

Part 1:

City Edge Church Child Safe Policy

Child Safe Commitment Statement

As part of our commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ, City Edge Church is committed to the protection, wellbeing and safety of all people who participate in our community. This includes all members and visitors to Sunday worship, prayer meetings, Bible studies, youth and children ministries and any other function/event held by City Edge Church. We take this responsibility seriously and aim to have full transparency with policies, procedures, oversight and appropriate training for all staff and volunteers.

We firmly believe the Bible's teaching that God made man, male and female, in His own image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27, 5:1-2). In light of that we believe that age, gender, ethnicity, culture, language, disability or socio-economic background have no bearing on our duty to serve, love, protect and disciple those who visit and those who call City Edge Church 'home'.

All people, especially children and the vulnerable, have the right to be respected and valued, as well as to be physically, emotionally and spiritually safe at all times. City Edge Church is committed to this goal, and our Child Safe Policy has been developed for transparency, guidance, to adhere to National & State Legislation but ultimately to protect all people in our care.

Our Child Safe Policy

This policy applies to all members of our leadership team, including Elders and Deacons, volunteers and coordinators and anyone working on behalf of City Edge Church.

The Purpose of this Policy:

1. To protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who are under City Edge Church care. For the sake of this Child Safe Policy, references to 'child' will also include young people and vulnerable adults.
 2. To provide leaders and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 3. City Edge Church believes that a child, young person or vulnerable adult (or anyone) should not experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and to keep them safe. We are committed to conducting all worship services and other events in a way that protects them.
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Our Policy aims to:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of positional power.
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly and appropriately.
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe.
- Ensure that all people are respected, valued and protected.
- Follow National and State laws around child safety.

Legal Framework:

This Policy reflects legislation and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

National Legislation: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children "*Protecting Children Is Everyone's Business*" 2009-2020 (Commonwealth of Australia)

State Legislation: *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)

Working With Children Checks: *Working With Children Act 2005* (Vic)

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount, and is everyone's responsibility as outlined in the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*.
- All children, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation or identity, ethnicity, culture, language, disability or socio-economic background, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other organisations/agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We commit to the following standards and practices:

a. Safe recruitment of leaders

- All Elders and Deacons will be required to have a current *Working With Children Check* and *Victorian Police Check* (with records retained by City Edge Church).
- All adults leading any children's ministries at City Edge Church will be required to have a current *Working With Children Check*, in addition to *Victorian Police Checks* (with records retained by City Edge Church).
- Any volunteers regularly assisting children's ministry leaders will be required to have a current *Working With Children Check* (with records retained by City Edge Church).

- Any volunteers occasionally assisting children's ministry leaders will be encouraged to have a current *Working With Children Check* (with records retained by City Edge Church).
- b. **Adequate training of leaders**
 - All Elders and Deacons will be required to attend a Child Safe training workshop before commencing in their role and attend a refresher workshop every year.
 - All adults leading any children's ministries at City Edge Church will be required to attend a Child Safe training workshop before commencing in their role and attend a refresher workshop every year.
- c. **Have a clear code of conduct**
 - All Elders and Deacons will be required to sign and adhere to a Code of Conduct, including boundaries of behaviour and expectations of interactions with children and the vulnerable. This Code to be reviewed and re-committed to every year.
 - All leaders over age 16 leading any children's ministries at City Edge Church will be required to sign and adhere to a Code of Conduct, including boundaries of behaviour and expectations of interactions with children. This Code to be reviewed and re-committed to every year.
- d. **Ongoing supervision of leaders and volunteers supporting leaders**
 - City Edge Church commits to the ongoing training, supervision and support for leaders and volunteers supporting leaders.
- e. **Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious misconduct**
 - All Elders, Deacons and leaders (in any area of ministry) will report disclosures or suspicions of abuse, according to our procedure. We will listen and take seriously those who raise concerns.
 - We will ensure that procedures are clear and appropriate in responding to allegations of abuse.
 - Where an allegation of misconduct is made against a person in the organisation in relation to a child/young person/vulnerable adult, we will prioritise support to the child/young person/vulnerable adult. We will seek appropriate support for the person implicated to protect the safety of the child/young person/vulnerable adult as the paramount concern.
 - If child abuse is reported or suspected, Deacons and Ministry leaders will be responsible to report this information directly to the Elder(s) immediately and the Elder(s) will be required to disclose this information to Police.
 - If Elder(s) are unavailable or if any Deacon, Ministry Leader or adult Volunteer have immediate concerns for the safety of a child they are to call 000 and notify the police immediately.
- f. **Responding to other disclosure of abuse**
 - We will understand the processes of responding to disclosures of abuse and harm including self-harm and suicide ideation.
 - We will ensure that appropriate training takes place to ensure Elders, Deacons and children's ministry leaders can recognise and respond to indicators of abuse and neglect, and receive support for all involved in the disclosure.

