

# Child Protection Policy and Procedures of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Aust. Inc.



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Spiritual obligations

'Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care ... Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?'

*Extract, **Advices & Queries** (2008) Number 19*

'Children are our tangible link today with eternity. They are the gift of ongoing life to mortal humanity. They renew and refresh the human species with God-given gifts of love, truth, simplicity, beauty and health. They are God's restoration of the human creation, the very reincarnation of what God wants for human life on Earth. They bring us back to basics, both personally and as a species. They are the forward-carriers of faith, hope and love.

'Caring for our children, fostering their growth and development, protecting them from harm, is therefore the most sacred thing – the most worshipful thing – that we as human beings can do. To neglect, injure or exploit children is the greatest dereliction of our part, humanity's place, in creation.

'Children are not our property. Kahlil Gibran says we own none of them, not even "our own", for they are "life's longing for itself". But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me and forbid them not". Perhaps he might have said "exclude them not". Though we do not own our children, we owe all of them sacred care, respect and protection.'

Helen Bayes (1994) Paragraph 4.7 in ***this we can say, Australian Quaker life, faith and thought***, 2003, p202

## 1.2 Policy statement

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Incorporated is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for minors and adults. The Society's *Child Protection Policy and Procedures* aim to reduce the risk of abuse to minors occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse be alleged to have occurred.

The core beliefs of the Society require us to treat all people with love and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

## 1.3 Legal obligations

The Society accepts that it has a duty of care to minors being cared for under its auspices.

## 1.4. Scope

These *Child Protection Policy and Procedures* apply to all activities authorised by or under the control of the Society.

## 1.5 Authority

These are the *Child Protection Policy and Procedures* of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Inc. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition was endorsed by Yearly Meeting 2007, the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Yearly Meeting 2010. The authoritative version at any given time is the one published on the Society's website [www.quakers.org.au](http://www.quakers.org.au).

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Incorporated is committed to implementing the Policy and Procedures and educating the Society's [Approved Child Carers](#) in its content and application.

## 1.6. Updating the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*

The AYM Secretary will annually seek information about legislative and policy changes of relevance to the Society's fulfillment of its duty of care to minors and to the implementation of the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*; will communicate such changes to the Child Protection Committee, the relevant RM Clerk and Child Protection Contact Friends; and make this information available on the Society's website.

Revisions of the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures* that do not result in major changes may be approved by the Child Protection Committee.

New editions of the Policy must be accepted by a session of the assembled Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia in accordance with Quaker procedure.

## 1.7 AYM Child Protection Committee

The Society appoints a Child Protection Committee, the members of which are selected for their expertise in the area of child protection.

The Child Protection Committee, with assistance from the AYM Secretary, is responsible for:

- Providing support to RM Child Protection Contact Friends in carrying out their roles;
- Bringing to the attention of the Society the need for changes to the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*;
- Ensuring that the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures* is up-to-date and consistent with the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure*;
- Developing and updating the template for the annual audit of child protection practices [see section 9 and Appendix 6] conducted by Regional Meetings and organisers of all activities authorised by or under the control of the Society;
- Reviewing the annual audits of child protection practices and reporting to Standing Committee and/or Yearly Meeting on compliance with the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*, as well as legal and insurance requirements at all activities authorised by or under the control of the Society.

## 2. Definitions

**Activity** – any organised activity that is authorised by or under the control of the Society.

**Approved Child Carer** – a person paid or unpaid over the age of 18 who holds a current Working with Children check (or equivalent), and who has been through the Society's selection and screening processes [section 5] which qualifies them to be responsible for the care and safety of minors in a recognised activity of the Society. Child Carers supplied by professional agencies for short term contracts (e.g. Yearly Meeting) are not required to go through the Society's screening processes as it is assumed they are screened by the agency.

**Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM)** – consists of all the members of the Regional Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends in Australia.

**Child Abuse** –Minors can be abused in different ways and child abuse includes a wide range of acts of omission and commission. The following is based on definitions in 'Choose with Care', produced by *Childwise*, 2004.

**Physical Abuse** – Physical Abuse occurs when a person intentionally injures or threatens to injure a minor. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

**Sexual Abuse** – Sexual Abuse occurs when an adult or someone exercises their power through intimidation, authority, enticement, or by any other means, to coerce a minor to engage in sexual activity. Physical force may sometimes be involved. Sexual abuse involves a range of sexual activity and can include both contact and non-contact behaviours.

Contact sexual abuse may include, but is not exclusively: being touched and fondled in genital areas; being forced to touch another person's genital areas; being kissed or held in a sexual manner; being forced to perform oral sex; vaginal or anal intercourse; or vaginal or anal penetration with an object or finger. Non-contact sexual abuse may include: obscene calls or remarks; voyeurism; exposure to or being photographed for pornography; sexually intrusive questions or comments; being forced to masturbate or watch others masturbate; and indecent exposure. Sexual abuse may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential between adult and minor. (It should be noted that the age of consent varies between States and Territories in Australia, ranging from 16 to 18 years for heterosexual and homosexual intercourse, and in some jurisdictions it is also influenced by the age difference between the parties).

**Emotional Abuse** – Emotional Abuse is a persistent attack on a minor's self-esteem. It can take the form of name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating, bullying or isolating a child or young person.

**Neglect** — Neglect is the failure to provide a minor with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision, to the extent that the minor's health and/or development are placed at risk.

**Helper** – any unpaid person over the age of 16 who is invited by an Approved Child Carer to assist them, and who does so in the presence and under the supervision of the Approved Child Carer.

**Minor** means a person under the age of 18 years and includes a 'child' and 'young person' as defined in Australian child protection legislation.

**Regional Meeting (RM)** – consists of all people who are entitled, under the regulations concerning membership, to be recorded on the list of members of a Regional Meeting.

