

Child Safe Policy

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Campaspe Cohuna Local Learning and Employment Network Inc (CCLLEN) is committed to complying with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and embedding child safety and wellbeing throughout its governance, leadership, culture, programs, policies and practices. We want children and young people to be safe, respected, included and empowered. CCLLEN has zero tolerance for child abuse and harm. All concerns and allegations will be taken seriously and responded to promptly, with the safety and wellbeing of children and young people as the priority. This policy outlines how CCLLEN works to prevent child abuse and harm, respond to concerns and meet the eleven Victorian Child Safe Standards.

CCLLEN will:

- promote the safety, participation and wellbeing of all children and young people
- listen to children and young people and take their views and concerns seriously
- provide safe, inclusive and culturally respectful environments
- identify and manage child safety risks in its programs and activities
- respond promptly to concerns, complaints and disclosures
- support staff, volunteers and others to understand their child safety responsibilities
- meet its internal and external reporting obligations
- regularly review and improve its child safe practices

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people will take priority over the interests or reputation of any individual, program or the organisation.

Purpose

The purpose of this Child Safe Policy is to demonstrate CCLLEN's commitment to protecting the safety, wellbeing and rights of all children and young people who engage with the organisation. This policy establishes the principles, responsibilities and practices that guide CCLLEN in preventing child abuse and harm, responding appropriately to concerns and complaints and creating environments in which children and young people are safe, respected, valued and empowered. The policy supports CCLLEN's compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and promotes a culture where child safety and wellbeing are embedded in leadership, governance and everyday practice.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Committee of Management members
- employees, volunteers, interns and students on placement
- contractors and consultants
- partner representatives and others engaged to deliver CCLLEN programs or activities
- all physical and online environments in which CCLLEN operates

For the purposes of this policy, a child or young person is anyone under 18 years of age.

Definitions

In this policy, a child or young person is a person under the age of 18 years. Key child safety terms used throughout this policy are defined in Appendix A – Definitions and Legislative Context. Appendix A should be read in conjunction with this policy to support a consistent understanding of CCLLEN's child safety obligations and responsibilities.

Policy Statements

CCLLEN is committed to complying with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and embedding child safety and wellbeing into all aspects of its leadership, governance, programs, activities and partnerships. The following statements outline how CCLLEN implements each Child Safe Standard.

Child Safe Standard 1 – Cultural Safety

CCLLEN is committed to establishing culturally safe environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are welcomed, respected and supported to express their identity, culture and connection to community. Racism is not tolerated in any form and CCLLEN will actively promote respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and cultural rights.

CCLLEN values diversity and will consider the individual needs and experiences of all children and young people, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disability
- children and young people of diverse sexualities and genders
- children and young people who are unable to live at home or are in out-of-home care
- children and young people experiencing disadvantage, isolation or other vulnerability

Reasonable adjustments and support will be provided to enable children and young people to participate safely and fully in CCLLEN activities.

Child Safe Standard 2 – Leadership, Governance and Culture

CCLLEN embeds child safety and wellbeing into organisational leadership, governance and culture. The Committee of Management and Executive Officer are responsible for promoting a child safe culture, ensuring accountability and providing appropriate resources to support child safety practices.

Child Safe Standard 3 – Child and Young Person Empowerment

CCLLEN recognises the rights of children and young people to be informed, heard and involved in decisions that affect them. Children and young people are encouraged to express their views and raise concerns in ways that are safe, accessible and appropriate.

CCLLEN will:

- listen and respond to the views and concerns of children and young people
- provide clear and age-appropriate information about their rights, expected behaviour and how to raise a concern

- create opportunities for children and young people to contribute to program planning and improvement where appropriate
- support children and young people to make complaints in ways that are accessible and safe
- provide feedback, where appropriate, about how their views have been considered

Child Safe Standard 4 – Families and Communities

CCLLEN recognises the significant role of families, carers and communities in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

CCLLEN will make its child safety commitments, policy and Code of Conduct publicly available and provide clear information about how concerns can be raised.

Parents and carers will be involved in decisions affecting their child where appropriate, unless doing so may increase a risk to the child or conflict with CCLLEN legal or reporting obligations.

Child Safe Standard 5 – Equity and Diversity

CCLLEN respects and values diversity and is committed to providing safe, inclusive and accessible environments for all children and young people. The organisation recognises and responds to the individual needs of children from diverse backgrounds, abilities, identities and life experiences. CCLLEN's commitment to equity, inclusion and respect for diversity is further supported by the CCLLEN Diversity Policy.

Child Safe Standard 6 – Suitable Staff and Volunteers

CCLLEN is committed to ensuring that people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to uphold child safety and wellbeing values in practice. Recruitment, screening and suitability assessment processes are undertaken in accordance with the CCLLEN Recruitment Policy.

