PENINSULA CITY CHURCH

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Reviewed by Board on: May/June 2023

Next review: May/June 2024

INTRODUCTION

Peninsula City Church is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone (staff, volunteers and contractors) working at Peninsula City Church 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 Peninsula City Church
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To ensure that all Child Safety Standards are implemented and upheld
4. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for 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/volunteers/contractors 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/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
7. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

POLICY

Peninsula City Church is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its programs.

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

Peninsula City Church has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Peninsula City Church is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between Peninsula City, all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the Peninsula City Church community.

Peninsula City Church will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop a child safe environment. Children will be informed regularly about how to access the complaints procedure in culturally safe and age appropriate ways.

Peninsula City Church supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. Peninsula City Church is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.
If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Peninsula City Church is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The Senior/Lead pastor is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct; • Ensuring that all adults within the Peninsula City Church community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All managers must ensure that they:

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

Management 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 the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and Peninsula City Church's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the

police and/or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters;

- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation); and
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

DEFINITIONS

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

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 (e.g. 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 assault 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 the 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 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 (see below) that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details 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," or

(c) the parents are unable or unwilling 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 may be talking about themselves);

c) someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;

d) professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or

e) signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

EMPLOYMENT OF NEW PERSONNEL

Peninsula City Church undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers that aims to:

- promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- identify the safest and most suitable people who share Peninsula City Church's values and commitment to protect children; and
- prevent a person from working at Peninsula City Church if they pose a risk to children.

Peninsula City Church requires all workers/volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with Peninsula City Church. may require applicants to provide a police check or Working with Children Check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at Peninsula City Church and during their time with Peninsula City Church at regular intervals.

Peninsula City Church will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

Once engaged, workers/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.

R**ISK MANAGEMENT**

Peninsula City Church will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

Peninsula City Church will have a risk and compliance sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks at Peninsula City Church. Risk and compliance sub-committee members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

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 their team leader/Lead Pastor about their concern. They will be required to follow the Complaints procedure and complete a written report using the Incident disclosure form.

In situations where the team leader is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision.

Team leaders must report complaints to the Senior Pastor who must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the Board chair and also to any external regulatory body such as the Commission for Children and Young People and the police.

INVESTIGATING

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to investigate a report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Senior/Lead Pastor will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Senior/Lead Pastor may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

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

The Senior/Lead Pastor will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time-to-time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

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

RESPONDING

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

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. 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. Peninsula City Church will have safeguards and practices 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 be able to access it.

REVIEWING

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the organisation's care.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- This policy must be read in conjunction with:
    - The law of the Commonwealth or of the relevant state or territory; ○ The organisation's Code of Conduct