

POLICY & PROCEDURAL STATEMENTS

Topic: Child Safe Standards

Background: Victoria has compulsory minimum Child Safe Standards (the Standards) which first came into effect for education and training providers on 1 January 2017. These Standards form part of the Victorian Government's response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and non-Government organisations.

In 2019, the then Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) published a review of the Standards. The Victorian Government endorsed the review's recommendations and eleven new Child Safe Standards will replace the seven previous Standards from 1 July 2022.

Avenue Neighbourhood House @ Eley Inc (ANH@E) is committed to compliance with all eleven Child Safe Standards.

Policy: ANH@E is committed to providing and maintaining a safe environment for all children, including children with a disability and promoting cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. ANH@E has zero tolerance to child abuse as this has serious effects on the health, safety, wellbeing and livelihood of children as well as the reputation of ANH@E.

ANH@E has a legal responsibility to ensure children's physical, mental and emotional safety. This is in addition to ANH@E's duty of care as a community organisation. ANH@E will involve families and communities in efforts to keep children and young people safe and manage the risk of child abuse in online environments. ANH@E will have in place governance, systems and processes to keep children and young people safe.

Definitions: *Child Safe Standards* covers child sexual abuse, physical abuse, serious emotional and psychological abuse and serious neglect. The *Child Safe Standards* set out the minimum requirements and outline the actions organisations must take to keep children and young people safe. They provide more clarity for organisations and are more consistent with Standards in the rest of Australia.

Scope: All staff, tutors and volunteers must adhere to this policy.

Code of Practice:

To maintain a child safe organisation, ANH@E will embed, apply and maintain practices that abide by the following eleven Child Safe Standards.

Child Safe 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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 1, ANH@E will ensure:

- 1.1 A child's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported.
- 1.2 Strategies are embedded within the organisation which equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people.
- 1.3 Measures are adopted by the organisation to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences.
- 1.4 The organisation actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within it by Aboriginal children, young people and their families.
- 1.5 All of the organisation's policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

Standard 2 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

In complying with Child Safe Standard 2, ANH@E will ensure:

- 2.1 The organisation makes a public commitment to child safety.
- 2.2 A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation from the top down and bottom up.
- 2.3 Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the child safety and wellbeing policy at all levels.
- 2.4 A Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.
- 2.5 Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.
- 2.6 Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.

Standard 3 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

In complying with Child Safe Standard 3, ANH@E at a minimum, will ensure:

- 3.1 Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation.
- 3.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.
- 3.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, children and young people are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age appropriate way.
- 3.4 Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.
- 3.5 Organisations have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.

3.6 Organisations provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

Standard 4 – Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

In complying with Child Safe Standard 4, ANH@E at a minimum, will ensure:

- 4.1 Families participate in decisions affecting their child.
- 4.2 The organisation engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible.
- 4.3 Families and communities have a say in the development and review of the organisation's policies and practices.
- 4.4 Families, carers and the community are informed about the organisation's operations and governance.

Standard 5 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

In complying with Child Safe Standard 5, ANH@E at a minimum, will ensure:

- 5.1 The organisation, including staff and volunteers, understands children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.
- 5.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- 5.3 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.
- 5.4 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and provides/promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

Standard 6 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

In complying with Child Safe Standard 6, ANH@E at a minimum, will ensure:

- 6.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasise child safety and wellbeing.
- 6.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent background checks.
- 6.3 All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.
- 6.4 Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.

Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused

In complying with Child Safe Standard 7, ANH@E at a minimum, will ensure:

- 7.1 The organisation has an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.
- 7.2 Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.
- 7.3 Complaints are taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- 7.4 The organisation has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.

7.5 Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

Child Safe 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

In complying with Child Safe Standard 8, ANH@E at a minimum, will ensure:

- 8.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement the organisation’s child safety and wellbeing policy.
- 8.2 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people.
- 8.3 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- 8.4 Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

In complying with Child Safe Standard 9, ANH@E at a minimum, will ensure:

- 9.1 Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child’s right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- 9.2 The online environment is used in accordance with the organisation’s Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing policy and practices.
- 9.3 Risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities, and the physical environment.
- 9.4 Organisations that contract facilities and services from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 10 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

In complying with Child Safe Standard 10, ANH@E at a minimum, will ensure:

- 10.1 The organisation regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child safe practices.
- 10.2 Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.
- 10.3 The organisation reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 11 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

In complying with Child Safe Standard 11, ANH@E at a minimum, will ensure:

- 11.1 Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.
- 11.2 Policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.
- 11.3 Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures.
- 11.4 Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.
- 11.5 Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.

This policy was reviewed in August 2021 and will be reviewed again in August 2023, unless

Signed..... CoM Meeting Date.....