

Riverside Gospel Chapel Child Safe Policy

for

Adults involved in Children's Care and Ministry

This Child Safe Policy was approved by the Church Leadership on 15/06/2021 and endorsed by members of the congregation. It is due to be reviewed on 15/06/2023.

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the leadership, staff and volunteers to child safety and to provide an outline of the policies and practices we have developed to keep everyone safe from any harm, including abuse.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, children and individuals involved in our organisation.

Commitment to child safety

We believe that churches ought to be places of safety and refuge for children, young people and others, where they should be and feel safe from any threat when on church property or involved in activities operated by the church.

We acknowledge the responsibility we have towards those who are taking part in church activities and the wider community. We therefore commit ourselves to striving to ensure that all our actions are morally upright. All people in a position of authority within the church have a moral and spiritual responsibility towards those they lead and serve.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel secure and have fun.

Children's rights to safety and participation

We encourage children to express their views. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all children in our church community to 'have a say' about things that are important to them. We teach children about what they can do if they feel unsafe. We listen to and act on any concerns children, or their parents, raise with us.

Valuing diversity

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families
- welcome children with a disability and their families and act to promote their participation

Recruiting & supporting staff and volunteers

We seek to attract and retain the best staff and volunteers. We require Working with Children Checks and police checks for relevant positions and interview and conduct referee checks on all staff. Our commitment to Child Safety is included in all documentation.

All our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

We provide support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated.

Training & supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our church understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Tasmania Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Verity Cooke and in her absence **Heather Misdorn** have been appointed as Child Safety Persons with the specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children. Our complaints processes are outlined in the "Children's Ministry " Document

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

Our church takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Tasmania who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Risk Management

We recognise the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and use this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

Reviewing this policy

This policy will be reviewed every two years and we undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers

Signed by the following Elders as the Oversight of the Congregation

David Cooke _____ Date

Vince Misdorn _____ Date

David Riches _____ Date