

RBGV and Cranbourne Friends Joint Statement Child Safe Program

The Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne and the Committee of Management of the Cranbourne Friends wish to further clarify the introduction of the Child Safe program.

We acknowledge that there has been some disagreement amongst some Cranbourne Friends Special Interest Group members about the requirements of this policy. We can only assure members that we have listened and given careful consideration as to how these concerns might be eased or alleviated.

Our conclusion is that a consistent and equitable implementation of this policy for all Cranbourne Special Interest Groups is necessary. This will ensure that the spirit of the legislation and of the policy is met and that the Cranbourne Gardens provide a child safe environment for the benefit of all.

If you are one of the many Special Interest Group members who have already fully completed the documentation process, thank you. We trust you will still find some relevant information here.

*Chris Russell
Executive Director Cranbourne Gardens*

*Erin Cosgriff
President Cranbourne Friends*

Frequently Asked Questions

1.1. Who of the Cranbourne Friends does this policy affect?

Only Cranbourne Friends who are involved as a member of a committee or who are members of the Cranbourne Friends Special Interest Groups are asked to comply with the policy.

Specifically, this includes all members of the:

- Committee of Management and administrative support
- Events subcommittee and Open House convenor, Events IT support
- Growing Friends
- Friends in the Garden
- Friends in Focus
- Herbarium Collectors
- Botanical Fabricators
- Basketmakers
- Botanical Illustrators

Cranbourne Friends members who are **not** actively involved with a Special Interest Group, **do not** need to comply with this policy (as they are not on site at Cranbourne Gardens regularly).

1.2. Why does the RGV have a Child Safe Policy?

The 'Betrayal of Trust Report' (2013) was the result of a Victorian Government Parliamentary Inquiry that identified more action was needed to prevent and respond to child abuse. Since then, various legislative and policy levers have been introduced to strengthen organisational obligations and safeguarding measures for the prevention of, and responses to child abuse.

This landmark report importantly confirmed that perpetrators of child abuse in organisations often obtain credibility, trustworthiness and access to children by virtue of their position within organisations. It also found that child abuse within organisations can be facilitated by the trusting relationships that are created by a perpetrator's association with an organisation.

Based on this, and a similar finding from the subsequent Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, actions have now been taken to ensure that organisations have a legal duty to:

- take action to reduce the risk of abuse arising from relationships of trust for which they are responsible
- uphold and protect the safety of children who come into contact with their members.

Legal duty means that an organisation can be held liable for child abuse unless it can prove that it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse. This has in effect, changed the regulatory landscape within which the RBGV now operates.

Whilst this policy implementation is in part a necessity arising out of regulatory and risk management demands, it also comes from wanting to be a socially responsible and a caring organisation. The safety and wellbeing of any young or vulnerable person lies at the core of this Child Safe Program.

1.3. Why do I need to comply with RBGV policy?

Through the Cranbourne Executive Director, the Board and Executive Team of the RBGV shared with the Cranbourne Friends Committee of Management its intention to introduce a Child Safe Policy in the last quarter of 2020. It indicated that the scope of this policy would include amongst many other categories of personnel, the Friends Groups. The Gardens were not seeking permission, rather they were advising their intention and asking for the Cranbourne Friends Committee cooperation with its implementation.

Members must all appreciate and respect the fact that the CFRBGV is obliged to operate within the authority and policies of the RBGV. The Cranbourne Friends can only exist if there is respect for the many permissions and benefits bestowed on us by the Gardens, in tandem with expectations that we comply with RBGV policies.

Under the organisation rules, Cranbourne Friends exists to assist the Gardens by providing practical and financial assistance and to enable the participation of members in activities relating to our natural heritage. Each and all of the activities of the Special Interest Groups should serve to promote understanding, knowledge and appreciation of the Gardens and native flora.

Support of the Child Safe program is an important part of building a culture that holds the safety and wellbeing of all at heart, particularly those who are young, disabled or vulnerable in some way. We all value the importance of mutual respect and care.

1.4. But I rarely if ever have contact with children / young people whilst at the Gardens...

Some SIG members have said they never encounter children and that they only undertake their activities in the Elliot Centre which is located in a non-public area.

All who attend the Gardens must park or traverse the public car park where children also are frequently present.

All SIGs undertake activities in public areas at least occasionally, and some often. Some conduct meetings, activities, sales or exhibitions in the Gardens or in the wider community, at all these times representing the public face of the Cranbourne Friends and of the RBGV.

The application of the standard requirements: signing of the Statement of Commitment and obtaining a Working with Children Check for all on-site personnel, is a practice that serves to protect all parties against actions or behaviours that have the potential to adversely impact on the RBGV, its affiliates and all its public users.

1.5. What are the Melbourne Friends doing?

The Melbourne and Cranbourne Friends are similar but separate organisations that seek to collaborate and work cooperatively when they can.

The Cranbourne Friends Committee of Management has made an assessment of the scope of the policy in consultation with the Child Safety Officer of the RBGV and the Executive Director Cranbourne Gardens.

We have considered the Cranbourne environment, the impact and benefits to all our SIGs members and the creation of a safe, caring culture for children and all vulnerable people.

The Cranbourne Friends Committee of Management is committed to supporting the RBGV in this important change and consider it our responsibility to equitably administer the policy across all Special Interest Groups and committees at Cranbourne.

1.6. The statement of commitment talks about BADGES...

You will be provided with Cranbourne Friends name badges (first name only) in due course. These will serve to identify you as a person who has knowledge about the Gardens and who has a trusted role.

1.7. What will happen if I refuse to meet the Child Safe policy requirements?

We do not want to lose you and hope that this information assists your understanding of why we are asking you to support the implementation of the RBGV Child Safe policy.

If you do not submit documentation by the end of April 2021, you will not be permitted to continue your involvement with the Special Interest Groups.

If you have other specific queries, please forward them to: childsafety@rbg.vic.gov.au

1.8. How do I proceed?

Please visit the Cranbourne Friends website for simple and clear instructions on the steps you need to complete to show your support of the RBGV and the Child Safe program

<https://rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au/2020/12/rbgvs-new-child-safe-program/#content>

1.9. When is my documentation required?

We have extended the due date by which documentation is required. Please provide your completed copies of your completed Statement of Commitment and of your Working with Children card to the Cranbourne Friends Secretary secretary@rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au by end April 2021.

1.10. Need help?

If you need assistance accessing documentation or lodging your Working with Children Check, send an email to the Cranbourne Friends Secretary, secretary@rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au. The Secretary will forward your details to a member of the committee who will assist you.

1.11. In need of personal support?

If any of the material included in this update raises issues of personal concern to you or someone you know, please contact:

- **Your General Practitioner**
- **National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Line**
1800RESPECT 1800 737 732 1800RESPECT.com.au
- **Lifeline** 131 114 <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>
- **Beyond Blue** 1300 224 636 <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>