Mount Eliza Soccer Club
Child Safety Policy
&
Code of Conduct

May 2026

SECTION 1 - CHILD SAFETY POLICY

1. Introduction

All football clubs affiliated with Football Victoria ("**FV**") are required to comply with the Child Safe Standards and the mandatory reporting obligations under the Victorian Government's amendments to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) ("**CYFA**") and the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) ("**Crimes Act**").

Mount Eliza Soccer Club (the "**Club**") is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment that promotes the wellbeing of all children involved in its programs. Everyone at the Club — including players, parents, volunteers, coaches, officials, and Committee members — shares responsibility for protecting children and reporting any concerns about child safety.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

a) Foster a Club culture that prioritises child safety.

b) Establish clear procedures to protect children and manage risks.

c) Ensure all people involved with the Club understand their responsibilities when interacting with children, including identifying and reporting potential child safety concerns.

d) Provide guidance on responding to child safety concerns across all Club environments.

e) Clearly communicate to players, committee members, volunteers, employees, and contractors the behaviours expected, behaviours considered inappropriate, and how breaches will be addressed.

f) Confirm that all suspected child safety breaches will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately.

3. Scope

This Policy, together with the attached Code of Conduct, applies to all individuals engaging with the Club, including but not limited to players, committee members, volunteers, coaches, team managers, assistants, referees, employees, and the families of players, whether registered or not.

Breaches of this Policy or the Code of Conduct may be investigated by the Club and/or FV. Investigations and outcomes may be managed by the Club, or alternatively by FV as Misconduct under the FV Governance, Disciplinary, and Tribunal Regulations (GDT).

4. Guiding Principles

This Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

a) Child safety is the Club's top priority.

b) The Club has zero tolerance for child abuse.

c) The best interests of the child are paramount.

d) Child safety is a shared responsibility.

e) All children have the right to feel safe and be safe while participating in football, with equal protection from inappropriate behaviour.

f) The Club actively seeks feedback from players to continuously improve child safety policies and practices.

g) The Club is committed to the diversity and cultural safety of all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with disabilities, and will make reasonable efforts to accommodate their needs.

h) All individuals covered by this Policy are required to comply with the Club's Child Safety Code of Conduct (Section 2) at all times.

5. Governance & Roles for Child Safety

The Club Committee is responsible for ensuring child safety is embedded in all operations. This includes reviewing policies, managing risks, providing training for all members, and keeping child safety as a standing agenda item. Committee decisions will always be informed by a child safety perspective, and adequate resources will be provided to ensure everyone understands their obligations.

The Child Safety Officer (CSO) provides guidance, confidentially receives and investigates concerns, makes reports on behalf of the Club, and brings a child safety lens to Committee discussions. The CSO will be clearly identified to all children, parents, and members, and listed on the Club website.

The Member Protection Information Officers (MPIOs) support the Club community to understand how to raise child safety concerns, and their rights and responsibilities.

All members share responsibility for maintaining a safe environment and are expected to act in accordance with the Club's Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct.

6. Recognising and Responding to Child Safety Concerns

All children have the right to feel safe and to be safe while participating in Club activities. Child safety concerns can arise in many forms, and include any behaviour, situation, or environment that is inappropriate, objectively age-inappropriate, or places a child at risk of harm.

For the purposes of this Policy, a child (or minor) is a person under 18 years of age, unless otherwise defined by law.

Child abuse is one serious form of child safety risk and includes mistreatment that causes, or is likely to cause, harm to a child's physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing, development, or safety. Child abuse may include, but is not limited to:

- sexual offences against a child, including grooming (as defined under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic));
- physical violence;
- serious emotional or psychological harm;
- serious neglect.

All members of the Club share responsibility for promoting child safety, recognising potential child safety concerns (including, but not limited to, abuse), and responding appropriately in accordance with this Policy.

7. Reporting Obligations

The safety and wellbeing of children is the Club's highest priority. All members are encouraged to report concerns about a child's safety, and the Club supports anyone who does so in good faith.

Mandatory Reporting

Under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), anyone who has a reasonable belief that a **sexual offence** has been committed in Victoria against a child under 16 years by a person aged 18 or over ***must notify the police as soon as practicable.***

A person may have a reasonable excuse not to report if:

- They fear for the safety of any person (other than the alleged perpetrator) if the information is disclosed; or
- They reasonably believe that the information has already been reported to the police and they have no further details.