Recruitment and screening will be appropriate to the responsibilities and risks of each role and may include:

- clear child safety expectations in position descriptions and recruitment information
- interview questions addressing suitability to work with children and young people
- referee and qualification checks
- Working with Children Checks
- national police checks
- any other screening required by law, a funding agreement or CCLLEN policy.

Required checks must be completed before a person commences relevant duties and must remain current throughout their engagement.

Child safety information will form part of the induction of new Committee members, staff and volunteers.

Child Safe Standard 7 – Complaints and Concerns

CCLLEN maintains child-focused and accessible processes for reporting concerns, complaints and disclosures. All concerns are taken seriously, responded to promptly and managed in accordance with legislative and organisational requirements.

Child Safe Standard 8 – Training and Education

Committee members, staff and volunteers will receive child safety information and training appropriate to their roles.

Training will include:

- this policy and the Child Safe Code of Conduct
- recognising indicators of abuse and harm
- responding to disclosures and concerns
- internal and external reporting obligations
- professional boundaries and online safety
- record keeping and information sharing
- cultural safety, inclusion and responding to racism and discrimination

Training will be refreshed as required and recorded. Child safety may also be addressed through staff meetings, supervision, performance discussions and program reviews.

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and Online Safety

CCLLEN identifies and manages risks to children and young people in physical and online environments. Risk management practices are designed to minimise opportunities for abuse and harm while supporting participation and wellbeing.

Child Safe Standard 10 – Continuous Improvement

CCLLEN regularly reviews, evaluates and improves its child safety policies, procedures and practices. Feedback, complaints, incidents and emerging risks are used to strengthen child safety systems and outcomes.

Child Safe Standard 11 – Policies and Procedures

CCLLEN maintains documented child safety policies, procedures and supporting resources that clearly describe how the organisation promotes child safety, responds to concerns and complies with the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Legislative and Reporting Obligations

CCLLEN is committed to complying with all relevant child safety legislation and regulatory requirements. All Committee members, employees, volunteers, contractors and others engaged by CCLLEN must understand and fulfil their obligations to protect children and young people from abuse and harm.

CCLLEN recognises and supports compliance with:

- The Victorian Child Safe Standards established under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.
- Mandatory reporting obligations that apply to certain professionals under Victorian law.
- The criminal offence of Failure to Disclose, which requires adults to report to Victoria Police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under 16 years of age.

- The criminal offence of Failure to Protect, which applies to people in positions of authority who fail to take reasonable steps to reduce or remove a substantial risk of child sexual abuse.
- Reporting obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, where applicable.

Compliance with these obligations forms part of CCLLEN's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe environment for children and young people.

Roles and Responsibilities

Committee of Management

The Committee of Management has overall responsibility for ensuring child safety and wellbeing are embedded in CCLLEN governance, culture and operations.

The Committee of Management will:

- approve and oversee this policy and related child safety arrangements
- promote and model a child safe culture
- ensure appropriate resources, training, risk controls and reporting systems are in place
- monitor significant child safety risks, concerns and improvement actions
- ensure statutory reporting and governance obligations are met

Executive Officer

The Executive Officer is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this policy and is the CCLLEN nominated Child Safety Officer.

The Executive Officer will:

- ensure child safety policies and procedures are implemented and accessible
- support staff and volunteers to understand their responsibilities
- oversee child safety risk management, training and record keeping
- respond to complaints, disclosures and concerns
- ensure matters are reported to the relevant authorities as required
- report significant child safety matters and improvement actions to the Committee of Management

Where a concern involves the Executive Officer, it must be reported to the Chair of the Committee of Management. Where a concern involves the Chair, it may be reported to another Committee office bearer or directly to the relevant external authority.

Employees, volunteers, contractors and others

Everyone covered by this policy must:

- comply with this policy, the Child Safe Code of Conduct and related procedures
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries
- contribute to safe and inclusive physical and online environments
- identify and act on risks to children and young people
- report concerns, disclosures, suspected abuse or breaches promptly
- participate in required induction, training and supervision

No person is expected to investigate an allegation or establish proof before making a report.

Child Safe Code of Conduct

The CCLLEN Child Safe Code of Conduct sets out the behaviour expected of people who interact with children and young people through CCLLEN.

All Committee members, staff, volunteers and relevant contractors must read, understand and comply with the Code.

Partner organisations and contractors involved in activities with children and young people must comply with CCLLEN Code or demonstrate equivalent child safety requirements.

Suspected breaches must be reported promptly and will be addressed in accordance with this policy and other relevant policies where appropriate.

Child safety risk management

Child safety will be considered as part of CCLLEN risk management and project planning processes.

Risks will be considered in relation to:

- programs, events and excursions
- work-based learning and industry activities
- transport and off-site activities
- one-to-one interactions
- physical venues and facilities
- online communication and social media
- photography, filming and personal information
- services delivered with partners, contractors, host employers or other third parties

Risk controls will be proportionate to the activity and will balance safety with children's rights to privacy, participation, learning and social connection.

