



OAC Ministries (Aust) Ltd

# Prioritising The Safeguarding of Children & Vulnerable People

Collection includes the OAC Ministries:

- CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
- CHILD PROTECTION CODE OF CONDUCT
- CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURE
- APPENDIX 1 - DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST CHILDREN

Version 4.1

Consistent with version 4 with minor amendment in Code of Conduct – December 2021

# OAC CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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

The purpose of this Policy is to guide OAC Ministries (Aust) Ltd, hereto known as OACM, in developing a child-protective culture. OACM is a Christian religious institution committed to welcoming children and their parents or carers and providing a 'child-safe'<sup>1</sup> environment, culture and programs for children and other vulnerable people who participate in services and other programs conducted by OACM. We see such a commitment as flowing naturally from our vision and mission to operate according to Christian biblical principles for living and for recognising the unique value and potential of every person, regardless of race, age, gender, ability, or disability.

All children who participate in services, activities and other programs conducted by OACM have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of children in our care will be our first priority. The authorised leaders accept the responsibility of providing a safe and friendly environment where children are listened to, feel safe, have fun, accept challenges, learn and grow. This duty of care applies at all times, although when children attend services and other programs conducted by OACM and remain with their parents, then the parents retain the primary duty of care.

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

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

### 1.2 Scope

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

- The Society Members of OACM
- The governing board of OACM, known as the National Executive Committee
- All persons appointed to Committees or Sub Committees of OACM
- The Staff of OACM including:
  - Evangelists who serve as ministers of religion. (A minister of religion is: A person defined or appointed as a recognised leader in an organised religious

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<sup>1</sup> It is recognised that no organisation can guarantee the absolute safety of children and other vulnerable people who are involved or participate in their activities and programs. The term 'child-safe' means that child safety is paramount to this organisation, that it has compliant policies and procedural documents and that risk identification and mitigation practices are embedded in the culture.

- institution; or the appointed leader of a local religious congregation in an organised religious institution who has general authority.)
  - Other employees
  - Volunteers
- Any and all other representatives of OACM
- All activities and programs organised by or with the approval of OACM.

### 1.3 Authority

This Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct was revised and updated to reflect the most recent changes to State and Federal law and guidelines towards being a child-safe organisation. It was approved by the National Executive Committee and adopted for use by OACM at the National Executive Committee meeting and Annual General Meeting held on May 10th, 2018.

### 1.4 Policy Review

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

Any proposed changes or updates will be submitted to the National Executive Committee acting on behalf of the Members of OACM for approval at a properly convened meeting before being adopted and implemented.

### 1.5 Operating Principles

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 2.1 Feedback from Children

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

## 3. Employment of Staff and Volunteer Leaders

### 3.1 Recruitment, screening and selection practices

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

1. Our statements of commitment to child safety and our behavioural expectations of employees and volunteers are included in all advertisements and Job Descriptions.
2. We conduct reference checks prior to engagement, using an agreed set of questions. Conversations will be documented and kept as part of the employment/ engagement file of successful applicants.
3. Short-listed applicants will be interviewed by a panel appointed and/or authorised by the National Executive Committee prior to appointment being made official. The National Executive Committee will make employed staff appointments to a specific role in the form of a Letter of Offer/Agreement. Such a Letter of Offer/ Agreement will include a commitment to the OACM Child Protection Policy, OACM Code of Conduct and OACM Procedures. Offers will be made to volunteers in the form of a Volunteer Agreement. Such a Volunteer Agreement will include a commitment to the OACM Child Protection Policy, OACM Code of Conduct and OACM Procedures
4. All workers who do not have a current written Letter of Offer/Agreement are to enter into a ministry/organisational covenant dealing with their suitability to be workers and

agreeing to the OACM Child Protection Policy, OACM Code of Conduct and OACM Procedures.

5. We will conduct thorough screening to determine whether a prospective OACM employee or volunteer may pose a risk to children. This will include OACM making reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:
  - a. child-related Employment Screening Clearance;
  - b. proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
  - c. the person's history of work involving children; and
  - d. references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.
6. The type of evidence that an applicant is required to provide to OACM will vary depending on the type of position for which they are applying. However, OACM will not offer any applicant a position at OACM until they provide the required evidence to the National Chairman or authorised officer. We have a clear staff and volunteer induction process that includes providing them with a copy of OACM Child Protection Policy, OACM Code of Conduct, OACM Procedures and other relevant documents detailing standard operating procedures.
7. All staff and volunteers are trained regularly to refresh their knowledge of our policies and expectations in terms of conduct and protocol, especially where there has been document review, and to brief new employees or volunteers.

