



## **Child Safe Environment Policy**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outline that children and young people have a right to be safe and cared for, no matter where they are or who they are with. Children have the right to be protected from violence, abuse, or neglect. When working with children and young people, it is important to understand children's rights and needs.

We are advocates for children and have a strong commitment to child safety and establishing and maintaining a child safe environment. Children's safety and wellbeing are paramount at our Service. Our Service embeds the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and promotes a culture of safety and wellbeing to minimise the risk of child abuse or harm to children whilst promoting children's sense of security and belonging.

### **Objective**

Our Service has a legal and ethical responsibility to provide a safe and friendly environment where all children are respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Children's safety and wellbeing is paramount, and we aim to take all practical steps to protect children and young people from harm or risk of harm, ensuring a healthy and safe environment. Our Service provides children and staff with an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

### **Other related policies and procedures**

Child Supervision Policy

Centre Morning and Afternoon Supervision Plans

Code of Conduct for Albert Waterways Children's Centre

Confidentiality of Records Policy

Child Protection Policy

Arrival and Departure Policy

Blue Card Policy

## **Application of this Policy**

This policy applies to children, families, staff, volunteers, students, visitors, educators, Nominated Supervisor and Committee members while they are in the workplace including at a site away from their usual workplace. Should the need arise, the policy will be translated into appropriate languages.

## **Implementation**

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations the Nominated Supervisor and Management Committee must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for providing a child safe environment and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed. (Regulation 168, Regulation 170). The National Law requires management to ensure all children being educated and cared for are adequately supervised and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury. Our focus is to build a child safe environment which is reflected in our Service policies and procedures and understood and practiced by all educators, staff, volunteers, and students.

## **KEY TERMS-DEFINITIONS**

**Child Safe Standards:** A list of ten standards that organisations can use to keep children safe from harm and abuse as recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

**Code of Conduct:** Lists of dos and don'ts which describe acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour.

**Disclosure:** The process where a child or young person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused.

**Information sharing:** Refers to sharing or exchanging information, including personal information about, or related to, abuse in organisational contexts. The terms refer to sharing information between (or within) organisations, as well as sharing information with professionals who provide key services for children.

**Mandatory reporter:** A person who is required to report known and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to a nominated government department or agency.

**Mandatory reporting:** The legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

**Reportable conduct:** Certain organisations or entities have legal obligations under Reportable Conduct Schemes to notify and investigate certain allegations of abuse involving a child, when the allegation is against someone they employ, engage or contract in circumstances outlined in the legislation.

**Rights of the Child:** Human rights belonging to all children, as specified in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

**Wellbeing:** Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs.

**Working with Children / working with vulnerable people check (WWCC/WWVP):**

A notice, certificate or other document granted to, or with respect to a person under a working with children law. The person has been assessed as suitable to work with children; there has been no information that if the person worked with children the person would pose a risk to the children; or the person is not prohibited from attempting to obtain, undertake or remain in child-related employment.

Definitions sourced from

ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. *Providing a Child Safe Environment*.

NSW Department of Education (2021). [Guide to the Child Safe Standards for early childhood education and care and outside schools hours care services](#)

## **COMMITMENT TO THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE** (National Principles 1-10)

AWCC is committed to being a child safe organisation and endorses the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, placing the protection of children as a priority of our responsibilities and obligations. The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission provide guidance for our Service to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies, and attitudes, ensure children's safety is paramount.

Our Service has a zero tolerance to child abuse, and we are committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children. We promote diversity and tolerance and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children participate in decisions affecting them and listen and respect their suggestions and ideas. We respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations, or suspicions of harm by reporting to the relevant authorities.

We are dedicated in promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe

environment for children with a disability. Our Service will not tolerate bullying or harassment. Our priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and encourage positive relationships.

**COMMUNICATION** (National Principles 2 and 3)

We aim to build and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children, families, educators, students, and volunteers of our Service and prioritise a child safe environment. We communicate regularly and clearly with all stakeholders and ensure our policies and procedures are available to employees, volunteers, families and children and young people. Feedback and evaluation of our policies and procedures is welcomed through surveys, feedback, or discussions with management.

