



Narre Community Learning Centre's Child Safe Policy

Our Commitment to Child Safety

Our organisation is committed to child safety.

The Board of Management is responsible for the Duty of Care for all students and the Child Safe Standards of the centre. These responsibilities cannot be transferred.

We want children and young people to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children and young people, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently in accordance with our organisational policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's or young person's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and by removing and reducing these risks.

Our organisation has robust recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Our organisation is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children and young people, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people, the cultural safety of children and young people from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children and young people with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child or young person is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our Children and Young People

This policy is intended to empower children and young people who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We will take into consideration the opinions of children and young people and use their opinions to develop child protection policies and procedures.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally
- Promote the safety and empowerment of LGBTIQ+ children and young people

Our Staff and Volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children and young people in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our *Code of conduct* which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children and young people. We will take into consideration any contributions made from staff, volunteers, families, children and young people in regards to the ongoing development of NCLC's *Code of conduct*.



Training and Supervision

Training and supervision is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers, children and young people) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing training to:

- develop their skills to protect children and young people from abuse
- promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people,
- promote the cultural safety of children and young people from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds
- promote the safety of children and young people with a disability

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children and young people from abuse. This includes checking that their behaviour towards children and young people is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's *code of conduct* to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children and young people. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

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

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. All recruitment documentation including but not limited to reference checks and copies of qualifications, working with children checks and police checks are stored securely for evidence and compliance.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is our primary concern. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be fair, thorough, transparent, and evidence based.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children, young people and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.



Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, unless there is a risk to someone's safety, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents, children or young people. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative Responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children and young people when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children and young people.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess and take steps to minimise child abuse risks. This includes reviewing and acting on risks posed by physical environments, where applicable.

Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and following significant incidents. We encourage contributions from families, children and young people at any time. Where possible we endeavour to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse, are a victim and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child or young person states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it