

Child Safe

Policy

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Related policies and documents:	<p>WAI Employee Code of Conduct Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct WAI Student Code of Conduct Records Management for Content Manager (formerly TRIM) Student Duty of Care Policy Student Duty of Care Procedure Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse Procedure Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 Welfare and Accommodation Arrangements for International Students Under the Age of 18 Procedure</p>

Purpose

To ensure that William Angliss Institute (WAI) maintains a child safe organisation where the safety, wellbeing, and rights of children and young people are paramount.

It provides a comprehensive framework to prevent, identify, respond to, and report child abuse and harm involving students under the age of 18.

The policy aims to embed a culture of child safety across WAI, ensure compliance with all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, and set clear expectations for behaviour and accountability.

Coverage

This policy applies to all members of WAI, including but not limited to:

- Employees (fulltime, part-time, casual)
- Contractors and consultants
- Volunteers
- Student and trainees
- Board members and governance representatives
- Any other individuals engaged in institute activities involving children and young people under 18 years of age.

Policy

- WAI is committed to protecting children from harm and providing a safe environment in which they can participate and learn.
- This extends to protection from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological harm, whether in person or on-line, and protection from neglect.
- This commitment is championed and modelled at all governance levels of WAI.
- This commitment includes:
 - Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

- Cultural safety for children from ethnically and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Safety for children with a disability.
- Safety children who identify as gender diverse or same sex attracted.
- The importance of inclusion is recognised as well as the harm caused by discriminatory behaviour and practices. This is enhanced by relevant communication and involvement with families and community about WAI's approach to child safety.
- WAI has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. As a guiding principle, the protection of the child is the primary concern.
- WAI will:
 - **Child Safety First:** Maintain standards of conduct for employees, students and contractors regarding appropriate behaviour towards children.
 - **Immediate Action:** Take appropriate action where the behaviour towards children by employees, students or others is inappropriate including reporting the behaviour to Police or the relevant Child Protection agency, along with making a report of 'reportable conduct' to the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People where required.
 - **Risk management:** Identify, remove or reduce the risk of harm or abuse to children through proactive risk assessment and regular reviews.
 - **Screening and Training:** Undertake rigorous screening of new employees provide ongoing supervision and deliver child safety training to reduce the risk.
 - **Reporting Culture:** Maintain processes to enable employees to report concerns about suspected harm or abuse and encourage a 'see something, say something' approach.
 - **Empowerment:** Support and appropriately respond to children who raise concerns about inappropriate behaviour, ensuring their voices are heard and respected.
 - **Record Keeping:** Create, store and retain full and accurate records of any incidents of inappropriate behaviour or allegations of child abuse.
- This policy is guided by the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, which provide a consistent framework for child safety and wellbeing across Australia.
- These principles underpin the legislated Child Safe Standards in all states and territories, and this policy ensures compliance with those standards as embedded within each jurisdiction.
- By adopting this approach, the organisation commits to creating a child-safe culture that prioritises the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children and young people, while meeting all regulatory requirements nationwide.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations:

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

Definitions

- **Child/children:** Young people under the age of 18 years.
- **Child abuse:** Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse or neglect.
- **Physical abuse:** Non-accidental forms of injury or serious physical harm inflicted on a child including beating, shaking, burning and assault with implements.
- **Sexual abuse:** Occurs when a person uses their authority or power over a child to engage in sexual activity, including exploitation through pornography or prostitution.
- **Emotional/psychological abuse:** Occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats or witnesses' family violence and includes hostility and derogatory name-calling. Psychological or emotional abuse may occur with or without other forms of abuse.
- **Serious Neglect:** Includes failure to provide a child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, shelter, clothing or supervision where the health or development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk.
- **National Child Safe Principles – i.e. Child Safe Standards:** (The Standards) which provide guidance to all states and territories and are a part of the objectives at WAI:
 - To create and maintain a child-safe organisation where the safety, wellbeing, and rights of all children and young people are paramount
 - By preventing and responding to abuse, promoting inclusion and cultural safety, empowering participation,
 - Embedding child safety into every aspect of WAI's culture and operations.
- **Cultural safety:** 'An environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening'¹ (Williams, R. 2008)
- **Harm:** Any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. This is possibly less detrimental than 'abuse' but is still not in the interest of a child's safety or wellbeing.

Legislative and/or Institute Management Context

This policy enables WAI to comply with regulatory and management instruments including but not limited to:

- Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse Procedure
- Victorian Child Safe Standards and relevant state-based child protection legislation
- William Angliss Staff Code of Conduct
- Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct
- William Angliss Student Code of Conduct
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and relevant state based equivalent where applicable
- Student Duty of Care Policy & Procedure
- AHRC National Principles for Child Safe Organisation
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005
- Child Safe Standards Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005(VIC)
- Crimes Act 1958
- Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014

- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Fair Work Act 2009
- Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Privacy and Data Collection Act 2014 (Vic)
- Protected Disclosure Act 2012
- Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)

¹ Williams, R. (2008), *Cultural safety; what does it mean for our work practice?* Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 23(2)213-214.

Non-compliance

Established breaches of WAI's Child Safe Policy and any associated procedures will be met with disciplinary action and may result in dismissal. Proven non-adherence may also result in the initiation of legal investigations where breaking the law prescribes legal action.

Where incidents involve children or young people, WAI will comply with all mandatory reporting and information -sharing obligations.

This document has been reviewed in accordance with the William Angliss Institute Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP).