**INTRODUCTION**

Drysdale Football Club is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Drysdale Football Club is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

**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** are 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:

* the child is in need of protection.
* the child has suffered or is likely to suffer “significant harm as a result of physical injury,” or
* 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:

* achild states that they have been physically or sexually abused.
* a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).
* someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused.
* 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.
* signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

**PURPOSE**

Drysdale Football Club Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our organisations commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of Drysdale Football Club approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/Ministerial_Order.pdf) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply within Drysdale Football Club programs.

It informs our community of everyone’s obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of participants across all areas of our work.

The purpose of this policy is:

* To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Drysdale Football Club.
* To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
* To prevent child abuse within Drysdale Football Club.
* 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.
* 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.
* To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
* To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

**CHILD SAFE POLICY**

**Our commitment to child safety**

* Drysdale Football Club is committed to child safety.
* We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.
* We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
* We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
* We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
* We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child’s safety, which we follow rigorously.
* Drysdale Football Club is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
* Drysdale Football Club has robust human resources and recruitment practices to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing board members, staff and volunteers.
* Drysdale Football Club is committed to regularly training and educating our board members, staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
* We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
* We have specific policies and procedures in place that support our board members, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

**OUR CHILDREN**

This policy is intended to empower children, who are vital and active participants at Drysdale Football Club. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and acceptance at Drysdale Football Club, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:

* promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
* promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
* ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Our families have an important role in monitoring and promoting children’s safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Drysdale Football Club we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for families on our website www.wombatswish.org.au

**OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children at Drysdale Football Club.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

**TRAINING AND SUPERVISION**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at Drysdale Football Club understands that child safety is everyone’s responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all board members, staff, volunteers, families and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our board members, staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our board members, staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New board members, staff and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Drysdale Football Club’s commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. This will include checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to Drysdale Football Club’s code of conduct for information about appropriate behaviour). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

**RECRUITMENT**

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legal responsibilities. Drysdale Football Club understands that when recruiting board members, staff and volunteers, we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people who are engaged in child-related work and who are not exempt, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check. For more information, please refer to the [Working with Children website](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/) <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/>.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. If during the recruitment process a person’s records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

**FAIR PROCEDURES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and reasonable to all staff and volunteers. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and actions we as an organisation take.

**PRIVACY**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, families or children, unless there is a risk to someone’s safety. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it and who will have access to it. This is intended to protect reporters and to ensure that all members of Drysdale Football Club are comfortable to disclose any allegations or concerns in relation to child safety without repercussions.

**LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Drysdale Football Club takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

* Failure to disclose: All adults in Victoria 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 Victoria Police
* Mandatory reporting: Any board members, staff or volunteers who are mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teacher, principals and police officers) must comply with their duties
* 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
* Reportable conduct: The head of our organisation must be made aware of any allegations of physical and sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, significant emotional or psychological harm or significant neglect by an employee or volunteer towards a child. We are also legally required to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of the allegation
* Duty of care: If a child is abused by an individual associated with our organisation, our organisation is presumed to have breached its duty of care unless it can prove that it took ‘reasonable precautions’ to prevent the abuse in question. For more information, please refer to the [new organisational duty of care to prevent child abuse page](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new) <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new> on the Department of Justice and Regulation’s website.

**RISK MANAGEMENT**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

**ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS**

Drysdale Football Club takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our board members, staff and volunteers are trained to deal with allegations appropriately.

We work to ensure all children, families, board members, 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.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may include:

* a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
* behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
* someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
* observing suspicious behaviour.

**REGULAR REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we will do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

**PROCEDURE**

**Responsibilities**

The Board of Drysdale Football Club 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 Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The Manager of Drysdale Football Club 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 Drysdale Football Club 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 staff, team leaders and volunteers 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 themselves about the prevention and detection of child abuse.
* Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

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 Drysdale Football Club’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).
* Provide an environment that is supportive of all children’s emotional and physical safety.

**Employment of New Personnel**

Drysdale Football Club 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 organization.
* Identify the safest and most suitable people who share Drysdale Football Club’s values and commitment to protect children.
* Prevent a person from working at Drysdale Football Club if they pose a risk to children.
* Drysdale Football Club requires all workers/volunteers to pass through the organisation’s recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with Drysdale Football Club.
* Drysdale Football Club requires applicants to provide a Working with Children Check and a Victorian police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at Drysdale Football Club and during their time with Drysdale Football Club at regular intervals.
* Drysdale Football Club will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.
* Once engaged, workers/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.

**Risk Management**

* Drysdale Football Club will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.
* Drysdale Football Club will have a risk and compliance sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks at Drysdale Football Club. 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 supervisor about their concern.
* In situations where the supervisor 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.
* Supervisors must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the CEO and to any external regulatory body such as 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 Manager 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 Manager 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 Manager 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 Manger 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.

**Additional Code of conduct for employees, volunteers and contractors when working with children**

Management, staff, volunteers and contractors at Drysdale Football Club are required to abide by this Code.

By way of the Manager, management will:

* Be responsible for the overall welfare and wellbeing of staff and volunteers.
* Be accountable for managing and maintaining a duty of care towards staff and volunteers.
* Nominate a Child Protection Officer to provide information and support to all staff, volunteers, children, young people and their carers regarding child protection matters. The nominated Child Protection officer is Nicki Dunne – Operations Manager.

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of Drysdale Football Club will:

* Work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organization.
* Be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area.
* Maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities.
* Establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work.
* Be fair, considerate and honest with others.
* Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions.
* Act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people.
* Be professional in their actions.
* Maintain strict impartiality.
* Comply with specific organisational guidelines on physical contact with children.
* Respect the privacy of children, their families and teachers/carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.
* Maintain a child-safe environment for children and young people.
* Operate within the policies and guidelines Drysdale Football Club.
* Contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse, phone 000.

No person shall:

* Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people.
* Unlawfully discriminate against any child.
* Engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to harm them physically or emotionally.
* Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person,or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves.
* Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time.
* Develop a ‘special’ relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs.
* Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention.
* Arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the organisation’s programs and activities.
* Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians.
* Work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
* Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children.
* Use inappropriate language in the presence of children.
* Do anything in contravention of the organisation’s policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct.

What happens if you breach this Code of Conduct

* If you breach this Code of Conduct you will face disciplinary action, including and up to termination of employment or cessation of engagement with the organisation.

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

The law of the Commonwealth

The Child Safety Act - Victoria

Drysdale Football Club Code of Conduct

This policy was provided in template form from the Department of Health and Human Services and adopted for Drysdale Football Club purposes.