



Geelong Field Naturalists Club Inc. (GFNC)

Child Safe Policy

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/79wq57iut9ax2tk/AADyTVis5kxa6vxMUoJOf8Qpa?dl=0>

This Child Safe Policy was approved by the GFNC Committee on 17 Oct 2022. The Policy is reviewed every five years, when advised by the Commission for Children and Young People, or if and when the scope of Club activities change. It is due to be reviewed in 2027.

This policy demonstrates the strong commitment of the GFNC to child safety. It provides an outline of the policies and practices we have developed with the intention to keep everyone safe from any harm, including abuse.

Any comment or enquiry on the GFNC Child Safe Policy, procedures and practices, should be referred to the Child Safety Officer or the Club President.

Child Safety Officer (CSO)

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PART 1—Our commitment to child safety

All children who participate in GFNC activities have the right to feel and be safe. We aim to create a child/family friendly environment where children are valued, feel safe, learn and have fun.

The GFNC is committed to the inclusiveness and cultural safety of Aboriginal children and their families; children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds; and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability; those who are unable to live at home; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children. We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation and we respect the diverse circumstances and cultural backgrounds of people. We recognise that these principles support the wellbeing and safety of all children.

The welfare of children is a priority and the Club has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about or receive a complaint about the safety of a child. Any allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently according to GFNC policies and procedures.

Definitions

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

Child abuse can include:

- 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; and
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child, including because 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 Safety Officer (CSO) works with the GFNC President and Committee in leading the Club towards child safe practices; leading the development and ongoing maintenance of a plan for the protection of the children associated with the Club; and establishing a culture of safety and growth for children. The Child Safety Officer receives and manages any complaints or incident reports regarding child safety or suspected or known child abuse.

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 the Club related to one or more of the following:

- our dealings with individuals;
- claims of abuse or bad behaviour by a Club member, a volunteer or another individual associated with the Club;
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child;
- the conduct of a child at a GFNC activity or event; and
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

Person associated with the Club is a non-member who participates in a Club event or activity.



Children in the GFNC

The GFNC acknowledges and respects the rights of all children. We aim to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal and other cultures and understand the importance of culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children. We value the voices of children and will act on concerns raised by children or their families in regard to their safety.

The GFNC involves the voices of children and their families through provision of a Junior membership option, as well as a Family membership option. These options provide the opportunity for children and/or families to become members with rights to participate in decision-making, especially about matters that may directly affect them.

In the past, the GFNC has run a Cadet (juniors) naturalists' program. This program is not currently on offer, but could be reinstated pending demand. Such a program would provide a further opportunity for children and families to feed into the development of Club policies and practices and lead to a review of this policy.

Responsibilities

This Policy applies to all GFNC members and persons associated with the Club.

GFNC President and CSO are responsible for:

- developing, implementing and maintaining the GFNC Child Safety Policy and procedures
- implementing processes to ensure that Club members and others associated with the Club are familiar with this Policy and procedure, including their individual responsibilities
- ensuring that a Child Safety training program is developed and delivered
- ensuring that any reported Child Safety concerns or reports of harm to children are taken seriously and actioned urgently
- ensuring Club members who lead any official activity sanctioned by the GFNC hold a current Working With Children Check (WWCC) or Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration and that this information is securely stored
- implementing processes to ensure members sign agreement to respect and abide by Club Rules, Code of Conduct and Child Safe Policy.

GFNC key leaders (e.g., Group leaders, Excursion leaders, Committee members) are responsible for:

- being proactive and keeping fully informed of the Child Safe Policy
- acting at all times to ensure that all activities follow policy guidelines and making sure that all our activities and events take place in safe spaces for children and those children are protected as much as possible from harm
- ensuring they hold a current WWCC or VIT registration and add the Club as a linked organization
- encouraging children who may attend GFNC activities to contribute and voice their ideas or any concerns about the activity, project or event
- reporting any child safety and wellbeing concerns or incidents either witnessed, or reported to them by children or an adult, to the Child Safety Officer and GFNC President
- following the GFNC procedures and guidelines for reporting and managing a complaint or incident, including making sure the child is safe.

