



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Education Equity Alliance

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- clearly demonstrate the Education Equity Alliance's ('the Alliance') commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children;
- ensure that the Alliance complies with its legal and ethical child safeguarding obligations; and
- inform staff, volunteers and contractors of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Alliance staff, volunteers and contractors (where applicable). It applies at all times, both during and outside normal working hours and to all activities of Alliance in which children are involved.

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Child/Children	Any person/s under the age of eighteen years.
Young person/Young people	Any person between the ages of 18 and 25.
Mature Minor	A young person under 18 with the capacity to make decisions and provide consent on their own behalf (i.e. without requiring parental / guardian's consent).
Child Abuse	The abuse of a child's rights to life, survival and development, and includes all forms of physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual abuse, as well as domestic or family violence, neglect, sexual exploitation or child labour.
Child Sexual Abuse	When a child is used by another child or adult for their own sexual stimulation or gratification, whether or not there is physical contact. Sexual Abuse includes all forms of sexual activity that involve children, including communication with children via digital technology or exposing children to pornographic images
Child Sexual Exploitation	Where a child is sexually abused or exploited in return for cash or for kind.
Emotional Abuse	A persistent attack on a child's self-esteem, including name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating a child.
Grooming	Building the trust of a child or their carer to gain access to that child in order to sexually abuse them. Indicators involve but are not limited to developing special relationships with a child, inappropriate interactions, or testing or ignoring professional boundaries.



4. Policy Statement

The Alliance is committed to protecting children from harm, exploitation and abuse. The Alliance staff, volunteers and contractors must, at all times, treat all children with dignity and respect and must endeavor to actively promote and prioritise the right of every child to feel physically and emotionally safe.

This Child Safeguarding Policy is guided by the following principles:

Principle	Explanation
Best interests of the child	Every Alliance program or activity is guided by the principle of serving the best interests of every child that is involved in or connected to an Alliance program or activity.
Child participation	Children involved in Alliance activities or programs are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informed about their rights to safety and wellbeing; • participate in decisions that affect them; and • have their views taken seriously.
Zero tolerance of abuse	The Alliance will not tolerate any form of Child Abuse by any person involved in a program or activity of the Alliance or representing the Alliance in any way
Risk management	The Alliance will ensure that the risks of Child Abuse are identified, monitored and reasonably managed in assessing and undertaking all Alliance activities or programs.
Confidentiality, fairness and wellbeing	Any matter, allegation or concern raised under this policy or the Child Safety Code of Conduct will be dealt with in a fair, confidential and timely manner to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all persons involved.

5. The Alliance's obligations

The Alliance has obligations to safeguard children and provide an environment that fosters child safety and wellbeing under National and State-based legislation, regulations, principles and guidelines.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) have been developed by the National Children's Commissioner to provide a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing. Australian organisations are not legally required to adopt the National Principles, however are considered best practice for fostering child safety and wellbeing culture and practice.

Victorian Child Safe Standards

Victoria has compulsory minimum Child Safe Standards that the Alliance is required to comply with. Under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) organisations that exercise care, supervision or authority over children, whether as part of its primary function or not are required to comply with



the Victorian Child Safe Standards From 1 July 2022, Victoria will introduce 11 new Child Safe Standards. These standards are:

- Standard 1: Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
- Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
- Standard 3: Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- Standard 4: Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Standard 5: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
- Standard 6: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Standard 7: Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
- Standard 8: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Standard 9: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Standard 10: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- Standard 11: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

6. Implementation

The Alliance upholds its commitment to safeguarding the welfare of every child involved in The Alliance's programs or activities and complies with its child safeguarding obligations through the following means.

6.1 Child Safety Code of Conduct

Every Alliance employee, volunteer, and contractor (where applicable) should familiarise themselves with and follow Alliance's Child Safety Code of Conduct. This ensures that all persons are given clear guidance on minimizing risks to children and have an understanding of the behavior required of them when interacting with children.

Alliance employees, volunteers and contractors will be required to hold a current Working with Children Check.

6.2 Recruitment

The Alliance has implemented policies and procedures around the recruitment of staff and volunteers, which include guidance on ensuring child safeguarding is embedded in the advertising of vacant roles, pre-employment/pre-engagement screening, interviewing process and reference checks.



6.3 Ongoing review

As the Alliance's activities develop and change, the Board will consider child safeguarding risks and appropriate mitigation strategies. This will be a standing agenda item at Alliance Board Meetings.

6.4 Privacy and consent

The Alliance's Ethics Statement outlines how it collects, stores and uses the personal information of children and young people. This includes guidelines for how it ensures the confidentiality of young people when they make contributions through the Alliance's activities.

The Alliance has developed processes around obtaining informed assent from children and consent from their parents or guardians prior to their participation in and making contributions to Alliance activities.

