

Mornington Peninsula Athletic Club

Child safe policy and statement of commitment

Our commitment to child safety

MPAC is committed to child safety.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our coaches, volunteer and athletes.

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.

MPAC is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

MPAC has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all volunteers including coaches.

MPAC is committed to regularly training and educating our committee members, coaches and other volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, coaches and other volunteers to achieve these commitments.

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

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in MPAC. 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 tolerance in MPAC, 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.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our committee members, coaches and other volunteers on how to behave with children who are members of MPAC.

All of our committee members, coaches and other volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in MPAC understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our club's culture aims for all club members (in addition to parents/carers) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our committee members, coaches and other volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our committee members, coaches and other 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 coaches and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand MPAC's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to our child safety code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). 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

When engaging or recommending coaches, we take all reasonable steps to ensure that skilled people work with children.

All coaches and other volunteers engaged in child-related work, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to all club members. The decisions we make when 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 form¹, including investigation updates. 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 any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be committee members, coaches, other volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

MPAC takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. 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 the police.²

¹ See resource seven in this toolkit.

² A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

- **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.³
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.⁴

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). 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 (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no committee member or coach is to have contact with a child member on social media).

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.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

MPAC takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our committee is trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, committee members, coaches and other 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 (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- 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 observed⁵
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

³ Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

⁴ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first>.

⁵ For example behaviour, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc>