

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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This document is presented in three parts:

- **Part 1 - Purpose and Parameters** contains Carringbush Adult Education Inc's (Carringbush's) purpose and parameters of its policy and provides key links to relevant policies and legislation.
- **Part 2 - Implementation** contains Carringbush's approach to implementing each Child Safe Standards.
- **Part 3 – Responding and Reporting Procedure** contains the process for all Carringbush staff and volunteers in reporting a concern, complaint or allegation about child safety.

PART 1 – Purpose and Parameters

1.1 Purpose

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

Carringbush has a zero tolerance policy for child abuse and is committed to promoting child safety, children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse.

While students at Carringbush are adult students, Carringbush also provides programs where staff come into contact with children or otherwise interact with children in the course of their role.

Staff, volunteers and persons from the broader organisational community must ensure that they comply with the requirements set out in this Policy and Procedure, the Staff Handbook and the Code of Conduct.

1.2 Statement of commitment to child safety

Carringbush is committed to child safety and wellbeing and to children being safe, happy and empowered. Carringbush supports and respects all children, as well as staff and parents and carers and is committed to protecting the rights of all children to be safe, without fear of abuse, or exploitation as outlined in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)* and is committed to keeping children safe by all reasonable means.

1.3 Scope

This Policy applies to all members of the Board, staff, volunteers, students, program participants, contractors, visitors and other people who are associated with or come in contact with Carringbush.

1.4 Responsibilities (*Standard 11*)

The Board

The Board is responsible for ensuring Carringbush prioritises children's safety and wellbeing throughout the organisation.

The Board will review annually the effectiveness of Carringbush's child safety and wellbeing policy and procedures.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The CEO will lead and model a child safe culture at Carringbush and work with the staff and volunteers to create a positive culture around reporting that enables people to feel comfortable to raise concerns and that action is taken when a concern is raised

The CEO, with input from the Child Safety Officer, has responsibility for the day to day management of staff and volunteers adhering to Carringbush's Policies, Procedures and processes and Code of Conduct.

The CEO, with the assistance of the Child Safety Officer is responsible for following the reporting process to relevant agencies or organisations.

Child Safety Officer

The Child Safety Officer is responsible for providing access to appropriate child safety training to all new staff including volunteers as part of their induction at the commencement of their employment..

The Child Safety Officer is the first contact for any complaint or issue for all staff, volunteers, students and others. The Child Safety Officer will ensure all processes are followed and be responsible for reporting to the CEO on all complaints, issues and incidents that are reported, both internally and externally.

Compliance Manager

The Compliance Manager is responsible for conducting annual audits of compliance with this and related policies, procedures and processes and reporting on the outcome of such audits to the CEO.

Management Team

Each member of the Management Team has responsibility for monitoring all staff, volunteers and others in their area of responsibility to ensure they aware of and follow Carringbush's Policies, Procedures, processes and Code of Conduct in regard to child safety and wellbeing.

Staff and volunteers and others

All staff, volunteers, contractors and others are responsible for following Carringbush's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, procedures, processes and Code of Conduct.

All staff and volunteers are advocates for child safety and model and promote behaviours that champion the organisation's policy.

1.5 Definitions

The Board means the members of the Board of Governance.

Carringbush means Carringbush Adult Education Incorporated

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

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.

Concerns are any action, physical or verbal that refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction related to one or more of the following:

- our services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Carringbush
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person in any of Carringbush's programs
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

Child-connected work means work authorized by Carringbush and performed by an adult in Carringbush's environment while children are present or may be reasonably expected to be present

Child Safety Officer is the person authorised to respond to any concern, complaint or issue raised about child safety or wellbeing

Carringbush or Carringbush's environment means any physical or online site made available or authorised by Carringbush for the provision of programs including educational and community and other programs, and may include but not limited to:

- Carringbush Adult Education Inc. – 415 Church Street, Richmond
- Collingwood Neighbourhood House - 253 Hoddle Street, Collingwood
- Belgium Avenue Neighborhood House - 9 Belgium Avenue, Richmond
- Richmond Library, 415 Church Street Richmond
- White House, 215 Church Street, Richmond
- 106 Elizabeth Street, Richmond
- Richmond Community Information Centre – 110 Elizabeth Street, Richmond
- The Salvation Army Richmond, 22 Lennox Street, Richmond

Staff means an individual working in Carringbush’s environment who is directly engaged or employed by Carringbush and/or a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person as an intermediary) and or a minister of religion.

