

## **CHILD SAFE AND WELL-BEING POLICY**

This document is available on the website at <https://www.mazenodfc.com.au/club-policies-code-of-conduct>

### 1 PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this Policy is to educate all members, staff, supporters and spectators of the Mazenod Old Collegians Football Club on their responsibilities when interacting with children and young people at our Club and to familiarise members, staff, supporters and spectators with the Club's processes for its response to any concerns, incidents or allegations of harm or abuse to children and young people.

### 2 POLICY STATEMENT

The Mazenod Old Collegians Football Club:

- 2.1 Is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for all children and young people who participate in football and umpiring activities at our Club;  
  
Is committed to implementing child safe practices in accordance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Appendix 1);
- 2.2 Has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse or harm and will act quickly to protect children and young people should an incident occur. All complaints will be treated seriously, fully investigated and handled confidentially;
- 2.3 Is committed to the active participation of children and young people at the Club, ensuring all children and young people know their rights, have their views taken seriously and involve them in decisions that may directly affect them and their peers at the Club;
- 2.4 Recognises the important role families play in supporting children and young people to participate in Australian football and values the input of families in decision making at our Club;
- 2.5 Recognises the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and will promote their cultural safety within the Club environment;
- 2.6 All children and young people have equal rights to protection from harm and abuse regardless of their race, religion, age, disability, cultural background, gender, sexual orientation or family/social background. Our Club considers that the health, safety and well-being of children and young people take priority over all other competing considerations;
- 2.7 The safety and well-being of all children and young people at our Club is a shared responsibility between the Club, its staff, contractors, associates, parents/carers, coaches, spectators, volunteers and members of our Club community;

- 2.8 The safety and well-being of all children and young people within the VAFA is a shared responsibility between the VAFA, its staff, board members, contractors, associates, clubs, parents/carers, coaches, spectators, volunteers and members of the VAFA community.

## 3 SCOPE

- 3.1 This Policy applies to everyone involved at our Club including (but not limited to) participants, parents, spectators, contractors, officials, coaches, and board/committee members.
- 3.2 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Club's related policies and procedures, the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Appendix 1) and Commonwealth and Victorian legislation (Appendix 2).
- 3.3 Our Club is committed to continually reviewing its policies and practises to protect the safety and well-being of all children and young people. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis in consultation with all Club participants including children, young people, parents/carers, board/committee members and other interested parties.

## 4 DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 **Child and Young Person** means a person under the age of 18 years.
- 4.2 **Child Abuse** includes all forms of physical, emotional, psychological, verbal and/or sexual abuse. Child abuse also includes sexual exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, grooming, harassing behaviour, bullying or other exploitation of a child or young person and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child or young person. Child abuse can be a single incident or take place over time.
- 4.3 **Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.
- 4.4 **Club** is the name of the club outlined in section two (2) of this policy document.
- 4.5 **Family Violence** occurs when children and young people are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. Family violence includes violence between members of a family, or extended family, or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person's life. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of injury and harm and has a significant impact on their well-being and development.
- 4.6 **Grooming** is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator builds a relationship with a child or young person with the intent to abuse or harm them. Perpetrators may also groom parents/carers by forming relationships of trust with parents/carers before harming a child or young person. Grooming can take place over a long period of time before abuse occurs or the abuse can happen relatively quickly. Grooming can take place in physical (face-to-face) environments or online.
- 4.7 **Harm** can be any action that may have a significant impact on a child or young person's physical, psychological or emotional well-being. Harm can be caused by:
- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect;
  - Sexual abuse or exploitation;
  - Family violence;

- A single act, omission or circumstance; and/or
- A series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

- 4.8 **Sexual abuse or exploitation** is any act which exposes a child or young person to or involves them in sexual acts beyond their understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. It also includes engaging a child or young person to participate in sexual conversations online.
- 4.9 **Concerns and complaints** include any issue that an adult or peer considers may negatively impact on the safety or well-being of a child or young person.
- 4.10 **Mandatory reporter** means a person who is legal required to make a report to the Department of Human Services or the Police if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection. It includes teachers, principals, registered psychologists, nurses, doctors, and midwives.
- 4.11 VAFA People includes the following persons associated with the VAFA and/or VAFA entities:
- All employees (including casual and interns)
  - All directly engaged volunteers and contractors/consultants who are engaged to provide services to the VAFA or a VAFA entity that involve an interaction with children or young people
  - VAFA Board Members.