### 3.2 Support and Training

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

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

## 4. Investigation of Suspected Child Abuse

In the case of an allegation being made against a member, staff member, volunteer, leader and/or contractor at OACM the appointed Child Protection Officer<sup>2</sup> (CPO) will follow the Child Protection Procedure. OACM will take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount.

The first step is to withdraw the accused person from active duty, which could entail standing down (with pay, where applicable), re-assignment to other duties that do not have direct

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<sup>2</sup> The National Director or authorised officer will have oversight of the Child Protection processes, but a CPO will be identified and authorised for each mission and activity involving children.

contact with children, or to work under increased supervision while the matter is being investigated.

#### **4.1 Case management**

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

#### **4.2 Investigations**

OACM will appropriately investigate all allegations relating to an incident of abuse in accordance with its obligations and to the extent reasonably practicable. In some circumstances, it may be necessary for OACM to conduct an investigation in addition to any investigation conducted by authorities (e.g. the police).

OACM may conduct an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by the relevant government departments or authorities or the police, and will co-operate with the authorities as required.

All people covered by the OACM Child Protection Policy, OACM Code of Conduct and OACM Procedures must co-operate fully with any investigation by the relevant government departments or authorities, the police or OACM.

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

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

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

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

### **5. Risk Management**

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

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

Risk management applies to Work Health and Safety generally. This policy applies specifically to the minimising of risks of abuse of any kind to children and vulnerable people who are in our care and to ensuring their physical safety in activities and programs of OACM and at ministry locations.

*Any person who has been convicted of child abuse of any kind will be automatically precluded from serving with OACM.*

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

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

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

A **Child Protection Officer (CPO)** is appointed by the leadership for responding to complaints made by members, staff, contractors, volunteers, children or other attendees/participants for each OACM initiated mission and program.<sup>3</sup>

The Child Protection Officer will be identified and their role explained at appropriate times during a year. Attendees/participants, staff and volunteers are expected to use either the **Complaints Form** or the **Incident Form** to note concerns arising from observations or experience (See Appendix 4 and 5). Copies of these forms will be kept in the OACM National Office by the National Administrator or authorised officer.

## 6. Record keeping

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

## 7. Privacy and Confidentiality

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

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

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<sup>3</sup> This person is mature, experienced and readily accessible during those times children are attending an OACM organised program or activity. Where OACM is invited to run a program for a church/organisation the church/organisation should have appropriate Child Protection policies, procedures and a CPO.

# OAC PROTECTION CODE OF CONDUCT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose:

OAC Ministries (Aust) Ltd (OACM) is a group of followers of Jesus Christ dedicated to sharing the gospel primarily within Australia. We seek to reflect the teachings of Christ and of the Bible with integrity and humility. Beyond personal faith in the redeeming work of Christ in His death and resurrection, we accept that this faith is worked out and expressed in the quality of relationships we develop within our organisation and with all those with whom we interact. Jesus summarised God's expectation for the conduct of His people into one famous and succinct sentence: *'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbours as yourself.'* He reinforced this 'law of love' by adding, *'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples; you love one another!'* Jesus also taught and demonstrated the importance of truth and honesty, of justice and mercy as essential to healthy relationships.

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

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

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

### 1.2 Our Commitment

Our commitment to expressing the love of Christ leads us to the view that all people should be able to live, work and learn in an environment that is free from abuse of any kind. Our commitment is to cultivate an environment where all people, regardless of age,

gender, race and culture can thrive and grow. That is, we are committed to OACM being a safe place for all people, with a special focus on the safety and wellbeing of children.



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

The **Code of Conduct** recognises and is aligned with all statutory and compliance requirements enshrined in State and Federal law, where State laws vary, this policy reflects the higher level of compliance required nationally. OACM is committed to operating in accordance with the law in all its operations, so that it provides a safe, ethical, and caring place for all users and activities.

### 1.3 Complaints regarding child abuse

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

## 2. Standard of Conduct

All those who minister or work under the auspices of OACM will hold to the OACM

Statement of Faith and behave in a manner that upholds the biblical principles of a Christ like character. Their lives should commend the Gospel to the world through the high ethical and moral standards by which they live, taking care to consider others and being careful to not only do no wrong, but to not even appear to do wrong (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Knowledge of OACM policies, codes & procedures, together with OACM's aims and objectives, will also inform and guide in undertaking OACM duties and in personal and ethical decision making related to OACM.

