



# Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

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Macedon & Mount Macedon Community House Inc (MMMCH) is a not for profit, community led organisation that provides an inclusive and supportive space to connect, create and learn for residents of the Macedon and Mount Macedon communities.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates the strong commitment of the Committee of Management to child safety and wellbeing, and how our organisation keeps children and young people safe from harm, including child abuse.

## Commitment to child safety

All children who come to activities offered at or by the House have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of children will always be our first priority, and we have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe.

Any organisation, group or individual accessing programs or hiring space at the House will be made aware of and required to carry out their activity according to this policy in regard to children and young people.

## Purpose

This Policy outlines how MMMCH prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

## Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers, Management Committee members, children and other individuals involved in our organisation and persons, organisations and groups accessing the House. This policy applies to all activities offered by MMMCH both at the House and externally.

## Definitions

*Child abuse* means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

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*Harm* is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

*Child/Children* means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

*Concerns and complaints.* A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to MMMCH related to one or more of the following:

- our services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a volunteer or another individual associated with MMMCH
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a person accessing or hiring a space at the House
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of an adult, child or young person attending an activity at the community house or an external event being hosted by MMMCH
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or an activity.

*Committee* means the MMMCH Committee of Management

*MMMCH Member* is a person being a member of the Committee or an MMMCH volunteer or member.

*The House* is the Macedon & Mount Macedon Community House located at 47 Victoria Street, Macedon.

## **Role of the Committee of Management**

The Committee has the role of making sure MMMCH prioritises children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

The Committee will champion and model a child safe culture at MMMCH. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Committee will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Everyone at MMMCH has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. MMMCH will make sure that as part of any risk assessment undertaken for any event includes risks to children and young people and take action to manage risks for any activity or event, in accordance with this policy.

MMMCH will include in any organisational annual review conducted by the Committee, the effectiveness of how MMMCH is delivering child safety and wellbeing.

The Secretary is responsible for including this policy and the Code of Conduct in the induction package provided to new members of the Committee and volunteers.

## **Children's empowerment and participation**

MMMCH is a community-based organisation which provides a venue for other organisations and community members to conduct programs and activities as well as offering specific MMMCH events and community activities.

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MMMCH wants children to feel comfortable and safe when participating in activities at the House whether offered by MMMCH, a participating organisation or an organisation or individual who rents space at the House, or at an external MMMCH event or activity offered by MMMCH.

We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour towards or between children and if an MMMCH member or an individual using the House witnesses or becomes aware of such an incident they will take appropriate action if this occurs such as making the person conducting the event or activity aware.

MMMCH values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families.

If a need is identified, the Committee will seek out and offer relevant training around child safety for the Committee, volunteers and/or members.

## **Families and communities**

MMMCH recognises the important role of families and, when appropriate, may involve parents and carers when making significant decisions about activities that may involve children, if such activity is within the control of or offered directly by MMMCH.

Parents, carers, families and community members are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

MMMCH provides information to the community about our child safe policy and practices including through:

- publishing our Code of Conduct on our website and made available via the secretary upon request.
- including a report on child safety in the annual report.

## **Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families**

MMMCH is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country flyer placed in a prominent location on our notice board and website
- when appropriate, consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices at the House and seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at MMMCH particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture.
- when appropriate, supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including, if appropriate, consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- providing, if appropriate, training for MMMCH members on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children

## **Diversity**

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- encourage MMMCH members to gain an understanding of diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety

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- welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- offer families/individuals through our enrolment forms the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- strive to reflect the diversity of our community through representation in our volunteers and the Committee members
- acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities (if any) promote inclusion of children of all abilities
- inform partnership organisations and individuals the requirement to follow the child safety and wellbeing policy applicable to anyone entering and using the House facilities.

## Code of Conduct

MMMCH has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Volunteers, members and the Committee must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with our organisation.

All partnership organisations, groups and individuals accessing activities and events at the House and third-party contractors are also expected to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

## Recruiting volunteers

MMMCH puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for volunteers. We only recruit volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children. Members of the Committee must also be screened.

We require current and valid Working with Children Checks for Committee members and volunteers. Committee members also must provide a valid Police Check.

## Supporting Management Committee members and volunteers

MMMCH is committed to ensuring that Committee members and volunteers understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety. This responsibility sits with the Secretary to ensure all WWC and Police checks (for Committee) are provided and will conduct an annual review of individual WWC's to ensure they remain current. The Committee assists its members and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decisions and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed in line with our Code of Conduct, complaint handling policy and disciplinary policy.

## Complaints and reporting

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

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Complaints will be handled in accordance with Division 2 of MMMCH's Rules of Association. Upon request, a committee member will provide information on how to access the complaints process. If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then it must be reported to the Committee. The Committee members and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police. Under the Complaint Handling and Disciplinary policies, Committee members and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down during an investigation or removed as a member of the Committee as a volunteer following an investigation
- have their membership revoked
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at MMMCH activities
- removing their access to the MMMCH IT system and facilities.

Complaints can be emailed to the Secretary.

*If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.*

## **Child Safety Person**

The Secretary will take responsibility for responding to any child safety related complaints or concerns.

If a person does not feel comfortable making a report to the Secretary, they may report their concern to any member of the Committee.

## **Record keeping**

MMMCH is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.

## **Information sharing**

MMMCH may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. MMMCH will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety.

## **Review**

MMMCH will review all child safe practices and policies at least every two years. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'. Findings from reviews, which are overseen by the Committee, will inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices. Reviews will be informed by consultation with volunteers.

## **Supporting documents**

The following policies and procedures work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all of our operations:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaint Handling Policy
- Volunteer recruitment policy

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## Supporting legislation

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* (including Child Safe Standards)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* (including reporting to Child Protection)
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- *Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)