

# Mornington Community Gardens

## Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

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### Commitment

All children who come to Mornington Community Gardens have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children attending Mornington Community Gardens will always be our first priority and we have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe and have fun while participating in gardening activities with their families or carers or visiting as part of an education program.

### Purpose

This Policy outlines how Mornington Community Gardens prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

### Scope

This policy applies to all members of the COM, members, and associate members children and other individuals involved in our organisation including contractors and visitors. This policy applies to all activities conducted by Mornington Community Gardens

### Definitions

*Committee of Management* means the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and elected general members.

*Child abuse* means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child.
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

*Harm* is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

*Child/Children* means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

## ***Concerns and complaints***

A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to Mornington Community Gardens related to one or more of the following:

- our services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Mornington Community Gardens.
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person at Mornington Community Gardens
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

## **Role of the Committee of Management**

The COM has the role of making sure Mornington Community Gardens prioritises children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

The COM will champion and model a child safe culture at Mornington Community Gardens. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The COM will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Everyone at Mornington Community Gardens has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The COM will make sure that members and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy.

The COM will conduct an annual review the effectiveness of the Mornington Community Gardens child safety and wellbeing policy.

## **Children's empowerment and participation**

We actively seek to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning, delivery of services and management of facilities.

We want children to develop new friends and encourage children to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and take action if this occurs.

We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights including the right to be safe at Mornington Community Gardens. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation.

Mornington Community Gardens values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families.

### **Families and communities**

Mornington Community Gardens recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions that may affect their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

### **Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families**

Mornington Community Gardens is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country at all official meetings
- consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices at Mornington Community Gardens
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at Mornington Community Gardens, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture.

### **Valuing diversity**

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- deliver opportunities that reflect the diversity of our members and their interests and cultures
- strive to reflect the diversity of our community through representation in our COM and members
- acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates.
- have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity
- commit to ensuring our facilities and activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

## **Code of Conduct**

Mornington Community Gardens has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. COM, members, volunteers, contractors and visitors must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.

## **Complaints and reporting**

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

Mornington Community Gardens has a complaint handling policy that includes information for members and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. An easy-to-understand complaints information sheet will be provided in the clubrooms.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then members and volunteers at Mornington Community Gardens must report it in accordance with the complaint handling policy and the reporting requirement of the Child Safe Standards. KCGS members and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police.

**Complaints can be emailed to:** [dig-itcomgarden@hotmail.com](mailto:dig-itcomgarden@hotmail.com)

*If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.*

If a person does not feel comfortable making a report to a child safety person, they may report their concern to the Chair of the Management Committee.

## **Record keeping**

Mornington Community Gardens is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.

All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system.

Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

## **Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct**

Mornington Community Gardens will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies (see list below). Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in suspension or termination of membership.

## **Review**

COM will review all child safe practices and policies at least every year. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'. Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and also inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices. Reviews are overseen by the COM and will be informed by consultation with children, families and members.

## **Supporting legislation**

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* (including Child Safe Standards)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* (including reporting to Child Protection)
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)