

# Child Safety Policy

## 1. Introduction

Djerriwarrh Community College (the College) is an independent specialist senior secondary school based in Melton. The College delivers the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) at Foundation, Intermediate and Senior levels for students aged 15-19 years. It provides a safe and inclusive learning environment for young people who may have been disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education. The College is committed to supporting students to reach their personal, social and educational potential by providing the tools and skills to reflect, set goals and plan.

Djerriwarrh Community College (the College) is committed to creating and maintaining a school in which all young people are safe from harm and to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all young people from all cultures and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those with a disability.

We understand and implement our duty of care to all students and we undertake reasonable measures of the proper supervision and protection so that no student faces risks, injury or harm.

All College School Council members, staff, volunteers and contractors have a responsibility to prevent child abuse and respond appropriately to allegations.

The College will comply with Ministerial Order 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools (Vic) and the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

## 2. Purpose

This Child Safety Policy sets out the principles and framework governing the College's behaviours and activities that enact the child safe standards and which aim to keep all children and young people safe from harm. The policy, together with the policy implementation documents listed in Section 9 of this document, must be read and understood by all those connected to the school.

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within the College;
- the creation of a positive and robust child safe culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the College; and
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to members of the School Council (as individual members as well as to the council as an entity), the Principal, all College staff, volunteers, students on placement and contractors working in the school environment.

## 4. Definitions

<b>Child</b>	Means a child enrolled as a student at the school.
<b>Child abuse includes-</b>	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• any act committed against a child involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a sexual offence; or</li> <li>- an offence under section 498(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming);</li> </ul> </li> <li>• the infliction, on a child, of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- physical violence; or</li> <li>- serious emotional or psychological harm;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• serious neglect of a child.</li> </ul>
<b>Child safety</b>	Encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.
<b>Child-connected work</b>	Means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.
<b>College</b>	Djerriwarrh Community College, 235 Station Road, Melton, 3337
<b>Contractors</b>	Include, but not limited, to: maintenance and building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and cleaners.
<b>ETR Act</b>	means the <i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006</i> as amended from time to time
<b>Parent/guardian</b>	Includes parents, guardians, step-parents and/or carers as listed in the Enrolment Application Form.
<b>Principal</b>	The Principal of the College, or the Principal's authorised representative
<b>Proprietor</b>	In relation to a school, means the person who is ultimately responsible for the way the school is managed and conducted. In the case of a non-Government school, the proprietor of the school.
<b>School environment</b>	Means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a campus of the school;</li> <li>• online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and</li> <li>• other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).</li> </ul>
<b>School governing authority</b>	Means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor; or</li> <li>• the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or</li> <li>• the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.</li> </ul>

<b>School staff</b>	In a non-Government school, is an individual working in a school environment who is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;</li> <li>• a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary); or</li> <li>• a minister of religion.</li> </ul>
<b>Student</b>	The Student named in the Enrolment Application Form

## 5. Responsibilities

Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility. At Djerriwarrh Community College, the School Council, staff, volunteers and contractors have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the College's Child Safety Officers.

Specific responsibilities include:

**School Council.** The School Council is responsible for:

- authorising the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct and overseeing their implementation;
- actively promoting and supporting a culture of child safety in the school;
- developing strategies to embed a culture of child safety in the school and allocating roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies;
- informing the school community about child safety practices, strategies and allocated roles and responsibilities;
- periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revising those strategies;
- developing and implementing risk management strategies regarding child safety;
- ensuring that appropriate resources are made available to allow the College's Child Safety Policy and associated procedures to be effectively implemented; and
- participating in child safety standards annual training.

The School Council takes an active role in promoting a child safe culture and works with the Principal and the Compliance Manager to ensure compliance with Ministerial Order 870 and implementation of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct.

**Principal.** The Principal is responsible for:

- ensuring appropriate arrangements for child safety (including, without limitation, clear and comprehensive policies, procedures, accountability mechanisms and communication strategies) are implemented, monitored and reviewed; and
- promoting a child safety culture in which this policy is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of the College and that children are safe.

**Child Safety Officers.** The Principal and the Compliance Manager are nominated as the College's Child Safety Officers. They are responsible for:

- implementing the College's Child Safety Policy and the mandated requirements of Ministerial Order 870;
- ensuring that all policies, procedures and related documents are maintained and up to date to reflect current legislation;
- developing and coordinating staff and volunteer training; and
- championing child safety within the College and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

Staff may seek advice from the Child Safety Officers if they have concerns about child safe matters and when considering whether to make a report about a child in need of protection.

**Staff, volunteers and contractors.** All staff, volunteers and contractors have a duty of care to protect children from harm and a responsibility to comply with the College's Child Safety policies and procedures.