- We understand that responding to abuse is not limited to children and commit to ensuring our leaders understand the most appropriate steps to support vulnerable adults within City Edge Church.

g. Communication

- The City Edge Church Child Safe Policy will be available to download on our website, and hard-copies will be available at our meeting space for anyone to take a copy.

h. Other procedures to minimise risk of harm

- For all children's ministries we commit to having two adults present at all times, with at least one of them *Working With Children* approved.
- Leaders and volunteers supporting leaders must not be alone with a child (one-on-one) in private, however this restriction does not apply in open/public spaces where they are visible and easily interrupted.
- Leaders and volunteers supporting leaders will seek the parent/guardian of a child to accompany the child to the rest rooms when needed. Leaders and volunteers are not permitted to take a child unaccompanied to the rest rooms under normal circumstances.
- Where Leaders or volunteers are making driving arrangements for children/youth, they will take reasonable steps to ensure: all drivers are fully licenced, experienced, responsible and not under the influence of alcohol or any other mind-altering substance. All vehicles must be registered, third-party insured, safe and fitted with appropriate child safety devices.
- City Edge Church leaders are not to be alone with children in a motor vehicle under normal circumstances. Under exceptional circumstances, no action will be taken without written parental consent.
- Consent will be sought before any Elders, Deacons, Ministry Leaders or Volunteers of City Edge Church post photos of any child/young person/vulnerable adult on social media.

Definitions:

Abuse – Abuse and neglect includes, but is not limited to, physical abuse, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, bullying, family violence, sexual abuse, grooming and neglect.

Child – For the purpose of this Child Safe Policy a Child is any person who is under the age of 18 years or any vulnerable adult. As per section 'c' above, there may be instances where someone between the ages of 16 and 18 are supporting adult leaders in a ministry context. For the purposes of this Child Safe Policy they will still be regarded as a 'Child'.

Disclosure – a disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in leadership within City Edge Church that they have been subject to abuse/misconduct or knows of abuse/misconduct. A disclosure may or may not be an allegation or admission, but it is the responsibility of the leadership team to investigate and take any appropriate action, with final responsibility resting with the Elders.

Vulnerable Person – a person who may be considered to be susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (mental or physical), age, grief, previous experience of abuse, social isolation or financial hardship. In this sense vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

Leader – a person formally given responsibility for the direction, teaching, activities and behaviour of those in their care. For the sake of this Child Safe Policy this includes Elders, Deacons and any others responsible for other church ministries (such as Children’s Ministry etc).

Volunteer/Assistant – a person who provides support and assistance to Leaders in their responsibility for direction, teaching, activities and behaviours of those in the care of the Leader.

Elder – Is a man called and ordained to the formal office of leadership, oversight, preaching and teaching within the church (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9). The term Elder is not related to age but is instead related to the responsibility given to them by God to shepherd Jesus’ sheep. At City Edge Church the Elder is Ian Gould.

Deacon – Is a man or woman called and ordained to the formal office of leadership within the church and is primarily responsible for the service and administration of the body of believers (1 Tim 3:8-13, Acts 6:2). At City Edge Church there is a team of deacons dedicated to meeting the practical needs of the church to allow the Elder to focus on leadership, oversight, preaching and teaching.

Adult – For the sake of this Child Safe Policy an adult is any person over age 18.

Normal Circumstances – include typical and ordinary operations of City Edge Church. This includes how corporate worship, children’s ministry, youth and young adults ministries, prayer meetings and Connect Groups are conducted in almost all cases.

Exceptional Circumstances – include those times when, for whatever reason, any City Edge Church events/meetings experience are not conducted in ‘Normal Circumstances’. This may include, but is not limited to, times when there may be too few adult Leaders for the event/meetings, in an emergency such as a fire, health or safety emergency, where the Leaders act to protect a Child from immediate harm etc.

Part 2:

City Edge Church Child Safe Code of Conduct

City Edge Church staff, leaders and volunteers are responsible for keeping a professional role with children. This means establishing and maintaining clear boundaries that serve to protect everyone from misunderstandings.

This Code of Conduct sets out the behaviour that City Edge Church expects from all people associated with or representing it.

