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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

AND

PROCEDURES

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy Statement: A commitment to Child Protection

Oasis Camp Inc. is committed to welcoming children and their carers and providing a 'child-safe' environment, culture and programs for children and other vulnerable people who come to this venue. We see such a commitment as flowing naturally from our vision and mission to operate according to biblical, Christian principles for living and for recognising the unique value and potential of every person, regardless of race, age, gender, ability or disability.

All children who come to Oasis Camp have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of children in our care will always be our first priority. We aim to create and maintain a safe and friendly environment where children are listened to, feel safe, have fun, accept challenges, learn and grow. We recognise the particular need for sensitivity for Aboriginal children and those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds. We take into consideration the needs of children with disabilities and seek to include them and make them feel safe and welcome.

The responsibility for safety and welfare of children in this context may at times be shared between Oasis Camp, guest organisations and the adults supervising the guest group (e.g. teachers or camp leaders).

The staff of Oasis Camp accept the responsibility of providing a safe environment and creating a culture where child safety and wellbeing is our first priority. This policy recognises federal and state legislation (see Appendix 1) and seeks to comply with its requirements.

This Policy has the endorsement of the Board of Oasis Camp Incorporated and Christian Venues Association¹, a national association of which Oasis Camp is a member. It recognises both Federal and State legislation (See Appendix 1) and the spirit that seeks to protect and nurture the holistic development of children and young people. It reflects the operational principles of our **Code of Conduct**. (*See separate document*)

1.2 Scope:

The provisions and duties of care expressed in this Child Protection Policy applies to:

- a. The governing Board, managers, all employees (including volunteers) members, camp leaders.
- b. All guests or hirers or the venue and its facilities, including school, church or other groups.
- c. Any contractors, subcontractors, delivery persons or others engaged to provide services on the premises.
- d. All activities and programs organised by or with the approval of Oasis Camp, on the premises or off-site.

¹ Christian Venues Association resources and supports more than 200 members, specifically hosting professional development programs to improve skills and understanding of the industry standards, compliance and operational issues.

1.3 Authority

This Child Protection Policy was revised and updated to reflect the seven Mandatory Standards as defined by the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safety Standards) Act, 2015 (Victoria). It was approved by the Board and adopted for use by Oasis Christian Camp Incorporated on 1/12/2016.

1.4 Policy Review

The Child Protection Policy and Procedures will be reviewed at least bi-annually, or to remain compliant with new legislation. The Board of Oasis Camp will inform all interested parties when the date of review will occur, and any changes recommended by the interested parties should be submitted in writing to the governing body for consideration one month before the review date.

Any proposed changes will be submitted to the Board for approval at a properly-convened meeting for approval before being adopted and implemented.

2. 1 Children's Rights to Safety and Participation

Oasis Camp staff and volunteers encourage children to express their views and suggestions through the feedback surveys (see Appendix 2), through listening to them when they speak about matters that directly affect their sense of safety or well-being. We value diversity and do not tolerate discrimination in our words or practices or in those of others.

Part of our work with children is to **teach and inform** them of what they can do if they feel unsafe, threatened or upset by the behaviour of adults or other children.

We will listen to and act on any concerns children or their carers raise with us.

We are committed to protecting children from harm. 'Harm', as used in this policy, includes any and all of the following types of abuse or neglect of children and young people: physical; sexual; emotional/psychological; racial/cultural or religious. (Appendix 3)

'All forms of abuse injures children, sometimes visibly, but often in profound ways that damage a child's sense of identity, cause them to be anxious or fearful and reduce their capacity to participate in the community and opportunities of life.'

2.2 Feedback from Children

Children and young adults will have opportunity to reflect on their experience at the venue and to make comments regarding the accommodation, meals and program elements and other aspects of wellbeing, including staff conduct. Such feedback will inform Oasis Camp and guide adjustments to practices, programs and training.

3.1 Employment of Staff and Volunteers

Oasis Camp seeks to attract and retain the best staff and volunteers. Oasis Camp applies best practice standards in the recruitment, screening and training of staff and volunteers.

1. Our statement of commitment to child safety and our behavioural expectations of employees and volunteers are included in all advertisements and Job Descriptions.
2. We conduct reference checks prior to engagement, using an agreed set of questions. Conversations will be documented and kept as part of the employment file of successful applicants.
3. Short-listed applicants will be interviewed by the manager or his experienced delegate, prior to a written offer of employment being made.
4. We require and keep accurate, up-to-date records of National Criminal History Checks and Working with Children Checks status for all those working on the site with access to children. Any applicant who has been found guilty of a violent or sexual offense will not, under any circumstances, be considered for employment in activities or programs involving children.
5. We have a clear staff and volunteer induction process that includes providing them with a copy of this Policy, the Code of Conduct and other relevant documents detailing procedures.
6. All staff and volunteers are trained annually to refresh their knowledge of our policies and expectations in terms of conduct and protocol, especially where there has been document review.

3.2 Support and Training

We provide a system of support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. To this end we have developed a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our staff and volunteers.

1. Staff and volunteers are provided with a copy of our Code of Conduct booklet that defines unacceptable conduct, boundaries and expectations for behaviour.
2. Annual 'Refresh, Renew, Update' sessions are run for all program staff, to ensure staff awareness of the importance of child safety and familiarity with child protective practices and expectations.
3. Employees and management attend workshop training sessions organised by CVA, or other specialist organisations.

3.3 Risk Management

Risk assessment and management practices are embedded in our procedures prior to each camp, program or activity. We use these practices to inform our planning and operating of all aspects of the camping experience at Oasis Camp. Risk management applies to Work Health and general safety and specifically to the minimising of risks of abuse to children who are in our care.

4. Reporting a Child Abuse Concern

4.1 Appointing a Child Safety Officer

Each camp that involves children or minors will have an allocation of officers with specific responsibilities, such as Program Director, or First Aid Officer. A **Child Safety Officer** is appointed for responding to complaints made by staff, volunteers, children or young people (campers) or their supervising adults. This person should be mature, experienced and available on site, but preferably not directly working with children on site.

- 2018: Donna Watson: CSO

The Child Safety Officer will be identified and their role explained as part of the initial briefing of a new client group to the venue. Guests, staff and volunteers are expected to use either the **Complaints Form** or the **Incident Form** to note concerns arising from observations or experience. (See Appendix 4 and 5) Copies of these forms will be kept in the Camp Office.

4.2 When to make a Child Abuse Report

In the following pages, explanation is provided on making a report of suspected or actual child abuse to the Police or the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS Vic). Legislation requires any adult person who comes to the view that a child is in danger of being abused or harmed, or is being abused, must make a report. It is up to authorities to determine whether there is a case to prosecute. Such a view can be formed on the basis of:

- Direct observation
- A disclosure made by a child.
- A disclosure by someone close to a child (sibling, close friend, relative)

If you have formed a view that abuse is actually or likely to occur, act appropriately:

- Do not investigate or push the child for details
- Reassure the child that they are listened to, they are not at fault and it was right to report
- Do not make contact with the alleged perpetrator. If the alleged perpetrator is a member of staff, the manager may ask them to fill out an Incident form, and will stand them down from duties pending the outcome of the investigation.
- If an alleged sexual assault has taken place, clothing worn by the child should be retained for forensic examination

4.3 Notifying the OCC Insurer

When a report is made, the management will contact the insurer, GJ Insurance Consulting Pty Ltd.

‘Those who develop and provide services, as well as parents, should give the highest priority to the promotion and protection of a child’s safety, health, development, education and wellbeing.’
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)

Oasis Camp Reporting Process and Staff Debriefing On Site

There is a formal process for making and recording of complaints of child abuse or neglect on site and for seeking resolution to them. The following steps must be followed:

- A **Complaints Form** (see Appendix 4) that is kept [in the Manager's Office] will be filled out. A copy of this Form MUST be kept by the Child Safety Officer², if the complainant wishes to keep the original. This is an essential record of the event.
- The **Child Safety Officer** will meet with the child or the complainant, and hear the story, taking notes and seeking clarification, ensuring that the child feels listened to, understood and protected. (Some complaints may be able to be dealt with at this time.)
- If, in the view of the CSO, the allegation is serious and emotions are running high, **report the incident to the police**. This takes the matter immediately out of the jurisdiction of the venue. The police will determine if there is a case, and how to proceed. The Complaints Form will provide data for the police to assess.
- The accused staff member/volunteer or carer should be stood down from duties. If an allegation of abuse or inappropriate behaviour has been made, the person named must step out of direct contact with the client group until the matter is resolved.
- The accused person should fill out an **Incident Report** (Appendix 5). This ensures that their side of the story is heard and recorded. Another adult may witness the Incident Report if they personally observed the incident or alleged inappropriate behaviour.
- **Debriefing.** The staff member alleged to have misbehaved must be debriefed and appropriate decisions made regarding his/her immediate future, that is, whether or not they remain on the property or can continue to work with the client group.

Debriefing should also occur **for the whole team**. Allegations of inappropriate behaviour towards a child are upsetting to all staff members and they need support, encouragement, clarification and the opportunity to express their feelings.

- **Liaison with the client group.** Re-establishing trust in the management and program staff is essential and should be dealt with as soon as is practicable. The group (particularly supervising adults, such as teachers) need to be assured that the process is good and has been followed, and that all steps have been taken to ensure justice is done and that children are indeed safe.

² It is important to nominate and introduce a member of staff as the **Child Safety Officer**. This could be a manager or senior administration person – not an activity leader – preferably with some experience and skills in listening to children.

General Principles for making a Report regarding Child Abuse

Who should make a Child Protection (abuse) report or notification, to whom and when?

Certain professions are referred to as 'mandatory reporters'. This includes medical practitioners, nurses (including school nurses), members of the police force, primary and secondary teachers and principals. Penalties may be incurred by those named as 'mandatory reporters' if they fail to notify the appropriate authorities if they have reasonable grounds for a belief (not proof!) that a child or young person is in need of protection, because they have suffered, or are likely to suffer significant harm (see definitions), particularly physical or sexual abuse.

However, **everyone** has a moral responsibility to report all types of known or possible child abuse. (Furthermore, the recent Crimes Amendment Acts (Protection of Children, Grooming and Failure to Report) require **all** people, regardless of occupation, to protect children and report abuse, where there is a **reasonable belief** that a physical or sexual offence has occurred or may be committed against a child.

a. **Record Observations.** Make notes as to what you observe, or hear from or about a child that causes you concern for their safety and wellbeing. If you are reasonably sure that a child is in danger and needs protection, then make a report.

You do not have to be given permission by your employer to make such a report.

b. **Reporting.** Making a report is to lay a serious allegation of a criminal offence against another person, so clarify your perceptions (talk to the child or your colleagues) and decide the best method of reporting. You can make your report to:

- **The Oasis Camp Child Safety Officer**, using a Complaint Form. Attach your notes to the form, keeping a copy. The CSO may decide to take the concern to the person-in-charge of the guest group or to act unilaterally.
- **The Police.** The police are the most appropriate first responders if the report is regarding behaviour taking place at a campsite. Again, fill out a Complaint Form, attach your notes and call 000. The Child Safety Officer may also decide to call the police as a first step.
- **Child First (Family Information and Support Team)** – is a family-focussed and community-based intake and referral service.
Yarra Ranges: 1300 369 146
- **Child Protection Services** (1300 655 795 BH, or 13 12 78 AH) is a statutory service provided by DHS to protect children and young people at risk of harm and to work with families to ensure these risks are mitigated.

APPENDIX 1

LEGISLATION RELEVANT to CHILD PROTECTION

Both Federal and State legislation is relevant to the concepts discussed in this policy. This legislation includes:

Federal:

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

Fair Work Act 2009

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Family Law Act, 1975

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986

Victorian:

Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (The principle legislative document setting Child Protection reporting and responding standards)

Working with Children Act 2005

Children Well-being and Safety Act 2005

Charter of Human rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (NB Article 17)

Equal Opportunity Act 2010

The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012

Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014 (establishes 'grooming' as a criminal offence)

Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (establishes an offence of 'child endangerment' by negligently failing to reduce or remove a risk that a person will commit a sexual offence against a child.

*Crimes Amendment (Failure to Protect) Act 2015 (established a new criminal offence on July 1st, 2015. It applies to people in positions of authority within organisations that exercise care, supervision or authority over children, such as churches, schools, child-care centres, residential care homes and **camp sites**.*

Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safety Standards) Act 2015

International:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

APPENDIX 2 Feedback survey

Campers Name: _____

This survey is your chance to have a say about Oasis Camp and your time here. Think about each statement and mark on the line, somewhere between “Not at all!” and ‘Absolutely!’.

1. When we arrived I felt welcomed and looked after.

_____ | _____ | _____
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

2. The bedrooms were clean and the beds were comfortable.

_____ | _____ | _____
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

3. The bathrooms were clean, big enough and easy to use.

_____ | _____ | _____
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

4. There were great spaces for eating and activities.

_____ | _____ | _____
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

5. The activities were fun, challenging and well-organised.

_____ | _____ | _____
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

6. I felt safe and relaxed while I was at this camp.

_____ | _____ | _____
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

7. Even though some activities were challenging, I faced my fears and enjoyed doing them.

_____ | _____ | _____
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

8. The camp activity leaders were friendly and respectful of my friends and me.

_____ | _____ | _____
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

9. The meals were tasty, healthy and I had plenty to eat.

_____ | _____ | _____
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

10. I would recommend this camp as a great place for kids.

_____ | _____ | _____
Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

APPENDIX 3

DEFINITIONS OF 'HARM' IN THE CHILD SAFETY CONTEXT

1. Physical Abuse and Neglect

Includes intentionally causing, or threatening to cause, physical injury to a child. It includes inadvertently causing injury as a consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

It may also include not meeting the necessary developmental needs, such as being provided with adequate food, drinks or rest period, or being exposed to extreme weather without protection.

2. Sexual abuse and grooming

Sexual harm occurs when a person (adult, adolescent or another child) uses power or authority over a child, or inducements, to involve the child in sexual activity. It involves a wide range of sexual activity, contact or non-contact acts, including grooming behaviours, inappropriate touching, holding, or fondling a child, or exposing a child to pornography and, of course, to engaging in a sexual act with a child. (Under 16 years or more than 3 years apart in age.)

Some behaviours may not be regarded as abuse, but are unacceptable at Oasis CC:

- Inappropriate conversation of sexual matters
- Coarse language, especially of a sexual nature
- Suggestive gestures or remarks, especially regarding gender or physical attributes
- Jokes of a sexual nature
- Inappropriate touching – that is, uninvited, unwanted or of sexual or sensitive parts.

3. Emotional and Psychological

Emotional and psychological harm occurs when a person engages in inappropriate behaviours, such as rejecting, ignoring, threatening or verbally abusing a child, or allows others to do so. Because such abuse does not leave physical signs, it is often hidden and underestimated in terms of lifelong impact and damage to physical and emotional growth.

4. Racial, cultural or religious

Racial abuse is any harmful conduct that discriminates against, or demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, ethnic origin skin colour or other evidence of 'difference'. It may be overt, such as racial vilification or discrimination, or covert, such as demonstrating a lack of cultural sensitivity or positive ideas about a different ethnicity.

Religious or cultural abuse is similar to racial abuse, but is directed towards expressions of religious faith or practice or cultural dress, identifying styles of cultural expression or practices.

*The harm that is caused by racial, religious or cultural abuse targets the child's **identity**.*

5. Bullying

Bullying of a child or young person occurs when there is an inappropriate use of power by an individual or a group, with intent to harm or injure, either physically, emotionally or psychologically. Bullying is usually a deliberate and repeated focus by an individual or a group on the young person.

APPENDIX 4. Complaint Form

[To be used for Formal Complaints regarding discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), vilification, victimisation or bullying against yourself or another person, as observed by yourself.]

Please read the Code of Conduct Document before using this form.

