

VHKA

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact wade.ho@vhka.org.au

VHKA Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Purpose

The VHKA's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe when they are receiving our services or attending to our facilities.

It informs our organisation's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of children receiving our services or attending to our facilities across all areas of our work.

Scope

This policy:

- applies to all our committee members, staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with children;
- applies in all physical and online environments used by children during or outside the operating hours of our activities, events and facilities, including other locations provided through third-party providers; and
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related organisation policies section below.

Definitions

The following terms in this policy have specific definitions:

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| Child | a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years |
| Child abuse | Includes: a) any act committed against a child involving: 1. a sexual offence; 2. grooming offences under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958; b) the infliction, on a child of: 1. physical violence; 2. serious emotional or psychological harm; and c) the serious neglect of a child. |
| Child connected work | work authorised by the organisation and performed by an adult while children are present or reasonably expected to be present. |
| Child safety | includes matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to suspicions, |

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| | incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse. |
| Child related work | work, paid or unpaid, which usually involves (or is likely to involve) direct contact with a child, irrespective of whether that contact is supervised or not, and in any of the child-related occupational fields listed in the Worker Screening Act 2020. Direct contact includes oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact. |
| Grooming | When a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person for sexual activity at a later time, which can include communicating or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer. |
| VHKA or Our organisation | Victoria Hongkongers Association (Australia) Inc. and associated entities |

Statement of commitment to child safety

VHKA is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where children who receive our services and/or attend our facilities are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to children who receive our services and/or attend our facilities.

We promote positive relationships between children and adults and between children and their peers, who receive our services and/or attend our facilities. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to children who receive our services and/or attend our facilities. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal children receiving our services, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international children receiving our services, children receiving our services with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other children who receive our services and/or attend our facilities experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting children receiving our services based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our organisation, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our organisation has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from children who receive our services and/or attend our facilities, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Roles and responsibilities

Organisation leadership team

Our organisation leadership team (comprising the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with the latest

Child Safe Standards implemented by the Victorian and the Commonwealth government and legislature.

The leadership team will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed;
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of children who receive our services and/or attend our facilities, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing;
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all children receiving our services are considered;
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between children adults, and among children;
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the organisation community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and committee meetings;
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, children wellbeing, prevention of and responding to abuse; and
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

Organisation staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the organisation or other third-parties recommended by the organisation, and always follow the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policies and other policies and procedures in effect;
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures;
- ensure views of children who receive our services and/or attend our facilities are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives; and
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of children who receive our services and/or attend our facilities.

Our Committee

Our committee members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader community;
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at committee meetings;
- undertake annual training on child safety;
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to organisation's staff, volunteers and committee members; and
- when hiring staff and enrolling volunteers, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe

Specific staff child safety responsibilities

VHKA has nominated a Child Safety Officer (Mr. Wade Ho, wade.ho@vhka.org.au) to support the organisation leadership team to implement our child safety policies and procedures, including staff and volunteer training.

The responsibilities of the Child Safety Officer include but not limited to:

- promote child safety culture and wellbeing;

- ensure the organisation's child safety policies and procedures are current and fit for purpose; are publicly accessible; and are known and implemented;
- promote a culture of listening to children and families and acting on their child safety concerns;
- support staff and volunteers to focus on the child safety needs of vulnerable children;
- provide support and guidance and be a point of contact for child safety concerns for staff and volunteers;
- Provide guidance to staff and volunteers on child safety policies and procedures;
- Work with organisation's committee to respond to child safety incidents;
- Maintain current skills and knowledge to support child safety and wellbeing;
- Provide child safety induction programs for new staff, volunteers and committee members;
- Provide child safety training for staff, volunteers and committee members;
- Provide child safety updates and information to staff and volunteers, as needed;
- Record child safety complaints and concerns, and analyse trends as needed;
- Coordinate reviews following significant safety incidents and recommend improvements;
- Maintain the VHKA's child safety risk register with VHKA leadership team;
- Coordinate child safety policy and practice reviews in consultation with the wider community; and
- Maintain detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.

Our Chairman and Child Safety Officer are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

Child Safety Officer is also responsible for:

- monitoring the organisation's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in our organisation should approach the Child Safety Officer if they have any concerns about the organisation's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy; and
- informing the organisation's staff and volunteers about this policy, and making it or procuring to make it publicly available.

Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure, Child Safety Complaints Policy, Child Safety Risk Management, Privacy Policy, and Staff and Volunteer Policy.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and children receiving our services. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that children who receive our services and/or attend to our facilities also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the organisation.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At our organisation we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online facilities owned, managed or effectively under the control (whether permanent or temporary) of the organisation. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, and other policies and procedures in effect.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our organisation leadership team and Child Safety Officer will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Our Child Safety Officer will keep up to date with current online safety issues and expert information from specialist government and non-government bodies and monitor activity in relation to the organisation's online facilities and respond to any potential breaches of our child safety policy.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

At VHKA, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe organisation where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

For Aboriginal children who receive our services and/or attend to our facilities, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal children receiving our services and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our organisation planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our organisation community:

- begin events and meetings with a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country as a standing agenda item. Use this as an opportunity to pause and reflect or open a discussion;
- Display plaques and signs to Acknowledge Country and Traditional Owners outside our facilities;
- Celebrate the local Aboriginal community in communications with staff, volunteers and patrons;
- Express zero tolerance of racism in your statement of commitment to child safety included in this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and other documents of our organisation;
- Address racism from staff, volunteers or patrons directly. Make sure racist speech or actions are always dealt with, and the culture of the organisation works to prevent incidents from occurring;
- Train staff, volunteers and our committee members to understand the importance of Aboriginal culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children; and
- Support local Aboriginal businesses through our procurement of goods and services.

Children empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at VHKA, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages children and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

We inform children receiving our services or attending to our facilities of their rights through active engagement and give them the confidence to speak up and act on concerns of unsafe situations with adults or other children. We ensure the children receiving our services and/or attending to our facilities know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share their concerns with the responsible committee member or staff.

When the organisation is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the children and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

Family engagement

To support family engagement, at VHKA we are committed to providing families and the wider community with accessible information about our organisation's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- allowing relevant parties to leave their comments or messages through our organisation website and social media pages;
- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for children who receive our services or attend to our facilities and parents at our organisation's website; and
- our periodic newsletters will inform families about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure children safety.

Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our children, families and the wider community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people;
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- children and young people with disabilities;
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence;
- international children receiving our services ; and
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

We do this by:

- normalising asking for people's preferred pronouns and names for children;
- using contemporary, culturally sensitive and inclusive examples when discussing families, relationships or professions and vocations;
- recognising the range of diverse children and family attributes, and paying attention to:
 - cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
 - the needs of children with disability and responses to disability;
 - the needs of children from diverse religious and cultural communities;
 - gender differences;
 - the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer children;
- anticipating the needs of children from diverse backgrounds and life circumstances. Do not expect all children to be equally empowered to ask for what they need;
- providing staff and volunteers with training to identify and address racism, bullying and discrimination; and
- creating opportunities to remind staff and volunteers about children diversity and accommodating their needs.

Suitable staff and volunteers

At VHKA, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff recruitment and volunteer enrolment

When recruiting staff and enrolling volunteers, we follow the our rigorous Staff and Volunteer Policy.

When engaging staff and volunteer to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check;

- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications;
 - the person's history of working with children; and
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Staff and volunteer induction

All newly appointed staff and enrolled volunteers will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document);
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct;
- Child Safety Complaints Policy;
- Child Safety Risk Management;
- Privacy Policy;
- the Child Safety Reporting Obligations and Procedures and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that organisation leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff and volunteers will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by our organisation leadership team and Child Safety Officer.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our organisation and department policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff and volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff and volunteers will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our organisation's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices;
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and children receiving our services;
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm;
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and children receiving our services;
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations; and
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the organisation environment.

We may also team with external third-parties who are conversant with child safety rules and skills to deliver appropriate trainings to our staff and volunteers.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

Organisation council training and education

To ensure our organisation is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of children safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our organisation environment, our committee is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse;
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our organisation environment; and
- VHKA child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices that are in effect.

Complaints and reporting processes

VHKA fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, children, parents, and the wider community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our organisation's Child Safety Complaints Policy.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers must follow our Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, patrons or any other person while connected to the organisation.

Communications

VHKA is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to every staff and volunteers of the organisation through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website;
- updates in our organisation newsletter; and
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at organisation leadership meetings, staff meetings and organisation council meetings.

Review of child safety practices

At VHKA, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident;
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice; and
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with organisation staff and volunteers.

Related policies and procedures

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related organisation policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures



Child Safety
Reporting Obligai

- Child Safety Code of Conduct



Child Safety
Code of Conduct.

- Child Safety Risk Management



Child Safety Risk
Management.pdf

- Complaints Policy



Complaints
Policy.pdf

- Staff and Volunteers Policy



Staff and
Volunteer Policy.p

- Privacy Policy



Privacy Policy.pdf

Policy status and review

Our Child Safety Officer is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from children receiving our services and parents/carers.

Approval

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| Created date | 12 August 2022 |
| Endorsed by | VHKA's committee |
| Endorsed on | 14 August 2022 |
| Next review date | 14 August 2022 |