**RM Child Protection Contact Friend** – a person appointed by a Regional Meeting to be responsible for child protection matters and to ensure that the Society's child protection procedures conform with the requirements of the relevant jurisdiction. The Contact Friend will hold a current Working with Children check (or equivalent).

**Society** – The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Incorporated, a body incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 1991 (ACT).

**Working with Children check (or equivalent):** Each state and territory require paid employees, volunteers and students proposing to start or continue in child-related employment to undergo a Working with Children check (or equivalent). Applicants consent to information from any police, court, prosecuting authority or other authorized agency being obtained and for the police, court, prosecuting authority or other authorized agency to disclose any information for the purposes of assessing their eligibility to work with children, including ongoing checks while their application/card remains current.

**Young Friends:** A welcoming community of people aged from 18 years and over, with fluctuating membership, structure and activities. They include those committed to Quakerism and also those wishing to explore or understand it. [3.9 *Handbook of Practice and Procedure*]

**Young Friends camp organiser** is a Young Friend who takes responsibility for fulfilling the requirements of the checklist [see Appendix 5]

### **3. External policies**

Some activities carried out by the Society may occur in conjunction with other organisations which will have policies governing the issues of child safety and abuse. The *AYM Policy and Procedures* are not intended to replace or conflict with the other policies, but instead to operate in conjunction with them. Where there is a difference in policy and procedures between organisations, the safety of minors will be the paramount concern, and so the policy and procedures of the organisation with the most stringent requirements will prevail.

### **4. Code of conduct**

Approved Child Carers and Helpers shall ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times when they have minors in their care. The following behaviours are regarded as inappropriate when caring for minors:

- Being affected by alcohol or drugs
- Engaging in extremely rough physical activities
- Holding, kissing or touching minors in inappropriate or culturally insensitive ways
- Making sexually suggestive comments to minors
- Doing things of a personal nature that minors can do for themselves such as going to the toilet or changing clothes
- Being alone with a minor (other than with a Helper)
- Taking a minor to your home or visiting a minor in their home without the minor's parents being present or having received parental permission to do so.

## **5. Selection, screening and preparation of Approved Child Carers and Helpers**

### **5.1 Child Carers**

Paid and volunteer Child Carers must be carefully selected and screened by appropriate interviewer(s) appointed by the Local Meeting. The interviewer(s) will notify the Local Meeting Clerk and a Regional Meeting Child Protection Contact Friend when the selection process has been successfully completed, after which the person may commence as an Approved Child Carer.

Where there are doubts about the suitability of an applicant, the interviewer(s) will consult with a Child Protection Contact Friend before informing an applicant that their application is unsuccessful.

Paid Child Carers need to be appropriately qualified and possess a current Working with Children check (or equivalent). Volunteer Child Carers need to have been involved for at least six months in the life of the Society with the meeting or activity where they are being considered for the role of an Approved Child Carer.

Prospective paid and volunteer Child Carers will complete an application form (see Appendix 2.2). They will also be interviewed and asked specific questions (see Appendix 3.2). Referees nominated by Child Carer applicants will be consulted using similar questions asked of the prospective Child Carer (see Appendix 3.3). These questions will seek to establish the applicant's suitability for the role and these conversations will be documented.

The interviewer(s) must sight and record details of the expiry date of the applicant's Working with Children check (or equivalent) prior to a Child Carer being appointed. The process followed to obtain this must comply with the legislative and policy requirements of the State or Territory in which the Meeting is located. Check with the relevant authority or see the Child Family Community Australia (CFCA) website, [www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/pubs/factsheets/a141887/index.html](http://www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/pubs/factsheets/a141887/index.html).

If the results of the check would not allow the person to be employed in the relevant State or Territory in the care or teaching of minors, they will not be appointed as an Approved Child Carer. Strict confidentiality will be observed in relation to this information. (Information on a person's criminal history is usually released by police to organisations on the condition that such information will not be included in any written or electronic files held by that organisation, and hence should be destroyed once a decision has been made to appoint/not appoint someone as a an Approved Child Carer).

Where someone is not appointed as an Approved Child Carer, all documents relevant to their application will be destroyed after two months and confidentiality observed in relation to their application. When someone is appointed as an Approved Child Carer, their application forms will be held indefinitely in a secure place accessible to the Child Protection Contact Friend(s) for that Regional Meeting.

Each Regional Meeting is required to maintain a Register of Approved Child Carers. This should include the name of the Approved Child Carers, the names of the persons who interviewed them, the date of interview, the names of referees, the date(s) referees were contacted and their views obtained, the date the Working with Children check (or equivalent) was sighted and its expiry date. When conducting the annual audit [see section 9, Appendix 6], RM Child Protection Contact Friend/s will review the names on the register and send details of the RM Register of Approved Child Carers to the AYM Secretary.

All Approved Child Carers will be issued with a copy of the current *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures* by a Child Protection Contact Friend from their Regional Meeting. The Approved Child Carers will be given the contact details of the RM Child Protection Contact Friends. An RM Child Protection Contact Friend will check that Approved Child Carers understand the content, reporting procedures and associated legal requirements contained within the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*.

To assist Local and Regional Meetings in implementing the selection process, guidelines adapted from the practice of Victoria Regional Meeting are provided in Appendices 2 - 4. (Appendix 2 outlines the steps in the selection process, Appendix 3 provides notes for those interviewing applicants, and Appendix 4 provides a checklist for ensuring that the process has been completed properly). Appendix 6 contains a template for Regional Meetings to conduct the annual audit of child protection practices.

## 5.2 Helpers

Any helper who provides brief assistance in an organised activity involving minors must be supervised by an Approved Child Carer at all times and be accountable to an Approved Child Carer. Approved Child Carers who accept the assistance of a helper must be satisfied of the helper's maturity and their suitability for helping in supervising activities involving minors. Helpers are expected to be aware of the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures* and to be prepared to work within them.

Helpers must not be alone with a minor. Helpers must not take on the role of an Approved Child Carer.