The Club encourages all committee members, employees, volunteers, coaches, and team managers to report concerns about a child's safety, health, or wellbeing to police or the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DHHS). Where possible, individuals are asked to also inform the Club.

Anyone making a report in good faith will be fully supported by the Club and will not face any penalties for doing so. If unsure whether to report, individuals should seek guidance from the CSO or FV. The decision to report externally ultimately rests with the individual.

If an allegation involves a committee member, employee, volunteer, coach, or team manager, the CSO will follow the Club's reporting procedures to prioritise the safety of the child.

Voluntary Reporting

In addition to mandatory obligations, any person who reasonably believes that a child may be at risk of abuse may voluntarily report this to the police. The Club encourages individuals to seek guidance from the CSO or FV when making a voluntary report.

Reasonable Grounds for Belief

You have reasonable grounds to report when:

- A child tells you they have been physically or sexually abused;
- A child reports knowing someone who has been abused;
- Another person (e.g., relative, friend, sibling) tells you a child has been abused;
- Your observations of the child's behaviour or knowledge suggest abuse; or
- You observe physical indicators of abuse (e.g., bruises, cuts).

The Club strongly encourages reporting to the CSO whenever there is concern for a child's safety.

8. Prevention

Risk Management

The Club integrates child safety into its overall risk management framework. As part of this approach, the Club will:

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of child safety controls.
- Provide appropriate training for:
    - Committee members
    - Coaches, team managers, and volunteers
    - Employees

- Provide child safety information to players and their parents or carers.
- Offer ongoing supervision and support for committee members, volunteers, coaches, team managers, and employees to enhance performance and maintain a child-safe environment.

Communication

The Club takes a proactive approach to communicating its child safety framework. The Child Safety Policy, Procedure, and Code of Conduct are communicated through multiple channels:

Stakeholder Group	How the Communicates Child Safety Information
Players	Annual welcome paperwork (2027+) Club Website Season Kick-Off Team Talk
Parents / Caregivers / Community	Annual welcome paperwork (2027+) Club Website
Committee Members, Coaches, Team Managers, Employees, Volunteers	Letters of appointment / induction pack (2027+) Club Website Annual training session

Recruitment

The Club is proactive in ensuring child safety is a core consideration in the recruitment of individuals for positions of responsibility.

Recruitment practices include:

a) Implementing a structured recruitment process for all paid roles, including screening candidates through interviews, reference checks, and online background searches.

b) Ensuring all recruits (paid and volunteer) read, understand, and agree to the Club's Code of Conduct and related policies.

d) Requiring Working with Children Checks (WWCC) for all Club roles that involve interaction with children, and validating them against the relevant State Government agency.

e) Including child safety topics in induction training for all new recruits.

The Club aligns its practices with the FV Child Protection Guidelines, adopting all reasonable measures to comply.

Further Preventative Measures

To strengthen child safety, the Club will:

- Require that no adult has access to an unaccompanied minor (who is not their own child) without prior parental or guardian consent, unless unavoidable.
- Maintain a secure, up-to-date record of all WWCC for coaches, team managers, and committee members in ClubGov.
- Provide child safety training for all new and existing coaches and team managers.
- Communicate the Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct to all stakeholders, and monitor for compliance.
- Set clear guidelines for appropriate communication between coaches, team managers, and players, including social media use.
- Take a proactive, participatory approach to child safety, empowering minors to contribute to decisions affecting them.
- Foster a culture of openness that encourages reporting of incidents.
- Respect cultural diversity and child-rearing practices while prioritising child safety.
- Ensure minors know who to speak with if they feel unsafe or have concerns.
- Report suspected abuse, neglect, or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities.
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where a child's safety is at risk.
- Manage FV Player ID Cards responsibly: Team Managers with a valid WWCC will carry these on match days; cards will not be left with match officials, and Club officials must be present when reviewing them. No photographs of the ID cards are permitted.

9. Responding to Child Safety Concerns

When a concern or allegation is raised about a committee member, coach, team manager, employee, volunteer, or contractor, the CSO will follow the Club's Child Safety Procedures. At all times, the safety and wellbeing of the child is paramount.