## 5 EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR AT OUR CLUB

- 5.1 All participants, parents, spectators, contractors, officials, coaches, and board/committee members have responsibilities in relation to the safety and well-being of children and young people at our Club and are expected to:
- understand the definitions of child abuse and harm and act on anything that they hear or see;
  - understand the rights of children, as appropriate to their role and cause no harm to a child or young person;
  - value equity and diversity at the Club and treat all children and young people with respect regardless of their race, religion, age, disability, cultural background, gender, sexual orientation or family/social background;
  - at all times, know and follow this Policy; and
  - co-operate with police and/or other formal investigations to the best of their ability.
- 5.2 All third-party contractors are expected to abide by our Club's Child Safety and Well-Being Policy, and where they may engage with children or young people, sign an agreement requiring them to comply with this Policy, prior to delivering any services.
- 5.3 Our Club will appoint a Child Safety Officer or equivalent role that will be the primary point of contact for all concerns and complaints related to child safety and well-being.

## 6 RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

- 6.1 Our Club seeks to implement screening practices that reduce the risk of harm or abuse to children and young people by:

- Recruiting people suitable to work and interact with children and young people (e.g. by requiring Working With Children Check (WWCC) or other State equivalent and/or Police Checks). No adult will be allowed to work in a child related role at our Club until a valid Working With Children Check and/or Police Check has been obtained.
  - Undertaking background checks of staff, contractors and volunteers who interact with children and young people such as two referee checks with specific child related questions.
- 6.2 Our Club also requires that all board/committee members hold a valid Working With Children Check.
- 6.3 Once engaged, staff, volunteers, board/committee members and contractors must read this Policy and familiarise themselves with child safe practices at our Club.
- 6.4 Our Club expects that VAFA affiliated clubs ensure all staff and volunteers who undertake the following positions – coach, assistant coach, trainer, team manager, runner, on-field volunteer umpire (excludes goal and boundary umpires) and those persons who regularly assist during training and have direct unsupervised contact with children have a current WWCC, which needs to be signed off annually as part of the affiliation process.
- 6.5 Not everyone who has contact with children needs a Working With Children Check. Under the Worker Screening Act 2020 (the Act), only people who are doing child-related work (and aren't otherwise exempt under the Act) need a Check. This applies to both paid and volunteer workers.
- 6.6 If any staff, volunteers, or contractors are registered as teachers with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), they are exempt from the Check, unless they have been given a Negative Notice. A registered teacher who does child-related work, other than teaching in a school or early childhood service, must still notify the Department of Justice, [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) of the person or organisation whom the teacher is engaged by to do that child-related work by completing the Teacher notification form.
- 6.7 The Club reserves the right to request a WWCC from anyone else who the Club identifies as requiring a WWCC due to the nature of the work that they are undertaking for the Club

## 7 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PERSONNEL PROTECTING CHILDREN

- 7.1 Personnel involved in protecting children include the VAFA Board, staff and the committees and volunteers of our Club Members. Those people have responsibilities in relation to protection of children and are expected to:
- Understand the rights of children, as appropriate to their role;  
Respect the cultural and religious practices of families who access our Club's programmes or events;
  - Understand and appropriately respond to the needs of children with developmental delays or disabilities;
  - Appropriately act on any concerns raised by children;
  - Understand the definitions, indicators and impact of child abuse;
  - At all times, know and follow regulations in relation to the care of children and follow the relevant policies and code of conducts;

- Cooperate with police and/or other formal investigations to the best of their ability; and
- Not harm or exploit children who access VAFA programmes or events.

## 8 SUPPORTING CLUB STAFF, COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

- 8.1 Our Club is committed to supporting all staff, board/committee members and volunteers to understand how to create a child safe and child friendly environment at the Club.
- 8.2 Our Club recommends that staff, board/committee members and volunteers familiarise themselves with the documents and guides listed in Appendix 3 of this document.

## 9 RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- 9.1 Our Club recognises the importance of identifying and managing risks to children and young people in physical and online environments and will implement a risk management plan to address risks.
- 9.2 The risk management plan will be updated on a regular basis in consultation with staff, volunteers, parent representatives and children and young people to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- 9.3 Our Club recommends that staff, board members, volunteers, contractors, parents and guardians and any other relevant contacts familiarise themselves with online training in child safe practices.

