

Policy Title	<b>CHILD SAFETY &amp; WELLBEING POLICY</b>		
Policy Number	CC05	Version	1
Date Approved	<b>February 2023</b>	Review Date	<b>February 2025</b>

*Kensington Neighbourhood House (KNH) respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation. We acknowledge and respect their contributions, experience and knowledge as First Nations people. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.*

**This Policy is applicable to:**

- All KNH staff and volunteers, regardless of whether they work with children or not.
- All activities and programs run by KNH

**Introduction**

This policy should be used alongside the KNH Child Protection Policy. It complies with the requirements of the 2022 Victorian Child Safe Standards.

This document is based on guidance and templates provided in “Creating a Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy”, published by the Commission for Children & Young People, 2022.

**Purpose**

This policy outlines how Kensington Neighbourhood House (KNH) will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. It documents the child safe practices that KNH will implement to create a culture where the safety of children and young people is promoted, child abuse is prevented, and allegations of child abuse are taken seriously and acted upon.

Kensington Neighbourhood House has a moral and legal responsibility to do all it can to ensure the health and safety of all children who attend its various programs. KNH will provide training, resources, information and guidance to support this aim.

**Statement of Commitment to Child Safety**

- Kensington Neighbourhood House is committed to child safety.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child’s safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Kensington Neighbourhood House is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- We have robust human resources and recruitment practices to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing board members, staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to regularly training and educating our board members, staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We have specific policies and procedures in place that support our board members, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

## **Definitions**

**Board** means the Board of Management of Kensington Neighbourhood House.

**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 KNH 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 KNH
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person at KNH
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

## **Role of the Board**

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

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

Everyone at KNH has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Board will make sure that staff 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 staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

The Board will conduct an annual review of how effectively KNH is delivering child safety and wellbeing via the annual Risk Management Register review process.

### **Children's empowerment and participation**

KNH actively seeks to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning and delivery of services.

We want children to develop new friends through KNH 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.

We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights including the right to be safe at KNH. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We regularly communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

KNH values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families. KNH supports children's participation in the following ways:

- Display of age-appropriate posters advising children of their right to feel safe.
- Regular collection of feedback from children regarding the programs they attend.
- Consultation with children about any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, programs or staffing. Children's views are collected by staff, provided to management and considered in the decision-making process.
- Information provided to children and families about KNH operations, staffing and programs are made suitable for different age groups and diversity of the children.

### **Families and communities**

KNH 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 encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

KNH 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 For Staff And Volunteers Working With Children & Young People on our website
- displaying our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety in all of our public areas
- displaying age-appropriate information on child safety and wellbeing in our classrooms, study support and playgroup area.

### **Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families**

KNH 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 meetings, formal gatherings and community events
- endeavouring to consult with members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices through KNH activities
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture, including during KNH 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 Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- endeavouring to seek feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at KNH, 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 to 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 and 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 staff and Board members
- acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates in our classes
- 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**

KNH has a Code of Conduct For Staff & Volunteers Working With Children & Young People (the Code of Conduct). Staff, volunteers and the Board 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 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 staff and volunteers**

KNH puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for staff and volunteers. Our commitment to child safety is clearly stated on all job advertisements and position descriptions. We only recruit staff and volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children. Members of the Board must also be screened.

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

## **Supporting staff and volunteers**

KNH is committed to ensuring that all staff and volunteers receive appropriate training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. KNH assists its 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 KNH Board members, staff and children's program volunteers are required to complete child safety training at regular intervals.

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, 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.

KNH has a Child Protection Policy that contains information for staff and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. An easy-to-understand complaints information sheet will be provided for children, families and the community 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 staff and volunteers at KNH must report it in accordance with the Child Protection Policy. KNH staff and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police. 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 at KNH
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at KNH
- removing their access to the KNH IT system and facilities.

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

## **Child Safety Person**

KNH has two trained child safety persons with responsibility for responding to any child safety related complaints or concerns:

1. Manager
2. Study Support Coordinator

Child safety persons are introduced to children so they know and understand who the appointed officers are, and how and when they may contact them. Photos and names of the child safety persons are displayed on the KNH noticeboard, in classrooms and study support areas.

If a person does not feel comfortable making a report to a child safety person, they may report their concern to the Chair of the Board.

## **Record keeping**

KNH is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns in line with the KNH Complaints Policy.

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.

Child Safety Complaint Records related to sexual abuse will be stored securely and kept by KNH for at least 45 years.

## **Information sharing**

KNH may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. KNH 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. 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 Child Protection 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 KNH.

We conduct regular risk assessments and have a Risk Management Register to address the risk of child abuse and harm at KNH. We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at KNH. The Board is responsible for approving the Risk Management Register and reviewing it annually and/or after any incident occurs.

## **Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct**

KNH 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 Child Protection Policy.

## **Review**

KNH 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 Board and will be informed by consultation with children, families and staff.

## **Supporting documents – KNH 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
- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff & Volunteers Working With Children
- Complaints Policy
- Staff Recruitment Policy
- KNH Risk Management Register
- **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)