Members and others associated with the Club are responsible for:

- being proactive and keeping fully informed of Club Rules, Code of Conduct and Child Safe Policy
- ensuring they respect and abide by Club Rules and the Code of Conduct
- reporting any child safety and wellbeing concerns or incidents either witnessed, or reported to them, to the CSO and GFNC President



PART 2—Guidelines for the GFNC Committee

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to appoint members with appropriate skills to work with children. The CSO, Committee members, Group Leaders and Excursion Leaders must demonstrate a commitment to cultural awareness and child safety, and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when appointing Group Leaders or inviting members to lead excursions, we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

The CSO and members who lead any GFNC sanctioned activities or events (Leaders) are required to hold a WWCC, or for those who are registered teachers, a current VIT registration. Club members must add the Club as a linked organisation to their current WWCC. The Secretary will maintain a secure record of such members with a WWCC.

If necessary, the Committee will carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people to lead and assist with activities that are specifically designed for children, for example a cadets or Club juniors' program.

Training

The GFNC is committed to ensuring that all members understand their responsibilities in relation to cultural inclusiveness and child safety. The Policy is brought to the attention of members each year through the President's Report as part of the Club's AGM.

The Club provides all members in leadership positions, including Group Leaders and Excursion Leaders, with an induction to the Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct upon appointment to their role and/or as part of a biennial information session scheduled for key leaders. Training will assist these members to recognise concerns about child safety and incorporate safety considerations into decision-making to promote a culturally inclusive and safe environment for children and families.

Online resources available on the Commission for Children and Young People website will be used as part of the Club's training program <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/child-safe-standards/>

A key role within the Club is the CSO. While not a nominated Committee position, the CSO is required to report to the Committee annually on all child safe related matters. No specific background or skills are required for the role, but the CSO should understand the requirements that organisations, including the GFNC, need to meet in order to comply with government regulations surrounding child safe environments. Supporting resources for the CSO are located on the Commission for Children and Young People website <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/useful-links/>

Fair procedures for GFNC members

The safety and wellbeing of children is a primary concern. We are fair and just to GFNC members who volunteer for roles within the Club. The decisions we make when recruiting and when assessing any reported safety incidents will always be thorough, transparent, based on evidence and in line with the Club's Rules and this Policy.

We will record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident report form including investigation updates. All records will be securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we will provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions that we as an organisation take.

Privacy and information sharing

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. The Club will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety.

We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected, for example by way of secure/password protected online storage.

Risk management

We recognise the importance of a risk management approach to minimise the potential for child abuse or harm to occur, and use this to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning.



Risk management strategies are included in the Club's Code of Conduct to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical and online environments. Risk management strategies include, no individual/adult will be left alone with children (other than their own) except in case of an emergency, and children at Club meetings or on excursions or Club events and activities are expected to be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Legal responsibilities

The GFNC takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** The failure to disclose criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in the GFNC 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.
- **Duty of care:** If a child is abused by an individual associated with the GFNC, we are presumed to have breached our duty of care unless the Club can prove that it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse in question.



PART 3—Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct identifies expected behaviours of people associated with the Club and should be read in conjunction with the GFNC Child Safe Policy and Victorian Child Safe Standards <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/>

As a GFNC member, or as a person participating in Club activities, **I will:**

1. treat everyone with consideration and respect and not discriminate against any person
2. support the Club to ensure everyone feels welcome, included, safe and is an equal and valued participant in activities
3. adhere to all relevant laws and regulations and to Club rules, policies and protocols, including the Child Safe Policy and health and safety practices
4. respect and protect the natural environment including all native flora and fauna while engaged in any Club activity
5. identify and mitigate risks to peoples' safety, health and wellbeing by following directions and safety systems associated with Club activities
6. take all reasonable steps to prevent all forms of physical, emotional, psychological or sexual harm to children*
7. raise concerns if risks to child safety or abuse are identified in any of the activities, organisational structures, procedures or other practices at the Club
8. ensure any allegation of criminal activity, such as child abuse, is reported to the police or child protection as appropriate
9. act and report on any concerns or observed breaches of this Code of Conduct to GFNC leadership

