

3.3 Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Our commitment to safeguarding children

In keeping children and young person safe the following values are a mechanism for guiding our actions and assisting in decision-making, they are a reference to which personnel can refer, to ensure their responsibilities to children and young person are upheld;

- Safeguarding children and young person are a shared responsibility; it is reliant on all individuals within our organisation to keep children and young person safe in our care.
- Any form of abuse or neglect towards children and young person will not be tolerated and immediate action will be taken upon reporting any suspected harmful or abusive behaviours.
- The best interest of the child will be the primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person.
- We are accountable to the children and young person we work with by fostering high ethical standards in a culture of openness and transparency.
- We empower children by informing them of their rights and responsibilities and support them to speak up about any matters of importance to them, including if something goes wrong. We work to include the participation of children and young person in decision making regarding any services or other matters affecting them.

1. Purpose

Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation (AKKF) has zero-tolerance towards abuse and neglect of children and young person. We are committed to the rights of all children and young person to feel safe and be safe when participating in our organisations' activities, services, and programs.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities, procedures and practices required by all personnel within AKKF in relation to keeping children and young person free from abuse and neglect.

This policy supports our international obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and is aligned with the Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

AKKF is committed to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations: to creating environments where the safety and wellbeing of children and young person is at the centre of our thoughts, values, and actions. We are building an organisational culture where children and young person, families, communities, and everyone who works with us feel safe and confident to have a say and raise any concerns.

As such, our policies and procedures reflect child safe legislation and promote best practice and care for the children and young person within our organisation. Our Board of Directors approves and endorses our AKKF Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

We take seriously our responsibility to deliver a supportive environment that is caring, nurturing and safe. We are committed to taking action in advancing the safety and wellbeing of children and young person and ensuring compliance with all requirements set out in this policy.

2. Scope

2.1 The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy applies to all personnel, including employees, casual employees, Board and committee members, volunteers and contractors involved with AKKF.

2.2 This policy applies in all our operational environments and without fail wherever children and young person are participating in our organisation's activities, programs, services and / or facilities.

2.3 It replaces all other Child Safety and Wellbeing policies/procedures of AKKF (whether written or not).

2.4 This Policy should be read in conjunction with all other AKKF Policies.

2.5 Employees are required to comply with all AKKF policies and procedures in place from time to time. This Policy does not however form part of any employee's contract of employment and create obligations on the Employer.

3. Responsibilities

Safeguarding children and young person are a shared responsibility within our organisation. It is the responsibility of all at AKKF, from the Board, Executive to employees, volunteers, and contractors to:

- protect children and young person from all forms of abuse and neglect by our people.
- be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside the scope of our operations and services that may have an impact on the children and young person to whom we provide a service; and
- create and maintain a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed, and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer, support or access our programs and services.

We expect all within our organisation, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, to act to safeguard children and young person from such harm by:

- adopting appropriate safeguarding practice and behaviour set within our policy and procedural guidelines, when carrying out their roles, and
- reporting any abuse and neglect of which they become aware to our management and/or to external authorities responsible for child protection or to police, regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by personnel within our organisation, or by those outside our organisation including those from the child's family, extended family, their family's extended network or strangers.

We expect all within our organisation to promote equity and respect diversity by:

- actively anticipating children and young person's diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- informing children and young person of their rights and giving all children and young person access to information, support, and complaints processes
- respecting the rights of children and young person to participate in decision making, paying appropriate attention to the needs of the following groups:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
 - Children and young person with disabilities
 - Children and young person from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex)
 - Children and young person who are unable to live at home

AKKF has zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion for children and young person is further outlined in the EEO Discrimination Bullying and Harassment Policy.

The responsibility of each role in relation to the development and compliance of the AKKF Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is detailed in section 10 of this policy.

Safeguarding Governance

Our organisation has a safeguarding children and young person governance structure with robust systems in place which support personnel and service users to report safeguarding concerns and facilitate effective risk-based and informed decisions that ensure accountability to children and young person.

Our governance structure, including a Clinical Governance & Operations Committee, defines the roles and responsibilities associated with providing oversight, management, and implementation of our commitment to safeguarding children and young person.

4. Our Commitment

AKKF is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young person who access our activities, programs, services and / or facilities. Our policies and procedures seek to address risks to child safety and to establish a safeguarding culture and practices.

Our safeguarding policies and procedures are:

- publicly accessible, online and in forms that are easy to understand.
- informed by stakeholder consultation; and
- communicated to children, young person and their families, our personnel, our partners and contractors and the public.

