

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Alliance Francaise Melbourne (ABN 91 005 140 385) ("Organisation")

Effective date: 18th August 2023

(1) PUPOSE OF THIS POLICY

At Alliance Francaise Melbourne (we, our, us), we are committed to providing an environment which is safe for children and youths, and to ensuring that this is reflected in all aspects of our business operations.

This Child Safety Policy (Policy) sets out the general principles that guide the management of child and youth safety at Alliance Francaise Melbourne.

We have developed this Policy to help our Workers understand and manage child and youth safety, and to set a framework to ensure that we provide a safe environment for children and young people, and that we meet all our objectives and comply with all of our legal and regulatory obligations in relation to these matters.

(2) NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS

(a) We support the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* (National Principles) and will endeavour to embrace them at our Organisation.

(b) The National Principles require that:

- 1. Child safety and wellbeing 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 minimising 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.

(3) OUR OTHER POLICIES

In addition to this Child Safety Policy, you are required to be familiar with, and to comply with, all other workplace policies which may apply from time to time, including:

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Performance and Misconduct Policy
- Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy

(4) APPLICATION OF POLICY

(a) This Policy applies to any people who perform work for Alliance Française Melbourne, including all our directors, managers, board members, employees, contractors, subcontractors, employees of our contractors and subcontractors, apprentices, trainees, volunteers, interns, work experience students, labour hire employees and outworkers and any other people who perform work for or on behalf of our Organisation (Workers).

(b) We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all Workers and visitors to our Organisation. However, this Policy specifically addresses our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of youths and children at our Organisation. Throughout this Policy, we use the terms "youth", "young person", "child" and "children" to refer generally to people under 18 years of age.

(c) This Policy applies to all activities in our Organisation which involve children, or which result in or relate to contact with children.

(d) This Policy is intended to help manage the safety and wellbeing of any children that come into contact with our Organisation, whether they are receiving services from us, are the children of someone who is receiving services from us, are the children of our Workers, or come into contact with us in any other way.

(5) OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

(a) Safeguarding children from harm and abuse is an essential responsibility for our Organisation. We are committed to ensuring that any child who comes into contact with our Organisation or services is properly safeguarded. Every person under this policy must ensure that they play an active role in ensuring that children are properly safeguarded.

(b) We believe that no child or young person should experience abuse or harm and we are committed to the protection of children and young people. This policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to those who represent us as volunteers or staff, to guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.

(c) It is our intention that a child safe culture should be embedded in all levels of our Organisation, including but not limited to our leadership and governance as well as amongst all of our other Workers.

(d) When dealing with concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing, we are guided by a consideration of what is in the best interests of the child.

(e) We strive to:

- ensure that our Workers have the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe.
- ensure that any of our Workers who work with children have the necessary skills, attributes, experience, and qualifications to uphold this Policy and provide the support and supervision that children require.
- ensure that any children who come into contact with our Organisation and who have concerns about their safety or need assistance know where to go and who to talk to.
- ensure that any children who come into contact with our Organisation and who have concerns about their safety feel comfortable seeking assistance
- promote a workplace which values diversity and inclusion
- where appropriate, involve children and their families in decisions that affect them
- promote a culture of child safety at all levels in our Organisation
- take any allegations or complaints in relation to child safety seriously, and respond promptly and appropriately
- report any allegations or concerns to relevant authorities whenever appropriate or necessary

(6) GENERAL WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

(a) Our Workers must uphold our Organisation's values in accordance with this Policy. Our Workers must demonstrate behaviour which is consistent with this Policy and with our Organisation's values. Our Workers must be proactive about upholding and promoting our values and this Policy, including by doing the following:

- remaining alert and aware of possible safeguarding risks to children
- guarding children against harmful environments with appropriate actions (for example, adequate supervision or ensuring safe environments)
- taking positive steps to maintain the safety and wellbeing of children engaging with our Organisation
- reporting concerns expeditiously and appropriately, in line with child protection procedures
- understanding the duty to report specific concerns (and understanding how these interplays with confidentiality)
- challenging any inappropriate or harmful behaviour of any other adult and reporting this accordingly
- acting appropriately in the presence of children
- not taking any inappropriate risks
- not smoking, drinking, or taking any form of illicit substances in the presence of children
- ensuring that any children who come into contact with our Organisation or access our services understand their rights and responsibilities
- communicating with children clearly and respectfully and using language which they can understand, and which is appropriate for their age and level of development
- ensuring that any children who come into contact with our Organisation or access our services are supported and get any necessary assistance with exercising their rights and responsibilities

(b) Our Workers are responsible for ensuring that they personally comply with all applicable laws in the state or territory where they are based including any applicable Commonwealth laws.