**CODE OF CONDUCT** (National Principles 4 and 6)

Management, educators, staff, volunteers, and students will adhere to our Service's Code of Conduct

**We will:**

- adhere to our *Child Safe Environment Policy, Child Protection Policy, Cyber Safety Policy, and Child and Youth Risk Safety Management Strategy* at all times.
- provide adequate supervision of children at all times.
- take reasonable action to protect children and young people for risk of harm.
- ensure the service premise is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol.
- be responsible for their own, and others health and safety.
- be a positive role model to children and young people.
- respect children's privacy and dignity at all times.
- listen and respond appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people.
- report any allegations of child abuse to the Nominated Supervisor.
- notify the approved provider and/or the regulatory authority within 24 hours of any serious incident or complaint as per the National Regulations.
- encourage children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them.

**Staff, educators, volunteers, and students must:**

- not discriminate against any child, because of age, gender, cultural background, race, ethnicity, or disability.
- not put children at risk of abuse- refusing food/play, making threats, exposing children to inappropriate language or material (movies, internet, photos).
- not develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people that could be seen as favouritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment.

[Primary policies – Child and Youth Risk Safety Management Strategy; Code of Conduct; Confidentiality of Records; Induction of New Staff Policy; Cyber Safety Policy; Privacy Policy; Inclusion, Anti-bias and Promoting Equity Policy]

### **PARTICIPATION OF FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE** (National Principle 2)

Our Service ensures families are always welcome and feel comfortable asking questions on how we prioritise child safety. We provide a range of opportunities for consultation and collaboration about decisions about their child's safety whilst at AWCC including:

- policy and procedure review
- child protection
- allegations/grievance procedures
- sun safety
- written authorisations- parenting orders
- code of conduct
- inclusivity and supporting children with diverse needs.

We promote a respectful, child safe culture where children's concerns are always responded to, and children feel empowered to participate in decisions and provide feedback to educators and staff.

[Primary policies – Interactions with Children Policy; Parent Grievances Policy; Partnerships with Families Policy]

### **RECRUITMENT** (National Principle 5)

Our Service maintains a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening, and selection process to ensure the best staff possible based on skills, qualifications, experience, and suitability for the position available. All staff participate in robust interviews and have reference checks completed to ensure the applicant's suitability to the role, previous experiences, and their commitment to child safe values and practices. All staff are provided with a comprehensive induction process which outlines our Code of Conduct, identifying and responding to child abuse, grievance processes, and work health and safety.

[Primary policies - Child and Youth Risk Safety Management Strategy; Induction of New Staff Policy]

### **WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK- POLICE CHECKS** (National Principle 5)

Working in conjunction with the Child Protection Act and National Regulations, the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children is paramount within our Service and community. A Working with Children Check/Blue

Card (WWCC) is a requirement for people who work in child-related work. It involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct.

The result of a Working with Children Check is either a clearance to work with children and is valid for three years, or a bar against working with children. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

Management is responsible for the periodic review and maintenance of up-to-date records of employees' Working with Children Check, including the Working with Children Check number and the date on which each clearance expires. Once an employee provides their WWCC clearance, management will verify the clearance to ensure that it is valid and current. The WWCC will be placed in the individual's file and continue to be updated as required.

[Primary policies – Child Protection; Blue Card Policy; Staffing Policy]

### **CHILD PROTECTION- REPORTABLE CONDUCT** (National Principle 6)

Children and young people always have a right to be safe and protected. To comply with legislation and ensure a child safe environment, educators are provided with training and ongoing supervision to ensure they understand that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*.

All educators and staff are mandatory reporters and must make reports if they suspect on reasonable grounds, a child is at risk of significant harm. All staff are provided with up-to-date training about child protection law, and their obligations under this law. This is to ensure they are confident in following the reporting guidelines within QLD and adhere to our *Child Protection Policy*.

Through continual education and training, educators and staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe. Training gives educators and staff confidence to identify, respond and report child abuse.

All educators and the Nominated supervisor will complete a course in child protection approved by the Regulatory Authority on an annual basis.

[Primary policies; Child Protection]

### **Child Protection- Allegations Against Employees**

To protect children and ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, management is responsive to report allegations or convictions of child abuse and child related misconduct by any staff member or volunteer or contractor to the National Office for Child Safety or Queensland Police Service.

Our Service will ensure an appropriate level of confidentiality of information relating to the reportable allegations as per the Children’s Guardian Act 2019. We take our legislative responsibilities seriously and will respond to any reportable allegation or conviction against employees or volunteers that may arise.