VRQA means the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

Skills First means the funding program provided by the Department of Education and Training

1.6 Relevant legislation and standards

- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *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)*
- *Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)*
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *The Child Safe Standards (Vic)*

1.7 Related organisational policies and procedures (Standard 11)

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Risk Management Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Induction Policy
- Privacy Policy

1.8 Access to the policy (Standard 11)

This Policy will be provided to all staff and volunteers at induction and can be accessed publicly via the Carringbush website and via the *Policies and Procedures folder in the General Drive* for all staff and volunteers.

PART 2 – Implementation

2.1 Cultural safety for Aboriginal children (Standard 1)

Carringbush is committed to creating an environment where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- An Acknowledgement of Country to be posted and visible to everyone at Carringbush’s premises
- consult with external agencies and where possible, families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices in Carringbush’s community and educational programs

- providing opportunities and encouragement for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture individually and through community activities and educational programs
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- providing training at induction and annually for staff and volunteers on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- including as part of training strategies to identify and address incidents of racism
- ensuring all staff, volunteers, students and community understand that racism will not be tolerated
- celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- actively seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experiences at Carringbush, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture
- ensuring its policies, procedures, systems, processes and measures create a culturally safe and inclusive environment for aboriginal children and young people

2.2 A commitment to child safety and wellbeing (Standard 2)

Carringbush is committed to supporting child safety and wellbeing by:

- embedding and promoting a culture of child safety and wellbeing in its culture and programs
- preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks
- being aware of and sensitive to, the diverse backgrounds, circumstances and needs of aboriginal children and young people, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and young people and children and young people with disability
- actioning any adjustments to its services to provide equal protection for all children and young people
- provide appropriate support to the needs of children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, non-binary and gender diverse
- provide appropriate support to the needs of children and young people unable to live at home
- ensure all staff and volunteers receive relevant cultural training so they have an understanding of aboriginal culture, and an appreciation for culturally sensitive issues
- identifying and addressing incidences of racism with the involvement of aboriginal children and young people, and their families
- ensuring its policies, procedures, systems, processes and measures create a culturally safe and inclusive environment for all children and young people
- including in its Annual Report a report on its performance against the Standards.

2.3 Taking child participation and empowerment seriously (Standard 3)

Although Carringbush does not provide pre-accredited or accredited training programs to children and young people, Carringbush actively seeks to include, where appropriate, children's views and ideas in our organisational planning, delivery of services including the community programs delivered at all sites and in the management of facilities.

Carringbush:

- encourages children to develop new friends and encourages children to be supportive of each other. Carringbush does not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children, adults including staff, volunteers and members of the community participating in or assisting in its programs. Carringbush will take action if this occurs.
- respects the rights of children and provides information about their rights including the right to be safe by ensuring there are posters and signs about their rights and safety visible in all of the facilities where it delivers programs.
- actively seeks to understand what makes children feel safe in its organisation. Carringbush regularly communicates with children who may be attending a program with a parent or carer, about what they can do if they feel unsafe.
- values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children, their families or others and supports children's participation in the following ways:
 - where appropriate to the age of a child, regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe
 - consultation with children and their parents or carers about any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, programs or staffing. Children's and/or their parents and/or carers' views are collected by staff and provided to management and considered in the decision-making process.
 - information provided to children and their families and carers about Carringbush operations, staffing and programs are suitable for different age groups and diversity of the children. Child safety information will be offered in languages other than English where needed.

Carringbush will collect relevant student information including capturing data of students from diverse backgrounds and analyse the data to inform the development of an organisational culture to:

- prevent racism and respect for Aboriginal and all cultures
- those unable to live at home
- LGBTQIA+ communities
- Students with disabilities
- Cultural differences or disadvantages

2.4 Involving families and communities (*Standard 4*) and Respecting equity and diversity (*Standard 5*)

Carringbush recognises the important role of families and carers and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions to programs that may affect their child.

