

Child Safety Policy (MPF1337)

1. Objectives

1.1. The objectives of this policy are to:

- a) outline the University's commitment to child safety, which includes the physical, cultural, emotional, and psychological safety of children;
- b) outline appropriate standards of behaviour towards children;
- c) prevent and manage child abuse risks and guide responses to incidents of harm;
- d) empower children by establishing an environment of trust, inclusion and cultural safety that enables them to ask questions and speak up if they have concerns, feel unsafe or have experienced harm; and
- e) outline the process for responding to child abuse concerns and reports.

2. Scope

2.1. This policy applies to:

- a) all members of the University community;
- b) the University's controlled entities; and
- c) individuals or organisations (and their officers and employees) who are contractually obliged to comply with this policy.

2.2. All other individuals engaged in activities reasonably connected with the University and its controlled entities are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this policy.

2.3. Any person, whether they are a member of the University community or not, can report a child safety concern that is related to the University.

2.4. A concern can be raised about a current incident or one that has occurred at any time in the past.

2.5. Controlled entities must adopt and implement this policy, with appropriate amendments, or a policy which is equivalent to this policy in all material respects.

2.6. For a controlled entity that adopts this policy, references to the University, are deemed to be references to the controlled entity, or to both the controlled entity and the University, as the context requires.

3. Authority

3.1. This policy is made under the [University of Melbourne Act 2009 \(Vic\)](#) and the [Vice-Chancellor Regulation](#) and supports compliance with the:

- a) *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic);
- b) *Child Employment Act 2003* (Vic);
- c) *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic);
- d) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Child Protection Policy;
- e) *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cth);
- f) National Principles for a Child Safe Organisations;
- g) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- h) Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities;
- i) Victorian Child Safe Standards; and
- j) *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic)

4. Policy

4.1. The University is an inclusive and welcoming environment that supports the safety, participation, empowerment and wellbeing of all children. In particular, the University will provide a safe environment and:

- a) promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- b) promote the safety and inclusion of same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse children in accordance with the Gender Affirmation Policy ([MPF1364](#)); and
- c) promote the safety of children with a disability to ensure that they can participate equitably.

4.2. The University does not tolerate child abuse in any form, and will:

- a) take a proactive approach to the prevention of child abuse by identifying, removing and/or reducing risks early;
- b) take a proactive approach to identifying and responding to instances of racism and any form of discrimination, harassment and bullying against children;
- c) take action to eliminate and prevent sexual misconduct in accordance with the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy ([MPF1359](#));
- d) take all reasonable steps to support a child making a disclosure or the child to whom a concern pertains;

e) treat all children making a disclosure or to whom a concern pertains with dignity and respect; and

f) treat all child abuse allegations seriously in accordance with applicable legislative obligations.

4.3. The University is committed to promoting best practices in relation to child safety and will periodically review the effectiveness of the child safety policy and procedural principles and revise them as needed.

4.4. The University is committed to ensuring that its employees have access to appropriate professional learning and training opportunities to develop and maintain an understanding of child safety and prevention of harm.

5. Procedural Principles

Child Safe Champion

5.1. The following procedural principles outline appropriate standards of behaviour towards children. The Child Safe Champion is responsible for implementing the standards in Section 5.3 throughout the University.

5.2. The Provost is the University's Child Safe Champion.

General

5.3. All members of the University Community and the University's controlled entities are responsible for promoting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

a) treating children with respect and developing strategies to embed a culture of child safety;

b) complying with all relevant laws, regulations, policies including but not limited to the Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy ([MPF1328](#)), Student Conduct Policy ([MPF1324](#)) and Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy ([MPF1359](#)), processes and guidelines;

c) The University will ensure that children, including those from linguistically diverse backgrounds, have access to child safety information and support in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.

d) obtaining appropriate consent in writing, and retaining appropriate records of the consent, from parents/legal guardians for their children to participate in all University activities;

e) informing the University, via the Safer Community Program, of any child safety or wellbeing concerns, instances of suspected child abuse or neglect in accordance with section 5.7;

f) complying with any child safety training, registration or accreditation requirements which may be relevant to their duties or activities;

g) encouraging and providing the mechanism for children to raise concerns and issues and to express their views and participate in decisions affecting them; and

h) engage with families and communities in the design and operations of our activities where practicable and reasonable to do so.

Child abuse

5.4. Child abuse is not tolerated by the University. All individuals covered by this policy must avoid actions or behaviours deemed to be child abuse and have a positive duty to avoid:

a) using language or behaviour towards children or in the presence of children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, grooming, discriminatory, disrespectful, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;

b) exploiting or harassing children in any way;

c) engaging in unauthorised personal contact with children, including through social networking sites;

d) developing special relationships that could be seen as favouritism or grooming behaviours; or

e) physical and emotional harm being caused to children by other children.

