

# Child Protection in the Sport of Gliding - Victoria

Guidelines for achieving child protection  
In Victorian gliding clubs



# COMMITMENT TO CHILD PROTECTION

Victorian gliding clubs along with other sporting clubs have a legal and a moral responsibility to provide positive and safe environments for children.

This requires making a firm and open commitment to child protection and adopting procedures and practices that will minimise the risk of a child being abused.

Child protection involves keeping children safe from abuse and protecting them from people who are unsuitable to work with children. Child protection in sport and recreation enables children to participate in activities that are an integral part of their culture without being exposed to individuals who can damage their development and, in some instances, take away their ability to enjoy the future.

The Victorian Soaring Association is committed to creating an environment where instructors, coaches, officials and parents/guardians are committed to acceptable practice and where clubs endeavour to ensure that children are safe from any form of abuse.

# Understanding child abuse and child protection

## Understanding child abuse

Child abuse can take many forms. Children may be harmed by both verbal and physical actions. They may also be harmed by people failing to provide them with basic care.

Child abuse could include:

### Sexual abuse/sexual misconduct

- any sexual act
- or sexual threat imposed on a child, including suggestive
- behaviour and inappropriate touching

### Physical abuse

- non-accidental injury and/or harm to
- a child caused by a parent, care-giver or another person responsible for the child

### Emotional abuse

- behaviours that may psychologically
- harm a child, including severe verbal abuse and threats of abuse or excessive and unreasonable demands

### Neglect

- where a child is harmed by the failure to provide the child with the basic physical and emotional necessities of life.
- All forms of child abuse must be avoided and addressed.
- For the purpose of guidelines, a child is considered to be a person under 18 years of age.

## Understanding child protection

Child protection involves keeping children safe from abuse and protecting them from people who are unsuitable to work with children. More specifically, child protection involves protecting children from the risk of harm caused by sexual abuse or misconduct, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect.

This can be achieved by:

Completing the *Working with Children Check* for child related positions, which is a legal requirement

Making a firm commitment to child protection that is understood and supported across your gliding club by officials, coaches, children and parents/guardians.

Providing a safe, open and honest environment that protects children as well as the people working with children. This includes creating an awareness of the risk of child abuse and openly discussing the need for child protection and how this can be achieved.

Identifying and managing the risks to children in your organisation

Adopting policies and practices that minimise the risk of child abuse. These can be by adopting a Code of Conduct and ensuring all members, officials, parents and pilots are aware of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Swiftly and appropriately responding to any incident of suspected child abuse that you observe or that is raised with you. This can involve a personal as well as an organisational response.

<https://www.vicsport.com.au/child-safe-standards/>

# LEGISLATION

## **Information on Victorian Child Protection:**

<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-protection>

## **Victorian Child Protection Legislation:**

[https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/search?q=child+protection&queryType=title\\_content&page=1&sort%5B\\_score%5D=desc&sort%5Btitle\\_az%5D=asc](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/search?q=child+protection&queryType=title_content&page=1&sort%5B_score%5D=desc&sort%5Btitle_az%5D=asc)

## **Information on Australian Child Protection legislation:**

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/australian-child-protection-legislation>

Besides meeting legal requirements, gliding clubs can benefit from making a commitment to child protection. Parents and guardians are more likely to support activities and clubs that are committed to the safety of their children, and a club that promotes this commitment could very likely benefit through increased membership and participation.

## **Key points to remember:**

- ✓ Fines and/or gaol sentences apply for failing to comply with the child protection legislation.
- ✓ There is no age minimum on the Working with Children Check (WWCC).
- ✓ The Working with Children Check is a free service for volunteers.
- ✓ Working With Children Check – How to apply as per the link:  
<https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply>

# MAKE CHILD PROTECTION PART OF YOUR CULTURE

## Child protection requires commitment

Child protection requires commitment and a genuine desire to minimise the risk of child abuse within gliding.

Clubs and groups that embrace child protection and make it an important part of their culture are more likely to achieve a safe and appealing environment for children.

Some ways in which a club or group could make child protection part of their culture include:

- Ensuring compliance with child protection legislation including conducting the Working with Children Check.
- Reference to child protection in any material produced by the club or group, for example, annual report, promotional material or club raffles.
- Regular discussion of child protection objectives at club committee meetings and in discussions with other clubs or organisations.
- Reference to the commitment to child protection at any functions, particularly where parents or guardians are involved (outlining any specific policies or actions adopted by the club).
- Child protection posters and leaflets in prominent positions around club facilities.
- Promote child protection objectives to parents and children.
- Adopt a Code of Conduct and ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities for creating a child-friendly environment.
- Ensure everyone – parents, staff, members, juniors, understand what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- When concerns are raised, act quickly to respond.