Parents, families and communities are welcome to and encouraged to provide feedback at any time through our program staff or direct to management.

Carringbush provides information to families and community about its child safe policies and practices through:

- publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct on its website

Carringbush values diversity for all children. To achieve this, Carringbush will:

- provide training for all members of the Board, staff and volunteers 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 students, families and participants in our community programs, through our enrolment process, 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 programs that reflects the diversity of our participants and their children, their interests and cultures
- strive to reflect the diversity of our community through representation in our staff and volunteers and the Board.
- acknowledge and celebrate cultural dates in our programs
- have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of participants, including children of all abilities

2.5 Ensuring that staff are suitable and supported (*Standard 6*)

Carringbush includes child safety and wellbeing as part of its recruitment and screening processes for staff and volunteers as outlined in the recruitment and screening policy.

Carringbush only recruits staff and volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children. Members of the Board must also be screened.

Carringbush requires a current and valid Working with Children Check, Police Check and referee checks for all staff and volunteers. Carringbush requires staff to have appropriate qualifications for their roles

and check to ensure these qualifications are valid. Members of the Board must hold a valid Working with Children Check and a national Police Check.

An annual check of all WWC's will be conducted by the Compliance Manager to determine currency.

Carringbush is committed to ensuring that all leaders, staff and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. Carringbush assists its leaders, staff 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.

All members of the Board, staff and volunteers will receive training and information on:

- children's rights
- the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- recognising signs of child abuse or harm
- responding to disclosures
- understanding and responding to harmful behaviours by a child towards another child
- record keeping
- risk assessment and management
- external reporting obligations
- creating culturally safe and inclusive environments and responding to racism.

The method and content of training will be identified by consultation between the Child Safety Officer, managers and staff. Training will be provided at induction for new Board members, staff and volunteers.

Training will be conducted according to the Child Safety Training Action Plan and recorded in individual staff records.

Where required, staff 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 and Responding and Reporting Procedure contained in this Policy..

2.6 Child-focused complaint systems (*Standard 7*) and Staff knowledge, skills and awareness (*Standard 8*)

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.

Support services will be tailored to the needs of individual children according to their specific circumstances and needs and include, where required, access to sexual abuse programs and relevant information appropriate to their age.

Carringbush has a Reporting and Responding Procedure that includes information for staff and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. Information on the complaints process will be provided to staff and volunteers on induction and to students, families and those participating in community programs at enrolment. Information on supports available to those

making a complaint and those involved in the complaint process will also be made available in the Staff and Student Handbook and information posted in various locations in Carringbush premises.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then staff and volunteers must report it in accordance with the Responding and Reporting Procedure. Carringbush staff and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potential criminal conduct to Victoria Police. Under the Reporting and Responding Procedure, staff 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 during the course of their employment at any site where Carringbush delivers programs
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children
- removing their access to Carringbush's IT system and facilities
- all complaints or concerns involving a child's safety will be confidential and managed according to Carringbush's Privacy Policy

Complaints can be made to the Child Safety Officer or if a person does not feel comfortable or the Child Safety Officer is not able to be contacted, they may report their concern to a manager.

Record keeping

Carringbush will keep full and accurate records of all child-related complaints, concerns incidents and near misses in the *Child Safety Reporting Register*, which forms part of the Complaints and Incident Reporting Register.

All records and documents that 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 if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

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

Records will be stored securely and kept for at least 45 years.

Information sharing

Carringbush may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. Carringbush will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. Carringbush may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety. Further information can be found in the Responding and Reporting Policy.

Should a complaint be raised of abuse or harm caused to a child by another child, the Child Safety Officer will make a determination as to whether an appropriate independent child advocate is to be appointed to assist in the investigation for either or both children. The investigation will follow the normal process as outlined in the Child Safety Complaint Handling Policy.

Support for those involved in the process

Carringbush will provide appropriate support to the person making the complaint and those involved in the process. The Child Safety Officer and if required, the CEO, will source independent external support services for those involved if required.

2.7 Safe physical and online environments (Standard 9)

Carringbush recognises the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated by the organisation.

Carringbush conducts regular risk assessments and has a risk management plan which includes the risk of child abuse and harm at its delivery sites. The risk management plan will be reviewed and further developed in consultation with staff, volunteers, and where appropriate, participants in community programs.