5.5. All members of the University community and the University's controlled entities must immediately inform the University of any concerns or allegations of child abuse or non-compliance with this policy in accordance with University processes established under section 5.7.

5.6. A failure to comply with sections 5.4 or 5.5 may constitute a criminal offence and result in serious penalties.

Responding to and reporting child abuse

5.7. The University's Child Safety Officer is responsible for establishing and implementing processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse in accordance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme, mandatory reporting requirements (where applicable) and other applicable reporting requirements around child safety.

5.8. In the first instance, all concerns must be immediately reported to the Safer Community Program (or University Security if after hours) who, in consultation with the Child Safety Officer, and where applicable will contact relevant child safety and law enforcement agencies.

5.9. The University is committed to implementing processes and practices for raising child safety concerns that are child friendly and easily accessible to children, their families, and the University community.

5.10. Members of the University community covered by this policy (as outlined at section 2 - Scope) may be subject to mandatory reporting obligations while carrying out University business. This includes, but is not limited to:

a) registered medical practitioners, nurses, midwives, registered teachers (including kindergarten teachers), school principals, out of home care workers, early childhood workers, registered psychologists and youth justice workers.

b) As such, these individuals must be aware of their mandatory reporting obligations whilst carrying out University business and must report their concern to the University's Safer Community Program in the first instance.

5.11. University staff must create and keep accurate records relevant to child safety and wellbeing, including recording incidents, responses and decisions affecting children. Records must be created and maintained in accordance with the Records Management Policy ([MPF1106](#)).

5.12. The Safer Community Program, in consultation with the Child Safety Officer, may seek advice from appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies in relation to child safety matters involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Working with Children Checks and Suitable staff and volunteers

5.13. University staff, volunteers, students, contractors and other individuals who are engaged to perform work with children directly, indirectly or incidentally must have a working with children check or equivalent background checks.

5.14. The University will ensure position descriptions and Job advertisements clearly demonstrate the University's commitment to child safety and awareness of social and legal responsibilities.

Training and supervision

5.15. University staff and volunteers must receive an appropriate induction and must be made aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.

5.16. University staff and volunteers must complete the required child and cultural safety training where directed to do so.

5.17. The supervision and management of University staff and volunteers is focused on child safety and wellbeing where relevant.

Research

5.18. All members of the University community or of the University's controlled entities who conduct research with, or relating to, children, must ensure that:

a) the research ethics principles outlined in the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) of merit, integrity, justice and beneficence and respect are applied to the research;

b) appropriate approvals are obtained for the activity prior to the commencement of research, including appropriate ethical approvals, and that the conditions of any approvals are adhered to during the course of the research;

c) all members of the University community involved in the research are screened to ensure that they are fit and proper persons, at a minimum in accordance with regulatory requirements, including working with children checks, prior to the personnel commencing work on the project.

d) any ethical approvals for human research obtained outside the University of Melbourne are formally registered with the University through the relevant human research ethics process.

Responding to and reporting child abuse

5.14. The University's Child Safety Officer is responsible for establishing and implementing processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

5.15. The University's Child Safety Officer is the Director, Student Services.

Privacy, technology and social media

5.19. All members of the University community and the University's controlled entities must protect the privacy of children and their families in accordance with the Privacy Policy ([MPF1104](#)) and the Provision and Acceptable Use of IT Policy ([MPF1314](#)).

5.20. All members of the University community and the University's controlled entities must ensure that technology and social media are used appropriately in connection with children, including by:

a) obtaining all necessary approvals from parents, guardians, or otherwise in accordance with relevant processes and guidelines including appropriate storage and record keeping;

b) ensuring that any use of technology and social media by the University in undertaking its activities is not detrimental to the child or harmful to the child's safety; and

c) presenting children in a dignified and respectful manner.

5.21. Any members of the University community and the University's controlled entities who photographs, records the voice and/or image of children, or uses photographs and/or recordings of children's image or voice, for study or work-related purposes must:

a) provide an appropriate notice and obtain informed consent directly from the child, where they have capacity to provide it, or from a parent or guardian of the child.

b) ensure that the content and purpose of the photographs, film and recorded or video material are appropriate in accordance with section 5.20 and align with any notice or consent relied upon in collecting information; and

c) act in accordance with all relevant processes, guidelines and operating rules, including (where applicable) the University's social media guidelines, and the

Information Security Policy ([MPF1270](#)), and Provision and Acceptable Use of IT Policy ([MPF1314](#)).

International students

5.22. The University is responsible for ensuring that appropriate accommodation, support and general welfare arrangements are made to protect the personal safety and wellbeing of any child who is:

- a) currently enrolled in a University course, subject or program as an international student; and
- b) not being cared for in Australia by a parent or a suitable nominated relative.