## 3. Specific Expectations to Protect Children from Abuse

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

### DO:

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of or in connection with OACM must:

- contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone '000');
- adhere to the Child Protection Policy and Procedure and uphold OACM's statement of commitment to child safety at all times;
- take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse;
- conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as an employee, volunteer, leader or contractor of OACM and as a positive role model to children and young people;
- work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of OACM ;
- be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area;
- maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities;
- establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
- be fair, considerate and honest with others;

- treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas, opinions and backgrounds;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island child's self-identification);
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination);
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability;
- listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they are or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child;
- ensure (as far as practicable) that adults are not alone with a child;
- comply with all reporting obligations as they relate to reporting under legislation;
- raise concerns about suspected abuse with the appointed Child Protection Officer as soon as possible;
- record and act upon all allegations or suspicions of abuse, discrimination or harassment as quickly as possible, ensuring the safety of the child/ren;
- be professional in their actions;
- maintain strict impartiality;
- respect confidentiality when sharing information about children in accordance with the OACM Child Protection Policy and OACM Procedures and your reporting obligations;
- maintain a child-safe environment for children and young people; and
- operate within the policies and guidelines of OACM

### DO NOT:

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of OACM must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- put a child at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors for an improper reason);
- speak to a child in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating.
- Some examples are:
  - swearing or using inappropriate language in the presence of a child;
  - yelling at a child, except in an emergency situation where the a child's safety may be in danger;
  - dealing with a child while the adult is angry with the child; and
  - using hurtful sarcasm.
- discuss sexual activities with a child;
- have contact with a child outside of OACM activities without the knowledge and/or consent of OACM's leadership;
- have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary by virtue of your authorised OACM duties);

- use any personal communication channels/devices such as a personal email account to communicate with a child without parental knowledge;
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child (unless necessary by virtue of your authorised OACM duties);
- use, possess or be under the influence of *alcohol* while in the presence of or while supervising a child (unless your contact with the child is accidental/ incidental and you are not performing your duties as directed by OACM);
- use, possess or be under the influence of *illegal drugs* while in the presence of or while supervising a child;
- provide or allow a child to consume alcohol;
- provide or allow a child to consume illegal drugs;
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves;
- engage in rough physical games, hold, massage, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate and or/culturally insensitive way ;
- engage in any sexual contact with a child for any purpose;
- take a child to your home or encourage meetings outside program activities (unless parental permission has been provided);
- be naked in the presence of a child;
- possess sexually explicit printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of children;
- sleep in the same bed or sleeping bag as a child;
- sleep in the same room as a child, (*This may not apply in situations such as large capacity dorms or tents accommodating numerous campers, where duty of care supervision is required. However, leaders should share this duty because a leader must avoid being alone with campers in such rooms*);
- discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender identity, sex, race, culture, sexuality or disability;
- engage in any activity with a child that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
- be alone with a child unnecessarily and for more than a very short time;
- develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child for their own needs;
- show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians;
- do anything in contravention of OACM's policies and procedures or this Code.

# OAC CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURE

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## Handling of Complaints and Allegations

### 1 Steps to respond to a Complaint or Allegation of Abuse

Note: Any person who believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse should phone 000.

#### Step 1. Initial Complaint/Allegation – Written Record and Witness Reports

Where possible, any person (including a child) making an allegation should be encouraged to fill out a Complaints Form and give this to the mission/program specific Child Protection Officer (CPO). Where the person provides only verbal advice the CPO should complete the Form noting that it is a record of verbal statements. The CPO will ensure the complainant understands their concern is taken seriously by OACM and will be addressed. The CPO will inform the leadership of OACM, initially through the OACM Oversight CPO, in a timely manner; and immediately if the allegation is of a serious nature or reportable under state legislations (refer Step 3). A copy (scanned, photocopied or photographed) of this Form must be lodged by the CPO with the OACM National Office for secure filing. The complainant may keep the original. This is an essential record of the event. Where others have witnessed a relevant event they should be encouraged to complete an Incident Report to provide further context to the complaint/allegation.

#### Step 2. Concern for Immediate Safety – Assessment of Risk & Written Record

If a person lodging the complaint is concerned about their own safety or the safety of another person, the person may speak to the Child Protection Officer (CPO). The CPO will meet with the complainant, and hear the story, taking notes and seeking clarification, ensuring that the complainant feels listened to, understood and protected. Some complaints may be able to be dealt with at this time, where there is misunderstanding, a lack of evidence of any abuse or no reportable act has been committed. The record of these further discussions should be attached to the completed Complaints Form and should include the determination made regarding further action and the reasons supporting that determination. These documents must be lodged with the OACM National Office for secure filing. This is a further essential record of the event.