## 6. Maintaining a safe environment

Approved Child Carers need to take all reasonable steps to ensure that minors are cared for in a physically and emotionally safe environment.

In order that the Society's duty of care and insurance requirements are met, whenever the Society accepts formal responsibility for caring for a minor at camps or similar external activities authorised by or under the control of the Society, the Approved Child Carer will record:

- The names of those caring for minors on that occasion
- The names of minors in attendance
- Contact details of parents
- Any relevant medical information

In addition, the Approved Child Carer will ensure that each minor is signed in and out of the event with dates and times.

The Approved Child Carer completes and stores a record of the names of minors and Carers in attendance at each session of the event. Any incident that could, at any time in the future be the subject of an insurance claim, must be reported to the AYM Secretary (tel: 0423 308 550) who will, as soon as practicable, inform the Society's insurer, Ansvar, of such a notification (tel: 1300 650 540).

The first time a minor is cared for, parental contact details and any necessary medical information should be recorded. For any minor required to take prescription medication, written instructions must be obtained from the parent/guardian, setting out clearly how the medication is to be administered and how the condition is to be managed.

Any special requirements in relation to other matters, such as custody arrangements, should be recorded. Except in an emergency, written parental or guardian consent is necessary for a minor to be collected by an adult other than a parent or guardian, unless the person collecting the minor is the same as the person who left the minor.

At least two Approved Child Carers or an Approved Child Carer and a Helper should be present when working with or supervising minors, except when a parent is caring for their own child or children in the same location, in which case one Approved Child Carer may be sufficient, depending on the number of children.

If it is not possible for two Approved Child Carers (or Approved Child Carer and a Helper, or an Approved Child Carer and a parent looking after their own children) to be present when caring for children, then the Approved Child Carer and the children need to be within sight of other adults at all times. The Approved Child Carer may exercise discretion in relation to JYFs of 16 years or older who could assist, as the second person, if another adult is not available.

For overnight camps, at least two Approved Child Carers are needed because of the long hours of responsibility.

Parents need to be consulted about their wishes if their child is of an age requiring assistance with toileting (e.g. parents may wish to do this themselves or give permission for the Approved Child Carer to do so).

When transporting children, Approved Child Carers should endeavour not to be alone with a child in a car. Where this is not practical, Approved Child Carers will take a child/children directly to and from arranged venues and will not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements. Children being transported by private transport shall be restrained by the use of suitable seatbelts.

Adults and children are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Approved Child Carers will set an

example by protecting their own privacy in such situations. Approved Child Carers should try not to be alone in a room with a child while either is changing.

When an activity is in a location where parents are not readily accessible, written parental consent is required for the minor to be cared for, and contact details of the parent, medical details and an emergency treatment permission form for the minor need to be provided in writing.

All aspects of activities relating to minors will be open to observation by parents or guardians. Initiations and secret ceremonies are prohibited in the Society's activities.

Approved Child Carers have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at activities involving minors to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

## **7. Behaviour management of minors**

It is the responsibility of the Society and its Child Carers to take all reasonable steps to ensure that minors are cared for in a physically and emotionally safe environment.

It is essential that at the beginning of any event or camp Approved Child Carers and all participants come to an agreement about behavior guidelines. [A suggested model is that participants agree to say and do things that are legal, safe, fair and respectful.](#)

While reasonable discussion of what constitutes unacceptable behavior is appropriate, the final decision rests with the Approved Child Carer.

If, after reasonable discussion a minor does not abide by the agreed guidelines in detail or in spirit, or is an obstruction to the care of other minors or may cause harm to themselves or any other participants, the parent or guardian of the minor will be required to resume responsibility for their care without delay.

The consumption by a minor of alcohol or illegal drugs during any activity involving minors authorised by or under the control of the Society is not to be condoned by any Approved Child Carer. Parents/guardians will be required to resume care of any minor found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs without delay.

In caring for minors and in managing behavior that is problematic, at no time will an Approved Child Carer administer physical, emotional or mental punishment.

## **8. Procedures for managing alleged abuse**

### **Child Protection Contact Friends**

An RM Child Protection Contact Friend will be responsible for dealing with any concerns or allegations of abuse that may arise during or following an activity under the auspices of the Society involving minors. The names, addresses and contact telephone number(s) of the RM Child Protection Contact Friends will be available to all Approved Child Carers.

If it is known that an RM Child Protection Contact Friend is not going to be available, an additional RM Child Protection Contact Friend needs to be appointed.

### **Reporting to a Child Protection Contact Friend**

- **Physical or sexual abuse**

An Approved Child Carer or any other Friend who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a minor has been physically or sexually abused shall immediately contact an RM Child Protection Contact Friend.

Reasonable grounds for reporting can be assumed when physical or sexual abuse has been observed, when a minor discloses that he or she has been physically or sexually



abused, and/or when someone close to a minor (such as a sibling, relative or close friend), makes such a disclosure in relation to a minor. This includes alleged abuse involving minors that has occurred outside the activities of the Society (e.g. home or school).

In such instances an RM Child Protection Contact Friend will notify an appropriate statutory authority, i.e. Police or Child Protection in that jurisdiction (see Appendix 7 for contact details of child protection statutory authorities in each state and territory).

An RM Child Protection Contact Friend will also inform the AYM Secretary (tel: 0423 308 550) who will, as soon as practicable, inform the Society's insurer, Ansvar, of such a notification (tel: 1300 650 540).

- **Emotional abuse or neglect**

Where the Approved Child Carer or any other Friend has reasonable grounds to suspect that a minor is being emotionally abused or neglected, they should contact an RM Child Protection Contact Friend without delay to discuss their concerns.

The RM Child Protection Contact Friend, in consultation with the Approved Child Carer, should take into account the particular situation and the relevant State legislation in deciding whether to contact the statutory Child Protection Service to discuss the concerns. It may be advisable to do so in a manner which does not identify the individuals involved, until the statutory authority recommends that a formal notification of the alleged incident is appropriate.

