

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY¹

1. Purpose

This policy outlines VolunteeringACT's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and informs staff including volunteers of their obligations and responsibilities in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people across all areas of our operations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all people who conduct work for VolunteeringACT in a paid or unpaid capacity. This includes employees, volunteers, people undertaking work placements and/or internships, contractors, and consultants.

This policy applies to all activities in the organisation which may involve, result in, or relate to contact with children and young people.

3. Policy Statement

VolunteeringACT is committed to fostering an organisational culture that is child safe and ensuring that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is embedded across our operations.

VolunteeringACT incorporates the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) into relevant policies and procedures, including staff and volunteer recruitment and selection, our Standard Operating Procedures, and our peak body capability building activities delivered to members and other organisations in our networks.

In line with our People and Culture Policy, all employees (paid staff and volunteers) are required to hold a Working With Vulnerable People (WWVP) card and if required a national police check.

4. Definitions and Principles

Child – is defined within the National Principles as a person under 18 years of age.

Child safety and wellbeing is about actively preventing child harm and promoting wellbeing.

Child harm includes:

- Intentional and unintentional physical and emotional harm
- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Child abuse and neglect
- Child sexual abuse
- Exposure to violence – including family violence
- Grooming a child for sexual activity

These harms may be caused by adults or other children.

A child safe organisation is one that puts the best interests of children and young people first, by creating a culture where there are clear strategies and actions in place to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people.

The *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* are a set of ten principles, developed in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

¹ New document endorsed by Board 6 August 2024

5. The Ten National Principles

The [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) provide a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing across all sectors, to keep children and young people safe, with the intention of reducing future harm in organisational settings.

The ten National Principles are:

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

For each principle, the above guidance document outlines:

- The intent and key elements of the principle
- Key action areas, showing where organisations should take action to create a culture of child safety
- Indicators that the principle is upheld, providing practical examples that the principle is effectively in place
- References to examples of relevant articles of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

6. Responsibilities

VolunteeringACT requires staff at all levels to engage ethically with children and young people and be committed to keeping them safe from harm. The following outlines the nature of the commitment required from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

The Chair, Board, CEO and senior leadership team are responsible for promoting and modelling a child safe culture through:

- Ensuring that child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and governance arrangements facilitate their effective implementation.
- Providing clear support and direction to staff on implementing the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- Ensuring staff acting as specialist complaints handlers for children and young people have additional training, support, and timely access to debriefing.

- Analysing complaints, incidents and concerns relating to child safety and wellbeing to identify causes or systemic weaknesses and supporting implementation of any required changes or practice improvements.
- Encouraging all staff to be alert to child safety and wellbeing concerns and ensuring VolunteeringACT has clear strategies in place to support employees and volunteers who report a disclosure of harm or risk to children and young people.
- Encouraging staff to make recommendations for system and procedural improvements.

VolunteeringACT staff including volunteers, are responsible for preventing and reducing harm to children and young people through:

- Commitment to VolunteeringACT’s Child Safe Code of Conduct (part of our organisation Code of Conduct) and creating a child-safe culture.
- Attending training on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations including complaints handling responsibilities, reporting and privacy obligations, and responding to children who disclose abuse (including recognising the different ways that children may disclose).
- Incorporating the ten National Principles for Child Safe Organisations into ongoing practice, service design, and delivery- including the advice, information and capability building activities we provide to other organisations.
- Remaining alert to child safety and wellbeing concerns, making sure their roles and responsibilities within organisational policies and procedures are understood, and being proactive to seek clarification from senior leaders on these if needed.
- Engaging children, young people, families, communities and VolunteeringACT members in child safety review processes where possible and appropriate, and communicating feedback on review outcomes in a timely manner.

7. Related documents and procedure overview

This policy should be read together with VolunteeringACT’s WHS Policy, People and Culture Policy, Code of Conduct, Complaints Handling Policy, Risk Management Policy, and Standard Operating Procedures.

Following a disclosure of abuse or harm by a child, staff must follow the Mandatory Reporting procedures outlined in VolunteeringACT’s Standard Operating Procedures Manual.

This policy has been developed in line with best practice advice including through the Australian Human Rights Commission, and ACT Human Rights Commission: Office of the Children and Young People’s Commissioner.

8. Applicable Legislation and Regulations

VolunteeringACT complies with all state and federal Acts, Regulations, Codes of Practice and Standards relating to child safety and wellbeing which may include but may not be limited to:

Commonwealth	ACT Government
<i>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989</i>	<i>ACT Codes of Practice</i>
<i>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986</i>	<i>Children and Young People Act 2008</i>
<i>Family Law Act 1975</i>	<i>Domestic Violence and Protection Orders Act 2008</i>
<i>Privacy Act 1988</i>	<i>Human Rights Act 2004</i>
<i>Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2031</i>	<i>Public Advocate Act 2005</i>
<i>National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030</i>	<i>Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011</i>
	<i>Family Violence Act 2016</i>

	<i>Keeping Children and Young People Safe: A Shared Community Responsibility – A guide to reporting child abuse and neglect in the ACT 2022</i>
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9. Evaluation and Review

VolunteeringACT will seek feedback from staff and stakeholders on the effectiveness of this policy and accompanying procedures within the first six months of implementation. Key learnings and findings will be incorporated into ongoing continuous improvement processes and staff training and capability activities where needed.

This policy will be reviewed again at the point the new ACT Legislation and Child Safety Implementation Scheme comes into effect, then on an annual basis by the Leadership Team and Risk and Policy Committee.

10. Accessibility

This policy will be made publicly available on VolunteeringACT's website, along with our Charter of Commitment to Children and Young People.