### **REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO GENERAL COMPLAINTS** (National Principle 6)

Feedback from children, families, educators, staff, and the wider community is fundamental in creating an evolving Childcare Service working towards the highest standard of care and education. We aim to investigate all complaints and grievances with a high standard of equity and fairness. Our Service believes in procedural fairness and natural justice that govern the strategies and practices, which include:

- The right to be heard fairly.
- The right to an unbiased decision made by an objective decision maker.
- The right to have the decision based on relevant evidence.

[Primary policy – Dealing with Complaints Policy]

### **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT – SUPERVISION AND SAFETY CHECKLISTS** (National Principles 5 and 7)

Children’s safety is embedded in our day-to-day practices. We ensure effective and adequate supervision is provided to children at all times. Educators employ ‘active supervision’ strategies within the service environment and when participating in excursions or transporting children. Consideration will be made for the different ages and abilities of children and the activities that may require different levels of supervision.

Sleeping infants and toddlers will be closely monitored at regular intervals and will always be within sight and hearing distance of educators, so a child’s breathing, and the colour of their skin can be monitored.

Through conducting risk assessments, we assess and manage risks in the physical environment. We collaborate with children to develop behaviour guidelines for play, including adventurous play, to ensure their safety. Educators have a sound understanding of their duty of care and responsibilities in ensuring a child safe environment.

Educators conduct regular safety checks to maintain basic standards of safety within our Service. We believe that child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels within our Service. Children are encouraged to speak up about their safety and the safety of their friends by telling an educator if they feel unsafe in a particular situation or environment.

Educators will complete the following daily checklists and record inspections of the physical environment where foreseeable risks may be evident and cause harm or injury to a child:

- Workplace Health and Safety Inspection Checklist (indoor and outdoor)
- Outdoor Equipment and Surface Temperature Checklist

Any findings that require attention will be either dealt with immediately or submitted into the maintenance book depending on priority.

[Primary policies – Code of Conduct; Child Supervision; Sleep, Rest and SIDS Prevention; Nappy Change and Toileting; Child and Staff Health; Staffing]

### **RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL** (National Principle 8)

It is a legislative requirement that Management and educators implement a risk management system where they identify and manage hazards and risks within the workplace to ensure a child safe environment. Strategies are in place to make sure child safety and Education and Care National Regulations are embedded across our Service.

#### **The key principles of risk management include:**

1. Identifying all hazards or potential hazards in the service.
2. Assess the risk of harm or potential harm for each hazard.
3. Control or manage the risk – Risk Rating Matrix.
4. Monitor and improve safety – Risk Assessment Action Plan.
5. Evaluate and Review.

It is the responsibility of all staff and educators at the Service to complete a Risk Assessment, where children's safety may be jeopardised, and when organising an excursion, or any transportation of children. Children's safety must be incorporated into everyday practice within the Service.

#### **Common hazards within the Service which may require a risk assessment include:**

- cross-infection and infectious disease
- administration of medication
- anaphylaxis procedures and management
- building and equipment (including storage)
- hazardous chemicals
- electrical appliances



- food preparation and storage
- environmental influences such as shade, noise etc
- sun safety
- children's behaviours
- water safety
- fire equipment
- pets and/or animals
- children's activities and experiences
- Work Health and Safety such as manual handling (e.g., safe lifting children from cots and highchairs)
- transportation of children (regular outing and regular transportation)
- excursions

To maintain a child safe environment, we will adhere to Service policies and procedures and conduct the following checklist and audits:

- Risk Assessment
- Maintenance Record
- Regular Outing Risk Assessment
- Excursion Risk Assessment
- Medication Audit
- Bathroom Safety Audit
- Safe Sleep Audit
- Supervision Audit

[Primary policies – Emergency and Evacuation; Child Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness; Sleep and Rest, Safe Transportation; Sun Protection; First Aid; Medical Conditions; Excursion]

#### EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plans are displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the service premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas.

All staff are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures and regulatory requirements.

Rehearsals for emergency and evacuation procedures, including lock downs, are conducted at least once every 3 months. Records will be kept for all rehearsals.

[Primary policies- Bomb Threat; Fire Emergency Policy and Action Plan; Lockdown]

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE AUTHORISATION

Our Service prioritises children's safety at all times. We will only release children to an authorised person as named on the child's enrolment form. We request families provide current court orders, and parenting plans to ensure our records are up to date.

National Regulations require our Service to keep a record of children and visitor's arrival and departures, with the signatures of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record and the identity of the person collecting the child.

Educators will work in collaboration with our *Arrival and Departure Policy*, *Custody Policy* and *Student and Volunteers Policy* to ensure children feel safe and secure.