(c) Our workers must read and apply this policy.

(7) RESPONSIBLE PERSON

Any question, report or concern in relation to the safeguarding of children must be shared with the Director of Studies and/or the Child safety officer.

(8) THE RISKS TO CHILDREN

(a) Children can be vulnerable to different forms of abuse and harm. It is important to recognise that abuse and harm of children can cover a wide range of circumstances and behaviours. For example, children can be at risk of:

- physical or emotional abuse
- sexual abuse
- grooming and exploitation
- exposure to or infliction of domestic abuse
- bullying or cyber bullying
- exposure to other inappropriate content or behaviour, such as violence or criminal behaviour
- physical harm when engaging with activities without adequate supervision

(b) The causal factors of any such harm and/or abuse can also be wide-ranging. For example, children can be placed at risk by family members or by members of the community.

(9) TAKING CHILD PARTICIPATION SERIOUSLY

We strive to ensure that children who come into contact with our Organisation or our services are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them, and are taken seriously.

(10) RESPECTING EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

We strive to create an environment where children and young people's diverse needs and circumstances are recognised and all children feel safe, welcome, and included.

(11) TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

We use a variety of measures to ensure that staff and volunteers are provided with relevant knowledge, skills, and awareness on an ongoing basis to keep children safe.

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone in The Alliance understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The Alliance organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

The Alliance is committed to train its staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand the AFM's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to the organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further).

A training about children safety will be provided annually.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

(12) RECRUITMENT

We strive to ensure that Workers at our Organisation who are working with children and young people are suitable to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

The Alliance takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children.

The Alliance organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers, The Alliance have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the Working with Children Check website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for further information.

The Alliance carries out reference checks to ensure that The Alliance is recruiting the right people. The Alliance retains its own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected its decision-making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

(13) CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

All personal information we may process relating to children, shall be processed, and stored in accordance with our data protection privacy policy.

(14) RESPONDING TO A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN

(a) We aim to provide accessible and responsive complaints management processes that are focused on the needs of children and young people.

(b) Where a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, any adult present should call 000. Thereafter, the Director of Studies and/or the Child Safety Officer must be contacted as soon as is reasonably practicable.

(c) Where there is a safeguarding concern but no immediate risk of serious harm, the adult who has heard or witnessed this concern must consult with the Director of Studies and/or the Child Safety Officer as soon as practicable and by no later than the end of that same day.

(d) Where any child makes a disclosure relating to harm or abuse to an adult, it is important for that adult to:

- listen calmly and carefully, showing that their views are taken seriously
- provide an appropriate and honest level of reassurance
- avoid interrogating children and asking probing, intrusive and/or leading questions
- avoid making false promises regarding secrets and confidentiality with the child (because any concern of abuse/harm must be shared with a Responsible Person and any subsequent safeguarding referral)
- make a confidential *written* record of the discussion either during the discussion or immediately afterwards. The record should include the key details of the disclosure together with any relevant times, dates, places, and people concerned. Audio and video recordings of children making disclosures should be avoided.
- refer all relevant information to an available Responsible Person as soon as practicable afterwards, and by no later than the end of the day.

(e) Upon receipt of any safeguarding concern, the Director of Studies and/or the Child Safety Officer shall consult with any other relevant persons and will make any appropriate referrals to the relevant authorities.

(15) REPORTING CONCERNS ABOUT OTHER ADULTS

(a) Where any person has a concern regarding the conduct of an adult connected to the Organisation, which poses or may pose a safeguarding risk to children such as:

- harming a child either physically or emotionally
- exposing a child to behaviour which may cause physical or emotional harm
- engaging in criminal activity concerning a child

this must be raised in the first instance with the Director of Studies and/or the Child Safety Officer (or where this is not appropriate, a different senior member of the Organisation) so that the next appropriate steps may be agreed and actioned. We recognise that there could be circumstances where a person may need to report a matter that has taken place in a setting outside of the person's engagement with the Organisation.

(b) Usually, any appropriate steps following a safeguarding referral in respect of an individual connected to the Organisation will include either:

- further initial enquiries
- escalation to the applicable authority for assessment and/or the police for investigation
- instigation of any appropriate disciplinary, formal investigation processes and suspension of any person concerned within the Organisation
- a referral to any relevant regulatory bodies

(c) Any person within the Organisation who has allegations made against them shall be informed properly in a formal meeting of the particulars of the allegations and the relevant next steps which shall be taken. Such a meeting should ordinarily be held by the Director of Studies. On certain occasions, such a meeting may not be convened until this has been approved by any authorities involved (such as the police or the relevant local authority).