I will not:

10. condone, exaggerate, trivialize, participate or encourage others to participate in behaviour that is illegal, unsafe, offensive or abusive
11. put children at risk of abuse, for example through exploitation, harassment or segregation from a group
12. arrange personal contact, including via social media or online, with children for a purpose unrelated to Club activities
13. disclose personal or sensitive information about people unless required to do so under relevant Club policies and procedures or with their agreement

By following these principles and actions you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any concerns about breaches of this Code to Club leadership, such as the GFNC President or CSO.

Breaches of this Code of Conduct will be dealt with according to the procedures outlined in the GFNC Rules.

*Children are defined as being under 18 years of age.



PART 4—Procedure for responding to complaints, concerns or reports of suspected child abuse

Individuals who believe, or have been made aware of, child abuse have a legal obligation to report the allegations.

Someone—GFNC Club member, child, parent, carer etc—has a concern; receives a complaint or allegation; or observes harm to a child:

1. You (informant) **must report allegations/observations to a relevant GFNC leader as quickly as possible.**

Relevant leaders include Excursion Leader/s; Meeting Chair; CSO or Club President and/or Secretary

2. The relevant leader and informant will assess whether the child/children are at risk of immediate harm. **If there is a belief that a child is at risk, the Police must be notified.**
3. You **must complete an Incident Report Form as soon as practical** and forward it to the CSO.
4. You are required to maintain accurate written records pertaining to the reported matter.

Relevant Club leader is advised of child abuse or made aware a child may be unsafe:

5. You (relevant leader) and informant will assess whether the child/children are at risk of immediate harm. **If there is a belief that a child is at risk, the Police must be notified.**
6. You **must advise the CSO of the situation as quickly as possible.**
7. Ensure the informant knows where to obtain the Incident Report Form and confirm that it must be completed and promptly sent to the CSO.

CSO is advised of child abuse or made aware a child may be unsafe:

8. You (CSO) **must ensure that Incident Report Form is completed by the informant.**
9. **You must ensure that any further accurate written reports** pertaining to the reported matter are created.
10. **You are responsible for reporting to relevant authorities**, including the Department of Human Services and Child Protection if required.
11. **You must complete the *Office Use* and *Action Taken* details on the Incident Report Form** and inform the GFNC President.
12. **Offer support to the informant**, from the Club and other organisations such as the Commission for Children and Young People or Childfirst (Child and family services information, referral and support teams <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams>), if needed.
13. **Securely store online, or organise for the storage of, the completed Incident Report form.**
14. **Undertake any follow up action promptly.**
15. **Keep the Club President, informant, relevant leader, child/children and families, up-to-date** on the investigation/s and outcome/s of the matter.



Record keeping

- All child safety complaints, concerns and incidents will be recorded.
- 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.
- Records will be stored securely and kept by the Club for seven years after the child turns 18.



PART 5—Flow chart of the Incident Report process

Who is responsible for reporting allegations or complaints, or witnesses harm?