Withdrawal of the Individual

The first step is to assess whether the person involved should be temporarily removed from duties that involve contact with children. This may include:

- Standing down (with pay, where applicable)
- Reassignment to duties that do not involve direct contact with children
- Working under increased supervision

During any investigation, it may be necessary to temporarily suspend the individual from their usual duties or from all Club activities to ensure child safety and the integrity of the process.

Investigations

If a concern is raised about a child's safety, it will be handled sensitively, professionally, and in accordance with the Club's obligations. The Club will investigate all child safety concerns appropriately, which may occur alongside any investigation by external authorities where required, such as police or DHHS.

All individuals covered by this Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct must fully cooperate with investigations conducted by the Club, police, or DHHS.

Club investigations will:

- Be conducted with procedural fairness to protect the integrity of the process and the interests of all involved;
- Be handled confidentially to the greatest extent possible, though it may be necessary to consult other staff or committee members for witness statements.

Outcomes

Investigation outcomes will depend on the findings and may include:

- Withdrawal from active duties;
- Reassignment to duties with no contact with children;
- Increased supervision;
- Disciplinary action or dismissal;
- Referral to authorities for further action, if required.

The Club will notify FV of any investigation outcome that results in suspension or removal of an individual from the Club due to child safety concerns.

10. Record keeping

All child safety concerns and reports must be recorded by the CSO. Places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours or evidence of harm are to be recorded. Reports must be securely stored by the CSO or club administrator.

11. Privacy and confidentiality

The Club collects, uses, discloses, and holds personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and Football Victoria's Privacy Policy.

There are two guiding principles regarding a child's privacy:

1. **Best interests of the child:** All committee members, employees, volunteers, and contractors must act in what they reasonably believe to be the best interests of the child. This principle takes precedence over all others.
2. **Confidentiality:** The Club will respect a child's right to confidentiality except where this conflicts with the best interests of the child.

Individuals who make reports, and those about whom allegations are made, are entitled to confidentiality. Where there is suspected abuse or other child safety concerns, committee members, employees, or volunteers must not disclose or use the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, except as required to:

- Report and act in accordance with this Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct; or
- Comply with relevant statutory or regulatory requirements.

12. Child Safety Procedures

A) REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE

This procedure applies when a person reasonably believes a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, or neglect).

STEP 1: Recognise and raise concerns

- Any person aged 18 or over who forms a reasonable belief that a ***sexual offence*** has been committed in Victoria against a child under 16 by a person aged 18 or over **must report this to Victoria Police** as soon as practicable, unless a reasonable excuse applies.
- Any person who forms a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of abuse may report this to Victoria Police, DHHS, or the Social Services Regulator.
- The Club's CSO and/or FV can provide support and guidance if needed.

STEP 2: Make the report and inform the Club

Contact details for reporting:

- Emergency: Victoria Police – 000
- Non-emergency: Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team – (03) 8690 4056
- DHHS: 1300 664 977 or 131 278 (ask for Child Protection)
- Social Services Regulator: 1300 310 778

Additional guidance for external reporting:

- Keep the Club informed: Where possible, let the CSO know that a report has been made and provide updates as appropriate.
- Interviews at the Club: If an external authority needs to interview a child at the Club, this meeting must be private, and officers are requested to be in plain clothes. The CSO can help arrange the space and provide support.
- Allegations involving a Club member: If the allegation is against a committee member, coach, volunteer, employee, or contractor, that person will be temporarily stood aside from their duties while the matter is investigated, to protect children and maintain the integrity of the process.

STEP 3: Internal investigation support

- The CSO may conduct or appoint an independent internal investigation, but only to the extent that it does not interfere with DHHS, the Social Services Regulator, or police investigations.
- External investigators may be engaged if impartiality is required.
- All Club members, employees, and volunteers must cooperate with the CSO and external authorities.
- The Club will securely record all allegations and the steps taken in response.
- This process does not remove or replace any statutory obligations to report abuse.

STEP 4: Support for the child

- If the child agrees to be interviewed by external authorities, the CSO will offer to attend and provide support.

STEP 5: Communication and notifications

- The CSO must inform FV of reports so records can be updated.
- Confidentiality and the child's best interests must be maintained at all times.

Additional considerations:

- During observation, discussion, and reporting, the child and family's interests should be protected from unnecessary disclosure.
- Following the report to DHHS, the Social Services Regulator, or police, further investigation is the responsibility of the external authority.

