



## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Responsible person	Centre Manager	Scheduled review date	April 2019

### Introduction

Mordialloc Community Centre is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at Mordialloc Community Centre is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Mordialloc Community Centre.
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To prevent child abuse within Mordialloc Community Centre.
4. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions of child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. To provide guidance to staff and volunteers as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. To provide a clear statement to staff and volunteers forbidding any such abuse.
7. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

### Policy

Mordialloc Community Centre is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs.

All children regardless of gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Mordialloc Community Centre has a zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Mordialloc Community Centre is responsible for the care and protection of children in our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the Mordialloc Community Centre, all employees, volunteers, contractors, associates and members of the Mordialloc Community Centre community.

Mordialloc Community Centre supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. Mordialloc Community Centre is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and those from a culturally and or linguistically diverse background, and to provide a safe environment for children living with a disability.

If any person believes that a child is in immediate risk of abuse telephone emergency services by dialling “000”

## **Procedures**

### ***Responsibilities***

The Committee of Governance (COG) of Mordialloc Community Centre has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The COG is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The Mordialloc Community Centre CEO (Centre Manager) is responsible for:

1. Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse
2. Ensuring that all staff, volunteers and contractors are aware of current laws, organisational policies, procedures and the organisations Code of Conduct in relation to Child Protection.
3. Ensuring that all adults within the Mordialloc Community Centre community are aware of their obligation to report all suspected forms of abuse including physical and sexual abuse of a child in accordance with this policy.
4. Ensuring that all staff, volunteers and contractors are aware of their obligation to observe the Child Protection Code of Conduct.
5. Providing support for staff, volunteers and contractors in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All Team Leaders and Coordinators must ensure that they:

1. Promote child safety at all times
2. Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible.
3. Educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
4. Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Team Leaders and Coordinators should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

All Staff / Volunteers / Contractors share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse and must:

1. Familiarise themselves with the relevant Child Protection Code of Conduct and Mordialloc Community Centre's policy and procedures in relation to child protection and comply with all requirements.
2. Report any belief that a child's safety is at risk to the Mordialloc Community Centre - Centre Manager and to the relevant authorities such as police or the Victorian Child Protection Authority and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters.
3. Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

## Definitions

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

**Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

**Child abuse** means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

**Child sexual abuse** is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in child pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

**Reasonable grounds for belief** is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken in account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

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

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

A reasonable belief or a belief on reasonable grounds is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a reasonable belief might be formed if:

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

### **Employment of New Personnel**

Mordialloc Community Centre undertakes a comprehensive recruitment screening process for all workers and volunteers which aims to:

- Promote and protect the safety of children under the care of the organisation;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share Mordialloc Community Centre's values and commitment to protect children; and
- Prevent a person working at Mordialloc Community Centre if they pose a risk to children.

Mordialloc Community Centre requires all workers and volunteers to pass through the organisations recruitment and screening process prior to commencing their engagement with Mordialloc Community Centre. The process includes obtaining a Working With Children Check and or National Police Check as determined by Mordialloc Community Centre.

### **Reporting**

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police. They should also advise the Mordialloc Community Centre - Centre Manager about their concern.

If the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately dealt with, the matter should be reported to the President of the Mordialloc Community Centre Committee of Governance.

### **Investigating**

If the appropriate child protection service or the police conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, volunteers and contractors must cooperate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation whether internal or through external services such as Police or Child Protection services will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice. The Centre Manager will make every effort to keep the investigation confidential however from time to time other members of staff may be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

## **Responding**

If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the centre's policies or Child Protection Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay if appropriate) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the centre's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with Mordialloc Community Centre. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

## **Privacy**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. The Mordialloc Community Centre will have safeguards in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it and who will have access to it.

## **Reviewing**

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the Child Protection policy and procedures require modification to better protect the children under the Mordialloc Community Centre's care.

## **Related Documents**

- Occupational Health and Safety Policy (001)
- Bullying Policy (003)
- Grievances and Dispute Resolution Policy (004)
- Staff and Volunteers Misconduct Policy (006)
- Recruitment Policy (015)
- Privacy Policy (014)

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Child Protection Code of conduct and the law of the Victorian and or Commonwealth Governments.