

# Child Safety Policy

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## POLICY

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Child Safety Policy is to state Discovery Church's commitment to child safety, outline the measures Discovery Church has in place to promote and protect the safety of children, and outline the expectations and responsibilities of Discovery Church representatives related to child safety.

### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Discovery Church representatives, defined as:

- **Staff** including employees, consultants and contractors.
- **Volunteers** including leaders, interns, ministry team members, lifegroup hosts and event-based volunteers.
- **Staff & Volunteers of Related Entities** including those of Treasure Corner Op Shop and Discovery Community Care.
- **Elders** (governing body).

### 3. COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Discovery Church is committed to child safety because it is integral to our mission. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.

Discovery Church is committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously, responded to in a timely manner and consistently with our policies and procedures. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Discovery Church is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and reducing or removing these risks. We have comprehensive policies and procedures for recruiting and managing our people, both staff and volunteers. We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

Discovery Church supports and respects all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of indigenous children, and of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

We have policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

## 4. DEFINITIONS

**Child:** any person under 18 years of age. This includes those also referred to as a young person.

- Children that turn 18 while involved in Discovery Church's youth ministry activities will be treated in the same way that children are within this policy until they exit the youth ministry. While this recognises they are still participants within the youth ministry, it does not exempt them from any legal obligations they hold as adults.

**Child Abuse:** any non-accidental act that endangers a child's physical or emotional health or development. These may be things people *do* to children, *fail to do* for them or *fail to protect* them from. Abuse occurs when those in positions of trust and power abuse that trust and make use of their power to harm children. It can take many forms, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as well as violence, neglect and exploitation.

**Child Exploitation Material:** any film, printed matter, electronic data, computer image or any other portrayal that describes or depicts a person who is, or appears to be, a child:

- Engaged in sexual activity.
- In a sexual context.
- As the subject of torture, cruelty or abuse (whether or not in a sexual context) in a way that a reasonable person would regard as being, in all the circumstances, offensive.

**Child Physical Abuse:** any non-accidental infliction of physical violence on a child by any person. Examples of physical abuse may include slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or assault with implements. It does not include lawful and reasonable discipline by a parent/guardian.

**Child Safety Concern:** any concern related to the safety or wellbeing of a child, or related to the actions of another person that places a child's safety and wellbeing at risk. This includes:

- Any disclosure, allegation, belief or suspicion of child abuse or harm.
- Non-compliance with the Code of Conduct or other child-related misconduct.
- Concerns regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child.

**Child Sexual Abuse:** the use of a child by another person for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification or for that of others. It includes:

- Sexual acts, such as sexual intercourse, oral sex, masturbation, sexually touching or fondling, or forcing a child to perform any form of sexual act.
- Exposing a child to things of a sexual nature, such as indecent exposure, viewing sexually explicit materials, or watching sexual acts.
- Discussing things of a sexual nature in any means of communication, such as sexual references and innuendo, or discussing or inquiring about sexual matters.

**Children's or Youth Ministry:** any activity or program that focuses on the participation of persons under 18 years of age.

**Grooming:** when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer. Young people are often 'groomed' before they are sexually abused. At first, they may be tricked into thinking they are in a safe and normal relationship so they may not know it's happening or may feel they have no choice but to be abused.

**Neglect:** the failure to provide the basic necessities of life where a child's health and development are placed at risk of harm. Neglect is a form of child abuse. It includes being deprived of food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, education, medical care, supervision, safety, or attachment to and affection from adults.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFETY

All Discovery Church representatives are responsible for keeping children safe. However, there are specific responsibilities that apply to key roles as described in the following table.