B) REPORTS OF MISCONDUCT AND OTHER CHILD SAFETY INCIDENTS

This procedure covers any concerns, incidents, or behaviour within the Club that may affect the safety, wellbeing, or fair treatment of children, including (but not limited to):

- Racist, discriminatory, or offensive behaviour towards a child;
- Physical aggression, intimidation, or unsafe practices;
- Bullying, harassment, or other breaches of the Club's Child Safety Code of Conduct or policies.

This procedure is separate from the Child Abuse Reporting Procedure and ensures all child safety concerns are addressed promptly, fairly, and consistently.

If you are unsure which procedure to follow, contact the CSO for guidance.

STEP 1: Reporting a child safety concern

1. Any person (player, parent, volunteer, coach, official) who observes or experiences a concern affecting a child's safety or wellbeing should raise it as soon as reasonably possible.
2. Reports should be made to the CSO, or if unavailable, the Club President or Vice-President.
3. The CSO will create a Child Safety Incident Report, including:
    - Date, time, and location of the incident;
    - Names of children and adults involved and any witnesses;
    - Description of observed behaviour, including direct quotes where possible;
    - Immediate actions taken to protect the child.

Note: While confidentiality is important, sharing information with the CSO or Club leadership is necessary to ensure the safety of the child and appropriate action.

STEP 2: Investigation

1. The CSO will:
    - Conduct a preliminary assessment of the seriousness of the concern.
    - Determine if urgent action is required to protect any child (e.g., temporary suspension of involved adults).
2. The CSO (or an independent investigator if needed) will:
    - Interview relevant parties and witnesses;
    - Collect relevant evidence (emails, photos, video, etc.);
    - Review any prior related incidents or concerns;
    - Maintain a record of all steps taken.
3. Investigations will be conducted in a timely manner, impartially, and confidentially, prioritising the safety and wellbeing of the child.

STEP 3: Resolution and outcomes

1. Based on the investigation, the CSO will make recommendations, and Club leadership will determine appropriate action, which may include:
    - Mediation between parties;
    - Child safety training or coaching;
    - Written warnings;
    - Temporary suspension from training, matches, or roles;
    - Removal from a role (coaching, volunteering, etc.);
    - Referral to external authorities if the behaviour may constitute a criminal offence.
2. The CSO will communicate outcomes to:
    - The complainant (person who raised the concern);
    - Relevant adults involved;
    - Other necessary parties on a need-to-know basis.
3. Procedural fairness will be followed at all times, and actions will align with the Club's Child Safety Code of Conduct and policies.

STEP 4: Record keeping

1. The CSO will maintain secure records of:
    - Incident reports;
    - Investigation notes and evidence;

- Decisions and actions taken;
- Follow-up communications.

2. Records will remain confidential, except where disclosure is required by law or necessary to protect the safety of children.

STEP 5: Follow-up and support

1. The Club will provide support to affected children and adults as needed, which may include:
    - Access to counselling or welfare services;
    - Adjustments to training, match participation, or roles;
    - Ongoing monitoring of behaviour to prevent recurrence.
2. The Club encourages feedback from children, parents, staff, and volunteers to ensure a safe, inclusive, and child-friendly environment.

SPECIAL NOTES

- Any person may raise a child safety concern without fear of retaliation.
- All incidents will be handled sensitively and respectfully.
- Confidentiality is paramount; only the CSO, Club leadership, required investigation participants, and relevant external bodies will be informed.
- If an incident meets the threshold for child abuse, the Child Abuse Reporting Procedure must be followed immediately.

SECTION 2 – CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Purpose

The Code of Conduct ensures all children at the Club are safe, respected, and supported. It sets out behaviour standards for all adults and children involved with the Club ("**members**"), including committee members, coaches, team managers, volunteers, employees, players, and parents/guardians.

The Code of Conduct aims to prevent harm, reduce risk, and protect children from abuse, neglect, grooming, and other inappropriate behaviour, while fostering a positive, inclusive, and respectful Club environment.

A Child Safety Quick Reference and Declaration accompanies this Policy and Code of Conduct and summarises key behavioural expectations and responsibilities for players, parents/carers, coaches, and team officials. Membership of the Club constitutes acknowledgement of, and commitment to, both documents.

