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<NUMBER> CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Policy Statement

This policy reflects the commitment of Wesley Mission Victoria (WMV) to providing a child safe environment and establishing and maintaining work places, work practices and systems which keep children safe from harm and protected from abuse.

A child safe environment is one where all adults accept responsibility for keeping children safe and where children feel safe, respected, valued and supported to reach their full potential. At Wesley this is enacted by responding to the needs of children, vulnerable people and their families in manner which is compassionate, professional and culturally appropriate.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the Principles for Child Safe Environments developed by the Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians. A copy of the principles is attached to this policy.

This policy describes practical steps we will take to eliminate child abuse and neglect, harassment and bullying in all programs and activities conducted by Wesley Mission Victoria.

Experience shows that abuse is more prevalent in organisations which lack regular, formal supervision and monitoring systems. The Child Safety Policy and the associated procedures is the central component of a system to keep children safe from abuse and harm. The other components include:

- *WMV Code of Conduct; the Code of Conduct requires all stakeholders to comply with prescribed standards of behaviour in their care, activities and interactions with children. The Code of Conduct is supported by WMV Grievance Procedure to address breaches of the code. All actions taken concerning breaches of the code must reflect the principles of fairness and natural justice and provide for the support and wellbeing of the stakeholder.*
- *Guidelines regarding appropriate physical contact between stakeholders and children which limit the risk of abuse and provide clear direction for anyone working with children. A copy of the guidelines is attached to this policy.*
- *WMV Screening and Recruitment Policy; the policy provides the requirements for the screening, recruitment and selection of suitable people to work with children. All applicants for employment and volunteers who will work with children are required to provide a current Police check, Working with Children Check and undergo a rigorous screening and selection process.*
- *Development of an open and aware culture which promotes child safety and wellbeing incorporates the unique knowledge and experience of children, implements strategies to*

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ensure children feel safe to disclose abuse and where all stakeholders are committed to reporting concerns.

- *Active participation of children in decision making particularly in matters that directly affect them. WMV also encourages input into relevant service development and planning activities.*
- *Clear reporting procedures and requirements where abuse and neglect is disclosed, observed or suspected and consistent support arrangements for children, families, and stakeholders where a report is made.*
- *Regular quality supervision and support for all staff and volunteers to ensure they are adequately prepared supported and resourced for their role.*

This policy informs all individuals listed below of this commitment.

Attachments:

Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Scope

This policy applies to the following persons: individuals elected to Wesley Mission Victoria boards, committees and sub committees, permanent and casual employees, volunteer carers, mentors or other volunteers, contractors, sub contractors, agency staff providing care in WMV facilities or on behalf of WMV, persons working as "lead tenants", students completing practical work or other placements and any other person involved with Wesley Mission Victoria.

Hereafter in this policy the individuals listed above are referred to as "stakeholders"

Definitions and Abbreviations

Abuse *includes sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. It includes harassment, bullying and humiliation.*

Bullying *is a systematic and repeated abuse of power (by a child or adult) such as dominating or hurting a person, unfair actions by the perpetrator and a lack of adequate defence by the individual being bullied.*

Child or Young Person *includes all children and young people under the age of 18 years receiving services from WMV.*

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Child abuse is an act by parents or caregivers (or others) which endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident or may take place over time. (Physical and behavioral indicators of abuse and neglect are listed as an attachment to this policy to assist individuals to identify children who may be at risk.)

Physical abuse occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a child's parent or caregiver. **Sexual abuse** occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve the child in sexual activity and the child's parent or caregiver has not protected the child. **Emotional Abuse** occurs when a child's parent or caregiver repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child.

Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

Natural justice (procedural fairness) requires that both the complainant and respondent must have full details of what is being alleged and an opportunity to respond; that all relevant submissions must be considered; that no person may judge their own case; that the decision maker must be fair and unbiased; and that the penalties imposed must be fair.

Risk includes anything that can threaten the safety and wellbeing of children.

Volunteer includes a range of voluntary roles including but not limited to foster parents, individuals providing direct care of children on camps and overnight (including on a temporary or extended basis) and persons acting as mentors.