Purpose

Following this code will help to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse and inappropriate behaviour from adults. It will also help staff and volunteers to maintain the standard of behaviour expected of them. Having a Code of Conduct that everyone adheres to also protects the organisation because opportunities from harm are actively reduced.

Upholding this Code of Conduct

All City Edge Church staff, leaders and volunteers are expected to report any breaches of this code to Ian Gould (Lead Elder) under the Child Safe policies and procedures put in place by City Edge Church.

Staff, leaders and volunteers who breach this Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary procedures, including any breaches involving external workers or volunteers. **All allegations of child abuse will be reported to statutory authorities, such as police or child protection.** City Edge Church condemns all forms of child abuse, discrimination and sexual exploitation. We are committed to creating and maintaining an environment which promotes safety for all people involved in our programs, especially children and people with a disability.

I WILL:

- Conduct myself in a manner that is consistent with the values of City Edge Church.
- Treat all children, young people and vulnerable adults with respect, regardless of colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children, young people, vulnerable adults, parents, Leaders and Volunteers.
- Follow and report any concerns of child abuse in accordance with City Edge Church's Child Safe Policy and procedures.
- Keep all information regarding child protection concerns confidential, only discussing information with relevant and appropriate people according to the reporting procedures.

- Respect cultural differences.
 - Encourage open communication between all children, young people, vulnerable adults, parents, Leaders and Volunteers, and allow children, young people and vulnerable adults to participate in the decisions that affect them.
 - Be transparent in my actions and whereabouts.
 - Take responsibility for being accountable and not placing myself in positions where there is a risk of allegations being made.
 - Wherever possible, I will ensure that another adult is present when I am working with or near children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - Self-assess my behaviour, actions, language and relationships with children, young people and vulnerable adults..
 - Report any concerns or suspicions regarding abuse by a fellow Leader, volunteer, or visitor, via City Edge Church's Child Safe Policy reporting procedures.
 - Comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation.
 - Immediately disclose any information of charges, convictions of abuse and policy non-compliance in accordance with appropriate procedures. This includes disclosing any charges or convictions made against oneself or others.
 - Avoid favouritism.
 - Ensure any contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults is appropriate and in the parameters of the program or event.
 - Always ensure language is appropriate and not offensive or discriminatory.
 - Provide examples of good conduct in daily activities.
 - Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations or suspicions of abuse.
 - Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like.
 - Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people.
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I WILL NOT:

- Engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, young people, vulnerable adults, or other people in person or on social media.
- Use inappropriate, offensive, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, culturally inappropriate or discriminatory language when speaking with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Allow allegations, suspected abuse, risk of harm or disclosures go unreported.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes. I will first request the parent/guardian of the child to do such things. If this is necessary, for example for a child with a disability, I will inform another Leader first and be as open as possible in my behaviour.
- Hit or physically assault children. This includes refraining from physical punishment or discipline of children.
- Develop inappropriate relationships with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Conduct a sexual relationship with a child, young person or vulnerable adult or indulge in any form of sexual contact with a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- Seek to make contact and/or spend time with any child that I come into contact with in my role as a representative of City Edge Church outside of the designated times and activities set for performing my role as a representative of City Edge Church.
- Condone or participate in behaviour of children, young people or vulnerable adults that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Act in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Release or discuss any personal confidential information about suspected or proven child abuse or protection cases other than with the designated Child Safe Concerns Person and other parties as designated by them and according to reporting procedures.
- Use any computer, mobile phone, or video and digital camera to exploit or harass children.
- Let children and young people have my personal contact details (mobile number or address).
- Make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive.
- Make inappropriate promises to children and young people, particularly in relation to confidentiality.

- Jump to conclusions about others.
 - Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
 - Rely on your reputation or that of the organisation to protect you.
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- I am responsible for my own actions and will utilise Child Safe standards and best practices to avoid actions and behaviours that could be in breach of this **Code of Conduct** and the **City Edge Church Child Safe Policy**.
- I have read the **City Edge Church Child Safe Policy** and **Code of Conduct** and discussed its contents with my Elder(s). I am aware that **City Edge Church** expects me to uphold at all times the standards of behaviour described in the Code of Conduct above.
- I also understand that disciplinary measures and legal steps will be taken if I am found to be in breach of the **Code of Conduct**.
- I understand that in making that report, **City Edge Church** may have to inform other authorities, in a confidential manner to meet obligations under Australian law.

Name: _____

Witness Name: _____

Signature: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness Date: _____