To ensure children's safety, educators have a clear understanding of their legal obligation to check identification when a person is collecting a child. To maintain compliance, parents/caregivers will complete an *Authorisation to Collect Form* if they authorise a person, who is not on their emergency contact form, to pick up their child.

[Primary policies Arrival and Departure; Student and Volunteers; Custody]

## ONLINE SAFETY (National Principle 8)

Our Service is committed to create and maintain a safe online environment with support and collaboration with staff, families, and community. Management ensures anti-virus and internet security systems are installed to block access to unsuitable web sites, newsgroups, and chat rooms.

Our Service ensures backups of important and confidential data is made regularly and either stored securely offline, or online. Software and devices are updated regularly to avoid any breach of confidential information.

Families are provided with information about our software program which is password protected and used to share observations, photos, videos, daily reports, and portfolios. Passwords are not to be shared with others as per our written agreement.

Written authorisation is requested as part of the enrolment process for children to use computers/tablets; have their photo taken and published as part of promotional marketing or on the app program used by the service. The identity of a child is not published on any platform.

Personal mobile phones are not used to take photos or video of children at the Service.

Only educational software programs and apps that have appropriate content and have been examined prior to allowing their use are used in the Service. Children are always supervised using any technology.

[Primary policies – Cyber Safety; Confidentiality of Records; Cameras, Filming and Photography; Privacy; Code of Conduct]

### STORAGE OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

We reduce the risk of harm to children and educators by using eco-friendly products. Our Service will endeavour to provide a safe environment, where necessary, chemical, and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately.

Management and educators will keep a register of hazardous chemicals used at the Service, including relevant Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

To maintain a safe environment for children, the following audits and checklists are conducted:

- Medication Audit
- Bathroom Safety Audit

[Primary policies – Toxic Product; Medication; Workplace Health and Safety]

### EQUIPMENT, FURNITURE & MAINTENANCE RECORD

There are several factors that can contribute to a hazard, such as a deprived program, insufficient supervision, and dilapidated equipment. To ensure a child safe environment free from hazards, we have implemented practices and continue to monitor Service policies and procedures that uphold Australian Safety Standards.

The premises and all equipment and furniture used within the Service are audited to ensure all aspects are safe, clean and in good repair. We understand that hazards are specific to developmental stages; educators are aware that toys and equipment need to be checked to ensure they are safe and developmentally appropriate for children. Regular checks occur within the Service to ensure that all toys, furniture, and equipment are in good condition and working order.

These checks include:

- Maintenance Record
- Bathroom Cleaning Checklists
- Daily Cleaning Checklists

[Primary policy – Buildings, Grounds and Equipment Safety]

### **CONTINUOUS REVIEW** (National Principle 9)

To ensure we maintain a culture of continuous improvement, we will ensure our child safe practices are regularly reviewed, evaluated, and improved. We aim to ensure all educators, staff and volunteers understand and effectively implement our policies and procedures to provide a child safe environment at our Service.

We will regularly review and monitor the effectiveness of our Child Safe policies and procedures and invite children, staff members, families, and communities to contribute to their development.

Any updates or revisions will be communicated to all stakeholders. Our *Child Safe Environment Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis.

### **CHILD SAFE STANDARDS LEGISLATION/RESOURCES**

#### **QUEENSLAND**

The Department of Education released the Aware. Protective. Safe. Strategy and Child Safe environment map in 2020. The Child Safe environment map outlines the measures in place to strengthen the department's commitment to keeping children and young people safe from sexual abuse in Queensland schools and early childhood services.

[Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening\) Act 2000](#)

[Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening\) Regulation 2020.](#)

[Child and youth risk management strategy toolkit](#)

[Child safe environment map](#)

#### **SOURCES**

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. *Providing a Child Safe Environment*.

Australian Human Rights Commission (2020). *Child Safe Organisations*.

<https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/>

Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2011).

NSW Department of Education (2021). [Guide to the Child Safe Standards for early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services](#) Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

[United Nations Convention of Rights of the Child, \(1989\). \(UNCRC\)](#)

Work Health and Safety Act, (2011).

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Blue Card Services - Public Safety Business Agency

Child Protection Act 1999

Bravehearts

Childwise

#### **Policy Review Record**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Management Committee Name</b>	<b>Nominated Supervisors Name</b>	<b>Review Cycle</b>	<b>Next Review Date</b>
Sept 2023	Elizabeth Maddock	Tamara Fallon	Every year	Sept 2024