



Child Safe Policy

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A. Child Safe Policy

Our commitment to child safety

All children who take part in Friends of Werribee Gorge & Long Forest Mallee Inc. (FOWGLFM Inc.) volunteer conservation activities have a right to be safe and feel protected. FOWGLFM Inc. will work to create a child-safe and friendly environment where conservation is fun and activities are appropriate to the age, abilities, culture and interests of children and adults.

A child safe organisation

FOWGLFM Inc. is a child-safe organisation that:

1. Welcomes the participation of parents, guardians and children.
2. Will ensure the safety and welfare of children taking part in Friends' activities.
3. Will not tolerate discrimination or abuse of children.
4. Will take action to prevent, identify and stop child abuse and will report serious abuse and manage potential abuse of children.
5. Will make members aware of our 'Child-Safe Policy' and train members to engage with children in a positive way and to identify and prevent child abuse.
6. Will have leaders who manage interaction with children while ensuring children's safety.
7. Will take action to protect children.

Respect for difference

All children, young people and adults with an interest in conservation are welcome to take part in Friends' activities and will be treated with respect.



Responding to suspected breaches of child safety

1. Suspected cases of child abuse will be reported to the Coordinator, Secretary or Treasurer who will respond to the report as appropriate to the reported abuse.
2. The appropriate officer will clarify the nature of the abuse and act to ensure the safety of the child.
3. Cases of lack of safety or suspected abuse reported by children will be taken seriously and will be investigated and include discussion with the child and an opportunity for the child to speak and be listened to in the presence of a parent or guardian.
4. Where appropriate and possible the breach of safety will be rectified.
5. Depending on the nature of the suspected abuse, actions include talking to the child, talking to the parent or guardian, contacting the school Principal, talking to the alleged perpetrator, and reporting behaviour to police.
6. Where a person or member is the suspected cause of child abuse and investigation by the Coordinator, Secretary or Treasurer indicates that there is a serious breach and there is evidence to sustain a case, the incident will be reported to Police. Where an act falls within the meaning of the 'Reportable Conduct Scheme' established under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, Victoria Parliament, and subsequent Schedules, the reportable allegation will be notified to the Victoria Government Commission for Children and Young People.
7. Where deemed appropriate, and a child needs protection, concerns about a child's safety may be reported the Child Protection Authorities.

B. Managing Child Safety

Expectations and procedures to manage Child Safety

Managing project days

1. We expect that parents, guardians or relatives will participate with children at project days unless children are participating as a school group.
2. School groups taking part in project days will be accompanied by the designated number of teachers and parents as per school policies.
3. FOWGLFM Inc. will maintain their commitment to a high standard of child safety by appropriate management and awareness.
4. During a briefing at the start of each project day, details of job safety and activities will be discussed with members and children present. Appropriate training and equipment will be provided to ensure safety and success.
5. Committee members will supervise activities, provide guidance and ensure children's safety.



6. Positive feedback will be provided to all children regardless of culture or ability. Children will be encouraged to express an opinion and participate in decision making where possible.
7. At the conclusion of project activities children will be given an opportunity to discuss their experience, including difficulties and successes.

C. Code of Conduct

Friends of Werribee Gorge & Long Forest Mallee Inc.

1. It is the responsibility of all members to act to ensure the safety of children working with the Friends.
2. Potential safety issues and their mitigation will be explained and demonstrated to members, parents, guardians and children. If appropriate, work areas will be clearly zoned to reduce potential dangers.
3. Where a member or child is placed in an unsafe situation, feels unsafe or is threatened with or subjected to abuse it is the responsibility of members who are aware of the situation to take action. They are to make that person as safe as possible if the situation needs immediate action. In any case the breach should be reported to the Coordinator.
4. Members will work with children in an open and transparent way and model appropriate adult behaviour.
5. Members will deal with children in a positive way, breaking tasks down to aid performance, praising good attempts, demonstrating correct methods, using appropriate language, avoiding bad and abusive language and generally creating a positive atmosphere.
6. Where appropriate, members should assist children on project days. However, members should work with small groups of children within sight of other members. Members should avoid working alone with a child or out of sight of other members.
7. Children will be listened to and their ideas valued.
8. Members will respect the differences in gender, culture and ability of children.
9. Physical contact with children may be appropriate where a child is related to a member but generally members will avoid physical contact with children except where they act to ensure a child's safety.
10. Members will not exchange personal contact details with other people's children participating in volunteer activities. Where children request a newsletter or information on projects this will be done by the Secretary.
11. Members should not ignore suspicions or disclosure of child abuse. In such cases the Coordinator, Secretary or Treasurer should be informed so that they can take appropriate action.
12. Photographs showing children as volunteers will only be taken if and when approved by a parent or guardian. Photographs taken of school groups working as volunteers will only be taken with the



school's approval and will be given to the school so that they will be handled within the school's Photography and Child Safety Policies. Photographs of children as volunteers will not be used in publications, including on-line, newsletters and newspapers, unless prior approval of parents or guardians has been obtained. A permission form will be available recording details and parent's/guardian's signature.