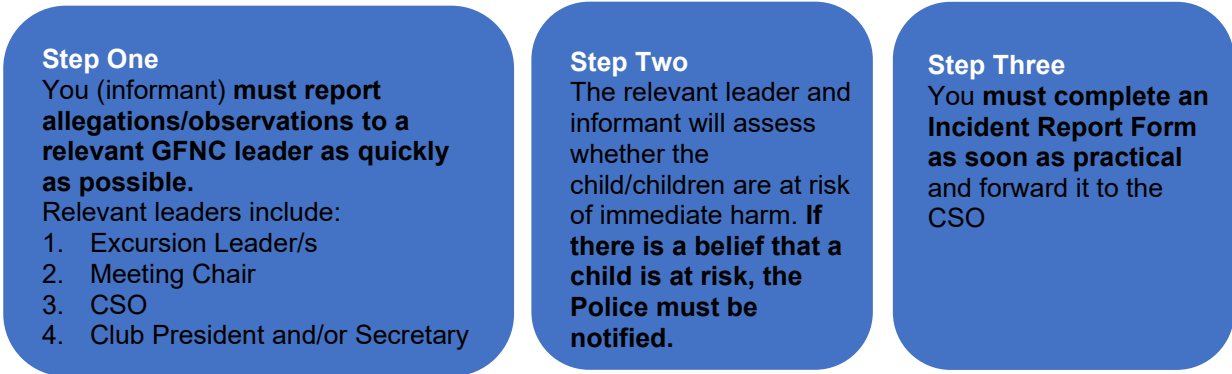


A complaint, or suspected incident or allegation of child abuse, occurs.
If it is believed that a child is in immediate risk call the Police on 000.

Types of allegations or incidents that need to be reported can include:

- Physical, sexual, grooming, emotional, psychological, neglect or family violence, bullying
- Disclosure of abuse or harm.

What to do once you have received a complaint/allegation or witness harm?



Note: You are required to maintain accurate written records pertaining to the reported



Once a relevant club leader has been notified, they must follow these steps:



A complaint, or suspected incident or allegation of child abuse, occurs.
If it is believed that a child is in immediate risk, Police are called on 000.

GEELONG FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Reg. No A0013708R
ABN 55 481 179 265



Step One

You (relevant leader) and informant will assess whether the child/children are at risk of immediate harm. **If there is a belief that a child is at risk, the Police must be notified.**

Step Two

You **must advise the Child Safety Officer of the situation as quickly as possible.**

Step Three

Ensure the informant knows where to obtain the Incident Report Form and confirm that it must be completed and promptly sent to the Child Safety Officer.

Once the CSO has been notified, they must follow these steps:

Child Safety Officer

Step One

You (CSO) must ensure that an Incident Report Form is completed by the informant.

Step Two

You must ensure that any further accurate written reports pertaining to the reported matter are

Step Three

You are responsible for reporting to relevant authorities, including the Department of Human Services and Child Protection if required.

**Department of Health and Human Services (Geelong Office) 4243 5111
West Division Intake for Child Services - Rural and regional only - 1800**

Step Six

You must complete the *Office Use and Action Taken* details on the Incident Report Form and inform the GFNC President.

Step Five

Offer support to the informant, if needed.

Step Four

Securely store online, or organise for the storage of, the completed Incident Report form.

Step Seven

Undertake any follow up action promptly.

Note: Keep the Club President, informant, relevant leader, child/children and families, up-to-date on the investigation/s and outcome/s of the matter



PART 6—Incident Report form

GFNC Child Abuse Incident Report Form

- This form is to be used in conjunction with the GFNC Child Safe Policy to guide and respond to complaints or reports of suspected or observed child abuse.
- **The form must be completed as soon as a complaint is known or an incident is reported or observed.**
- All incident reports **must be reported as soon as possible** to the **Child Safety Officer**

Details to be completed by person submitting this form

Name of person submitting form:	
Date of complaint/ incident:	
Time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
GFNC activity being undertaken	
Name(s) of child/children involved:	
Does the child identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?	No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Aboriginal <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Torres Strait Islander <input type="checkbox"/>
Name(s) of other person/s involved:	

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Please categorise the incident

Physical violence

Sexual offence

Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious neglect

Other

Please describe the complaint/concern/incident

Exactly when and where did an observed or reported incident take place?	
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What happened?	
Who was involved?	
What were you told or what did you see?	
Other information	
If the incident description is written by someone other than the person making the report, give name and details	

Details of person making the report

Name of person reporting the incident/complaint:	
Relationship of reporting person to the child involved	Child <input type="checkbox"/> Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Carer <input type="checkbox"/> Someone else <input type="checkbox"/>

Incident reporter wishes to remain anonymous?

Yes No

Informant signature ----- Date -----

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Office use:

Date incident report received:	
GFNC member managing incident and their position in the Club:	
Follow-up date:	
Incident ref. number:	

Action taken after reported incident

Incident reported to Child Safety Officer

Incident reported to Victoria Police

Incident reported to Department of Human Services

Other Action (details below)

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