

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

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Policy owner: Manager, Risk and Compliance

Policy sponsor: General Manager, Corporate and Governance

1. Background

The State Sport Centres Trust (SSCT) is required to comply with the Child Safe Standards, which set out the compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children and young people (or where services and facilities are used by children and young people), to help protect them from harm. (The standards can be viewed in full here: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/>)

The SSCT provides several services and programs dedicated to children and young people, including occasional care, holiday programs, school programs, swim squad and swim schools. The SSCT's venues and facilities are also visited by children and young people through events and activities with their families, friends, schools and as general members of the public.

This policy is informed and guided by the following:

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* and associated regulations and standards (Victorian Child Safe Standards)
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- Working with Children Check
- Royal Life Saving Australia's Child Safety in Aquatic Facilities (draft guidelines)

2. Purpose

This policy aims to ensure that all employees, volunteers and contractors (together, known as "staff") engaged by the SSCT are aware of the organisation's commitment to create and maintain a child safe culture that meets the Child Safe Standards.

A child safe environment means the organisation has shared attitudes, values, policies and practices that prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all staff and to the broad range of situations where interaction with children and young people may occur at the SSCT's venues and facilities. While this policy sets out the overarching policies applicable to all staff members and programs, the SSCT's occasional care is subject to other regulations and standards.

4. Definitions

Child means a child or young person under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse means:

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded
- sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of, a child
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child or significant neglect of a child.

Child Safety Officer is the General Manager, Venues.

Statement of Commitment is the SSCT's express commitment to child safety and wellbeing.

5. Child Safe Standards

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.

The SSCT is committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe environment where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

The SSCT is committed to ensuring racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated.

We think about how visitors can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal children and young people, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal visitors and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our planning, program design and activities by looking for opportunities that:

- encourage and support children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
- support and facilitate participation and inclusion within the organisation by Aboriginal children and their families
- recognise and celebrate Aboriginal peoples, their achievements, communities and cultures through celebrations of Aboriginal culture and staff training on Aboriginal cultural safety.

Standard 2

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

To achieve this, we:

- publicise our Statement of Commitment

- prioritise child safety and wellbeing issues when addressing feedback and managing incidents
- document duty of care obligations in recruitment policies and staff position descriptions
- provide guidance to staff about promoting child safety and wellbeing
- outline expected standards of behaviour of staff in the SSCT Code of Conduct relating to child safety and wellbeing and take appropriate action to deal with breaches
- make staff aware of the Child Safe Standards through a dedicated staff intranet page and providing targeted training for key staff.

Standard 3

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

The SSCT has strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.

We will make available age-appropriate and easy to understand documents that support children to raise complaints, feedback or concerns. We facilitate children and young people raising safety concerns for themselves, their friends or peers.

We support staff to seek, listen to and act on the voices of children when making decisions that have an impact on children and young people.

Standard 4

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

The SSCT considers that families and the community of visitors have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, the SSCT is committed to providing families and community with accessible information about the SSCT's child safe policies and practices and involving them in the organisation's approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We welcome feedback from our visitors, families and communities about our facilities and services and their experiences.

Standard 5

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our visitors, families and communities and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all. We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

We train our staff on recognising, understanding and supporting diversity, equity and inclusion. We strive to reflect the diverse and intersecting interests, needs, experiences and cultures of the children and families we work with. We acknowledge or celebrate important cultural dates in our workplace.

Standard 6

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

The SSCT applies robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable and appropriately qualified to work with children.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- will establish position descriptions that set clear expectations about the roles, requirements, duties, and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing
- sight, verify and record the person's current Working with Children Check
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Standard 7

Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.

We require staff to treat allegations of child abuse and harm seriously. We will provide information and training for staff about how to respond to allegations and concerns.

We will publish child-friendly information on our website for children and young people about how to make a complaint. We will register feedback, complaints and concerns in our systems, respond within a reasonable time and keep people informed of progress and any delays.

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.

All staff are expected to participate in the SSCT's child safety and wellbeing induction and ongoing training program. The program focuses on:

- the policy
- the SSCT Code of Conduct relating to child safety and wellbeing
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that the SSCT considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Standard 9

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

We identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in venues and facilities. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policy and practices.

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Standard 10

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

The SSCT has established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of its child safety policy and practices. We undertake to

- review and improve this policy every 3 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with staff.

Standard 11

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

This policy and the SSCT Code of Conduct relating to child safety and wellbeing document our general approach to child safety and wellbeing and our expectations of staff.