13. The privacy of children and their family will be respected and personal information only disclosed to people who need to know. (See our Privacy Policy)
14. All adult volunteers who attend FOWGLFM Inc. activities are required to have a current Working with Children Check. A copy of the card and details must be uploaded the Parks Victoria ParkConnect website, Accreditation page.
15. FOWGLFM Inc. will keep a register of Working with Children Checks. Card holders are to take personal responsibility to inform the Working with Children Check Unit of new work details and changes to personal contact details within 21 days of any change.

D. Appendix 1 – Other issues

1. Parks Victoria require all volunteers who participate in activities on Parks Victoria estate to hold a current Working with Children Check.
2. Working with Children check and card – no fee applies for volunteers, the process is handled via the website: www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au
3. Definition of a Child – In the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, Victoria Parliament, a 'child' is defined as person who is under 18 years old.
4. Definition of serious breach – In our Child Safe Policy a serious breach is one that would come under the definition of 'reportable conduct' as defined in the Child Welfare and Safety Act 2005.
5. Our Child Safe Policy will work with our other policies especially the Privacy Policy.

E. Appendix 2 - Definition of 'reportable conduct'

'Reportable conduct' listed in the Child Welfare and Safety Act 2005 includes –

1. Sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of a child).
2. Sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of a child).
3. Physical violence (against, with or in the presence of a child).
4. Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm.
5. Significant neglect.



This list is further explained in “Information Sheet 2, What is Reportable Conduct” and available from the Commission for Children and Young People at www.ccyp.vic.gov.au.

F. Appendix 3 – Awareness of Child Safe Policy, Training – Case Studies for discussion & Further Reading

Awareness of Child Safe Policy

1. Child Safe Policy will be reviewed in November each year and affirmed at the Annual General Meeting in the following February. All members will have a chance for input.
2. All members will be given access to a copy of the Child Safe Policy. Potential members and new members will be asked to read the Child Safe Policy at their first project day. Copies can also be downloaded from our website: www.fowglfm.org.au
3. At the start of each project day the project briefing and job safety alerts will include a reference to the Child Safe Policy. A Child Safe Policy checklist is printed on the reverse of the volunteer sign-in sheet. When signing in for a project day, members in attendance will need to tick the box beside their name to acknowledge having read and accepted the Child Safe Policy Checklist.
4. Volunteers at a project day will be made aware of our processes including who to approach for help, for reassurance, to express concern or to report a breach of child safety.
5. All members will be available to assist but any breaches of safety should be reported to the Coordinator, Secretary or Treasurer.



Training – Case Studies for discussion

Case studies from the Friends of Werribee Gorge & Long Forest Mallee Inc. for discussion.

When discussing each of these cases consider our Child Safe Policy and what other information you would need to know.

Case 1

At a project day planting with a group of school children, a child does not have a partner to plant with. The child appears isolated from the group. What do you do?

Case 2

A parent and child join a 'Clean up Australia Day' project in Long Forest Road. You know that there is a section of roadside still to be cleaned. However, the parent and child seem to be involved in an argument. What do you do to improve the situation?

Case 3

At a planting day with a school group accompanied by supervising teachers and parent assistants are planting with Friends at Werribee Gorge State Park. A photographer from the local newspaper arrives wanting photographs of children involved in planting. What should you do?

Case 4

A child and parent arrive at a project day to take part in a planting. The child is unhappy, covered in bruises and has an arm in a sling. You are told that the child has fallen over. What do you do?

Further reading:

Resources are available on-line, many with downloadable PDF documents. The most reliable are those from the *Commission for Children and Young People* and the Victorian Parliament websites. Organisations dealing with young people may have already developed Child Safe Policies and posted them online. Some of these may be worth consulting.

Documents listed below have been used to develop the FOWGLFM Inc. Child Safe Policy. Also, documents from Vicsport have been consulted but have been less useful as these are designed for sporting organisations. These can be viewed at website: www.vicsport.com.au/child-safe-standards.

Sites with documents of particular relevance are:

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, No 83, Victoria Parliament and schedules 1 – 5. Website: www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Commission for Children and Young People, August 2016, *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation*, Version 3, Victorian Government.



*Commission for Children and Young People, July 2017, Information Sheet 1, About the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme, **ccyp.vic.gov.au**.*

*Commission for Children and Young People, July 2017, Information Sheet 2, What is Reportable Conduct?, **ccyp.vic.gov.au**.*

*Commission for Children and Young People, July 2017, Information Sheet 3, Responsibilities of the head of an organisation, **ccyp.vic.gov.au**.*

*Victorian Health and Child Wellbeing amendments Bill 2017, Website: **www.legislation.vic.gov.au***