

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Version 1.0

Adopted – July 2023

Review Date – July 2025

As an organisation that provides services and activities involving the care and participation of children and young people, Venus Bay Community Centre is committed to implement the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

The new Child Safe Standards apply from July 2022, and legislative changes provide the Commission for Children and Young People with new, enhanced enforcement and compliance powers from January 2023.

These standards aim to promote the safety of children, prevent child abuse and put in place effective processes for dealing with allegations of abuse.

Policy Statement

VBCC is committed to obligations defined in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and will build on existing systems to embed and improve a culture of child safety throughout all levels of the organisation.

We will aim to improve the health and wellbeing of all children in our care. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

All VBCC employees and volunteers are responsible for care and protection of children. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and to removing and reducing these risks.

Our organisation has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Our organisations is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

Venus Bay Community Centre is committed to implementing the Child Safe Standards.

Guiding Principles

Definitions

Child: A person under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse: Any act committed against a child involving:

- Physical violence
- Sexual offences
- Serious emotional or psychological abuses
- Serious neglect.

Grooming: Purposely creating relationships with victims, their families or carers in order to create a situation where abuse could occur.

Parents, carers or other family members may be targeted by perpetrators in order to gain access to a child.

Cultural abuse: Actions and attitudes that deliberately ignore, denigrate or attack the culture of a person or a community.

Children from Cultural and/or linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds: A child or young person who identifies as having a particular cultural or linguistic affiliation by virtue of place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home, or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.

Cultural safety for Aboriginal and CALD background children: The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.

Right to safety and participation

VBCC supports the right of children and of young people who come to the Centre to feel safe and respected. We are committed to developing procedures and strategies to ensure a safe environment at all times.

We will work to develop and maintain a culture of safety and awareness among committee, activity leaders, paid staff and volunteers to ensure that all users, but particularly children and young people, know about their rights and protective behaviour strategies.

We encourage children to express their views and make suggestions about decisions that affect

them. We listen to them and encourage them to have a say about what affects them. We teach them what to say if they feel unsafe.

Valuing diversity

We welcome children from diverse backgrounds and seek to recruit adults who respect and/or reflect this diversity.

We value the positive recognition and celebration of cultures in our programs and activities. (*HOW? "It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity".*)

Implementation

Risk Prevention

VBCC will implement behavioural and operational strategies to prevent and manage the risk of abuse or harm to children and young people, including risks presented by physical and online environments.

In our adherence to the Child Safe Standards:

- Reporting and acting on any suspicions of child abuse or breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and on any complaints or concerns brought to our attention
- Complying with our obligations under the Victorian Government Reportable Conduct Scheme. The scheme requires organisations to report allegations of child abuse and misconduct towards children made against their workers or volunteers to the Commission for Children and Young People. *See Appendix*
- Ensure that reporting procedures for complaints and concerns are confidential, clear, prompt and sensitive.
- Continue to support the rights of teachers, administrative staff, volunteers and all participants.

In our interactions with children and young people:

- Complying with our guidelines on physical contact with children
- Working with children openly and transparently in the presence of other adults
- Not initiating unnecessary physical contact with children nor doing things for them that they can do themselves
- Showing no favouritism through special attention or gifts
- Not exchanging personal contact details with them such as a phone number or networking website
- Having no unauthorised contact with them online or by phone

Training

The Manager is responsible for the implementation of the Child Safe Standards in the day-to-day operations of VBCC.

VBCC will ensure that staff and volunteers know and understand this policy and the Child Safe Standards. Induction and training in recognizing and responding to child abuse will be provided for staff and volunteers, including identifying grooming, what to do if an allegation is made or a concern is raised, or if staff observe abusive behaviour towards a child.

Committee members, staff and volunteers are required to sign and commit to our Child Safe Code of Conduct which is included in our induction procedures. (see Appendix)

Publicity

VBCC will publicise that it is a child-safe organisation by displaying our Child Safe Policy Statement in the centre, on our website. A statement regarding child safety will be included in the enrolment information given to students and parents of children.

Continuous Improvement

In undertaking our scheduled reviews of policies and procedures, the committee and manager will ensure that Child Safe Standards are included and implemented.

Legislation and Regulations

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005

AQTF Essential Conditions and Standards for Continuing Registration Victorian

The Victorian Child Safe Standards 2022

Relevant Policies and Procedures

Child Safe Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers

Youth Specific Policies and Procedures (to be reviewed)

Childcare Policies and procedures (to be reviewed) Incident Reports

Mandatory Reporting Guidelines (to be developed)

References:

Victorian Child Safe Standards – [CCYP | Child Safe Standards](#)

Reportable Conduct Scheme Information Sheets - [CCYP | Reportable Conduct Scheme information sheets](#)

Child Safety Code of Conduct for Staff, Board of Governance and Volunteers

In-line with the Child Safe Standards in Ministerial order 1359, all staff, board members and volunteers are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children.

All personnel are responsible for:

- fully understanding and adhering to Venus Bay Community Centre's child safe policies and procedures at all times and upholding the statement of commitment to child safety.
- maintenance of a valid Working with Children's Check (employee or volunteer status depending on the role)
- notification to the Manager of any activity or offence which could result in a cancellation or change to the currency of the WWC card
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and protect their human rights
- being aware of what constitutes an offence with regards to Failure to Disclose, Failure to Protect, Reportable Conduct and Grooming
- treating everyone with respect and in line with the Venus Bay Community Centre's guiding principles
- 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 or they have concerns about the safety of another person or that themselves or another have been abused
- taking action to uphold equity for all children, promote children's safety and prevent child abuse and harm
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children, including Aboriginal children, children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with a disability and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTIQ+) children
- ensuring that one-to-one interactions between an adult and a child are to be in an open space or in line of sight of another adult.
- reporting all suspected child abuse or child safety concerns as per the Venus Bay Community Centre guidelines
- involving children in making decisions about activities, policies and processes that concern them or are important to them, wherever possible

Staff, Board members and volunteers must not:

- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism or grooming (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race, gender or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child or their family member, because of culture, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- engage in activities or physical contact with children that is unnecessary or not justified by the service delivery context, and with regards to their age, abilities or needs
- engage in any activity that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child, or any activity with or in respect of a child that is unlawful
- arrange personal contact, including online contact, with children for a purpose unrelated to approved Community Centre activities and without the permission of the parent
- show or provide children with access to inappropriate images or material
- work with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse

By observing these standards, you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the General Manager.

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct:

Name

Signature

Date