Child safety responsibilities will be clarified when CCLLEN works with another organisation. The involvement of a school, employer, contractor or partner does not remove CCLLEN responsibility to manage risks arising from its own involvement.

Reporting a concern or disclosure

All child safety concerns, suspected breaches and disclosures must be reported promptly, regardless of whether the person making the report is a mandatory reporter under Victorian law.

If a child or young person is in immediate danger or requires urgent medical assistance, call 000.

When a child or young person makes a disclosure, the person receiving it must:

- listen calmly and allow them to speak in their own words
- reassure them that they did the right thing by speaking up
- avoid asking leading questions or attempting to investigate
- not promise confidentiality

- record what was said or observed as accurately as possible
- report the matter promptly to the Executive Officer

Detailed instructions on the reporting process can be found in the CCLLEN Child Safe Reporting Procedure.

External reporting

CCLLEN will report child safety matters to the relevant authority where required. This may include:

- Victoria Police
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Child Protection
- the Social Services Regulator under the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- another relevant regulator, funding body or authority

Where an allegation relates to a committee member, employee, volunteer, contractor or another person associated with CCLLEN, the Executive Officer or Chair will determine whether it must be notified under the Reportable Conduct Scheme and ensure any required notification is made within the statutory timeframe. CCLLEN will cooperate with external authorities and seek their guidance before commencing any internal investigation that could interfere with Victoria Police, Child Protection or regulatory process.

Responding to allegations

CCLLEN will take immediate and proportionate action to protect children and young people while a concern or allegation is assessed.

This may include:

- removing or restricting a person's contact with children and young people
- changing duties, supervision or access to information and systems
- standing a person down from their role or engagement
- arranging appropriate support for those affected
- notifying a partner organisation or external authority

Any internal investigation will be procedurally fair, appropriately documented and conducted by a suitably qualified person.

Substantiated breaches may result in disciplinary action, termination of employment or engagement, and referral to external authorities.

Record keeping, privacy and information sharing

CCLLEN will maintain accurate and secure records of:

- child safety concerns and disclosures
- reports made internally and externally
- decisions and actions taken
- investigations and findings
- support provided and improvement actions identified

Records will be retained securely and access will be limited to those who require the information to fulfill their responsibilities.

Information will be managed in accordance with CCLLEN Information Privacy Policy and applicable legal requirements. Information may be shared where required by law or where reasonably necessary to protect the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person.

Confidentiality cannot be promised where information must be shared to protect a child or meet a reporting obligation.

Discipline under this policy

Failure to comply with this policy or the Child Safe Code of Conduct may result in:

- additional supervision or training
- changes to duties or removal from an activity
- disciplinary action
- termination of employment, volunteering or contractual engagement
- reporting to an external authority

No person will be victimised or disadvantaged for raising a genuine child safety concern.

Policy Review Statement

CCLLEN will regularly review this policy and associated child safety systems to ensure ongoing compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards. Reviews will occur following significant child safety incidents, organisational changes or legislative amendments and will support continuous improvement in child safety and wellbeing.

Appendix A – Definitions and Legislative Context

Term	Definition
Child / Young Person	Any person under 18 years of age
Child Abuse	Includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, and serious neglect of a child.
Harm	Damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child, including physical, emotional, psychological or sexual harm caused by adults or other children.
Grooming	Deliberate behaviour used to build trust and establish an emotional connection with a child, family or organisation to facilitate abuse.
Disclosure	When a child or young person tells, shows or indicates they have experienced abuse, harm or feel unsafe.
Complaint	An expression of concern about behaviour, safety, wellbeing, service delivery or breaches of child safety requirements.
Cultural Safety	An environment where children and young people are respected, valued and supported to express their identity, culture, beliefs and needs without fear of discrimination or harm.
Child Safe Standards	The 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards established under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 to help organisations protect children from abuse and harm.
Child Safety Officer	The designated person responsible for supporting implementation of child safety systems, responding to concerns and promoting a child safe culture.
Working with Children Check (WWCC)	A Victorian Government screening process that assesses whether a person can work with children.
Reportable Conduct Scheme	A Victorian scheme requiring certain organisations to report and investigate allegations of child abuse and child-related misconduct by workers and volunteers.
Failure to Disclose	A criminal offence where an adult fails to report to Victoria Police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under 16 years.
Failure to Protect	A criminal offence that applies when a person in authority within an organisation fails to take reasonable steps to reduce or remove a substantial risk of child sexual abuse.
Equity	Fair treatment that recognises diverse needs and circumstances so all children can participate safely and fully.
Wellbeing	A positive state of physical, mental, emotional and social health where a child feels safe, supported and able to participate.