



Bayside Playhouse Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Bayside Playhouse and Occasional Care centre (Playhouse) is a community-based organisation that provides a nurturing learning environment where children feel valued and safe to explore, create and communicate while in the care of qualified educators.

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Bayside Playhouse and Occasional Care Centre acknowledges the Bunurong People, of the Kulin Nations, as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather. We acknowledge and respect their contributions, experience and knowledge as First Nations people. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy was approved by the Committee on 22 June 2022. It demonstrates the strong commitment of management, educators and volunteers to child safety and wellbeing, and how our organisation keeps children safe from harm, including child abuse.

Commitment to child safety

All children who attend Playhouse have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe and have fun while enjoying play based activities and a natural learning environment.

Purpose

This Policy outlines how Playhouse prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

Scope

This policy applies to all educators, volunteers, committee members, children and other individuals involved in our organisation.

Definitions

Child abuse means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.



Child/Children means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Concerns and complaints

A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to Playhouse related to one or more of the following:

- our services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by an educator, member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Playhouse
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person at Playhouse
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

Role of the Committee

The Committee has the role of making sure Playhouse prioritises children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

The Committee will champion and model a child safe culture at Playhouse. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Committee will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Everyone at Playhouse has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Committee will make sure that educators and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for educators and volunteers is identified and completed.

The Committee will conduct an annual review of how effectively Playhouse is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Playhouse will be sought as part of this review.

Children's empowerment and participation

Playhouse is a child-centered organisation. We actively seek to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning.

We want children to develop new friends through Playhouse and encourage children to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and take action if this occurs.

Families and communities

Playhouse recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are also encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us via our anonymous feedback envelope located our entrance.



Our Management Committee is comprised of parent representatives who are asked to share their thoughts on our policies and procedures, including our commitment to child safety and welfare.

Playhouse provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:

- publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct on our website
- including information about our child safety approach, our operations and Management Committee and management structure, in the Playhouse parent and carer information manual
- including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures, in our newsletter.

Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families

Playhouse is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included.

Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country at all Committee meetings
- consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices at Playhouse
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture, including through community activities
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at Playhouse, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture.

Valuing diversity

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- provide training for all educators on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety
- welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- offer families through our enrolment forms the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our students, their interests and cultures
- strive to reflect the diversity of our community through representation in our educators and Committee members



- acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates in our sessions
- have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

Code of Conduct

Playhouse has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Educators, volunteers and the Committee must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.

All third-party contractors are also expected to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and where they are engaging with children will have to sign an agreement to comply with the code, prior to delivering any services.

Recruiting educators and volunteers

Playhouse puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for educators and volunteers as outlined in the recruitment and screening policy. We only recruit educators and volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children. Members of the Committee must also be screened.

We require a Working with Children Check, Police Checks and referee checks for all educators and volunteers who have a role with children or have access to children's personal information. We require educators to have appropriate qualifications for their roles and check to make sure these qualifications are valid. Members of the Committee must hold a valid Working with Children Check.

Supporting educators and volunteers

Playhouse is committed to ensuring that all leaders, educators and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. Playhouse assists its leaders, educators and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decisions and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

Playhouse Committee leaders, educators and volunteers are required to complete annual child safety training. Training will be recorded in the Child Safety Training Action Plan.

Educators and volunteers will receive supervision to support their engagement with children and for compliance with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed in line with our Code of Conduct, complaint handling policy and disciplinary policy.

Complaints and reporting

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.



Playhouse has a complaint handling policy that includes information for educators and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. Information about our complaints process will be provided to families to know about the complaint process and the supports available to those making a complaint and those involved in the complaint process.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then educators and volunteers at Playhouse must report it in accordance with the complaint handling policy.

Playhouse educators and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police. Under the complaint handling and disciplinary policies, educators and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
- having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at Playhouse
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at Playhouse
- removing their access to the Playhouse IT system and facilities.

Complaints can be emailed to baysideplayhouse@gmail.com or you can speak with an educator

If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.

Child Safety Persons

All Playhouse educators are trained to respond to any child safety related complaints or concerns.

If a person does not feel comfortable making a report to educators on duty, they may report their concern to the President of the Committee.

Record keeping

Playhouse is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.

All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system.

Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

Information sharing

Playhouse may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. Playhouse will keep information about complaints confidential and will protect the privacy of any person reporting an incident.



Where it is necessary, Playhouse will share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety. More information is available in our complaint handling policy.

Risk management

We recognise the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated by Playhouse.

We conduct regular risk assessments and have a risk management plan to address the risk of child abuse and harm at Playhouse. The risk management plan will be developed in consultation with our educators, volunteers, parent representatives and children. We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at Playhouse. The Committee is responsible for approving the risk management plan.

Any contractors or other providers of services will always be supervised by an educator while working with us to ensure child safety. See also Code of Conduct above.

Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct

Playhouse will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies (see list below). Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement or other corrective action. More information can be found in our Code of Conduct.

Review

Playhouse will review all child safe practices and policies at least every two years. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'.

Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and also inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices. Reviews are overseen by the Committee and will be informed by consultation with children, families and educators.

Supporting documents – Bayside Playhouse child safety and wellbeing system

- The following policies and procedures work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all of our operations:
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- complaint handling policy
- recruitment and screening policy
- risk management plan
- child safe training plan.

Supporting legislation

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* (including Child Safe Standards)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* (including reporting to Child Protection)



- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- *Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by the Committee of Management at the Committee meeting on 22 June 2022.

Review Date

June 2024