

# Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

## 1 Rationale

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This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (**Policy**) sets out how the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and its agents (**Assembly**) ensures the safety and wellbeing of children.

The Assembly is bound by the *Child Wellbeing Safety Act 2005* (Vic), including the Child Safe Standards. In addition, this Policy is informed by the:

- National Principles of Child Safe Organisations
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

This Policy will be reviewed from time to time and will be made available on our website. This Policy should be read together with related policies and procedures, including but not limited to:

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Complaints Handling Policy
- Child Safety Procedures
- Working With Children Check Procedure

These policies and procedures will be collectively referred to as the Assembly's **child safety policies and procedures**.

### 1.1 Commitment to child safety

The Assembly is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. All children who participate in our activities have the right to feel safe and be safe.

We aim to create an environment where children can learn about the past, participate in the Treaty process and connect to their culture. Children are vital participants in the journey to Treaty. We listen to what they have to say.

The Assembly promotes diversity and inclusion. Children from all cultural backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities and spiritual beliefs are welcome.

We have zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm.

## 2 Scope

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This Policy applies to everybody at the Assembly, including Directors, Members, employees, volunteers, other people engaged by the Assembly, children and their families.

This Policy applies to all Assembly activities involving children.

## 3 Definitions

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In this Policy, the expressions we, us and our are references to the Assembly.

**Child/children** includes young people and means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

**Child abuse** 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, or
- serious neglect of a child.

**Child Safety Officer** is the Head of Operations and Business Services.

**Complaint** refers to an allegation of wrongdoing related to child safety and includes any concerns of wrongdoing.

**Harm** is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. 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.

## 4 Role of the Child Safety Officer and Council

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The Child Safety Officer and the Assembly Council (**Council**) oversee the child safety policies and procedures. They ensure that the Assembly prioritises child safety and that action is taken whenever a concern is raised about a child's safety.

The Child Safety Officer and the Council will promote a child safe culture by:

- encouraging anyone involved with the Assembly to report a child safety concern
- identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm
- ensuring appropriate child safety training is delivered, and
- regularly reviewing the child safety policies and procedures.

## 5 Cultural safety

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The Assembly is committed to creating a culturally safe environment for all children that it engages with.

Connections to culture, community and Country nurture and support young people's wellbeing and spirituality. The Assembly aims to maintain and strengthen these connections. The unique identities of our young people and their families must be celebrated.

The Assembly embeds a culturally safe environment by:

- beginning all meetings and activities with the Assembly's Cultural Safety Protocols, as set out in the Assembly's Cultural Safety Policy
- providing opportunities for children to share their identity and express their culture
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant community organisations, and
- requiring employees to attend cultural safety training.

The Assembly does not tolerate any disrespectful or racist conduct.

## 6 Valuing diversity

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We value all children, their uniqueness and their diversity. We welcome and support the participation of all children, including children with a disability, LGBTIQ children and children who are unable to live at home.

Our activities will reflect the diversity of our participants, their needs and interests. We will ensure all children are able to participate in our activities and will not tolerate any form of discrimination.



## 7 Empowerment and participation

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Children are vital participants in the Treaty process. The Assembly's Youth Voice empowers children and young people to be involved in Treaty and to learn and celebrate their culture. The Youth Voice is guided by the views and ideas of young people. The Assembly also engages with young people through visiting schools and hosting child or youth centred activities.

We want children to develop new friendships and connections through the Assembly, to support and learn from their peers. We do not tolerate lateral violence, bullying or other abusive behaviour between children and will take action if this occurs.

All children must be safe and feel safe at our activities. We will take steps to understand what each child needs to feel safe. We will provide information to children about their rights, including their right to be safe.

## 8 Families and communities

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The Assembly recognises the important role of families and communities in a child's life. Families and communities will be informed of our activities and our child safety policies and procedures. Families and communities are welcome to provide feedback and are encouraged to raise any concern they have. We will communicate how to provide feedback or raise a concern.

## 9 Complaints and reporting

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All complaints of child abuse, harm and safety will be taken seriously. They will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

Any person can make a complaint – children, families, volunteers, staff, Members or any other person involved with or engaged by the Assembly. A complaint can be made about the conduct of an adult or child.

All complaints about child safety will be handled in accordance with our Child Safety Complaints Handling Policy.

*If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.*

## 10 Members, staff and volunteers

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The Assembly will ensure that all Members, staff, volunteers and other persons engaged by the Assembly who have a role with children:

- have appropriate background checks, including during recruitment processes for staff and volunteers
- hold a valid Working with Children Check
- receive training and information on issues including:
  - children's rights
  - cultural safety
  - recognising signs of abuse and harm and how to respond
  - child safety policies and procedures
- receive supervision to support their engagement with children, and
- understand and comply with the Assembly's child safety policies and procedures.

## 11 Risk management

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We will conduct regular risk assessments to address the risk of child safety in our physical and online environments. The Child Safety Officer and the Council are responsible for the risk assessments.

## 12 Non-compliance

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The Assembly will ensure all child safety policies and procedures are followed. Any potential breach will be taken very seriously, investigated and may result in a restriction of duties, suspension, termination of employment or other action.

# 13 Review

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The Assembly will review all child safety policies and procedures at least once every two years. We will also review the policies and procedures in response to a child safety incident.

## About this policy

Approved by Council on 21 October 2022

Scheduled Review Date 21 October 2024