Carringbush will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating in its programs. The Board is responsible for approving the risk management plan.

Any contractors or other providers of services engaged by Carringbush will be supervised at all times by a member of staff while working at any site where Carringbush provides programs, to ensure child safety. A further reference for information on this is contained in the Code of Conduct.

At all times Carringbush will implement processes and strategies to minimise the risk of child abuse and harm without compromising children's right to privacy, access to information and social connections and learning opportunities in both the physical and online environment.

As far as possible, Carringbush will conduct its own investigations and determinations of any external organisation's commitment to child safety and wellbeing when purchasing or contracting third parties..

All third parties are required to follow Carringbush's child safety requirements while on Carringbush premises.

2.8 Review of child safe policies and practices (Standards 10 and 11)

This policy in conjunction with all other related policies, procedures and codes, will be reviewed annually and when a complaint or incident occurs to ensure their currency and efficacy.

The Compliance Manager will conduct an annual internal audit of the organisation's implementation of this and associated policies and procedures as part of the annual audits for compliance with:

- VRQA and AQTF Standards and Guidelines
- Skills First Internal Audit

and any and all other internal audit requirements for funded and non-funded programs and will provide a report as to the outcome of those audits to the CEO with any actions that need to be implemented.

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An annual review will be conducted by the Compliance Manager of the Complaints and Incident Reporting Register to identify causes or systemic weaknesses and, with the CEO, implement improvements to address identified issues.

Carringbush will provide its community with the findings and actions taken in response to all reviews in the following ways:

- The CEO will provide the Board with an annual report
- An end of year information session for staff and volunteers

Individual staff responsible for delivery courses and programs will inform their program participants when and where deemed appropriate.

PART 3 – Responding and Reporting Procedure

3.1 Overview

This procedure:

- informs staff and volunteers on the process for responding to and reporting a concern, complaint or an allegation of the safety of a child.
- applies to allegations or disclosures of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, staff, volunteer, visitors, or other persons while connected to Carringbush’s environment.

3.2 Steps in the process

It is important to ensure that all communication and actions undertaken in regard to any concern, complaint or allegation are carried out being mindful of the responsibility to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties involved.

Any staff member or volunteer not directly involved in the process is to discuss or provide any information on the concern or allegation with any of the parties involved or any other person or organisation unless required by law.

3.2.1 Contact the Child Safety Officer as soon as you are aware of any concerns in regard to child safety and wellbeing, including:

- disclosure of abuse or harm
- allegation, suspicion or observation
- breach of Child Safety Code of Conduct
- environmental safety issues

If the concern is that the child is in immediate danger call 000 and if possible and safe, remove the child from the environment.

If the Child Safety Officer is not available, contact a Manager, Co-ordinator or the CEO.

If the allegation is made to any other staff member or volunteer, they must immediately contact the Child Safety Officer.

3.2.2. Depending on the level of concern, the report to the Child Safety Officer can be made:

- face to face (verbally)
- in an email
- by telephone
- in a meeting

3.2.3 Make your own notes of your concerns so that you can provide the Child Safety Officer with all relevant information. Protect your notes to ensure they remain private and confidential.

3.2.4 The Child Safety Officer will:

- clarify the nature of the complaint
- offer support to the child, the parents, the person who reports and the accused staff member or volunteer. Support may be internal or provision of an appropriate external counselling or support service, to be funded by Carringbush
- commence internal processes to ensure the safety of the child
- complete an initial *Child Safety Report* and provide it to the CEO
- the CEO and/or Child Safety Officer will contact Victoria Police prior to commencing any investigation or disciplinary process
- the CEO will commence the disciplinary process (if required)
- the CEO and Child Safety Officer will decide, in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should/must be reported to the police or Child Protection and make a report as soon as possible if required

3.2.5 At the completion of the investigation, the Child Safety Officer will:

- notify relevant staff, volunteers, parents and the child of the outcome
- in conjunction with the Compliance Manager:
 - review all relevant policies and procedures to determine a need for updating
 - Complete the Child Safety Register with details of the allegation and investigation.

Flowchart: CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCESS

