



**VIEN GIAC BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED**

Incorporation No: Inc 9893874 - ABN 34 326782614

**VIEN GIAC TEMPLE**

Address: 23 Broad Street, Cabramatta NSW 2166 , Australia

Tel/Fax: (02)8764 8570 \* Mobile: 0404 045 678 \* Email: chuaviengiac@hotmail.com

# Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct

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## Policy references and guides:

Implementing the Child Safe Standards: A Guide for Faith-Based Organisations:

[https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/838/CSS\\_ImplementationGuideFaithOrganisations.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/838/CSS_ImplementationGuideFaithOrganisations.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y)

Office of the Children's Guardian Training and resources:

<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources>

## **1. Introduction**

‘Viên Giác’ means complete enlightenment, peace, cessation of suffering and pureness within oneself. Viên Giác Buddhist Association Incorporated (referred to as ‘VGBA’ in this policy) was established in 2009 and is a member of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC), the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation in Australia-New Zealand (UVBCA NZ) and the Buddhist Council of New South Wales Inc.

Both adults and young students are taught about Buddhism values such as not harming one another, truthfulness, serving others, patience, generosity, forgiveness and compassion to all living beings. We focus on teaching meditation techniques to equip children and young adults to deal with daily stress from schooling, studying and work. They also learn about the history of Buddhism, rituals and characteristics and topics including the purpose and importance of human life.

We are committed to teaching Buddhism philosophy to the young generation to help them to lead a healthier life and have a healthy mind to contribute to a healthier society. Buddhism classes, including those delivered through our approved Special Religious Education (SRE) curriculum, are centred on Buddha’s teachings and how they can be used as life skills in day-to-day situations.

Everyone working, volunteering or visiting Viên Giác Temple is responsible for the safety and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

## **2. Child Safety Policy**

### **2.1 Purpose**

This policy has been designed to help embed child safety in our organisation and culture. Policies and processes ensure everyone is aware of their responsibilities in keeping children safe and minimise opportunities for child abuse to occur. Policies also provide guidance to members and volunteers in identifying and responding to allegations of child abuse in appropriate, child-focussed ways.

### **2.2 Child Safe Standards**

This policy is guided by the Child Safe Standards adopted by the NSW government following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse. These serve as a framework for child-related organisations to uphold children’s rights and work towards creating safe environments for children. These standards are:

- 1.** Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
- 2.** Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- 3.** Families and communities are informed and involved
- 4.** Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken in to account
- 5.** People working with children are suitable and supported
- 6.** Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused
- 7.** Members are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
- 8.** Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
- 9.** Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved

## 10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

A more detailed explanation of the Standards can be found here:

<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-standards#acc0>

### 2.3 Child Safety Policy: core guidelines

- Viên Giác Buddhist Association is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its programs at all times.
- All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.
- Children's rights are understood and respected.
- Concerns about child safety raised by children, their parents and carers are acted on.
- Reporting abuse is not obstructed or prevented.

### 2.4 Recruitment, training and support for members and volunteers

We undertake a careful recruitment process for all volunteers which aims to promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation. This includes:

- Identifying safe and suitable individuals who share our values and commitment to protecting children
- Preventing individuals from working with the temple and in our SRE program if they pose a risk to children
- Conducting Working With Children Check clearances (WWCC) with any individual engaged directly in activities such as SRE programs
- Ensuring members and volunteers are aware, understand and trained on updated Child Safe Standards, policies and procedures.
- Ensuring members and volunteers working with children are aware of and provide written agreement to our Child Safe Code of Conduct (see Appendix).

Members and volunteers are trained on processes and policies relating to Child Safety. They need to understand what reportable conduct is, be able to identify potential abuse and know how to report an allegation of abuse to the head of our organisation (Abbess Bhikkhuni Thich An Thien).

Our members participate in initial and ongoing training, including resources provided by the Office of the Children's Guardian (see link): <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-elearning>.

Those who teach in primary school Special Religious Education (SRE) programs on behalf of VGBA are provided with additional initial and ongoing training to ensure they are aware of their Child Safety responsibilities and are supported to teach the approved curriculum in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner.

### 3. Child Safety Procedures

#### 3.1 Definitions of reportable conduct

Systems and processes that prevent and respond to child abuse are based around the idea of 'reportable conduct'. The *Children's Guardian Act 2019* defines reportable conduct as physical assault, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, psychological harm, ill treatment, neglect and an offence under s 43B (failure to protect) or s 316A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900.

More detailed information about the definitions of reportable conduct is outlined here:

[https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/1021/Identifying\\_reportable\\_allegations.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/1021/Identifying_reportable_allegations.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y)

#### 3.2 Mandatory reporting and dealing with allegations

Mandatory reporters are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. On 1 March 2020, mandatory reporter groups in NSW expanded to include a person in religious ministry or a person providing religion based activities to children.