## Adopt basic principles

To minimise the risk of child abuse within your sport or activity there are a number of basic principles that should be adopted by sport and recreation clubs and groups.

These are:

- Be aware of the risk of child abuse. Identify and document where the risks are in your organisation.
- Be aware of the indicators of child abuse.
- Openly communicating and educating on the importance of child protection and risk management to instructors, coaches, pilots, officials, parents and guardians.
- Reinforce the club's/group's commitment to creating a positive environment for children, instructors, coaches and other club/group members.
- Adopt procedures that minimise the risks for instructors, coaches, pilots and parents. Try not to place instructors, coaches, pilots, parents or guardians in a position where they could be at risk.
- Ensure everyone is clear on what is acceptable behaviour and what is not acceptable (refer to the [Australian Sports Commission guidelines](#) and [Child Safe Sport Toolkit](#)).
- Adopt and implement policy and procedures regarding child protection (developed by your association).
- Promptly respond to any complaint, allegation or indication of child abuse.

# UNDERTAKE KEY TASKS

The key tasks that gliding clubs can undertake to create a safer environment for children to participate in their sport are outlined below.

## **1. Appoint a child protection representative**

Appoint a child protection representative from the committee of the club. This person should be the first point of contact if a child, parent, guardian or other member of the club becomes concerned about an incident. The person should be appropriately informed and trained and their details and role should be well advertised within the club.

[www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au).

## **2. Adopt and communicate policies and procedures**

Adopt and communicate the policies and procedures recommended by your relevant peak body or association. This should involve informing all committee members, instructors, coaches and other club members of the requirements.

## **3. Undertake the Working with Children Check**

All clubs and child related volunteers should meet the relevant requirements of the Working with Children Check.

Ask all existing volunteers, who are working with children to undertake the Working with Children Check. This is a free service for volunteers.

## **4. Respond to suspected child abuse (including allegations/complaints)**

Where there is an incident of suspected child abuse, the child protection representative for the club or group should immediately make contact with the peak body or association to seek advice and refer the management of the incident/complaint to the peak body or association. Before doing so, it may be appropriate for the child protection representative to clarify the allegation to enable proper briefing to the peak body or association (verbal followed by written advice). Ensure there is no harassment of the child or their parents/guardians by the person accused of the abuse or other members of a gliding club. If there is, this will be dealt with by the peak body or association.

# KEY PRINCIPLES WHEN DEALING WITH INCIDENTS

If a gliding club or group representative needs to communicate with any party (ideally the child protection officer), ensure that:

- Written and/or signed statements of any discussions are obtained.
- Only open questions are asked, for example “What happened?” rather than “Where did he hit you?”. Questions should require more than a yes or no answer.
- The club or group representative involved in any discussions is as independent as possible to the situation, the parties involved and the outcome. Ideally this will be the child protection representative.
- Another member of the club or group is present, and this person is also as independent as possible.
- People interviewed have appropriate support at meetings, such as a friend to witness discussions and provide support or a parent to provide support to a child.
- Any discussions are sensitively handled and no accusations are made.
- Liaise with the peak body, association, and/or Victorian Police.
- Action any disciplinary decision recommended by a peak body or association. The action should be immediate, particularly where an incident is more serious.
- Liaise with the peak body or association to finalise a report of any potential legal proceedings.
- Ensure there is no harassment of the child or their parents/guardians by the person accused of the abuse or other members of a club or group. If there is, this will be dealt with by the peak body or association. People should be encouraged to make a stand against child abuse and should not be victimised for doing so.



# BASIC PRINCIPLES OF COMPLAINT HANDLING

## Do:

- Treat all matters seriously
- Act promptly – preferably within 24 hours of a complaint being made
- Treat people fairly – you must listen to both sides of the story (this is referred to as natural justice)
- Stay neutral – work from the principle of ‘innocent until proven guilty’
- Listen carefully – do not put words into people’s mouths or interrupt them
- Make sure those involved in the complaint are kept informed
- Keep records

## Don’t:

- Ignore the behaviour and hope it will go away
- Take on the complaint if you have a conflict of interest
- Involve people unnecessarily in the complaint
- Prejudge the situation or people, take sides, or make assumptions or use stereotypes
- Leave the person making the complaint in a dangerous situation, particularly if the complaint concerns a child
- Treat people detrimentally or less favourably because they make a complaint or because they are the subject of a complaint.