All staff, volunteers and contractors are required to be familiar with the content of the Child Safety Policy, the Child Safe Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

**External Education Providers.** An External Education Provider is any organisation that the College has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the College, for example an RTO delivering a VET course.

The delivery of such a course may take place on College premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the College environment.

All External Education Providers engaged by the College are required to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

## 6. Policy

### 6.1 Child Safe Standards

The Child Safe Standards (the Standards) are compulsory minimum standards for all organisations that provide services to children including Victorian schools and early childhood services. The aim of the Standards is to ensure organisations are well prepared to protect children from abuse and neglect.

The seven Standards are:

- Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisation culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.
- Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.
- Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.
- Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.
- Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.
- Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.

- Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Each standard must promote:

- the cultural safety of Aboriginal children;
- the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- the safety of children with disability.

## **6.2 Organisational Culture of Child Safety**

Djerriwarrh Community College recognises that child safety is paramount and all of our policies, procedures and processes reflect our commitment to providing a safe learning environment and ensuring the safety and protection of our students.

The College has established work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children and young people including:

- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards);
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers, contractors, parents/guardians and students to understand, identify and discuss child safety issues;
- the appointment of Child Safety Officers responsible for championing child safety and ensuring that all staff, volunteers students on placement and contractors understand the College's Child Safe policies and procedures and their legal obligations;
- procedures for recruiting and screening staff, volunteers, students on placement and contractors;
- strategies designed to empower students and encourage their participation;
- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct;
- processes for the ongoing supervision and management of staff, volunteers and contractors directly and indirectly involved in child-related work;
- annual training for School, Council members, staff and volunteers to ensure that they remain up to date in relation to our policies and procedures and their legislative obligations;
- risk management processes; and
- a system for continuous review and improvement.

### **6.3 Statement of Commitment**

Djerriwarrh Community College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Djerriwarrh Community College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Djerriwarrh Community College is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Djerriwarrh Community College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

In its planning, decision-making and operations Djerriwarrh Community College will:

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- Value and empower children and young people to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
- Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children and young people;
- Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children and young people;
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with our young people and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
- Ensure children and young people know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
- Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is at risk; and
- Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

### **6.4 Code of Conduct**

The College has developed a Child Safety Code of Conduct that sets out the expectations for personal and professional behaviour of staff and volunteers when teaching, working with and/or supporting children and young people.

All staff and volunteers are required to read and sign their agreement to abide by the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct is published on the College's website and is available upon request from College Reception.

Refer to the Child Safety Code of Conduct for more information.

## **6.5 Recruitment, supervision and management of staff**

### **Recruitment**

The College takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with our students. We develop selection criteria and advertisements that clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and we interview and conduct referee checks on all potential employees and volunteers.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

When selecting employees, volunteers, students on placement and contractors the College will:

- Ensure that all teaching staff have current Victorian Institute Teaching (VIT) registration;
- Ensure all non-teaching staff have a current Working with Children Check and that this has been sighted and a copy retained;
- Obtain a National Police check and an International Police check (if applicable);
- Obtain proof of personal identity;
- Review their history of working with children;
- Obtain at least two references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children history, including one from the most recent employer;
- Verify all references by contacting the referee and asking child safe related questions; and
- Ensure all position description include the College's commitment to Child Safety.

All applicants for positions, including volunteers and students on placement, within the College are provided with a copy of the Child Safety Policy and the Child Safe Code of Conduct. The Child Safe Code of Conduct is to be read, agreed to and signed by the applicant prior to them commencing work at the College.

### **Staff supervision and management**

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand the College's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children and young people from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children and young people is safe and appropriate.

The College has processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of all staff and volunteers to work with young people, including regular reviews of the status of Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration and Working with Children Checks, probationary periods and performance review processes.

### **Education and training**

The College provides employees and volunteers with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of and ability to address child safety matters.

All new staff and volunteers are trained and informed at induction of their legal and moral responsibilities in relation to child safety and protection.

All staff, including teaching staff and support staff, School Council members and volunteers receive annual refresher training on the College's policies and procedures relating to child safety, including but not limited to, the Child Safety Policy, the Child Safe Code of Conduct, the Mandatory Reporting Policy and the Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy.

All staff and volunteers must undertake annual Mandatory Reporting Training.

All staff are encouraged to undertake additional training and educational opportunities relating to child safety issues provided by external training providers that may arise from time to time.

All staff will be advised via email of any changes in child safety reporting requirements and expectations and/or changes to the College's policies and procedures. The Principal and Compliance Manager will arrange for staff and volunteer training when new or revised policies and procedures are issued.

## **6.6 Responding to and reporting child abuse**

The Mandatory Reporting Policy and the Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy should be read in conjunction with this Policy.

### **Duty of care**

School staff have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people in their care. If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people in their care they should take immediate action.

### **Reporting child protection concerns**

Mandatory reporters, who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection.

All other school staff members who form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person:

- Is in need of protection, should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.
- Is displaying sexually abusive behaviours and is in need of therapeutic treatment should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection.