Who	Role in Promoting Child Safety
<b>Individuals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take personal responsibility for their own and others' safety and raise any child safety concerns.</li> </ul>
<b>Volunteers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</li> <li>Report any child safety concerns.</li> <li>Encourage program participants to take responsibility for their own and others' safety and advise how to report any child safety concerns.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</li> <li>Ensure any staff or volunteers they are responsible for act in accordance with policies and procedures.</li> <li>Report any child safety concerns.</li> <li>Ensure any staff or volunteers they are responsible for know how to report child safety concerns.</li> <li>Carry out responsibilities in accordance with contracts/position descriptions.</li> <li>Identify any child safety knowledge or practice gaps and actively seek training as it relates to their role and/or for those they are responsible for.</li> <li>Identify, assess and mitigate risks to child safety where they are responsible for a department that works directly with children.</li> </ul>
<b>Elders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold responsibility for what happens in the church and activities.</li> <li>Identify, assess and control risks, and review the effectiveness of control measures across the church.</li> <li>Adopt appropriate policies and procedures, review them regularly, ensure they are widely communicated and implemented, and act in accordance with them.</li> <li>Report any child safety concerns.</li> <li>Oversee executive leadership's adherence to their responsibilities.</li> <li>Ensure appropriate insurance arrangements are in place.</li> <li>Ensure the church is compliant with regulatory obligations, seek help from our affiliate body Churches of Christ Victoria Tasmania (CCVT) where needed and accept help from CCVT where CCVT believes necessary, including where minimum requirements are not being met.</li> </ul>
<b>Executive Leadership/Senior Minister(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</li> <li>Ensure staff are aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</li> <li>Report any child safety concerns.</li> <li>Ensure staff know how to report child safety concerns.</li> <li>Support the Child Safety Officer(s) in responding to child safety reports.</li> <li>Support staff in identifying, assessing and mitigating child safety risks.</li> <li>Promote discussions on a culture of child safety across our church.</li> </ul>
<b>Child Safety Officers</b>	<p><i>In addition to expectations of their respective roles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take the primary responsibility for receiving and responding to child safety reports in our church and activities.</li> <li>Meet reporting obligations to external bodies in relation to child safety, with the assistance of the executive leadership and/or chair of eldership as appropriate.</li> <li>Support staff in identifying, assessing and mitigating child safety risks.</li> <li>Promote discussions on a culture of child safety across our church.</li> </ul>
<b>Related Entities</b>	<p><i>In addition to expectations of their respective roles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement their own additional policies and procedures that promote child safety and align with the church's policies and procedures.</li> <li>Identify, assess and mitigate risks to child safety in their respective activities.</li> </ul>

## 6. RECRUITMENT & SCREENING

Discovery Church undertakes comprehensive recruitment and screening processes for all representatives that aim to keep children safe in all our activities, appoint the safest people who share our commitment to child safety, and prevent anyone from working or volunteering in our activities if they pose a risk to children. All Discovery Church representatives are required to undergo the below screening and recruitment steps.

<b>Applications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff</b><sup>1</sup> must formally apply for positions/contracts.</li> <li>• <b>Volunteers</b><sup>2</sup> must complete an application form.</li> <li>• <b>Elders</b> are considered for positions by invitation only.</li> </ul>
<b>Reference Checks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff, volunteers &amp; elders</b> must provide three non-related referees at application.</li> <li>• Referees will be asked for feedback about the candidate, which will include questions regarding the applicant's suitability to work with children. Checks will preferably be done verbally and where this is not possible, a formal written record will be obtained.</li> <li>• Reference check information will be securely stored on the church database.</li> </ul>
<b>Working with Children Checks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff, volunteers<sup>3</sup> &amp; elders</b> must obtain a Working with Children Check (WWCC) before commencing involvement in their role.</li> <li>• All staff (excluding consultants and contractors) must hold an employee WWCC.</li> <li>• The WWCC holder must record Discovery Church, and/or the applicable related entity (Discovery Community Care or Treasure Corner Op Shop), as a listed organisation.</li> <li>• The WWCC holder must renew their WWCC before expiry. Any person with an expired WWCC will be suspended from their role until their check has been renewed and evidence provided to Discovery Church of renewal.</li> <li>• Teachers registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) are exempt from obtaining a WWCC but must inform WWCC Victoria of their child-related work at Discovery Church within 21 days of commencement. Discovery Church will then be notified as a listed organisation.</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Checks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff</b> must undergo police checks before commencing in their roles.</li> <li>• <b>Volunteers</b> in ministries or activities that have a high level of engagement with vulnerable people may also be required to obtain police checks prior to commencing in their roles, including but not limited to COACH Mentoring.</li> </ul>
<b>Interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff, volunteers &amp; elders</b> will undergo interviews before appointment to their roles.</li> </ul>