To inform and review our safeguarding policies, we seek feedback from all our services users and providers. We gain endorsement and advise stakeholders of any changes.

We are committed to safeguarding children and young people

Through our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy we document our clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We communicate our commitment to all of our personnel and ensure that our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is available in child-friendly versions that reflect the ages, developmental stage, diversity and abilities of the children and young person whom we deliver services.

We have a zero-tolerance approach towards child abuse and neglect and take seriously any raised concerns / incidents.

Our approach to risk management recognises the potential risks to children and young person associated with our organisation's service delivery and considers online and physical or psychological environments, and any vulnerable or diverse circumstances of children or young person utilising our services.

Our personnel know the behaviour we expect

We ensure that each person involved in the delivery of our services understands their role and the behaviour we expect in relation to safeguarding children and young person from abuse and neglect. We utilise position descriptions which clearly state relevant responsibilities and safeguarding requirements.

Our organisation requires all personnel to acknowledge, in writing, their commitment and adherence to our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

We have a Code of Conduct, which is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation that outlines our expectations for behaviour towards children and young person. We monitor and supervise all personnel, including contractors and partner organisations, for appropriate practice and behaviour in the delivery of our services to children and young person.

Any failure to observe our behavioural guidelines is taken seriously, and we are committed to taking appropriate disciplinary and legal action wherever necessary.

We minimise the likelihood of recruiting a person who is unsuitable

We have appropriate measures in place and require applicants to undergo extensive screening processes prior to appointment to minimise the likelihood that we, or an external recruitment agency or contractor, will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work / volunteer with children or young person. We have recruitment procedures that ensure:

- our safeguarding commitment is communicated to potential applicants for all positions
- face-to-face interviews are held which include safeguarding-related questions
- two professional reference checks are undertaken which include safeguarding-related questions
- screening checks are undertaken, including identity, National, and where applicable, International criminal history checks, working with children checks and qualification checks.

We require our personnel to disclose criminal convictions or charges affecting their suitability to work with children and young person both prior and subsequent to their employment, and we review police records and Working with Children Check or equivalent periodically.

We ensure that there will be no discrimination as part of the recruitment process, with respect to inclusion and equal opportunity and where possible, hire appropriate personnel that

represents the diverse range of children and young person, and their families involved in our organisation.

Induction and training are part of our commitment

We have an induction process ensuring all new personnel are informed and supported to understand our organisations safeguarding children and young people policies, procedures, and practices. Our personnel are provided with copies of our organisations Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, and Code of Conduct and Incident Management Policy and where applicable Recruitment Policy.

Our induction process provides guidance relating to an individual's safeguarding responsibilities and offers opportunities to seek clarity in relation to the commitments and behavioural expectations set out in our safeguarding policies.

We have a Training plan that outlines how and when we support ongoing education for all our personnel in relation to how keeping children and young person safe will be fulfilled. Our organisation's plan includes training regarding children's rights, voices and participation, cultural safety, and humility.

We encourage the involvement of children, young person and their families

We have processes for seeking and incorporating input and feedback with children, young person, and their families. We respect diversity and seek to facilitate effective communication and engagement.

We promote participation and empowerment of young person and provide opportunities for their voice and ideas to be heard, and space to express their needs and concerns. We actively encourage children and young person to take part in the decision-making process, particularly on matters affecting them. We create opportunities for involvement and seek input and feedback to inform our policies, procedures, and practices.

We involve children, young person, and their families in developing a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment. We recognise the important role of families and involve parents/caregivers when making significant decisions about their child. We provide information to children, young person, and their families about:

- our commitment and approach to upholding and safeguarding the rights of children and young person
- the behaviour we expect of our personnel
- the behaviour we expect from the children, young person and their families who access our services
- our policy and mechanism for reporting abuse or concerns.

Our personnel understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse and responding to child safety complaints

Our policy for reporting and responding to child abuse is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation and applies to all our personnel. The policy states that:

- personnel must immediately report abuse or neglect and any concerns with policies, practices, or the behaviour of personnel
- personnel must meet any legislated mandatory reporting requirements

- all complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly
- personnel must follow a specified process when reporting abuse or neglect including who will receive reports
- failure to report is serious misconduct

Where an external or internal complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then personnel must report this in accordance with AKKF's Complaints policy and Incident Management policy. Personnel are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to the relevant State/Territory Police where the conduct took place.

Our personnel are given a copy of and have access to the policy and understand the implications of the policy for their role. We document any allegations, disclosures or concerns regarding child abuse and monitor responses to all allegations, disclosures, or concerns.