#### **Attending promptly to the minor's safety**

Where there are immediate concerns for the safety of the minor, the RM Child Protection Contact Friend should contact the statutory child protection authorities and the police without delay. If an RM Child Protection Contact Friend is unavailable, the Approved Child Carer should contact the relevant statutory authority and the police.

#### **Recording of the allegation or concern**

An RM Child Protection Contact Friend shall ask the Approved Child Carer or any other Friend to write down in detail what they have observed and/or what has been said to them. Details should include: the names of all people involved; the date and time of the disclosure; the demeanor of the minor; what the Approved Child Carer said; and the action taken. This should be done as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after the event.

A copy of record should be retained by the Approved Child Carer. The original should be given to an RM Child Protection Contact Friend who will ensure that it is kept in a safe and secure place until any investigation has been completed by statutory authorities. Any specific requirements for the management of allegations of abuse in that State or Territory should be followed. Any incident that could be the subject of an insurance claim at any time in the future must be reported to the AYM Secretary (tel: 0423 308 550).

#### **If a Child Protection Contact Friend is unavailable**

If an RM Child Protection Contact Friend or the person acting in this role is unavailable and the Approved Child Carer has reasonable grounds to suspect a minor has been or is suffering abuse and that there are immediate safety concerns, the Approved Child Carer will notify the Police and/or the Child Protection Service in that State or Territory without delay. It may be advisable to do this in a manner that does not identify the individuals involved until the statutory authority recommends that a formal notification of the alleged incident is appropriate.

An RM Child Protection Contact Friend will be informed as soon as possible that this has occurred and be responsible for notifying the AYM Secretary (tel: 0423 308 550) without delay. The AYM Secretary will inform the Society's insurer, Ansvar (tel: 1300 650 540)

## **After reporting to Police or Child Protection**

After reporting to Police or Child Protection, it is important not to take any further action and to allow Child Protection to complete their work. As soon as you suspect that abuse may have taken place, take care in how you talk to the minor and make sure that any questions are open-ended so you do not compromise evidence. As soon as you have enough information to contact the authority, no further questions should be asked. In the meantime, the minor and family should be supported, but without Friends investigating.

The RM Child Protection Contact Friends need to be aware that only a minority of cases notified to statutory child protection authorities in Australia are investigated and substantiated as cases of abuse. It is therefore necessary to consider that this may be the outcome of any notification and to plan a course of action to address this. For example, it may be appropriate, on the advice of the statutory authority, to consider a referral to a service that may be able to assist the minor and family.

When possible, an RM Child Protection Contact Friend (or if unavailable, the Approved Child Carer) will inform the minor's parents that a notification to statutory authorities has been made, unless there are reasonable grounds (possibly on the advice of the statutory authority) for believing that this would put the minor or others at risk.

Note that the legislation in some states promises anonymity for the person reporting suspected child abuse. A decision to let a parent know that a report has been made should be very carefully considered, bearing in mind the safety of both the minor and the reporter. Informing a parent that a report has been made may place the reporter at risk of abuse or even physical harm. Specifically in cases where the reporter has made allegations of possible abuse by the parent, it is the role of the police or the statutory authority to inform the parent that a report has been made.

If a disclosure of abuse is made, the Approved Child Carer will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the minor or person making the disclosure. This will include:

- treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim;
- not pushing the minor to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation;
- not making promises about confidentiality which cannot be kept;
- assuring the minor that they are understood; that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has been said to have happened is not their fault; and that they are justified in disclosing the incident;
- not making contact with a person who is accused of abusing the minor. This is the role of the statutory authority (If the Approved Child Carer is already providing counsel to this person, it is advisable for someone else to assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation.);
- if the alleged assault has taken place recently, ensuring that clothing worn by the minor is retained and handed to the police for forensic examination; and
- documenting promptly any disclosures by a minor and all details of the subsequent investigation and ensuring that the documents are held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.

If an allegation has been made in relation to an Approved Child Carer, an adult assisting an Approved Child Carer or an adult otherwise responsible for a minor, that person will not continue to participate in the Society's activities involving the care of minors until the outcome of all investigations is known. The Society reserves the right to carry out the Society's disciplinary procedures in accordance with the Society's *Handbook of Practice and Procedure*.

### **Supporting the accused person**

It should be noted that a person being investigated for alleged abuse of a minor is likely to be under significant stress, and that pastoral care which does not compromise any formal investigation by statutory authorities should be offered to the person and their family. The need for support for all individuals involved should be considered and appropriate arrangements made.

### **If authorities find the allegation to be unsubstantiated**

In the event of an allegation which, on investigation, is found to be unsubstantiated, careful consideration needs to be given to debriefing and providing support to all individuals concerned.

Take care that there is no conflict in roles in relation to who has made the report and who is offering help.

### **If authorities decide not to investigate**

Police or Child Protection may decide that there are insufficient grounds to investigate. RM Child Protection Contact Friends must then discuss with relevant members of the Meeting how to proceed and whether further action by the Meeting is warranted.

### **If the Meeting decides to further pursue the matter BECAUSE OF ONGOING MISTRUST, a SUGGESTED procedure is:**

- Appoint a committee/working group that will inquire into the matter. The committee is encouraged to consult with members of the wider Quaker community and others who have professional experience in this area.
- Interview the person(s) who has brought the concern to their attention and record details of the concern.
- Continue to provide support for each of the parties involved.
- Give the person who is the focus of the concern a copy of the concern in writing. Allow them to have a support person present. They may wish to go away and consider before responding.
- Receive this person's response to the concern and make a record.
- If the concern is not substantially disputed, then a conclusion can be formed and a satisfactory solution can probably be agreed upon.
- If no conclusion about the concern can be formed, relevant members of the Meeting may be asked to meet to discern actions the Regional Meeting might take, bearing in mind that the safety of the minor/s is paramount.
- If the matter is still unclear, consider consulting an expert in one of the larger churches about how to proceed.

