

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

1 Policy statement

Concern Australia recognises the rights of every child to be safe and protected and is strongly committed to being a Child Safe organisation.

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 providing environments where children and young people are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

Concern Australia has zero tolerance for child abuse and takes proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to children and young people. If child safety concerns are identified or raised, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Concern Australia is committed to meeting its legal obligations and duty of care to children as detailed in the *Child Safe Standards* and the *National Child Safety Principles*.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Board, staff, volunteers and contractors, whether or not they work directly with young people.

This policy applies in all physical and online environments, including other locations (eg excursions) and those provided by third parties.

3 Definitions

Aboriginal child	A child or young person under the age of 18 years who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent• identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander• and is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community
Child, children, young person	Any child or young person under the age of 18 years
Child abuse	An act or acts which endanger a child's health, wellbeing or development. It can be a single act or a series of traumatic events. It includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• physical abuse• sexual abuse• emotional abuse• exposure to family violence• neglect• grooming• cumulative harm• multi-dimensional harm

Child Safe organisation	An organisation that takes deliberate steps to protect children from abuse.
Cultural safety	The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination.
Duty of care	The obligation to take reasonable steps to protect children from the risks of harm that are reasonably foreseeable.
Emotional abuse	May occur through rejection, hostility, bullying, yelling, criticism and exposure to family violence. May damage physical, social, intellectual or emotional development of a child.
Grooming	Predatory behaviour undertaken to gain the trust and/or compliance of a child in preparation for future sexual abuse.
Neglect	The failure to provide a child with the basic necessities to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, harmed.

4 Responsibilities

Board	Ensure a strong child safe culture. Ensure effective child safety wellbeing and safety governance.
CEO/Executive Team	Ensure a strong child safe culture. Ensure effective child safety wellbeing and safety governance. Ensure policies and procedures address the risks of child abuse. Facilitate learning on cultural safety and procedures. Address any allegations of child abuse by staff, volunteers or contractors.
Managers	Ensure staff and volunteers are aware of and adhere to this policy and the Code of Conduct. Ensure new staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities related to child safety during induction. Lead staff in identifying and managing risks related to child safety. Actively enquire about any child safety concerns as part of fortnightly supervision. Respond to any concerns about abuse to secure the immediate safety of a child and to report the allegation. Seek external feedback on our practices.
Workers	Comply with this policy and the Code of Conduct. Participate in the identification and assessment of risks to child safety and implement risk management plans. Participate in mandatory training.

	Identify any cultural safety knowledge gaps and actively seek training.
	Notify HR Officer of any child safety training undertaken.
	Report any concerns about abuse immediately.
HR Officer	Ensure that recruitment and selection processes are child safe.
	Record staff attendance at mandatory child safe training and monitor compliance.

5 Statement of Commitment

Concern Australia's vision is to provide a sense of hope for vulnerable children and young people. The provision of a safe and supportive environment for the children and young people participating in our programs is of the highest priority.

Concern Australia is committed to providing child safe and protected environments in all its activities and programs and has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse or exploitation. Children have the right to be safe and protected.

6 Guidelines

6.1 Code of Conduct

Concern Australia's *Code of Conduct* sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and children or young people. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

The *Code of Conduct* also details requirements for reporting inappropriate behaviour.

6.2 Risk management

Concern Australia identifies, assesses and manages risks to child safety and wellbeing in accordance with our *Risk Management Policy*.

This includes specific risk assessments for activities and excursions, and facilities or services that are contracted through a third party.

6.3 Cultural safety

Concern Australia is committed to ensuring an environment that is welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe.

Concern Australia will promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people by supporting their connection to culture, kin, community, cultural practices, and Aboriginal identity.

We consider cultural needs in the planning and delivery of support and services.

6.4 Diversity and equity

Concern Australia recognises that every young person has unique skills, strengths and experiences.

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
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

6.5 Empowerment and participation

Children and young people have unique insights into their lives and their needs. We believe that all children and young people should be treated with respect, and we value their opinion. Children and young people have a right to be heard and to have their concerns and ideas taken seriously, particularly on matters that affect them, including what makes them feel safe and secure.