#### Step 3. Child at Immediate Risk – Requirement to Report Immediately & Follow Up Investigation

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

Certain professions are referred to as 'mandatory reporters'. Depending on the particular State/Territory legislations this may include medical practitioners, nurses (including school nurses), members of the police force, counsellors and primary and secondary teachers and principals. Penalties may be incurred in some States/Territories by those named as 'mandatory reporters' if they fail to notify the appropriate authorities when/if they have reasonable grounds for a belief (not necessarily proof) that a child or young person is in need of protection, because they have suffered, or are likely to suffer significant harm particularly physical or sexual abuse.

In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, may disclose that information to the Police or the relevant State/Territory Department (refer 1.2 below).

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

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

- a) the child has been abandoned by his or her parents;
- b) the child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person willing and able to care for the child;
- c) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- d) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- e) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type;
- f) the child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be, significantly harmed and the child's parents have not provided, arranged or allowed the provision of, or are unlikely to provide, arrange or allow the provision of, basic care or effective medical, surgical or other remedial care.

OACM encourages all persons with concerns about the safety of a child involved in the activities of the OACM to raise these concerns directly with the mission/program specific **Child Protection Officer (CPO)**, or the OACM Oversight **Child Protection Officer (CPO)**, who can assist the person to make the report to the appropriate State/Territory authorities and/or the police as required.

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

The relevant State/Territory department or authority must be notified of the allegations, no later than 30 days after the OACM leadership becomes aware of the allegation or conviction (or other time frame as may apply from time to time under State/Territory legislations). OACM will fully cooperate with the relevant State/Territory department or authority and be directed by the investigation process.

**Ring the local State/Territory Department – refer 2 below**

**AND/OR Ring the police on 000.**

### **Information for making a report:**

- name, age and address of child;
- the reason for suspecting that the behaviour or injury is a result of abuse;

- an assessment of the immediate danger to the child;
- a description of the injury or behaviour observed;
- the current whereabouts of the child;
- any other information about the family; and
- any specific cultural details, e.g. English speaking, disability, etc.

The OACM National Chairman or his appointee will conduct an investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by relevant State/ Territory Departments or the police, and will co-operate with the authorities as required.

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

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

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

#### Step 4. Advising the Insurer

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

## 2 General Principles for making a Report regarding Child Abuse – Including State/Territory Reporting Requirements

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

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

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

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

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

## b. Reporting.

Making a report is to lay a serious allegation of a criminal offence against another person, so clarify your perceptions (talk to the child or your colleagues) and decide the best method of reporting. You can (and, under some relevant State/Territory legislations, must) make your report to:

- The OACM Child Protection Officer (this may be the mission/program specific CPO or the OACM Oversight CPO depending on the circumstances), using a Complaint Form. Attach your notes to the form, keeping a copy. The CPO may decide to take the concern to the National Chairman or his authorised representative or to act unilaterally or on your behalf. You may still make an independent report. In Victoria, under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, reporting is time critical and there should be no delay in reporting an allegation to the CPO and the CPO informing the National Chairman or authorised representative.
- The Police. The police are the most appropriate first responders if the report is regarding behaviour taking place at an OACM activity, program or location. Again, fill out a Complaint
- Form, attach your notes and call 000 (in the NT if not an emergency, call 131 444). The Child Protection Officer may also decide to call the police as a first step.
- Relevant State/Territory Departments and Authorities

## NSW

- **Child Protection Helpline:** 132 111- 24/7 specialist unit
- **National Child Abuse Helpline:** 1800 99 10 99 Mon- Friday am -5pm
- **Website/s**
  - <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/preventing-child-abuse-and-neglect/reporting-suspected-abuse-or-neglect>
  - <https://www.childwise.org.au/page/41/state-legislation-reporting-nsw>

## QLD

- Child Safety Helpline: 1800 811 810
- Child Safety After-hours helpline: 1800 177 135 or 3235 9999
- National Child Abuse Helpline: 1800 99 10 99
- **Website/s**
  - <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/partners/our-government-partners/queensland-child-protection-guide/online-childprotection-guide>
  - <https://www.childwise.org.au/page/43/state-legislation-reporting-qld>