2. General Principles

All Club members must:

- Treat children with dignity, respect, and fairness.
- Avoid behaviour that is harmful, age-inappropriate, or places a child at risk of harm.
- Maintain professional boundaries, and follow the Club's Child Safety Policy at all times.
- Actively supervise children, avoiding unsupervised one-to-one contact except in emergencies.
- Use positive, age-appropriate language and guidance, and ensure any physical contact is necessary and appropriate for sport or safety.
- Recognise that child abuse, grooming, and online abuse are criminal offences.

3. Prohibited Behaviour

The following behaviours are strictly prohibited, as they place children at risk of harm and are inconsistent with the Club's commitment to child safety, respect, and wellbeing.

Child Safety & Abuse

- Physical, sexual, emotional, psychological abuse, neglect, or exposure to family/domestic violence.
- Grooming, exploitation, or deliberate manipulation.
- Online abuse, bullying, harassment, or intimidation.
- Sexualised comments, discussions of sexual matters, or inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- Behaviour that is degrading, frightening, humiliating, or cruel.

Physical & Emotional Conduct

- Physical punishment, rough handling, or over-training.
- Forcing participation when a child is injured, unwell, or otherwise unable.
- Inappropriate, intimate, or sexualised physical contact.

- Threatening, humiliating, shaming, or discriminatory behaviour.

Substance Use

- Using, possessing, supplying, or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while responsible for a child.
- Allowing children access to alcohol, drugs, or illegal substances.

Transport & Supervision

- Transporting a child alone without parental/caregiver consent and appropriate safeguarding measures.
- Failing to communicate accurate start/finish times, ensure safe pick-up, or maintain an operational phone during training and games.
- Overnight stays or sleeping arrangements without parental/guardian consent.
- Denying children the right to contact a parent or guardian at any time.

Communication & Digital Behaviour

- Unsafe, age-inappropriate, offensive, sexual, bullying, threatening, discriminatory, or exclusionary communication.
- Sharing personal information without consent.
- Inappropriate photos or video footage of children.
- Unauthorised one-to-one messaging without parent or Club oversight.

3. WhatsApp & Digital Communication Standards

Digital communication is an extension of the Club environment and must uphold the same child safety, respect, and behavioural standards as face-to-face interactions. These standards apply to all WhatsApp groups, messaging apps, social media, and other digital platforms used for Club-related communication.

- Use official Club channels only; personal groups or alternative channels are prohibited.
- Keep messages football-related (training, games, logistics).
- Include a parent/caregiver if a child is in the group.
- Use 1:1 messaging only with parental or Club oversight, and for football purposes.
- Pause before posting: only send messages appropriate to say in person.
- Be kind, respectful, and supportive.
- Report unsafe/inappropriate messages to the Team Manager, a Committee Member, or the Child Safety Officer.

Prohibited content includes: teasing, bullying, threats, sexual/explicit content, discriminatory language, sharing personal information, or anything that could objectively make a child feel unsafe, embarrassed, targeted, or excluded.

4. Physical Contact

Physical contact in sport must always be child-centred, purposeful, and respectful, with the child's safety, dignity, and wellbeing as the primary consideration. Physical contact:

- Must be necessary, appropriate, and related to the sport or safety.
- Respect the child's consent and comfort, and consider age, development, and cultural norms.
- Avoid private, isolated situations.
- Physical discipline is never acceptable; appropriate emergency contact to protect a child is permitted.

5. Reporting Concerns

Prompt reporting of concerns is essential to protecting children and ensuring appropriate action is taken.

- All suspected or observed child safety concerns or abuse must be reported in line with the Club's Child Safety Policy.
- Confidentiality should be maintained, but safety overrides privacy.
- Anyone can raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

6. Related Legislation & Contacts

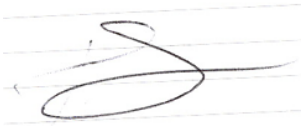
The Club's Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct are informed by the following Victorian legislation and reporting frameworks.

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Child Protection Crisis Line – 24/7: 13 12 78

8. Compliance

All Club members must comply with this Code. Breaches may result in disciplinary action, suspension, removal from role, or referral to authorities, in line with the Club's Child Safety Policy and FV General Disciplinary Tribunal provisions.

SECTION 3 – Document Approval & Revision History

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