## **9. Annual audit of child protection practices within the Society**

Each Regional Meeting is asked to conduct an annual audit of its child protection practices as part of an annual audit of child protection practices within the Society. The aim is to determine the Society's compliance over the past 12 months with the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*, as well as legal and insurance requirements at all activities authorised by or under the control of the Society.

Early in the calendar year, the AYM Secretary will send to Regional Meetings a standard set of questions developed by the AYM Child Protection Committee [see Appendix 6], which will enable them to conduct an audit of their child protection practices.

RM Child Protection Contact Friends, in consultation with Approved Child Carers, will be responsible for conducting the audit and sending it to the AYM Secretary by 1 June each year.

The AYM Secretary will collate the information from the audits for review by the AYM Child Protection Committee, which will report on compliance to Standing Committee and/or Yearly Meeting.

The annual audit will ensure that each Regional Meeting holds copies of the Working With Children check (or equivalent) of Approved Child Carers and Contact Friends, with expiry dates recorded.

The AYM Secretary will maintain a centralised register of the names of the Approved Child Carers and the expiry date of their certification. Six months in advance of a certificate expiring, the AYM Secretary will send a reminder to the Approved Child Carer and to the relevant RM Contact Friend/s. The RM Contact Friend will follow-up with the Carer about renewal of their certificate and notify the AYM Secretary whether the person is continuing as an Approved Child Carer.

## **APPENDIX 1: Supporting child protection processes in our meetings**

Sufficiently accredited Child Carers as well as committed Helpers are needed to meet our spiritual and legal child protection obligations. These appendices give a checklist of actions and a sequence of practices to help meetings achieve this.

However, over and above carrying out our *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*, meetings can do much more. Powerful preventive and safeguarding protection is afforded when all within our religious community are well known to each other and the relationships between adults and minors in the meeting are active.

When the focus of our attention is on the spiritual, loving, joyful, careful and thoughtful life of the whole meeting and of all within them, inclusive of the minors and all those who have taken particular responsibilities towards the minors, then we can be more confident that we will know when something is amiss in the loving and sacred patterns we expect.

In particular, we stress the need to have a small group of people within each meeting (e.g. a Children's Committee) who *together* oversee the safe care of minors, ideally in the context of the meeting's general spiritual care, education and 'encompassing' of its minors. Such groups provide mutual support, better communication between RM Child Protection Contact Friends and local meetings and groups, and oversight of accreditation of Child Carers and Helpers.

### **We suggest the following:**

a. Regardless of whether minors are currently attending – at a local meeting or worshipping group level, the Clerk or Ministry & Oversight Committee members or any member of the Meeting identifies either an existing group or committee interested in the care and spiritual learning needs of the minors in the meeting, or seeks such a group (e.g. 2 - 6 Friends) who are able to take on or add the child protection duties to its remit. If no group is available, then at least one person is identified as the local Child Contact.

b. The group or committee or, in the absence of a group or committee, the individual Child Contact takes responsibility for:

- Keeping the local list of Approved Child Carers and willing Helpers
- Ensuring an up-to-date copy of the list is sent to/held by the RM Child Protection Contact Friend
- Regularly seeking new interested Child Carers and Helpers – giving them the application forms and a copy of the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*;

receiving their applications and Working with Children checks (or equivalent); seeing that interviewers are appointed; receiving reports (both of the applicant and of the referees), and forwarding these and the nominations for acceptance or not to the RM Child Protection Contact Friends

- In consultation with the RM Child Protection Contact Friend, presenting a report on implementation of the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures* to a mid-year Regional Meeting for Worship for Business each year.

## APPENDIX 2: Child Carer Application Pack

### 2.1: Suggested guidelines for Child Carer selection

1. Ask the person to fill in the application form and send/hand it to one of the interviewers appointed by Local Meeting.
2. Conduct the interview (**see Appendix 3.1**) using the prescribed questions (**at 3.2**) and taking (and retaining) notes on the interview schedule. This should preferably be face to face (by one or two interviewers) but it can be by telephone if the need is urgent (e.g. an upcoming activity requiring child care) or convenient (if the person is at a distance).
3. Then telephone or meet with each of the nominated referees. Ask a relevant/modified version of the same prescribed questions (**at 3.3**) with a view to establishing suitability of the applicant, and also retain documentation of these two interviews (see 9. below re disposal).
4. Sight original document/s (and photocopy) relating to a Working with Children check (or equivalent).
5. The interviewer/s reach/es a decision about the applicant's suitability and if the person is believed to be suitable, the interviewer/s should inform (a) the applicant, b) the Local Meeting Clerk and (c) the RM Child Protection Contact Friend/s. If there are doubts about an applicant's suitability, the interviewer/s should consult with the RM Child Protection Contact Friend/s before making a decision and informing the applicant.
6. The interviewer/s, once the application is decided, should forward to the RM Child Protection Contact Friend the full documentation for people appointed as Approved Child Carers (including their application form, the interview notes, and the referees' interview notes, and the copy of the Working with Children check documentation). These should be permanently stored in a confidential and secure place accessible only to the Child Protection Contact Friend/s and the RM Clerk.
7. The RM Child Protection Contact Friend should enter the name of the Approved Child Carer on the RM Register of Approved Child Carers. The Register should include the name of interviewer(s) and date of interview, names of referees and dates of contact with them, and date on which the Working with Children check (or equivalent) was sighted. This should also be securely stored with other formal RM records. However the list of all Approved Child Carers for the Regional Meeting (indicating the breakdown according to Local Meetings) should be shared with all Local Meetings and held by the Clerk or Children's Committee Convenor.
8. The RM Child Protection Contact Friend should ensure that the Approved Child Carer receives a copy of the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures* on application, and knows how to contact the RM Child Protection Contact Friends.
9. The interviewer/s should retain in a secure place the confidential interview and referee notes. Three months after a decision has been made to appoint/not appoint an applicant, the interviewer/s should destroy these documents as mandated by Privacy Legislation – with the exception of those cases where there is a police charge or criminal conviction involving child protection issues, in which case the records should be kept as mandated by Duty of Care legislation.