If staff have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or young person, they should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST.

In cases where staff have concerns about a child or young person, they should also discuss their concerns with the Principal or the Compliance Manager.

It is important to note that even if other staff members do not share the same view, the staff member is still required to make a report on each occasion they form a view that a young person is at risk. Where another mandated reporter undertakes to make the report, staff are required to confirm that the report is made.

Refer to the Mandatory Reporting Policy for full details on mandatory reporters, mandatory reporting and making a report.

## 6.7 Risk management

The College is committed to identifying and analysing risks associated with any issues regarding child safety and protection with the objective of minimising or eliminating these risks.

The School Council will work with the Principal to identify the risks of child abuse and to record specific actions the College will take to reduce or remove the risk.

The College adopts a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of the College's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student cohort.

Identifying risk involves compiling a list of child safe risks with consideration of all school environments and staff. The process includes review of any previous incident reports.

The identified risks factors will be analysed and evaluated in terms of the possible consequences and the likelihood of the risk occurring. The College acknowledges different risk controls may be necessary for particular groups of students depending on the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of students affected by the risk.

The outcomes from the risk management activities will be recorded in the Child Safe Risk register. The Child Safe Risk Register records all the risk factors that have been identified in the school environment, along with the associated risks. It records how the College controls these risks and who has oversight of and responsibility for risk management activity.

Evaluation of these strategies and the development of additional strategies to minimise and control risks to children and young people occur as part of our ongoing risk management process.

## 6.8 Empowering children and young people

Djerriwarrh Community College recognises the importance of empowering children and young and encouraging their **participation in identifying strategies that will contribute to their safety and wellbeing.**

Participation is important for children and young people because it gives them an opportunity to have a say about issues and decisions that affect them.

The benefits of involving and consulting with children and young people include:

- Improving policies practices and services as children and young people provide a unique voice regarding what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- Facilitating the empowerment and participation of children and young people enhances a culture of child safety and listening to children and young people within your organisation.
- Children and young people learn new skills, build self-esteem and develop an understanding of collaboration and rights.
- Children and young people are more likely to report abuse or concerns if they feel safe and empowered in the organisation.
- Children and young people feel their views are valued and listened to.
- Children and young people are more likely to support the outcome if they have been involved.

Strategies to engage and empower young people may include but are not limited to:

- Promoting the rights, responsibilities and personal safety of children and young people. This may include talking to children and young people:
  - about their right to feel safe;
  - steps the organisation takes to help keep them safe;
  - the rules of the organisation;
  - who to talk to/how to speak up if something is worrying them;
  - what to do if someone they know is being hurt.
- Providing guidance and support through open discussion and planned educational activities, for example: respectful relationships
- Promoting a safe and inclusive environment by:
  - actively promoting inclusion and valuing diversity;
  - creating an environment reflects the lives and identities of the young people attending the College, for example displaying artwork; positive images, photos and role models; maps of Aboriginal cultural boundaries, and/or different countries;
  - implementing strategies for promoting the participation of vulnerable children and young people;
  - paying particular attention and response to the needs of children and young people with disability, Aboriginal children and young people, and children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Developing and conducting learning activities in an inclusive way that adds to the self-esteem of all participants. This may include:
  - assessing the cultural and diversity needs of young people;
  - working with other professionals and/or families to ensure activities are adapted appropriately;
  - applying knowledge from training; sharing good practices and previous learnings;
  - ensuring individual support plans are in place;
  - seeking feedback on strategies with children and young people, parents/guardians and families.
- Providing opportunities for children and young people to contribute to program and policy development and review. This may be achieved by:
  - asking their opinions through discussions, activities and surveys on: how things could be better, what they like/don't like, what makes them feel safe/unsafe in the organisation; and
  - providing child-friendly versions of policies and procedures

## 7. Review

This policy is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

## 8. Communication

This Child Safety Policy is available on the College website, the school management system, Compass and hard copies can be obtained from College Reception.

## 9. Associated documents and legislation

<b>Associated policies and procedures</b>	Mandatory Reporting Policy Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy Duty of Care Policy Privacy Policy Complaints Policy and Procedure Recruitment policy Misconduct and unsatisfactory performance policy
<b>Other associated documents Internal</b>	Child Safe Code of Conduct Staff Code of Conduct Child Safe Risk Register
<b>Relevant legislation</b>	<i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)</i> <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)</i> <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)</i> <i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)</i> <i>Crimes Act 1958 (amended 2014) (Vic)</i> <i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)</i> <i>Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)</i> <i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)</i> <i>Working With Children Act 2005 (Vic)</i> <i>Working with Children Regulations 2006 (Vic)</i> <i>Ministerial Order No. 870: Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools</i>
<b>Other associated documents External</b>	VRQA Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration

## 10. Issuance and approval

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