We maintain and improve our policies and practices

Our organisation seeks to continuously review and improve our policies, procedures, and practices to safeguard children and young people from abuse and neglect. The responsibility for implementing and reviewing our safeguarding children and young person approach is led by the Clinical Governance & Operations Committee and the AKKF Board annually.

To identify any key improvements needed, our organisation incorporates findings from; internal audits and reviews that assess our ongoing compliance with our responsibilities to keep children and young person safe, input and feedback received by children and young person and their families, feedback gained from communication with our personnel and feedback gained from 'complaints and compliments' received.

5. Monitoring and review

This document will be reviewed by our Clinical Governance & Operations Committee at least every 3 years, after consultation. Some circumstances may trigger an early review, this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the Board and/or Chief Executive Officer.

When there are any updates or changes to this Policy, they will be communicated to all personnel and stakeholders.

External audit and verification based on a sample, conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation shall occur at 3 yearly intervals.

6. Records and Documentation

We retain records that each document is undertaken. Records may include minutes of meetings and documentation of changes to policies and procedures that result from a review.

7. Related Policies and Documents

The following AKKF policies must be considered in relation to this document:

- Code of Conduct
- Incident Management Policy
- Complaints Policy

- Internet and Email Policy
- Information Management Policy
- Recruitment Policy

8. Related frameworks and legislation

Our guidelines comply with relevant legislation.

In upholding this policy, the following legislation and frameworks must be considered by all AKKF personnel:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020
- Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

9. Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of each role in relation to the development and compliance of the AKKF Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy are detailed below;

Role	Responsibility
AKKF Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young person in support of this Policy and its expectations. • Promote the commitment to this Policy and its expectations both internally and publicly. • Support policy review on a 3-year cycle as a minimum or at a time governed by legislation, regulations, or organisational learnings that promote a change to the Policy and all relevant policy or procedural guidelines. • Ensure compliance to the Policy via an inbuilt mechanism for ongoing monitoring and review. • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow for the development, effective implementation, communication, and continuous improvement of this policy. • Develop opportunities for regular discussion and review at all levels to support a culture of openness and continued improvement and accountability to keeping children and young person safe from abuse and neglect.
Chief Executive Officer / Senior Leaders/Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young person in support of this Policy. • Ensure all Personnel understand their obligations in accordance with this Policy and any relevant policy and procedural documentation. • Ensure this Policy is implemented and adhered to amongst personnel. • Ensure the development and implementation of required internal policy/ procedures and guidelines are in place to support

	<p>safeguarding children and young people practices in accordance with the expectations of this Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation of this Policy. • Ensure to fully support Personnel with any decision to initiate action to protect a child from abuse and neglect. • Ensure appropriate supports, such as counselling and formal debriefing, are provided for any Personnel involved in a matter relating to responding to a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person. • Proactively share resources and experience in the development of child safe initiatives as they are identified. • Develop opportunities for regular discussion and review at all levels to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of keeping children and young person safe from abuse and neglect. • Ensure that all personnel are aware of the appropriate recruitment, screening, and employment practice in relation to safeguarding children and young person. • Promote and support all personnel to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.
<p>HR / Quality / Clinical Governance & Operations Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update this Policy and supporting resources in consultation with relevant stakeholders. • Support the coordination of the Safeguarding Children and Young People framework and its implementation. • Evaluate and analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents relating to this Policy. • Provide training and advice in the application of this Policy
<p>Employees Volunteers Contractors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young person in support of this Policy. • Maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy, as well as all other policy relevant to safeguarding children and young person. • Ensure compliance with this Policy, fully implementing and adhering to the commitments and expectations. • To undertake any induction and training anticipated in this Policy, in relation to policy and procedures relevant to safeguarding children and young person. • To support a culture of openness, continued improvement and accountability to children and young person by engaging in regular review and discussion of organisational policies and practices and providing feedback to support improvement. • To seek guidance from a supervisor or manager if there is ever any lack of understanding in relation to the commitments and expectations as set out in this Policy. • To adopt appropriate safeguarding practice and behaviour • To take action to protect children and young person from all forms of abuse and neglect. • To report any abuse committed by personnel within our organisation or by others. • To assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety.

10. Policy Document Control

Policy Authority	Board
Sub-Committee Responsibility	Clinical Governance & Operations Committee
SLT Responsibility	Mental Health Specialist

Documents Related to this Policy
Code of Conduct
Incident Management Policy
Complaints Policy
Internet and Email Policy
Information Management Policy
Recruitment Policy

Policy Review and Version Tracking			
Date Approved	Version Number	Approved by	Next review due
10 June 2025	V1	Board	2026

Appendix 1 Definitions

Term	Definition
Bullying	<p>Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal (name calling, put downs, threats); • Physical (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting); • Social (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating); and/or • Psychological (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).