Culture of child safety is an organisational commitment

Wesley is committed to the leadership of all measures contained in this policy and to actively promoting the participation and contribution of all stakeholders, children and families in systematic reviews of its effectiveness.

Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

Cultural identity and a sense of belonging are fundamental to the wellbeing of Aboriginal children.

Wesley is committed to providing an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children feel safe and nurtured and comfortable to express their culture and spiritual beliefs.

Wesley will identify and implement practical strategies to assist Aboriginal children to build self esteem and cultural identity. These strategies will integrate with current practice requirements (including cultural planning) and be implemented across the organisation, particularly in the areas of recruitment, induction, professional development and supervision.

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Wesley will develop and maintain effective relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to maximise cultural connectedness for children and provide guidance in case practice and policy development.

Principles for Child Safety

- All children have a right to be safe and protected from harm, abuse and neglect.
- The most important responsibility for all stakeholders is to protect children from abuse and harm and promote their healthy development.
- It is the duty of all stakeholders to report disclosures, observations of concern or a reasonable belief that a child is suffering abuse and harm.
- The racial and cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, gender identity and sexual orientation of all children and their families are valued and respected.

Wesley Mission Victoria will;

- Implement and comply with this policy.
- Distribute and promote this policy.
- Apply this policy consistently
- Report allegations of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities promptly.
- Manage breaches of this policy in accordance with the rules of procedural fairness (natural justice).

Stakeholders bound by this policy will;

- Make themselves aware of this policy and the associated Child Safety Procedures.
- Place the safety and wellbeing of children above all other considerations.
- Consider the risks to children in all care arrangements and activities and take appropriate decisions and actions to prevent abuse and keep children safe from harm.
- Discuss any issues in implementing this policy with their direct supervisor or program manager.
- Comply with the WMV Code of Conduct, Child Safety Procedures, other relevant organisational procedures and legislative requirements in their care and contact with children.
- Make themselves aware of the indicators of abuse of children and report disclosures, observations of concern or any reasonable belief that a child may have suffered abuse or neglect in accordance with required WMV procedures.

External Context

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Relevant Standards

Department of Human Services Standards (DHS)

Program requirements for residential care (Out of Home Care) services in Victoria 2014 (DHS)

Guidelines for responding to quality of care concerns (DHS)

Quality of Support Review (DHS)

Relevant Legislations / Regulations

Children Youth and Families Act 2005

Working with Children Act 2005

Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by Australia 1990)

Disability Act 2006

Disability Regulations 2007

Migration Act 1958

Housing Act 1983

Related Documents

Related Procedures, Guidelines, other documents

Code of Conduct (WMV)

Police Check Procedure (WMV)

Working with Children Check Procedure (WMV)

Screening and Recruitment Procedure (WMV)

Induction and Probation Procedure (WMV)

Privacy and Information Procedure (WMV)

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*Supervision Policy and procedure (WMV)**Client Rights and Responsibilities (WMV)**Charter for Children in Out of Home Care. Commission for Children and Young People**Risk Assessment Procedures (WMV)**Learning and Development Procedure (WMV)**Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities Statement (WMV)**Home Based Care Reference manual (WMV)**Responding to Allegations of Physical or Sexual Assault Procedure (WMV)***Revision Record**

Version	Date	Document Writer	Revision Description

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Attachment 1

Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians

Principles for Child Safe Organisations

- Take a preventative and participatory approach to child safety.
- Implement policies and procedures which support ongoing assessment and reduce risk.
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect them.
- Foster a transparent culture which supports all individuals to safely disclose risks to children.
- Respect diversity of culture and child rearing practices while keeping children safe.
- Provide written guidance regarding appropriate conduct toward children.

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- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer support and supervision.
- Ensure children know who to talk with if they feel unsafe.
- Report suspected abuse, neglect and mistreatment of children promptly to authorities.
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations to keep children safe.
- Value and communicate with families and carers.
- Review policies and procedures to keep children safe.

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