



CHILD SAFETY AND WELFARE POLICY

This policy and any subsequent amendments are issued pursuant to the Mallee Catchment Management Authority Board Charter of Corporate Governance.

Metadata

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1. Purpose

This policy outlines Mallee Catchment Management Authority's (CMA) commitment and approach to protecting the safety and wellbeing of children. This policy will ensure all of our employees, volunteers and identified consultants or contractors that undertake services directly with children on behalf of Mallee CMA will understand the Mallee CMA commitment to providing a child safe organisation, as well as their own responsibilities for protecting children.

All of our employees, volunteers and identified consultants or contractors that undertake services directly with children on behalf of Mallee CMA are expected to act in accordance with the Child Safe Standards.

2. Mallee CMA Child Safe Statement

Mallee CMA has adopted the Child Safe Standards to create a Child Safe Organisation that protects children and young people from abuse in all forms, by committing to the following:

- Employees, volunteers and identified consultants or contractors are required to abide by the '*Mallee CMA Child Safe and Wellbeing Code of Conduct*' which specifies the expected standards of conduct and appropriate behaviours required when working with and in the company of children.
- Employees who engage in Mallee CMA activities where children and young people are involved will be required to hold a current Working with Children Check.
- Volunteers and identified contractors and consultants who engage in Mallee CMA activities where children and young people are involved, will be required to hold a current Working with Children Check.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and will be reported to the relevant authority.
- We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing or reducing these risks.
- We have established contract management and recruitment practices for all employees and volunteers, and robust engagement practices for consultants and contractors.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and in providing a safe environment for children with disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures, training and induction in place that support our management team, employees and volunteers to achieve these commitments. All our employees, volunteers and identified consultants or contractors will acknowledge our '*Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct*'.

3. Child Safe Standards

In order to create a Child Safe Organisation, Mallee CMA must fulfil the 11 Child Safe Standards. These standards are as follows:

- Child Safe 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.
- Child Safe Standard 2 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.
- Child Safe Standard 3 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- Child Safe Standard 4 – Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Child Safe Standard 5 – Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
- Child Safe Standard 6 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Child Safe Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
- Child Safe Standard 8 – Employees and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Child Safe Standard 10 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- Child Safe Standard 11 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

| Who | Activity |
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| Chief Executive Officer (CEO) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable Officer for the Child Safe Standards • Responds to allegation, concerns and complaints |
| Executive Management Committee (EMC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champions and models a child safe culture at Mallee CMA • Monitors compliance with this policy and its related procedures and forms • Ensures Mallee CMA prioritises child safety and determines what action is taken when concerns about child safety are raised |
| Managers and Supervisors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern • Create a positive culture around reporting so people feel comfortable to raise concerns • Ensure employees and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy • Ensure their employees, volunteers and identified consultants or contractors are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Briefed and abide by the Mallee CMA Child Safe and Wellbeing Code of Conduct ○ Ensure they are aware of the process to report an incident or concern, and the legal implications of failure to disclose or protect a child ○ Conduct risk assessments and take action to manage risks in accordance with this policy |

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| Employees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the Mallee CMA commitment to the Child Safe Standards and that they have a role to play in protecting children and young people from abuse by ensuring their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate Ensure they are aware of the process to report an incident or concern, and the legal implications of failure to disclose or protect a child Abide by the Mallee CMA Child Safe and Wellbeing Code of Conduct which specifies the expected standards of conduct and appropriate behaviours Responsible for renewal their Working with Children Check |
| Volunteers, identified consultants and contractors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comply with the Mallee CMA Mallee CMA Child Safe and Wellbeing Code of Conduct which specifies the expected standards of conduct and appropriate behaviours Ensure they are aware of the process to report an incident or concern, and the legal implications of failure to disclose or protect a child |
| Human Resources (HR) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support managers to ensure recruitment and selection of employees and volunteers is conducted in line with the Child Safe Standards |
| Manager Safety, Contracts and Administration (MSCA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support managers, coordinators and volunteers in understanding their Child Safe Standards obligations Coordinate employee training and inductions to meet Child Safe Standards obligations Ensure that appropriate child safety training for employees and volunteers is identified and completed Provide advice about the Child Safe Standards, this Policy, and associated procedures and ensure the documents are accessible and up-to-date Complete annual review of how effectively Mallee CMA is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Mallee CMA may be sought as part of this review Updates this policy annually and ensures it is current on the Mallee CMA website Perform duties of Child Safety Officer |
| Child Safety Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds to any child safety related complaints or concerns |

5. Business Rules

| Activity | Rules |
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| Duty of Care | <p>The duty of care for the Child Safe Standards remains with the Mallee CMA.</p> <p>A duty of care is a legal obligation which is imposed on an individual requiring adherence to a standard of reasonable care while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm others.</p> |
| Children's empowerment and participation | <p>Mallee CMA encourage children to experience environmental themes and concepts through engagement events and also to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and take action if this occurs.</p> |