COMPLAINT FORM (Private and Confidential) Date: / /201__ Time:__:__am/pm

Your Name: _____	Role at Oasis Camp: _____
Is the complaint about offending behaviour: a. directed towards you? Yes / No b. about another person? Yes / No	Who was the victim of the behaviour? Staff member: _____ Camper: _____ Other: _____
Please briefly, but accurately, describe the alleged behaviour about which you are lodging this Complaint Form. (Keep to the facts, without interpretation or opinion.) Who was the offending person: _____ What did he/she say or do? _____ _____ _____ What was your response? _____ _____ Where did the event/behaviour take place? _____ _____ Were there other witnesses? If so, provide name(s) _____ _____ Was this a one-off or repeated offense? _____ _____ What would you like to see as an outcome of the Complaint process? _____ _____	
Statement of Intent: I make this complaint in all sincerity, recognising that such a complaint may have a serious or long term impact on all those involved. I will act in good faith in the process and accept the ruling of the 'investigator' where I believe it is fair and transparent.	
Signed: _____ Date: ____/____/20____	
Witness: (Print name) _____ Date: ____/____/20____	
Signature: _____	

Justice, Relationship Repair and Restoration.

As a Christian organisation we understand the Gospel of Christ to have at its heart a recognition that human beings fail at times to live up to the standards of behaviour enshrined in law, in the teachings of the Bible and even personal beliefs and values. The Good News (Gospel) is that there is a pathway to forgiveness, relationship repair and restoration.

Justice demands that a person accused of an illegal or improper act should find both impartial judgement and penalty in the law. This means that:

- **Allegations do not constitute an offense until proven beyond reasonable doubt.** Therefore, the process of investigating an allegation of behaviour that has the power to harm or abuse a child must be full, formal and impartial. Thus persons who are part of the process, that is, a victim, a complainant or an accused person, should not be carry out an investigation.
- **If a person is found to be guilty of the alleged offence, then appropriate penalties and sanctions must be applied via the judicial system.** Whilst impartial third parties may undertake an investigation, they are not able to judge in the legal sense. They can present findings and establish a case to be answered. Such a case should then be made through the appropriate legal system, which will determine guilt and an appropriate penalty.
- **If, after full, formal and impartial investigation it is found there is no case to answer, then the accused person must be exonerated and their standing legally restored.** In matters relating to Child Safety and Abuse, misinformation and unsubstantiated allegations have the power to ruin a person's reputation and career. This is unjust and fails to apply with integrity the same standards outlined in this policy to protect a child. It is unjust to hold and treat a person as guilty if they have been exonerated by an impartial investigation and a legal verdict of 'Not guilty!'

Relationships Matter! At Oasis Camp we highly value relationship at all levels of operation. We acknowledge that mistakes are made and offence caused in relationships. Where this occurs, we seek to follow a **Relationship Repair and Restoration process, as follows:**

- a. Recognise that one person's words or actions have caused offence.
- b. Give opportunity for both parties to express their point of view and acknowledge the other. (This must only happen in a mediated, safe context, where both parties are willing to seek understanding and restoration.)
- c. Where offence has been caused, apology (at least) should be made, and forgiveness received.
- d. An agreement will be made on how the relationship will progress from this point on. No retaliation or blaming going forward. Limits to contact and interaction agreed.
- e. Ideally, this process should promote learning, insight, empathy and restored trust.

Notes:

1. *This Policy is written to reflect accurately the type of organisation, structure, programs and arrangements that Oasis Camp Inc participates in.*
2. *This Policy is designed to be part of a suite of documents that guide the operation of Oasis camp facility and programs. This includes a Code of Conduct, an Employment or Human Resource Management policy, Work, Health and Safety policy and practices an Emergency Management Policy and procedural documents.*
3. *The Code of Conduct document is referenced by this policy. This document is signed annually by all staff, volunteers, management and governing bodies.*
4. *This Policy is a work-in-progress! It is reviewed at least bi-annually, and more often if new legislation or regulations require it to be updated. If changes occur, staff are briefed of these changes and how it may affect their working practices.*
5. *Copies of this and other key documents are distributed to staff. Hard copies are kept in the main office, but soft copies are provided by email or on a USB data stick.*
6. *Each 6 monthly policy review with any highlighted amendments is provided in draft form for scrutiny and comment by the Oasis governing body and employees. Once it is approved by the governing body it is activated.*