## 10 COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING

- 10.1 Our Club will take all concerns and complaints seriously, whether they are raised by an adult, child or young person. All child related concerns and complaints will be responded to promptly and confidentially.
- 10.2 If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child or young person, immediately call the Police on '000'.
- 10.3 If a child or young person is not in immediate danger but any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from any form of child abuse or harm, may disclose that information to the Police, Child Protection or the Commissioner for Children & Young People.
- 10.4 If a concern or complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, Club staff and volunteers must report it to a member of the Club Board or the Child Safety Officer.
- 10.5 Any Club staff member, board/committee member or volunteer who is the subject of a child or young person related concern or complaint may be requested to stand down from their position in the Club during an investigation, have their duties altered so they do not engage with children and young people and/or have their access to the Club's IT system/database removed.

- 10.6 Our Club will investigate allegations or inappropriate conduct against a child or young person in accordance with procedural fairness and will handle the allegations in a confidential and sensitive manner.
- 10.7 Our Club will keep a register of any allegations regarding inappropriate conduct.

## 11 REPORTING SEXUAL ABUSE

- 11.1 If a person receives information that leads them to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed, that person has a legal obligation to disclose that information to the Police as soon as it is practicable. Individuals who fail to comply with this obligation under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) may be subject to a penalty of imprisonment.
- 11.2 A number of professions in the community (including but not limited to teachers, nurses and doctors) are also required by law to report to Child Protection where they have formed a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection because they have suffered (or are likely to suffer) significant harm due to physical or sexual abuse.
- 11.3 This report must be made as soon as practicable, and on any occasion where they become aware of other allegations and have reasonable grounds for belief.

## 12 POLICY BREACHES

- 12.1 It is a breach of this Policy for any person or organisation subject to this Policy to have been found to have done anything contrary to this Policy. Any person who breaches this Policy is subject to a full investigation, which could result in withdrawal from the Club, Suspensions and any other disciplinary action at the discretion of the Committee Members and VAFA.

## 13 RECORD KEEPING AND INFORMATION SHARING

- 13.1 Our Club is committed to making and retaining accurate records of reports of child safety related concerns and complaints.
- 13.2 Our Club will maintain records and outcomes of investigations and resolutions of concerns and complaints. In maintaining records or reports about child safety, our Club will maintain confidentiality and privacy for children and families in accordance with legislation.
- 13.3 As part of our Club's commitment to continuously improve our children and young people safety practices, the Club will review identified risks to children and young people through the incident management and record keeping process and will incorporate those risks into the risk management plan.
- 13.4 From time to time, our Club may share relevant information to promote the safety and well-being of children and young people where appropriate and in their best interest. This may include sharing information with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise the safety of a child or young person.

## Appendix 1

### Victorian Child Safety Standards

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
2. Child safety and well-being is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
4. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and well-being.
5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and well-being values and practice.
7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
9. Physical and online environments promote safety and well-being while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

## Appendix 2

### Related Documents & Legislative Requirements

- The laws of the Commonwealth and Victoria (as amended from time to time) including but not limited to:
  - *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic);
  - *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015* (Vic);
  - *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) Failure to Disclose Sexual Offence Committed Against a Child Under 16 (section 327); Failure by a Person in Authority to Protect a Child from a Sexual Offence (section 49 O);
  - *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic); and
  - *Wrongs Act 1958* (Vic) Organisational liability for child abuse.
- The Club's policies and procedures.



## Appendix 3

### Related Child Safety Education Resources and Links

- AFL Safe Footy Safeguarding webinars and resources  
[www.afl.com.au/clubhelp/safeguarding-children](http://www.afl.com.au/clubhelp/safeguarding-children)
- Play by the Rules training (child protection, cultural awareness) [www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)
- eSafety Commissioner (safe online environments and sporting organisations)  
[www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)
- Let Kids be Kids
- <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/let-kids-be-kids#:~:text=Let%20Kids%20be%20is.participation%20and%20enjoyment%20of%20sport>
- Complaint Handling
- <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/online-courses/complaint-handling-course>