6.5 In-person safety for children and young people

For all Alliance in-person activities, the following risk mitigation strategies will be taken:

- For school-based workshops:
 - The workshop will be facilitated by at least one Alliance staff member or volunteer and one school staff member.
 - Children will never be supervised solely by the Alliance staff member.
 - Alliance staff members and volunteers will also comply with the school's own Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct.
 - Alliance staff members and volunteers will provide the school with a copy of their current Working with Children Check upon sign-in.
 - Children will be informed at the beginning of each workshop that they are able to leave at any time and the supports they have access to.
- For Social Labs:
 - The Alliance's Board will complete a separate child safeguarding risk matrix for each event.
 - Children will participate with a school staff member – the child safeguarding risk matrix will be shared with these school staff members.
 - Both the school staff member and the Alliance staff and volunteer will monitor the adherence to the child safeguarding risk matrix during the event.
 - The Alliance will not be responsible for transporting students – this will be the responsibility for the school.
 - Children will be informed at the beginning of a social lab that they are able to leave at any time and the supports they have access to.

6.6 Online safety for children and young people

For any Alliance activities conducted online, the following precautions will be taken:



- The Alliance will co-host the activity with a school/youth organisation connected with the young people;
- At all times, there will be a minimum of two Alliance/school/youth organisation team members, taking part in the online activity;
- The school/youth organisation team member will monitor the behavior and wellbeing of Child participants throughout the activity or event and should have access to the contact details of all Child participants should they need to be contacted for safety or wellbeing reasons;
- Any private chat capabilities of an online platform hosting an Alliance activity or event should be disabled;
- Children will not be in an online breakout without either an Alliance or school/youth organisation team member; and
- Children will be informed at the beginning of the workshop of their ability to leave the workshop at any time and the supports available to them.

6.7 Reporting policy breaches

All allegations and complaints regarding breaches of this Child Safety Policy, regardless of who they are made by, will be treated seriously, responded to promptly. Any investigation into a report of Child Abuse or a Breach of this Policy will be undertaken with the utmost confidentiality, sensitivity and care for the wellbeing of the Child involved.

6.8.1 Report by Alliance employee, volunteer or contractor

Alliance employees, volunteers and contractors are required to report any conduct directly seen or suspected, or any allegation or disclosure of conduct that does not comply with this Policy or the Child Safety Code of Conduct. The report should be made to the Alliance's Coordinator and to the relevant body or authority (where required under mandatory reporting laws, explained below).

Where there is an investigation into an Alliance employee, volunteer or contractor for conduct that is in breach of this Child Safety Policy or the Child Safety Code of Conduct, that person is to be immediately removed from any activities that involve contact with Children.

6.8.2 Report by a Child, Young Person or participants in an Alliance activity or program

Children involved in Alliance activities or programs are informed of their right to feel safe, how they can make a report if they do not feel safe and encouraged to report any conduct that they witness or become aware of that does not comply with this Child Safety Policy or the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

7. Mandatory reporting laws

There are Australian laws that require certain persons to report suspected abuse and neglect of Children to government child protection services in Australia
(https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/2006_mandatory_repo)



rting_of_child_abuse_and_neglect_0.pdf). The categories of people required to make a report of suspected abuse and neglect of Children differs in each State and Territory in Australia, but are most commonly teachers, early childhood educators, doctors, nurses and police. If an Alliance staff member, volunteer or contractor becomes aware of a situation where mandatory reporting or failure to disclose or report laws may apply, they must discuss their concerns and next steps with the Alliance Coordinator as soon as practicable. As appropriate, the Alliance Coordinator will also discuss the concerns with the relevant staff member of the school/youth organisation.

7.1 Victorian mandatory reporting laws

In Victoria, any adult (a person 18 years or older) who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child (in this case a person under 16 years) has an obligation to report that information to Victoria Police as soon as possible. If an adult fails to disclose this information to police, this is a criminal offence punishable by up to three years imprisonment under section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic). This is also known as the 'failure to disclose offence'. The failure to disclose offence applies to individuals and not to the Alliance as an organisation.

Victorian law also criminalises the failure of individuals to protect a child (in this case a person under 16 years) from a sexual offence. This is also known as the 'failure to protect offence'. This law covers Alliance employees, volunteers and contractors. The law requires a person in authority (at a relevant organisation) to take certain actions to protect a child if they know that a person associated with their organisation poses a substantial risk to a relevant child.

8. Consequences for breaching this policy

Breaches of this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary procedures, change of duties, suspension or termination of employment.

9. Monitoring and review

All staff and volunteers are responsible for monitoring the application of this Policy and should provide feedback on its effectiveness. This policy will be reviewed every two years at minimum.

10. Authorisation

Authorised by	The Alliance's Board
Last review	August 2023
Next review	August 2024