Child or young person	A person under the age of eighteen years.
Code of Conduct	The Code of Conduct aims to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to children and young person in our provision of services. The Code of Conduct outlines what is, and what is not acceptable behaviour or practice when working with or engaging with children and young person.
Emotional or psychological abuse	Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child or young person does not receive the love, affection, or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological, and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a child or young person. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviours continue to an extent that results in significant damage to the child or young person's physical, intellectual, or emotional wellbeing and development.
Family Violence	Family violence occurs when children are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person's life. Exposure to family violence places children and young person at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.
Grooming	Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of children. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a child in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom children but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports, and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.
Harm	Harm to a child, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect; • sexual abuse or exploitation; • a single act, omission, or circumstance; and • a series or combination of acts, omissions, or circumstances.
LGBTQI+	(Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex) as outlined in <i>Rainbow Tick National Accreditation</i> program for LGBTI inclusive practice throughout Australia. https://www.qip.com.au/standards/rainbow-tick-standards/
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles)	The National Principles are designed to build capacity and deliver child safety and wellbeing in organisations, families and communities and prevent future harm. All Commonwealth, state, and territory governments have endorsed the Principles. https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles
Neglect	Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child or young person with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, medical attention, or supervision to the extent that the child or young person's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. Categories of neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect,

	abandonment or desertion, emotional neglect, and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available.
Online environment	Anywhere online that allows digital communication, such as social networks, text messages and messaging apps, email and private messaging, online chats, comments on live streaming sites and voice chat in games.
Personnel	All who work for the organisation whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, including; employees, casual employees, volunteers, Board and committee members and contractors.
Physical abuse	Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child or young person to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child or young person. Physically abusive behaviour includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, suffocating, excessive and physically harmful over training, and kicking. It also includes giving children and young person harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol, or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child or young person at risk of being hurt.
Risk management	In the context of creating safe environments for children and young person, risk management consists of assessing and taking steps to minimise the risks of harm to children and young person because of the action of an employee, volunteer, contractor or another child or young person. Risk management includes planning the work of the organisation to reduce or minimise situations where children and young person may be abused.
The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission).	An independent inquiry established in 2013 by the Australian Government to examine and report upon responses by institutions to instances and allegations of child sexual abuse in educational institutions, religious groups, sporting organisations, state institutions and youth organisations. The findings provide recommendations to the Government on how to improve laws, polices, structures and practices to prevent such harm from re-occurring. https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or a person of authority (e.g. older) involves a child or young person in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a child, engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a child's genitals or breasts, oral sex, or intercourse with a child. Encouraging a child to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also sexual abuse. Engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet is also considered sexual abuse.
Sexual exploitation	Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where offenders use their power, (physical, financial, or emotional) over a child or young person, or a false identity, to abuse them sexually or emotionally. It often involves situations and relationships where children and young person receive something (food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money etc.) in return for participating in sexual activities. Sexual exploitation can occur in person or online, and sometimes the child or young person may not even realise they are a victim.
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	Is an international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion, or abilities. https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

Definition Reference and Sources

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2018
World Health Organization, (2006)
Child Family Community Australia (CFCA), (2016).
Australian eSafety Commissioner, (2020).

Appendix 2 Legislation

Location	Legislation Title
National	Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 Racial Discrimination Act 1975 Sex Discrimination Act 1984 Information Privacy Act, 2009
New South Wales	Children and Young Persons Care and Protection Act Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 No 51 (NSW) The Mental Health Act 2007, New South Wales NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010
Victoria	Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC) Mental Health and Wellbeing Act, 2022 VIC
South Australia	The Mental Health Act 2009, South Australia.
Western Australia	Children and Community Services Act 2005 (WA) The Mental Health Act 2014, WA
Northern Territory	Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (amended 2009/2011) (NT)
Queensland	The Mental Health Act 2016, Queensland Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD)
Tasmania	Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1997 (TAS)
Australian Capital Territory	Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)

Appendix 3 Relevant State/Territory Departments

Location	Department
New South Wales	Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)
Victoria	The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
South Australia	Department of Child Protection
Western Australia	Department of Communities
Northern Territory	Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities
Queensland	Child Safety Services - Department of Child Safety, Seniors, and Disability Services
Tasmania	Child Safety Services, Department of Education, Children and Young People
Australian Capital Territory	Child and Youth Protection Services