Further training on mandatory reporting is regularly updated and made available through resources such as those provided by the Office of the Children's Guardian:

<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-elearning>. Our members and volunteers are reminded to update their knowledge of these resources on an annual basis.

There are two ways mandatory reporters can make a child protection report:

1. By eReport through the [ChildStory Reporter website](#).
2. By calling the Child Protection Helpline on [132 111](#).

Mandatory reporters can call the Child Protection Helpline on [132 111](#). It is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Reading [Mandatory reporters: What to report and when](#) may help you to decide whether you should call or not.

Once the head of a relevant entity (Abbess Bhikkhuni Thich An Thien) is made aware of a reportable allegation, they will:

- Notify the Office of the Children's Guardian within 7 business days and make other reports
- Investigate the reportable allegation and
- Make a finding about the reportable allegation

The 7-day notification is available here: [www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/reportableconduct](http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/reportableconduct) and detailed responsibilities and reporting processes to be followed are kept up to date here: [https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/1021/Head\\_of\\_entity\\_responsibilities.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/1021/Head_of_entity_responsibilities.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y)

#### 3.2 Record keeping and managing information

Under section 54 of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*, VGBA must have systems in place, including for receiving, handling and disclosing information about reportable allegations and information relating to investigations of reportable allegations.

When an allegation is made, VGBA will endeavour to document the following information:

- The allegation (an accurate account of what has been said and by whom);
- Our initial response to the person making the allegation, the alleged victim(s) and the employee who is the subject of the allegation;
- Notifications considered or made to Police of a suspected criminal offence; to a Child Wellbeing Unit of risk of harm; or the Department of Communities and Justice of a child who may be at risk of significant harm;
- The outcome of any reports made to other agencies;
- A plan detailing how the investigation is to be carried out;
- The initial risk assessment, including what the identified risks are and the arrangements to manage those risks;
- Decisions made about the employee and the action taken in relation to the child or employee (e.g. change in duties, support or counselling);
- All interviews, including details of the questions and responses, the location of the interview, who was present, the start and finish times of the interview. Where possible, records should be verbatim, verified, signed and dated by all involved;
- Any decisions made, both during and at the end of the investigation, including their rationale, the position and name of the person making the decision and the date the decision was made;
- Any personal contact, discussions or emails with anyone about the matter including the date, details of the discussions, questions, advice and outcome, the name of the person making the contact, details of their position and agency and the reason for the contact;
- A summary report that details the allegation, the investigation process – including how the investigation had regard to the principles of procedural fairness – the findings in relation to each allegation (including the rationale for the finding); and
- The final risk assessment (which includes any final decision about the employee and the factors that have been considered) and any subsequent action that is to be, or has been, taken.

VGBA will also:

- Advise the employee, in writing, of the findings in relation to each allegation and the action to be taken;
- Have an organised information management system. For example, all documents should be kept together in a file and be able to be readily located;
- Store information and records relating to the investigation of an allegation against an employee in a safe and secure place; and
- Have an organisational policy concerning information storage and access to these records.

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary on an annual basis.

# Child Safe Code of Conduct

All members and volunteers at VGBA are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who engage with the temple. Members and volunteers are expected to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct in any interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years.

I will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act in accordance with the VGBA child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures at all times.</li> <li>• Behave respectfully, courteously and ethically towards children and their families and towards other members.</li> <li>• Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well.</li> <li>• Promote the human rights, safety and wellbeing of all children in VGBA.</li> <li>• Consider and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of children.</li> <li>• Involve children in making decisions about activities, policies and processes that concern them wherever possible.</li> <li>• Identify and mitigate risks to children’s safety and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Respond to any concerns or complaints of child harm or abuse promptly and in line with policy and procedure for receiving and responding to complaints.</li> <li>• Report all suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse as required by the <i>Children’s Guardian Act 2019</i> and by VGBA’s policy and procedures.</li> <li>• Comply with policies and procedures on record keeping and information sharing.</li> </ul>
I will not:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child.</li> <li>• Engage in any activity that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child.</li> <li>• Unlawfully discriminate against any child or their family members.</li> <li>• Be alone with a child unnecessarily.</li> <li>• Arrange personal contact, including online contact, with children I am working with for a purpose unrelated to VGBA’s activities.</li> <li>• Disclose personal or sensitive information about a child, including images of a child, unless the child and their parent or legal guardian consent or unless I am required to do so by VGBA’s policy and procedure on reporting.</li> <li>• Use inappropriate language in the presence of children or show or provide children with access to inappropriate images or material.</li> <li>• Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs.</li> <li>• Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse.</li> </ul>
<p>I agree to abide by this Code of Conduct during my work with VGBA. I understand that breaches of this Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action or termination of my engagement with VGBA.</p> <p>Full name:</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Date:</p>	