## 2.2: Working with Children Application Form

Dear .....,

Thank you for applying to work with children of our meeting. You will understand that we take this process very seriously, and also why we need to ask certain questions, even though some may be uncomfortable to ask or/and answer.

This pack contains an Application Form and a copy of the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*. Please fill in and return the Application Form to the Clerk or Convenor of your local Children's Committee (if such exists) or the local designated Child Contact.

We will then arrange interviews with both yourself and your referees. Meanwhile you might like to go ahead and apply for the Working with Children check (or equivalent). The form for this is available for downloading from ..... or at Post Offices.

Many thanks

[insert signature]

For [fill in name of].....Local Meeting

### **POSITION APPLIED FOR: APPROVED CHILD CARER (accredited by RM)**

#### **Personal Details**

Full Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Residential Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Home  
Ph.:

\_\_\_\_\_

Mob  
Ph.:

\_\_\_\_\_

Work  
Ph.:

\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Please list ***Places of Worship*** you have attended regularly in the last 3 years

Dates or approx frequency	Place of Worship


Please list any **qualifications** you have that relate to working with minors

Date	Qualification	Institution

Please describe any **experience** you have had that relates to working with minors

Date	Organisation or setting	Position

## References

Please provide details of two people we can contact, who can comment on your suitability for this position:

### First Referee

Full Name:

---

Residential Address:

---

Home  
Ph.:

Mob  
Ph.:

Work  
Ph.:

---

---

---

Email Address:

---

Work position &  
organisation (if  
applicable)

---

### Second Referee

Full Name:

---

Residential Address:

---

Home  
Ph.:

Mob  
Ph.:

Work  
Ph.:

---

---

---

Email Address:

---

Work position &  
Organisation (if  
applicable)

---

## Declarations

Have you (please **circle** Yes or No):

⇒ Received a copy of the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*? Yes/No

⇒ Read/understood the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*? Yes/No

⇒ Ever been in serious breach of the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*? Yes/No

⇒ Ever had someone express concerns about your behaviour towards a minor? Yes/No

⇒ Ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of an investigation relating to the abuse of a minor or inappropriate sexual behaviour? Yes/No

I confirm that the information provided on this application form is true and correct.

I consent to a Working with Children check (or equivalent) and the release to The Religious Society of Friends of any matters deemed to be relevant which are recorded against my name.

I have applied for Working with Children check (or equivalent).

*Or*

I have already got a current Working with Children Card (or equivalent) and have presented this to be sighted/copied

Applicant's  
Signature

Date:

---

---

## **APPENDIX 3: Interviewing Child Carer applicants**

### **3.1: Notes for interviewer of Child Carer applicants**

Thank you for your application to be an Approved Child Carer in a recognised activity or activities of the Religious Society of Friends.

The completed application form and Working with Children check is the first step in the procedure.

The second step is this interview and the third step will be for us to consult with your two nominated referees.

I'll keep some notes of both today's interview and the referees' interviews. I will keep these notes and your application form in a secure place and then transfer them to the RM Child Protection Contact Friends for safekeeping and for their sole use if your application is successful.

If you prove unsuccessful in your application, the notes will be destroyed within three months after a decision has been made (with the exception of where there is a police charge or criminal conviction involving child protection issues, in which case the records are kept by Regional Meeting as mandated by Duty of Care legislation).

The names of people appointed as Approved Child Carers will be recorded in the Register of Approved Child Carers kept in RM records and this will also include the name of the interviewer(s) and date of interview, referees' names and dates of contact with them, and the date on which the Working with Children check was provided or sighted. (This Working with Children clearance needs to be received or sighted prior to appointment as an Approved Child Carer).

If confirmed as an Approved Child Carer, you will receive the contact details for the RM Child Protection Contact Friends.

Is that all clear? Sorry about the degree of formality! Now let me ask you the questions.....  
[ go to 3.2 below]

## 3.2: Interview questions to be put to the applicant

### Working with Children - Interview Questions to be put to the applicant

*The questions asked in this interview may make you feel uncomfortable but we are sure you will understand they are a necessary part of our child protection policy and must be answered.*

*The answers you provide will be kept confidential but may be divulged to others if this is ever necessary in the interests of child safety and wellbeing.*

1. Please say why you have applied for this position and why you feel you are suitable for the role.

2. Please describe any positive experiences you have had with minors.

3. Please describe any negative experiences you have had with minors.



4. Our policy states that at no time will a Child Carer caring for minors for the Religious Society of Friends administer physical, emotional or mental punishment. However, at times they will provide guidance for behaviour.

In this light, have you ever been in a situation where you have disciplined a minor? If so, how did you handle this situation?

5. Have you ever been investigated for violent or sexually related offences? If so, what were the circumstances?

6. Is there any other information relating to your suitability for this position, of which we should be aware?

Thank you. I think that's all for now.

We will let you know the outcome of your application as soon as we have the necessary referee reports and Working with Children clearance. Thank you again for your interest in the care and spiritual education of the children of our meeting.

Name of interviewer:

Date:

Name of interviewee:

**... After the interview**

We'll now talk with your two nominated referees and get back to you as soon as possible. [Ask if there is any urgency; e.g. a forthcoming Friends' activity requiring child care.]

Thank you again for your interest.

### 3.3: Interview questions to be put to the applicant's referees

1. Our policy states that at no time will a Child Carer caring for minors for the Religious Society of Friends administer physical, emotional or mental punishment. However, at times [name the applicant] would be giving guidance for behaviour.

In this light, have you ever been in a situation where she or he [name the applicant] disciplined a minor? If so, how did they handle this situation?

2. To your knowledge has [name the applicant] ever been investigated for violent or sexually related offences, and if so, what were the circumstances?

3. Is there any other information relating to the suitability of [name the applicant] for this position, of which we should be aware?

Thank you so much for offering a reference for [name the applicant].

We will let [name the applicant] know the outcome of her or his application as soon as we have the necessary referee reports and Working with Children clearance. Thank you again for your interest in this way in the care and spiritual education of the minors in our meeting.

Name of interviewer: ..... Date:.....

## APPENDIX 4: Selection of Approved Child Carers checklist

*This checklist has been adapted from the one developed by Victoria Regional Meeting.  
Tick box and initial when each task completed*

### Application Form and *AYM Child Protection Policy & Procedures*

given to .....

*[Applicant's name]*

- Application received                      Date: .....
- Interview conducted – by whom: .....  
Where/how (phone? Face to face?) .....                      Date: .....
- Referee 1 contacted – by whom: .....                      Date: .....  
**Referee 1's name:** .....
- Referee 1 interviewed – by whom: .....                      Date: .....
- Referee 2 contacted – by whom: .....                      Date: .....  
**Referee 2's name:** .....
- Referee 2 interviewed by: .....                      Date: .....
- Police check sighted/copy retained.                      Date: .....

Satisfactory                       Unsatisfactory

\*\*Unsatisfactory for child protection reasons                      \*\*

- Local Meeting Clerk informed of approval.                      Date:.....
- Regional Meeting Child Protection Contact Friend informed of approval, and given application paperwork for safe storage.                      Date: .....
- Interviewee informed of outcome.                      Date: .....
- RM Child Protection Contact Friend added Approved Child Carer's name & required details to Regional Meeting Approved Child Carer Register.                      Date: .....
- Three months after decision to not appoint applicant, interviewer destroys confidential applicant interview notes and referee notes (with the exception of where there is a police charge or criminal conviction involving child protection issues).                      Date: .....

## APPENDIX 5: Checklist for organisers of camps involving minors

Organisers of camps which include minors held under the auspices of the Society are asked to apply the following checklist, where appropriate.

**Regional Meeting activities** (e.g. camps, retreats, day outings) involving minors can be authorised by the Regional Meeting Clerk or the Regional Meeting Children's Committee.

RM Contact friends should be informed in advance of these activities. Parents need to be informed whether the event is a formal event under the auspices of the Religious Society of Friends, or is an informal gathering in which they remain responsible for their child at all times.

**Yearly Meeting activities** can be approved by the Yearly Meeting Interim decision-making process (the Presiding Clerk, the YM Treasurer and the YM Secretary) or Standing Committee.

### **Child Protection requirements**

1. At least two Approved Child Carers, in accordance with the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*, must be present at camps in which minors are involved.
2. The camp organiser must keep a record of who is present each day: Child Carers and camp participants. This is an essential requirement for our Child Protection Policy. It is also vital in case of emergencies such as fire or flood. The record must be sent to the AYM Secretary following the camp. It will then be kept for insurance purposes.
3. The camp organiser must receive, at least one week before the camp, notice that a minor intends to participate, along with a letter of permission to attend the camp signed by the minor's parents/guardians that gives emergency contact information, and information about the minor's medication/allergies/health needs.
4. Those attending the camp must agree to behaviours that include a 'no alcohol or drugs' rule. A suggested model is that participants agree to say and do things that are legal, safe, fair and respectful.
5. Organisers must undertake a risk management assessment of the proposed activity/ies, as required by Occupational Health and Safety regulations. The assessment will identify potential hazards and actions that can be taken to reduce the risk of injury. **[See Risk Management Template on the AYM website [here](#).** The organiser document to the AYM Secretary at least one week before the planned activity/camp.
6. Organisers must have in place a Critical Incident Plan, with contact details of those who need to be notified.
7. Participants must agree on and adequately signpost a meeting place in case of an emergency such as fire.



Please list in this table any Approved Child Carers who have laid down the role during the previous year.

Name	Date of laying down the role

### SECTION B

The AYM Child Protection Policy requires that a register/roll of children and carers at normal Meetings for Worship is maintained and kept in a safe place at your Meeting House.

Please confirm that this practice is followed in all your Meetings. [Yes]/ [ No]

In the table below, please record child care which has been provided at any *other* events of the Regional Meeting [excluding Yearly Meeting, for which separate records are kept]

Event/Activity e.g. JYF camp, RM residential weekend	Date	Carers recorded Yes/no	Children recorded Yes/no

### Reportable incidents

Incident	Date of Incident	Date AYM Secretary notified	Date Insurer notified (AYM Secretary to complete)

**Other comments** (e.g. on training, record keeping, suggested amendments to this form)

Name of person who completed the audit:

Date:

Please send this report by 1 June to the AYM Secretary at [secretary@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:secretary@quakersaustralia.info)



## **APPENDIX 7: Statutory child protection authorities Contact details**

It is the role of the Regional Meeting Child Protection Contact Friend to annually update this information for their State/Territory. Please give details to AYM Secretary.

### **Australian Capital Territory**

Mandated Reporters 1300 556 728

General Public 1300 556 729

After hours Crisis Service 1300 556 729

### **New South Wales**

Phone 132 111 Child Protection helpline at any time:

### **Northern Territory**

Free call 1800 700 250 at any time

### **Queensland**

Child Safety Services, 1800 177 135 or (07) 3235 9999

### **South Australia**

Families SA Child Abuse Report Line 131 478

### **Tasmania**

Phone Child Protection Services 1300 737 639 at any time

### **Victoria**

Phone Child Protection Crisis Line: 131 278 at any time

### **Western Australia**

Free call 1800 708 704 at any time

# APPENDIX 8: National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, AYM Child Protection Contact Friend Role Description, eSafety Guidelines

Australian Quakers  
Australia Yearly Meeting  
Child Protection Policy and  
Procedures  
Approved July 2021

## 1. The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

As part of the Child Safe Organisations project, the Australian Government commissioned the National Children's Commissioner to lead the development of [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).