## SA

- The Child Abuse Report Hotline: 131 478 (24 hours, 7 days per week)
- National Child Abuse Hotline: 1800 99 10 99
- **Website/s**
  - <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>
  - <https://www.childwise.org.au/page/44/state-legislation-reporting-sa>

## TAS

- Child Safety Service: 1300 737 639
- National Child Abuse Helpline: 1800 99 10 99

- Gateway: 1800 171 233
- Website/s
  - <https://www.childwise.org.au/page/46/state-legislation-reporting-tas>
  - [http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/children/child\\_protection\\_services/what\\_can\\_i\\_expect\\_when](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/children/child_protection_services/what_can_i_expect_when)

## VIC

- **Child First (Family Information and Support Team)** - is a family-focussed and community-based intake and referral service.
- **Child Protection Services** (1300 655 795 BH, or 13 12 78 AH) is a statutory service provided by DHHS to protect children and young people at risk of harm and to work with families to ensure these risks are mitigated.
- **National Child Abuse Hotline:** 1800 99 10 99
- **Commission for Children and Young People**
  - [www.cryp.vic.gov.au](http://www.cryp.vic.gov.au)
  - <https://cryp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/resources/reportable-conduct-schemeinformation-sheets/>

## WA

- **Crisis Care:** 1800 199 008 or (08) 9223 1111 (24/7 service)
- **Department for Child Protection and Family Support:** (08) 92222 2555 or 1800 622 258
- **National Child Abuse Hotline:** 1800 99 10 99
- **Website/s**
  - <https://www.childwise.org.au/page/45/state-legislation-reporting-wa>
  - <http://www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx>

## ACT

- **Child and Youth Protection Services:** 1300 556 729 (24 hour/7 days service)
- **National Child Abuse Helpline:** 1800 99 10 99
- **Website/s**
  - <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child-and-youth-protection-services/reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>
  - <https://www.childwise.org.au/page/47/state-legislation-reporting-act>

## NT

- **The Child Abuse Hotline -** 1800 700 250
- **Crime Stoppers on** 1800 333 000
- **National Child Abuse Helpline:** 1800 99 10 99
- **Website/s**
  - <https://www.childwise.org.au/page/48/state-legislation-reporting-nt>



# APPENDIX 1 -

## Definitions of Abuse against Children

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There are four common types of child abuse: sexual; physical; emotional or psychological and neglect. “Child” means a person under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child.

### Sexual Abuse

- a) sexual offences (i.e. crimes) against, with or in the presence of a child
- b) sexual misconduct against, with or in the presence of a child

### Sexual Abuse, including ‘grooming’

**Sexual abuse** is any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another’s trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual, but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential or the age difference. E.g. a 14 year old child cannot legally consent to sex with an adult.

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

### Physical Abuse

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

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

NB Physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child constitutes abuse.

### Emotional or Psychological Abuse

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

## Neglect

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

## Other Forms of Abuse

### Bullying

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

### Racial, cultural, or religious abuse

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

Religious or cultural abuse is similar to racial abuse but is directed towards expressions of religious faith or practice or cultural dress, identifying styles of cultural expression or practices.

*'The harm that is caused by racial, religious or cultural abuse targets the child's identity.'*

### Spiritual abuse

This involves the perpetrator using their position of authority in a church or religious organisation to manipulate a child for their own gratification or benefit, or to pressure a child, using guilt, shame, or a strong "works" based ethic. This is not reportable to a Government Child Protection agency, although in extreme circumstances can be classified as emotional abuse.

### Cyber-bullying

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

## Statistics of Abuse

It is very difficult to know precisely the amount of child abuse that occurs in Australia, as many acts go unreported. Statistics of reported acts, though, are available through government agencies. Child Protection Australia 2010-11 report reported that there were

237, 273 notifications of child abuse involving 163,767 children in Australia.<sup>4</sup> The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2002) revealed the following breakup of perpetrators: 74% natural parent, 10% step-parent or de facto, 7% other relative or sibling, 5% friend or neighbour, 4% others (including strangers).<sup>5</sup> The reality of abuse in Australia is a lot worse than the statistics. There are estimates that as many as 1 in 20 men in Australia may sexually offend against a child. As many as 1 in 5 children will be sexually abused during their childhood. On average, it takes a girl 7 years to tell someone about such abuse, and for men the average is well over 25 years, if they ever do.

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<sup>4</sup> NSW and Act Baptist Churches, *Creating Safe Spaces Manual*

2012 v1.3, p11 <sup>5</sup>Ibid.