## 7. TRAINING

Discovery Church is committed to training all our representatives to uphold child safety across all activities of our church. Everyone is responsible for keeping children safe and we therefore expect everyone to undergo training relevant to their role and the level of engagement with children as outlined in the table below.

<sup>1</sup> Short-term or project-based consultants and contractors that have no direct engagement with children may be exempt from certain screening stages based on the nature of their roles and at the discretion of the executive leadership. Such workers must be fully supervised when on church premises at times when children may be on-site.

<sup>2</sup> Event-based volunteers may be permitted a shorter screening process relevant to the event and at the discretion of the executive leadership, with a WWCC at a minimum.

<sup>3</sup> Volunteers under the age of 18, such as apprentice and emerging leaders, will be required to obtain a WWCC upon turning 18.

Level	Who	Training Requirements
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff<sup>4</sup>, volunteers<sup>5</sup>, related entities and elders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Discovery Child Safety Training</b> within six months of commencing their role and annual refresher training thereafter.</li> </ul>
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers<sup>6</sup> that work directly with children/vulnerable people. <i>Including but not limited to Discovery Kids, Playgroups, 0-2 Program, Discovery Youth, Discovery Community Care and Foster Care Initiative.</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>In addition to level 1 training requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Child Safe Training (M3 Module)</b> completed at commencement of their role and every three years thereafter.</li> <li><b>Department specific child safety/vulnerable people training</b> within six months of commencing their role and annual refresher training thereafter.</li> </ul>
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff and elders.</li> </ul>	<p><i>In addition to level 1 training requirements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>NCCA Safe Church Awareness Workshop (SCAW)</b> at the commencement of their role and a refresher workshop every three years thereafter.</li> </ul>

## 8. RISK MANAGEMENT

Discovery Church is committed to identifying, assessing and mitigating risks to children in all our activities and those of our Related Entities. Discovery Church will conduct the risk assessments related to child safety as outlined in the table below.

When	What	Who
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Church-wide child safety self-assessment submitted to CCVT as part of the annual census.</li> <li>Departmental child safety risk assessments for departments with high engagement with children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operations Manager &amp; Child Safety Officers.</li> <li>Department Pastors.</li> </ul>
Biennially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Church-wide child safety risk assessment coinciding with the review of child safety policies and manuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operations Manager &amp; Child Safety Officers.</li> </ul>
As Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity-specific risk assessments for activities outside the scope of normal operations that involve children, such as large events, overnight activities including camps and any new activities or ministries.</li> <li>Risk assessments following any significant child safety incidents or near misses as they occur.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department Pastors.</li> <li>Child Safety Officers.</li> </ul>

All risk assessments will be securely and appropriately filed by the Operations Manager and recorded in Discovery Church's risk register, which is overseen by the elders. Refer to the **Risk Assessment Template**.

<sup>4</sup> Short-term or project-based consultants and contractors that have no direct engagement with children may be exempt from training based on the nature of their roles and at the discretion of the executive leadership. At a minimum, they will be briefed on the Child Safety Policy and must sign a Code of Conduct.

<sup>5</sup> Lifegroup hosts of youth lifegroups are exempt from training as the lifegroup leaders are considered the primary leaders in such situations. Hosts will be briefed on the Child Safety Policy and must sign the Lifegroup Host Agreement and Code of Conduct.

<sup>6</sup> Volunteers under the age of 18 that work directly with children, such as apprentice and emerging leaders, will undergo training at age appropriate times and training will be contextualised where necessary to their age and volunteer responsibilities.

For risk management strategies within children's and youth ministries, refer to the ***Discovery Kids Team Manual*** and the ***Discovery Youth Team Manual***. For risk management strategies related to contact with children outside ministry events, refer to the ***External Contact with Children Policy***.

