# EXAMPLE Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates the strong commitment of management, staff and volunteers to child safety and wellbeing, and how our organisation keeps children safe from harm, including child abuse.

## Commitment to child safety

All children who come to (Organisation name) have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe and have fun while participating and enjoying our programs and activities.

## Purpose

This Policy outlines how (Organisation name) prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

## Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, Governance Committee members, children and other individuals involved in our organisation. This policy applies to all programs, activities and social interactions conducted by and held at (Organisation name)

## Definitions

*Governance Committee* means the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and general committee members that provide strategic direction and are responsible for legal and compliance oversight of (Organisation name)

Child abuse means:

a sexual offence committed against a child

an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming

physical violence against a child

causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child

serious neglect of a child

*Harm* is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

*Child/Children* means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

## Concerns and complaints

A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to (Organisation name) related to one or more of the following:

* our services or dealings with individuals
* allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with (Organisation name)
* disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
* the conduct of a child or young person at (Organisation name)
* the inadequate handling of a prior concern
* can take the form of general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

## Role of the Committee of Management / Governance (Governance Committee)

The Governance Committee has the role of making sure (Organisation name) prioritises children’s safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns or tenders a complaint about children’s safety.

The Governance Committee will champion and model a child safe culture at (Organisation name).

We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern.

The Governance Committee will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Everyone at (Organisation name) has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Governance Committee will make sure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed (as appropriate to the child specific programs you are delivering).

The Governance Committee will conduct an annual review of how effectively (Organisation name) is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with (Organisation name) will be sought as part of this review.

## Children’s empowerment and participation

(Organisation name) actively seeks to include children’s views and ideas in our organisational planning, delivery of services, and management of facilities (as they relate to programs provided for them).

We want children to develop new friendships through (Organisation name) programs and activities and encourage children to be supportive of each other.

We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and take action if this occurs.

We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights, including the right to be safe at (Organisation name).

We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We regularly communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

(Organisation name) values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families.

(Organisation name) supports children’s participation in the following ways as appropriate to your programs:

* Regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
* A suggestion box for children that is regularly emptied with suggestions assessed and acted on where appropriate. Children are provided with feedback on their suggestions.
* Consultation with children about any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, programs or staffing. Children’s views are collected by staff, provided to management and considered in the decision-making process.
* Information provided to children and families about (Organisation name) operations, staffing and programs are made suitable for different age groups and diversity of the children. Child safety information sessions will be offered in a language other than English where needed.

## Families and communities

(Organisation name) recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

(Organisation name) provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:

publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct on our website

including information about our operations and Committee of Governance and management structure, on the (Organisation name) website.

including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures, in our newsletter and on social media.

## Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families

(Organisation name) is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children culture is celebrated and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children include:

* an Acknowledgement of Country at all formal meetings
* consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children culture and practices in the (Organisation name) programs and activities
* providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture
* supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children organisations
* providing training for staff and volunteers on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
* celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
* seeking feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities on their experience at (Organisation name), particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture

## Valuing diversity

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

* provide training for all Governance Committee members, staff and volunteers on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety
* welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families
* offer students and families through our enrolment forms the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs
* have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
* deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our students, their interests and cultures
* strive to reflect the diversity of our community through representation in our staff and Governance Committee members
* acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates
* have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity
* commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

## Code of Conduct (see separate policy)

(Organisation name) has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Staff, volunteers and the Governance Committee must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person’s involvement with the organisation.

All third-party contractors are also expected to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and where they are engaging with children will have to sign an agreement to comply with the code, prior to delivering any services.

## Recruiting staff and volunteers (see separate process)

(Organisation name) puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for staff and volunteers as outlined in the recruitment and screening policy.

We only recruit staff and volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children. Members of the Governance Committee must also be screened.

We require a Working with Children Check, Police Checks and referee checks for all staff and volunteers who have a role with children or have access to children’s personal information.

We require staff to have appropriate qualifications for their roles and check to make sure these qualifications are valid.

Members of the Governance Committee must hold a valid Working with Children Check and a national Police Check is required.

## Supporting staff and volunteers

(Organisation name) is committed to ensuring that all leaders, staff and volunteers receive training (relevant to your child specific program delivery) to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. (Organisation name) assists its leaders, staff and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decisions and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

## Complaints and reporting (see separate Complaints Handling Process & Critical Incident Response)

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child.

All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

(Organisation name) has a complaint handling policy that includes information for staff and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to.

An easy-to-understand complaints information sheet will be provided for children, families and the community to know about the complaint process and the supports available to those making a complaint and those involved in the complaint process.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then staff and volunteers at Organisation name must report it in accordance with the complaint handling policy.

Organisation name staff and volunteers are required to prioritise children’s safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police.

Under the complaint handling and disciplinary policies, staff and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

* being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
* having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at Organisation name
* not being allowed unsupervised contact with children at Organisation name
* removing their access to the Organisation name IT system and facilities.

Complaints can be emailed to organisation email address, or you can speak with the Manager or Committee member.

***If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.***

## Record keeping (see Critical Incident Form)

Organisation name is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.

All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system.

Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

Records will be stored securely and kept by Organisation name for at least 45 years.

Confidentiality
Organisation name may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests.

Organisation name will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety.

We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety. Please refer to our complaint handling policy.

## Risk management (see Organisational risk assessment)

We recognise the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments Organisation name.

We conduct regular risk assessments and have a risk management plan to address the risk of child abuse and harm at Organisation name.

The risk management plan will be developed in consultation with our staff, volunteers, parents and children.

We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating in programs and activities.

The Governance Committee is responsible for approving the risk management plan.

Any contractors or other providers of services using our venue will be provided with a copy of this Policy to ensure child safety when room booking.

The Organisation name Code of Conduct applies to all room hirers.

## Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct

Organisation name will enforce this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in termination of room hire, restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement or other corrective action.

## Review

Organisation name will review all child safe practices and policies at least every two years.

We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or ‘near miss’.

Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices.

Reviews are conducted and approved by the Governance Committee and will be informed by consultation with children, families, and staff.

## Supporting documents

any other child safety policies

[Child Safe Standards 1 July 2022](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/news/new-child-safe-standards-start-in-victoria-on-1-july-2022-to-better-protect-children/)

professional development training plan

procurement policy

## Supporting legislation

[*Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* *(Vic)*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/child-wellbeing-and-safety-act-2005/041) (including Child Safe Standards)

[*Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* *(Vic)*](https://www.vcat.vic.gov.au/case-types/review-and-regulation/application-for-review-of-a-decision/children-youth-and-families-act-2005-child-welfare-matters-review) (including reporting to Child Protection)

[*Crimes Act 1958* *(Vic)*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/crimes-act-1958/301) (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)

[Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/wrongs-act-1958/127) (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)