Young people engaging with our services are provided with a Handbook that informs them of their rights. We actively work with young people to build their capacity.

6.6 Family and community engagement

Concern Australia engages with families, schools and partner agencies where appropriate to participate in child safety and wellbeing decisions.

Concern Australia openly communicates with families, schools, partner agencies etc about its child safe approach.

Our *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* is available to all through our website.

7 Staff and volunteers

7.1 Recruitment

Concern Australia prioritises child safety and wellbeing during recruitment and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that we only engage people who are appropriate to work or volunteer in our organisation:

- All job advertisements and position descriptions explicitly state our commitment to child safety.
- Face to face interviews are conducted which include questions specifically related to child safety.
- A minimum of two reference checks are performed and documented. These include questions specifically related to child safety.
- Screening checks are carried out including identity, criminal record, Working with Children Checks and qualification checks. A staff member or employee is not permitted to begin work for Concern Australia before satisfactory checks are confirmed.

We encourage applications from Aboriginal people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

7.2 Induction

All staff or volunteers, upon commencing with the organisation are given a copy of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct. Our workers indicate in writing that they have read and understood the organisation's expectations of them, and the signed documents are retained on their personnel file.

Induction also includes face to face conversations regarding child safety.

7.3 Training

Concern Australia is committed to ensuring that all Board members, staff and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety.

All Board members, staff and volunteers are required to complete mandatory annual child safety training, which is recorded in the Professional Development Register.

7.4 Ongoing supervision and management

All staff and volunteers undertake regular supervision to support their work with young people and to ensure compliance with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Child safety is a regular topic at team meetings and staff meetings.

8 Complaints and reporting

8.1 Complaints

Young people engaged in Concern Australia programs are provided with a handbook which includes various options for making a complaint.

Concern Australia will deal promptly with all complaints in accordance with its *Complaints Policy*.

If a complaint includes an allegation or an incident of child abuse or harm it must be reported immediately.

8.2 Allegations of abuse

Concern Australia will treat all child safety concerns or allegations of child abuse seriously and will investigate all allegations in a procedurally fair way.

Staff and volunteers who are the subject of an allegation will be stood down, or found alternative accommodation such that they do not engage with young people, pending the outcome of any investigation.

8.3 Privacy and information sharing

Concern Australia collects, uses and discloses information in accordance with its *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*.

Concern Australia is an Information Sharing Entity under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and is authorised to share and request confidential information about any person to promote the safety and/or wellbeing of a child. Consent is not required from any person when sharing under the CISS.

8.4 Recordkeeping

Concern Australia recognises the importance of maintaining good records in relation to child safety and will keep full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.

Records will be retained in accordance with relevant legislation and guidelines.

9 Non-compliance and breaches

Potential breaches of this policy or the *Code of Conduct* will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the *Misconduct Policy*.

10 Review

This policy and associated policies and procedures will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents should they occur.

Version control

Issue date	Version	Author	Reviewer/Approver	Description of Changes
26/04/2023	3.0	M Wells	Executive Team	Policy significantly rewritten.

Related documents

Relevant legislation/standards	Associated policies/forms
<i>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)</i> <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)</i> <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)</i> <i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)</i> <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> <i>Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)</i> <i>Worker Screening Act (Vic)</i> <i>National Principles for Child Safe Organisations</i> <i>Child Safe Standards</i> <i>Human Services Standards</i>	Child Safety Reporting Policy and Procedures Code of Conduct Risk Management Policy Duty of Care Policy Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy Recruitment Policy Supervision Policy Complaints Policy Incident Reporting Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Records Management Policy Misconduct Policy



Signed acceptance

Please sign and date the following acceptance to confirm that you have received a copy of this Policy and agree to abide by the conditions contained within.

Acceptance

I, have read and understood Concern Australia’s *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and agree to abide by its provisions.

I understand that any breach of this policy will render me liable to appropriate disciplinary action which may result in dismissal, and improper use and disclosure of such information obtained directly or indirectly by virtue of my employment/engagement by or association with Concern Australia may also lead to prosecution.

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Signature of employee/volunteer

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Full name of employee/volunteer

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Position

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Date