## 9. MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

Discovery Church is committed to ensuring media and communications involve children in safe and ethical ways. Written consent must be provided by parents/guardians before capturing and/or publishing photographs, video recordings or written information involving children using a Media Consent Form.

Only representatives designated by the relevant department pastor are permitted to photograph or record children during Discovery Church activities. Photos and recordings must capture children in a positive and dignified manner and ensure they are fully clothed. Photos and recordings must be securely stored on the church database and not kept on personal devices.

All media content must be approved by the relevant department pastor and only posted by the designated social media representatives. Content must only include general information of children and must not include identifying information, such as full names, contact details or social media account tags.

Refer to the ***Media & Communications Policy*** for further information.

## 10. EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Discovery Church is committed to ensuring that any local or global partner organisations share our commitment to child safety. All partners that receive funding from Discovery Church are required to demonstrate this commitment through a partner appraisal process, which includes at a minimum providing a copy of their own child safety policy or statement of commitment.

Discovery Church affirms children's right to be raised in families and will only partner with organisations overseas that support children to be cared for within families, not residential care programs. Discovery Church will not participate in, organise nor promote visits or volunteering in residential care programs.

Any Discovery Church representatives visiting our partners locally or internationally are required to uphold the commitments of this Child Safety Policy and the Code of Conduct at all times.

Refer to Discovery Church's ***External Partnership Policy*** and ***Position Piece Regarding Orphanages and Residential Care*** for further information.

## 11. RECORD KEEPING & PRIVACY

Discovery Church ensures that the information we keep regarding children, the representatives that engage with children and any concerns or incidents regarding child safety are securely stored. Any personal information is protected in accordance with our Privacy Policy. Any representative with access to personal information on Discovery Church's database is required to sign and abide by a Confidentially Agreement.

Refer to the ***Privacy Policy*** for further information.

## 12. POLICY REVIEW

Discovery Church's Child Safety Policy and associated Code of Conduct will be reviewed and updated as necessary every two years, or following significant child safety incidents. The Operations Manager and Child Safety Officers are responsible for leading the review process. The process should include opportunities for feedback from children, parents/guardians and volunteers where possible.

### 13. POLICY COMPLIANCE

All Discovery Church representatives listed in the scope of this policy are required to read and abide by this Child Safety Policy and the Code of Conduct. Any non-compliance with the Child Safety Policy and/or Code of Conduct must be reported to a Child Safety Officer and/or department head.

Any representatives that fail to comply with the Child Safety Policy and/or Code of Conduct will be subject to Discovery Church's complaints, disciplinary and restoration procedures. Any serious breaches may result in representatives being stood down from their roles and/or being asked to leave Discovery Church and any associated activities. Serious breaches may also result in a report being made to authorities in accordance with our legal reporting obligations including mandatory reporting laws.

Refer to the ***Child Safety Reporting Procedure*** for further information.

### 14. CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS

All child safety concerns must be reported to a Child Safety Officer according to the ***Child Safety Reporting Procedure***.

Child Safety Officers can also be contacted regarding any queries, feedback or suggestions regarding child safety at Discovery Church.

<b>Discovery Church</b>	Beck Lambert	(03) 9760 8055	<a href="mailto:beck.lambert@discoverychurch.com.au">beck.lambert@discoverychurch.com.au</a>
<b>Discovery Kids</b>	Jacinta Cavill	(03) 9760 8029	<a href="mailto:jacinta.cavill@discoverychurch.com.au">jacinta.cavill@discoverychurch.com.au</a>
<b>Discovery Youth</b>	Tiani Greenwood	(03) 9760 8017	<a href="mailto:tiani.greenwood@discoverychurch.com.au">tiani.greenwood@discoverychurch.com.au</a>
<b>Neighbourhood &amp; DCC</b>	Moriah Weston	(03) 9760 8019	<a href="mailto:moriah.weston@discoverychurch.com.au">moriah.weston@discoverychurch.com.au</a>