(d) Any person from within the Organisation who has allegations made against them shall be treated fairly. All enquires, investigations and decisions taken shall be just and fair, with the safety of any child concerned at the heart of the process.

(e) Any person from within the Organisation who makes an allegation against another person from within the Organisation shall be listened to, taken seriously, and shall be treated fairly and justly throughout the process of enquiries, investigations and decision making.

(16) SAFE PHYSICAL AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS

We believe in promoting child safety and wellbeing in physical and online environments to reduce the risk of harm. We use a variety of measures to ensure that our physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

(17) LEGISLATIVE RESPONSABILITIES

The Alliance organisation takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

Failure to disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.¹

Failure to protect: People of authority at The Alliance will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

(18) SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AT THE ORGANISATION

Responsibilities and Planning

(a) Although the Director of Studies and/or the Child Safety Officer will hold ultimate responsibility for overseeing the safety of children present at the Organisation, all individuals under this policy must also play an active role in always ensuring the safety of children.

(b) Where a certain type of events, activity or trip is taking place, we may issue an additional code of conduct, policy, or some specific other requirements which is specific to that occasion. Any such additional documentation will be made available to all those concerned (staff members, parents, guardians etc.) in advance. They should be read carefully and adhered to.

(c) Appropriate background checking shall be undertaken wherever we are legally required to do so in respect of adults who are engaged by us.

First Aid

(a) If an ambulance is required, call 000. Please notify a manager or supervisor if an ambulance has been called.

(b) Any accident or injury concerning a child should be brought to the attention of the nearest first aider and should thereafter be formally reported to an available Responsible Person.

(a) Wherever a child attends our premises alongside their parent or guardian, parents and guardians should ensure that children are properly supervised.

(19) MANAGING BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN GENERALLY

(a) Whenever any adult engaged by us is faced with challenging or inappropriate behaviour from a child or with conflict between children, they must:

- treat each child fairly and equally

- approach the situation in a calm and neutral manner
- only ever use physical restraint/intervention in order to protect the immediate safety of a person, for example to prevent an injury or harm either to the child or others
- wherever it is justified to physically restrain a child or to physically intervene, the amount of force used should be kept to the absolute minimum taking into account the risk posed
- make a written record of the incident and ensure this is reported appropriately to an available Responsible Person

(20) PHOTOGRAPHY

Our Photographs

On some occasions, we may take photographs featuring children. To avoid any risk, we will:

- always ask for a written permission from a child and their parent/guardian before taking and sharing any image of them.
- always ensure that a child and their parent/guardian are properly informed how an image will be used and shared.
- Always ensure that a child's identity is protected as far as is possible within any published material.

Members of the Public

(a) We do also recognise that members of the public may take photographs when they are attending our premises, events, or activities.

(b) We ask that any parents, guardians, and other members of the public take the following into consideration when taking photos at our premises, events or activities:

- images of other children should not be shared on social media without the permission of any children who feature in the images (where ascertainable), together with the permission of the children's parent/guardian
- images which are shared on social media should be shared cautiously, with the appropriate privacy and security settings in place.

(21) REVIEWING OUR CHILD SAFE POLICIES AND PRACTICES

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur.

(22) MAKING OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AVAILABLE

- (a) Our child safe policies and procedures (including this Policy) are available to view at any time on our website <www.afmelbourne.com.au>
- (b) We strive to ensure that our child safe policies and procedures are understood by all Workers.
- (c) We strive to ensure that children who engage with our Organisation, as well as their families and relevant community members, are aware of and have confidence in our child safety policies and procedures.
- (d) Please contact us for assistance with understanding or implementing any of the matters addressed in this Policy.

(23) ADMINISTRATION OF THIS POLICY

- (a) This Policy was approved by: The General Manager and the Director of Studies
- (b) This Policy came into effect on: 18th August 2023
- (c) This Policy is due to be reviewed on: 18th August 2024
- (d) The following person are responsible for leading the review process for this Policy:
The Director of Studies and the Operations Manager

(24) FURTHER INFORMATION

We thank you for the time you have taken to review and consider this Policy. If you have further questions or want to discuss any matters in connection with this Policy, please speak to a manager or supervisor.

(25) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

By signing below, you acknowledge having read and understood this Policy, and you agree to comply with this Policy:

.....
Signature



Alliance Française

Melbourne

.....
Name

.....
Date