Child employment

5.23. Any member of the University community and the University's controlled entities who employs a child under the age of 15, paid or unpaid, must apply for a valid permit under the *Child Employment Act 2003* (Vic) and must ensure:

- a) the work does not adversely affect a child's education, health, safety, wellbeing or development;
- b) there is adequate supervision for the duration of the employment;
- c) if the child is employed in entertainment, the child is not subjected or exposed to any behaviour, acts or circumstances:
 - i. That unnecessarily socially isolates the child; or
 - ii. That is likely to intimidate, threaten, frighten or humiliate the child; or
 - iii. Otherwise depicts or deals with adult themes, including nudity, sex, cruelty, violence or drug misuse.
- d) compliance with the Mandatory code of practice for the Employment of Children in Entertainment (or any other applicable Code, laws or regulations), where applicable.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

<i>Role/Decision/Action</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Conditions and limitations</i>
University's Child Safety Champion Oversee the effectiveness of the implementation of this Policy at the University.	Provost	...

<p>Champion a child safe culture at all levels of the organisation through ensuring all University employees, volunteers and contractors (where relevant) receive appropriate induction and training on child safety on a mandatory and ongoing basis.</p> <p>Notify the Commissioner for Children and Young People of any reportable allegations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme</p>		
<p>Ensure appropriate resources are allocated within academic divisions to implement processes, systems and tools for ensuring child safety in relation to local faculty activities.</p>	<p>Deans of academic divisions</p>	
<p>Establish and continually review the processes, tools and systems for mitigating risk of harm to children connected to all non-research university activities.</p>	<p>Academic Registrar</p>	<p>...</p>
<p>University's Child Safety Officer</p> <p>Establish internal processes for reporting and responding to suspected child abuse.</p>	<p>Director, Student Services</p>	
<p>Establish and continually review the processes, tools and systems for mitigating risk of harm to children connected to research university activities.</p>	<p>Director of Research Ethics and Integrity</p>	

Establish and continually review the processes, tools and systems for mitigating risk of harm to children connected to University Museums and Collections.	Director, University Museums and Collections	
Implement and continually review the University's Working with Children Check Program and other related employee screening processes aimed at keeping children safe. Embed appropriate wording to demonstrate the University's commitment to Child Safety into all templates used for recruiting new staff	Director, HR Services	
Ensuring the security of both physical and IT infrastructure across all UoM campuses to mitigate risk of harm to children in physical and online University environments.	Executive Director, Business Services and Chief Technology Officer	

7. Definitions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child means a person under the age of 18 years who:

- is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent;
- identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and
- is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by the community in which they live or have lived.

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

Child abuse means any act committed against a child involving:

- physical violence (including threats of physical violence)
- sexual abuse
- serious emotional or psychological abuse; or
- serious neglect.

Child employment means:

- a child performs work under a contract of service or a contract for services (whether written or unwritten); or
- a child performs work, other than under a contract and whether or not the child receives payment or other reward for performing that work; and

- the work the child performs is for the benefit (financial or non-financial) of the University or its controlled entities; and
- the child is subject to directions about how the work is performed.

Child safety, in the context of this policy, means measures to protect children from child abuse, neglect or any form of cultural, emotional, psychological or physical harm.

Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds means a child who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.

Concern may include an allegation, complaint or concern regarding the psychological, physical, emotional or cultural wellbeing and safety of a child.

Controlled entities means all entities that are subject to the control of the University in terms of section 50AA of the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth).

Cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children means the positive recognition and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination, and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.

Cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds means an environment which is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are and what they need.

Report means a report made by the University's Child Safety Officer to the relevant Government Agency or authority following the receipt and consideration of a complaint or concern.

University community has the meaning given to it in the Vice-Chancellor Regulation, Part 6, and includes:

a) members of University bodies, and honorary appointees, both as defined in the University of Melbourne Statute, Part 5; and

b) all other individuals and organisations engaged in activities reasonably connected with the University and University activities (as defined in the Vice-Chancellor Regulation, Part 1), including contractors, consultants, University Council members, volunteers, visitors, student clubs, student unions, and affiliated colleges.

POLICY APPROVER

Provost

POLICY STEWARD

Academic Registrar

REVIEW

This policy is to be reviewed by 22 August 2025.

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections modified
1	Provost	30 January 2017	1 January 2017	New policy to comply with Victorian Child Safe Standards requirements.
2	Director, Students and Equity	7 March 2017	7 March 2017	Editorial amendment to sections 3 and 5.7 to include the <i>Working with Children Act 2005</i> (Vic) and new DFAT Child Protection Standards.
3	Director, Students and Learning	16 October 2019	28 October 2019	Editorial amendments to fix broken link at 5.10 (c) and update titles.
4	Provost	26 July 2022	22 August 2022	Major review cycle completed, policy aligned with recent Victorian Child Safe Standards coming into effect.
5	Policy Officer	N/A	N/A	Amended discrepancy in policy steward in metadata.