



1.8 Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds,
- Ensure children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

WPA is committed to child safety and we have a duty of care to ensure the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers, and have a zero tolerance of child abuse. We take our responsibilities for children's welfare seriously and have a legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety.

WPA is committed to preventing child abuse and we will always endeavour to identify risks early. Once any risks to children have been identified we will act immediately to mitigate those risks by removing and reducing them and where possible, eliminating those risks.

All allegations and safety concerns regarding children will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

WPA has robust human resources and recruitment practices in place for all staff and volunteers which ensure staff members working with children have certified clearances to be able to work with children.

WPA requires all new staff to provide an Employee Working with Children Check and evidence of a current Police Check. These checks are part of the reference check process to ensure we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision-making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context. WPA is committed to training all of our staff and volunteers in being able to identify risks to children and in responding to signs of abuse and neglect. Employees and partners of WPA must not engage in any form of conduct that is prejudicial to the principal objectives of WPA, its employees, clients or stakeholders.

WPA is committed to an inclusive workplace that embraces and promotes diversity through a range of initiatives including a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, migrant, disability and equal opportunity employment. We value and respect the unique contributions people from diverse backgrounds make to the development and success of WPA. We believe all people regardless of

race, gender, religion, disability, environment, association, background or sexual identity have the right to be treated in a fair manner that promotes equity and equality.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we take as an organisation.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative Responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report information to the police.
- Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (e.g. any doors that can lock), and online environments in line with our Social Media Policy.

Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed biennially and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities, and people with a disability.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief an incident took place.

WPA Diversity and Inclusiveness Statement

WPA values and promotes diversity, fairness and inclusiveness in the workplace and is committed to ensuring workplace diversity and inclusiveness through establishing proactive strategies, policies and procedures. WPA aims to ensure that all employee, clients, business partners and stakeholders are treated with respect, dignity and fairness to ensure WPA promotes inclusiveness and positive working relationships. WPA is committed to recognising the value of diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace and ensures that work practices promote equal opportunity and are non-discriminatory.

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