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| Families and communities | <p>Mallee CMA provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Mallee CMA Child Safe and Wellbeing Code of Conduct on our website • Including information about our child safety approach in our engagement event information • 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 | <p>Mallee CMA 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Acknowledgement of Country at all events • Consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices at Mallee CMA events • Providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture, including through performance at Mallee CMA community activities • Supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations • Providing training for staff and volunteers on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children • Celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Reconciliation Week |
| Equity and Diversity | <p>Mallee CMA values equity and diversity and is committed to supporting 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.</p> |
| Mallee CMA Child Safe and Wellbeing Code of Conduct (the Code) | <p>Employees and volunteers must comply with the Mallee CMA Child Safe and Wellbeing Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.</p> <p>All identified third-party contractors are also expected to abide by the Code, and where they are engaging with children will have to sign an agreement to comply with the Code, prior to delivering any services.</p> |
| Child Safety Officer | <p>Mallee CMA has a trained Child Safety Officer with responsibility for responding to any child safety related complaints or concerns.</p> <p>If a person feels uncomfortable making a report to a Child Safety Officer, they may report their concern to the CEO.</p> |
| Training | <p>We are committed to training our employees and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.</p> <p>New employees and volunteers will be inducted to ensure they understand our commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children and young people from abuse.</p> |

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| Allegations, concerns and complaints | <p>Mallee CMA takes all allegations of child abuse seriously and has procedures in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly.</p> <p>If an employee has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred, or receives an allegation of child abuse, they have a responsibility to report the incident or allegation, otherwise this will be seen as a failure to disclose and have legal ramifications.</p> <p>Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child 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 • Suspicious behaviour has been observed |
| Reporting child abuse | <p>For immediate help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To report concerns that are life threatening – ring Victoria Police 000 • In all other cases, contact your Manager, Child Safety Officer, CEO then contact child protection • To contact the Regional Child Protection Office – ring 1800 675 598 (Loddon Mallee) • To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child after hours ring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service 13 12 78 ○ (5:00pm to 9:00am Monday – Friday, 24 hours on weekends and public holidays). • Document the report via the Child Safety and Welfare Incident Form |
| Working with Children Check | <p>People engaged in child-related work, specifically those services, places, bodies or activities that involve direct contact with children, are required by law to hold a valid Working with Children Check. Direct contact includes face-to-face, written, oral and electronic communication. It should not include contact that is incidental to a person's work.</p> <p>Mallee CMA requires all employees and volunteers engaging with children to hold a valid Victorian Working with Children Check. Evidence of this Check must be supplied to Human Resources prior to commencing work and on renewal.</p> <p>If, during the recruitment or renewal process, a person's records indicate a criminal history, then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.</p> |
| Record Keeping | <p>Mallee CMA is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.</p> <p>All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Mallee CMA 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.</p> <p>Records will be stored securely and kept by Mallee CMA for at least 45 years.</p> |

6. Definitions

| Term | Meaning |
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| Child / Young person | A person under the age of 18 years |
| Child abuse | Refers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sexual offence committed against a child • An offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (Vic), such as grooming • Physical violence against a child • Causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child • Serious neglect of a child |
| Concerns and complaints | <p>A 'concern' refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.</p> <p>A 'complaint' is an expression of dissatisfaction to Mallee CMA related to one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our services or dealings with individuals • Allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Mallee CMA • Disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person • The conduct of a child or young person at Mallee CMA • The inadequate handling of a prior concern • General concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity |
| Harm | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> |
| Screening checks | May include, police checks, working with children checks, reference and other background checks. |
| Working with Children Check | A Working with Children Check is a screening process for assessing or reassessing people who work with or care for children in Victoria. It assesses the criminal history and relevant disciplinary or regulatory findings of applications to assess suitability. The check aims to prevent people from working or volunteering with children if an assessment of their records signals, they may pose an unjustifiable risk to children. |
| Volunteer | <p>In this policy the term "volunteer" refers to Volunteering Australia's definition of Formal Volunteering, 'volunteering that takes place within organisations (including institutions and agencies)':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer • of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion • for no financial payment • in designated volunteer positions only. |

7. Related Documents

Internal

[FORM 101-399 - Child Safety and Welfare Incident Form](#)
[FORM 101-400 - Child Safe and Wellbeing Code of Conduct](#)
[PRO 063-064 – Safety Management of Volunteers Procedure](#)
[PRO 034-017 - Grievance and Dispute Resolution Procedure](#)
[GN 063-025 - Role Statement for Managers Responsible for Volunteers](#)
[GN 063-026 - Role Statement for Volunteer Coordinators](#)
[GN 063-027 - Role Statement for Volunteers](#)
[MAN 008 - MCMA Volunteer Induction Manual](#)
[FORM 063-242 – Volunteer Registration Form](#)
[FORM 063-240 – Volunteer Safety Briefing Checklist](#)
[FORM 063-239 – Project Checklist for Volunteer Activities](#)
[FORM 063-238 – Job Safety Plan for Volunteer Activities](#)

External

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
Child, Youth and Families Act 2005
Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
Commission for Children and Young People - <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/>
Creating Child Safe Organisations - <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/about-us>