

A Commitment to Child Safety

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A Child Protection Policy

Upper Plenty Conference Centre

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Upper Plenty Conference Centre 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 Upper Plenty Conference Centre 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 safety and welfare of children in this context may be shared between Upper Plenty Conference Centre, guest organisations and the adults supervising the guest group (e.g. teachers or specialists).

The staff of Upper Plenty Conference Centre accept the responsibility of providing a safe environment and creating a culture where child safety and well-being is our first priority. This policy was developed in collaboration with our staff and is responsive to the feedback of children who use our services, their parents and carers. It applies to all staff, visitors, children and individuals involved in any aspect of the running of Upper Plenty Conference Centre.

This Policy has the endorsement of Christian Venues Association¹, a national association of which Upper Plenty Conference Centre 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 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.

Children's Rights to Safety and Participation

Upper Plenty Conference Centre staff 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 wellbeing. 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.

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 Upper Plenty Conference Centre and guide adjustments to practices, programs and training.

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.

1. Staff are provided with a copy of our Code of Conduct booklet that defines unacceptable conduct, boundaries and expectations for behaviour.
2. At least every 2 years, 'Refresh, Renew, Update' sessions are run online or in person for all program staff, to ensure staff awareness of the

importance of child safety and familiarity with ChildSafe² practices and expectations.

3. Staff and management attend workshop-training sessions or online training provided by CVA, ACA or other specialist organisations at least once every 2 years. 2 years is stipulated rather than annually because UPCC doesn't run any kids camps at this stage, just occasional interactions when groups with children come. This is to be reviewed if more kids camps are run at UPCC in the future.

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 Upper Plenty Conference Centre. 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.

Reporting a Child Safety Concern

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, children or young people (campers) or their supervising adults. Kathryn Stokes

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 and staff are expected to use either the **Complaints Form** or the **Incident Form** to note concerns arising from observations or experience. (See Appendix 4) In the following pages, explanation is provided on making a report of suspected or actual child abuse to the Department of Health and Human Services

General Principles for making a Report regarding Child Abuse

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

The Upper Plenty Conference Centre 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) will be filled out. A copy of this Form **MUST** be kept by the Child Safety Officer³, 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 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.

³ 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.

- **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.

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 Upper Plenty Conference Centre 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.
- **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

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

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 Upper Plenty Conference Centre 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 or ABUSE

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.)

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**.*

"If a child's identity is denied or denigrated, then they are not being kept safe. Denying (racial, religious or cultural) identity is detrimental to their attachment needs (sense of belonging) emotional development, their education and their health. Every area of human development which defines the child's best interests has a cultural component. Your culture helps define HOW you belong, HOW you express emotion, HOW you learn and HOW you stay healthy." Muriel Bamblett, Robin Clark Memorial Lecture, 2005

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: / /

Time: : am/pm

Your Name: _____	Role at UPCC: _____
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: ____ / ____ / ____
Witness: (Print name) _____	Date: ____ / ____ / ____
Signature: _____	