The National Principles were developed under the guidance of Community Services Ministers across Commonwealth, state and territory governments under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020. The Principles respond to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

### 1.1. Current child safety resources and legislation.

This page on the Child Safe website has links to state/territory, national and international information and legislation:

<https://chidsafe.humanrights.gov.au/tools-resources/links-resources>

## 2. AYM Child Protection Contact Friend Role Description

Found on the AYM website at <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/ChildProtect>

- a) To maintain an up-to-date and accurate Regional Meeting Register of Approved Child Carers;
- b) To provide the Yearly Meeting Secretary with an annual audit of the Regional Meeting Register;
- c) To be available to the Meeting for questions and concerns related to child protection.
- d) To give advice on the implementation of the YM Child Protection Policy and Procedures, and on any legal requirements specific to the relevant jurisdiction;
- e) To be available to members of the Meeting to consider questions and concerns around the safety of a specific child in the Meeting in relation to the child protection concerns.
- f) To provide policy and procedural advice in situations where a minor may have been subjected to abuse, including the legal obligations which may exist in relation to reporting alleged abuse in the relevant jurisdiction; and
- g) To inform the Yearly Meeting Secretary, without delay, of any alleged or suspected or alleged abuse of a minor while under the responsibility of the Religious Society of Friends.

## 3. eSafety Guidelines

### Guide to online and Zoom safety for Children and Junior Young Friends in AYM Introduction

This guide has been written in the context of increasing online and Zoom communication within AYM, acknowledging that revisions will be made as needed including more details on risks and the management of risks.

Quakers in Australia seek to provide a positive, safe and caring on line environment for children and young people to meet each other and build friendships.

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations include Principle 8 which states that in a Child Safe Organisation:

physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

The general safety guidelines found in AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures

(<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies> ) apply both in the face-to-face and online environment, including having at least two carers, at least one of whom must be an Approved Child Carer in interactions with children or young people.

#### Info for children and JYFs using Zoom and in the online environment

We want you to be safe online and there are things you can do to enable this:

- Don't share Zoom links for Quaker events publicly or on social media
- Use Zoom in an open environment e.g. kitchen or living room
- Check what is in your background and ensure you feel comfortable with what others can see
- Be aware of your clothing- that it is suitable for meeting with others
- If something happens which makes you feel uncomfortable, tell your parents, a trusted Friend, Regional Meeting Clerk or a Child Protection Contact Friend
- Remember that you can leave a Zoom meeting at any time by clicking the red Leave Meeting button on your zoom screen
- Please ensure you have your correct name showing on your Zoom picture

#### Info for parents and carers of children and JYFs

- You will receive the invitation and link to the gathering if your children are primary school aged- please assist them to join the meeting and monitor your child's participation by staying nearby during the meeting.
- If your children are teenagers then you may feel comfortable leaving them to participate in the Zoom meeting by themselves.
- Ensure that there are two Quaker leaders in the session with the JYFs before moving away from the session, if that is what you are planning to do
- Please ensure that children and JYFs are zooming in an open environment, such as kitchen or living room
- Please talk about eSafety with your children and JYFs.
- If you have any questions or concerns about an online event then please contact the Zoom meeting organiser or your Regional Meeting Child Protection Contact Friend (found on the AYM website).
- Please ensure your child has their correct name on their Zoom picture

#### Info for those running sessions with Children and JYFs

##### 1. Prior to the session

- Please attach these guidelines to the invitation you send out.
- Develop a plan for dealing with unexpected visitors
- Develop a plan for dealing with unexpected behaviour for example, children who seem to be not engaged with the program
- Please send the invitation to parents and carers of children and to JYFs with cc to their parents/ carers/ grandparents (whichever applies) and RM Clerks. RM Clerks will be asked to pass on the information about the on line meetings, but not advertise the Zoom link to everyone. They may be

asked to forward the invitation to any newly attending parents who may be interested.

- It is preferable to send the Meeting ID and password rather than a Zoom link. This means people have to name themselves prior to joining the meeting (so people in the meeting room will be easier to identify).
- In the invitation state how long the meeting will be and what you will be doing in the meeting.
- In the invitation send out ground rules for the meeting and agree on them at the meeting itself.
- Set up the Zoom account (or ask the account owner to set it up) so that recording is disabled- this is a safety precaution, and needs to be done prior to opening the session.
- Organising and hosting team develop a plan to deal with unexpected visitors and/or inappropriate behaviour or non-adherence to the rules. This is a bit like an online risk assessment.
- Arrive early to the meeting- enable the waiting room, which is a safety feature ensuring that only those who are expected to attend do attend.

2. In the session

- All on line gatherings for children and JYFs must be hosted by 2 adult carers and at least one of this must have a Working with Vulnerable People Card or your jurisdiction's equivalent AND be an Approved Carer (see AYM Child Protection Policies and Procedures for further information)
- Introduce the adults, so the children or JYFs know who is running the meeting.
- Agree on the ground rules for the Meeting.

3. After the session

- Reflect together on the session and children's participation and safety-Is there any follow-up necessary?

### Resources

The Commonwealth Government eSafety Commissioner has further information for parents, children and young people and teachers:

- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people>
- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents>
- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators>
- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/kids>

### Acknowledgements

- **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations**  
<https://childsafeforhumanrights.gov.au/national-principles>
- Simple guide for online children's meeting for worship Woodbrooke Quaker Centre  
<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/worship/setting-up-mfw/>
- Zoom Info Sheet: Zoom Safety for Children and Young People at Hillsong Church  
[https://d9nqqwcssctr8.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20010319/Zoom-Info-Sheet\\_Safety-for-Children-and-Young-People-at-Hillsong-Church-v2.pdf](https://d9nqqwcssctr8.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20010319/Zoom-Info-Sheet_Safety-for-Children-and-Young-People-at-Hillsong-Church-v2.pdf)

