

From: Nechama Bendet

To: "fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au" <fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au>

Subject:Victorian Government Inquiry into Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations

Please find attached Yeshivah Centre's submission to the Victorian Government Inquiry into Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations.

Please feel free to contact me if you require any additional information.

Regards,

Nechama.



This email message has been sent by:

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Yeshivah Centre  
תחת נשיאות כ"ק אדמו"ר מליובאוויטש

## Victorian Government Inquiry into Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations

Family and Community Development Committee  
Parliament House  
Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Email: [fcde@parliament.vic.gov](mailto:fcde@parliament.vic.gov)

Dear Madam Chair

Yeshivah Centre is a community organisation delivering a range of educational, religious, welfare and social services to the Melbourne Jewish Community. Services include Early Learning Centres, Primary and Secondary Schools, Jewish adult education, youth programs, university programs, community libraries, Synagogues and welfare services.

The Yeshivah Centre welcomes the Victorian Government Inquiry into Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations.

The Yeshivah Centre leadership condemns abuse in any form, particularly the sexual abuse of children.

In August 2012, Yeshivah Centre issued a letter to the Victorian Jewish Community that was posted to over 10,000 households, in which we unreservedly apologised for any past wrongs that may have occurred and outlined the steps that Yeshivah is currently taking in child protection (See Appendix 1).

While it is not appropriate for Yeshivah to comment on matters that are currently before the Courts, we would like to share with the inquiry the steps being taken currently, and in the future, to protect our children.

We provide the following brief summary of our policy, approach and practices regarding child protection and our commitment to ensuring that we are all well equipped to prevent and deal with issues should they arise.

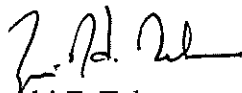
**Yeshivah Centre** *Serving the Community*  
Under the Auspices of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

- We cooperate openly and fully with Victoria Police and the Department of Human Services in any enquiry, maintaining open lines of communication.
- We actively encourage victims and the community at large to report cases of suspected child sexual to the relevant authorities.
- In our Child First-Child Protection Policy, we outline the procedures that staff are required to follow if they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing (See Appendix 2).
- Should we become aware of a problem or possible risk to our students, we will immediately report to and work with the relevant authorities and ensure the person has no access to our children.
- All teaching and auxiliary staff, including contractors, who have regular contact with children are subject to a Working with Children Check before being offered employment.
- The Yeshivah Centre has strong connections and relationships with relevant government authorities and support services including the Department of Human Services, the local Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse team and the South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA). In addition, we avail ourselves of the resources, training and support offered by the Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence and the social services provided by Jewish Care.
- Our teaching staff have undergone Department of Human Services "mandatory reporting" training on the detection and reporting of abuse and the support of victims of abuse. In addition all staff have recently completed the DEECD child protection elearning module.
- Staff have undertaken Protective Behaviour training facilitated by the Director of the Crisis Centre for Jewish Women (from Jerusalem).
- Our youth workers have undergone the Safeguarding Children Program delivered by the Australian Childhood Foundation, Protecting Children.
- Resiliency programs are conducted with students at all year levels including Bounce Back, Kids Matter and Protective Behaviours Workshops, to assist students to understand their rights and develop strategies to respond to and report inappropriate behaviours.

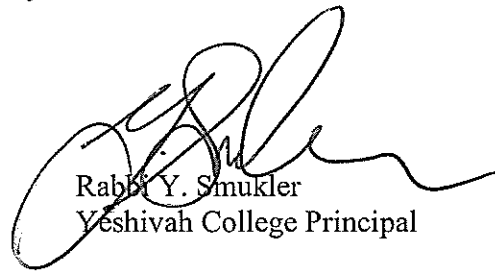
- In age appropriate workshops, our children learn to ‘say no, run away and tell an adult’. They learn about ‘good touch bad touch’, ‘no secrets’, ‘my body is mine’ and ‘if something makes me uncomfortable I don’t need to put up with it’.
- We have robust policies and procedures that govern staff and student interaction.
- We provide parent education on child protection. This includes distributing links to video training workshops on ‘How to Speak to your Kids About Personal Safety’ and ‘Unwanted Touch’.

It takes a community to prevent abuse. The close working partnership between the school and the parent body is vital. Yeshivah Centre adopts a leadership role by prioritising child safety, providing training programs and ensuring effective policies to prevent, and procedures to deal with issues should they arise.

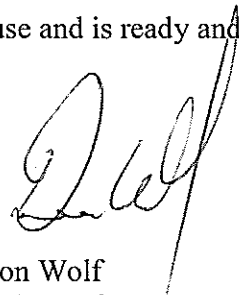
The Yeshivah Centre is committed to doing all it can to prevent child abuse and is ready and willing to assist the Inquiry further if it is able to do so.



Rabbi Z. Telsner  
Yeshivah Shule



Rabbi Y. Smukler  
Yeshivah College Principal



Mr Don Wolf  
Committee of Management Chair