



## **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures**

*Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre at Mitchell House Inc. (WNC) is a non-profit, charitable organisation, based on community development principles, whose purpose it is to:*

- *Provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment where people can meet to learn and share ideas, friendship, skills and information and improve social health and well-being.*

*This central and fundamental purpose informs policy development and is reflected in all WNC policy documentation.*

### **Purpose**

This Policy outlines how WNC prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children under the age of 18 years participating in WNC activities and what steps will be taken to do this.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all WNC staff, volunteers, Committee of Management members, children and other individuals including contractors involved in WNC. This policy applies to all programs, activities and social interactions conducted by and held at WNC.

### **Child abuse and harm 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 including discrimination and bullying
- serious neglect of a child.
- damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person by adults or the conduct of other children.

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.

## Commitment to child safety

Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre is committed to:

- providing an inclusive environment where children and young people feel safe, empowered and respected
- giving value to the voices and experiences of all children and their families and endeavours to provide an environment where children are heard and encouraged to reach their full potential
- zero tolerance of all forms of child abuse, neglect, harm and risk of harm and upholds the [Victorian Child Safe Standards](#)
- zero tolerance for any forms of discrimination including but not limited to gender, cultural or religious discrimination
- Value diversity and equity for all children
- acknowledging the strengths and recognizing the vulnerabilities of specific groups, and is committed to protecting the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children living with a disability, culturally diverse children and LGBTI children
- encouraging children to share their cultural identities and express their culture
- seeking continuous improvement to ensure the safety of all children and young people accessing programs, groups, activities and events

## Role of the Management & Governance Committee:

- ensure WNC prioritises children's safety and models a positive, child safe culture where everyone feels comfortable to raise any child safety concerns
- identify and manage risks of child abuse and harm
- take action when anyone raises concerns or tenders a complaint about children's safety.
- ensure all reports of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated seriously and promptly
- prioritize children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to the Victorian Police
- securely store a comprehensive and accurate records of any child safety complaint for at least 45 years
- ensure information about a complaint remains confidential except where it is necessary to share information to prioritise child safety
- respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety
- maintain a current complaint handling policy
- ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed and all staff are familiar with the eleven Victorian Child Safety Standards.
- review the Child Safety policy every two years
- conduct an annual review of how effectively WNC is delivering child safety and wellbeing - the input of people involved with WNC will be sought as part of this review.

- ensure that Child Safety Standards promoted by management are on display within WNC and published on the website.
- ensure all staff and volunteers have a current Working with Children's Card and a National police check
- referee checks are conducted and appropriate qualifications are sighted and determined to be valid during the interviewing process for prospective staff

## **Role of staff & Volunteers**

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of WNC must:

- maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities
- establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work
- be fair, considerate and honest with others
- treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions
- act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people
- be professional in their actions
- maintain strict impartiality
- comply with specific WNC guidelines on physical contact with children (see below)
- respect the privacy of children & their families and only disclose relevant information to people who have a need to know
- operate within the policies and guidelines of Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre at Mitchell House.
- report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and/or the state-based child protection service)
- report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person at WNC) and
- contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse, phone 000

No person involved in the care of children on behalf of WNC shall:

- shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people
- unlawfully discriminate against any child
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves
- be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time
- develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs
- show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of WNC's programs and activities
- photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians

- work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- do anything in contravention of WNC's policies, procedures

Staff, volunteers and the Governance Committee must comply with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at all times. Breaches of the Policy may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with WNC.

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

## **Exceptions**

WNC personnel may only act outside the Child Safety and Well-being Policy should they feel compelled due to a reasonable belief that a child or young person's welfare is at risk. Even in such circumstances, personnel must act within the limits of the law. It is also expected that, wherever possible, authorisation is obtained from the Manager or President of the CoM before taking such action. Furthermore, when personnel have acted outside the Child Safety and Well-being Policy, it is a requirement that at the earliest opportunity an incident report is completed and logged and the Manager or the President is notified of the circumstances in which this Policy has been breached.

## **Supporting legislation**

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (including Child Safe Standards)

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (including reporting to Child Protection)

Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)