
• Hitting • Shaking • Burning/scalding • Biting • Causing bruise or fractures by excessive discipline • Poisoning • Giving children alcohol, illegal drugs or inappropriate medication • Domestic and family violence	• Bruising • Fractures • Internal Injuries • Burns
Psychological or Emotional Abuse	**Psychological** *Refers to the mind and cognitive processes* **or Emotional** *Refers to the ability to express emotions*
• Scapegoating • Persistent rejection or hostility • Constant yelling, insults or criticism • Cultural affronts • Teasing/bullying • Domestic and family violence	• Learning and developmental delays • Impaired self-image • Depression • Hypervigilance • Poor self esteem • Self-harm • Fear/anxiety
Neglect	**Sexual abuse or exploitation**
• Not giving a child sufficient food, housing, clothing, enough sleep, hygienic living conditions, health care and adequate supervision • Leaving children unattended • Children missing school	• Kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner • Exposing a sexual body part to a child • Exposing children to sexual acts or pornography • Making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child • Having sexual relations with a child or young person under 16 years of age.

General Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

General indicators of Child Abuse:

1.
2. showing wariness and distrust of adults
3. rocking, sucking or biting excessively
4. bedwetting or soiling
5. demanding or aggressive behavior
6. sleeping difficulties – often tired and falling asleep
7. low self-esteem
8. difficulty relating to adults and peers
9. abusing alcohol or drugs
10. being seemingly accident prone
11. having broken bones or unexplained bruising, burns or welts in different stages of healing
12. being unable to explain an injury, or providing explanations that are inconsistent, vague or unbelievable
13. feeling suicidal or attempting suicide
14. having difficulty concentrating
15. being withdrawn, or overly obedient
16. being reluctant to go home
17. creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse

General indicators of Neglect

- malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food
- poor hygiene, matted hair, dirty skin or body odour
- unattended physical or medical problems
- comments from a child that no one is home to provide care
- being constantly tired
- frequent lateness or absence from school
- inappropriate clothing, especially inadequate clothing in winter
- frequent illness, infections or sores
- being left unsupervised for long periods

Appendix B

Identifying Grooming

<table>
<tr><th>What is Grooming?</th><th>What are some impacts of Grooming?</th></tr>
<tr><td>Grooming is a process of preparing a person – usually a child or other vulnerable person – for sexual assault. It includes establishing a ‘special’ friendship with the child. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents, other adults and Church leaders to think that the relationship with the child is ‘normal’ and positive.</td><td>• people may trust the person who is grooming
• the child might like the person who is grooming them, or like certain aspects of the interaction
• over time, the child can become isolated from peers and become dependent on the groomer</td></tr>
<tr><th>Why should the Church be aware?</th><th>What are some signs of Grooming?</th></tr>
<tr><td>• For these reasons:
• Sexual assault of children occurs across all society including churches and other faith communities.
• Within most community organizational settings opportunities can be found for adults to form special relationships with children which can have a potential to be exploited.
• Although children parents and the Church should be aware of ‘stranger danger’, most people who sexually abuse children are known to the victim through family, friends, school, sporting, Church and other community based participation.
• There is no clear ‘profile’ of a person who is likely to sexually offend against children. An offender could be a friend – someone who is married in their thirties with children, or a person who is well liked and well educated. They could be male or female.
• Grooming often begins with a legitimate, condoned relationship with a child. Initially, conduct might appear innocent – even commendable – but it progresses over time and escalates.</td><td>• giving extra special praise and attention to a child
• making a child feel special through gifts and treats
• engaging inappropriately on social media
• sharing secrets
• allowing the child to break rules
• tickling, hugging sitting on laps
• rough play
• declarations of love
• spending time alone with the child away from adults
• asking the child for personal information

What can I do if I suspect Grooming?
• be aware of Grooming, but not overly suspicious – the conduct of most people is of pure and noble intent
• a sense of uneasiness or concern about a person’s conduct towards a child should be brought to the attention of department leader</td></tr>
</table>

1

Appendix C

Grace Church, Castlemaine Complaint Form

Complainant Details – Name & Address

……
……

Any Additional Support Required re Communication – Phone number? Email?

……

Details About the Subject of the Complaint

……
……
……
……
……
……
……
……
……

……

Issues Raised by the Complaint

……
……
……

……
……
……

2

OFFICE USE ONLY

How the Complaint was Resolved / Investigated

……
……
……
……
……

……
……
……

What Risks Were Managed, and How Were They Managed?

……
……
……
……
……
……
……
……

……

The Complaint Outcome

……
……
……
……
……

……

……