

# Child Safe Policy & Audit Procedure

## Document Control

Version Number:	V2
Date Adopted:	April 2024
Review Date:	With OH&S review annually

*This policy supersedes any prior policy on this subject matter.*

## Purpose & Scope

The Victorian Government updated the Child Safe Standards as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

This document describes Portarlington Neighbourhood House (PNH) alignment with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, some of which are not applicable to PNH. Where practical, PNH will extend its current policies and practices to include the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safe Standards apply to PNH staff, facilitators and event managers that interact with children under 18 years of age. At PNH, persons aged 15 to 18 years are considered full members. Children under 15 years are registered as associate members and must have a parent (or legal guardian) registered as a full member. The PNH Constitution describes the rights of members, including associate members.

This child safe policy and audit procedure will be part of the OH&S Framework for governance and administration.

Note: if changing this Child Safe Policy, change also as required in the Facilitator Handbook and OH&S Policy.

## Policy

1. PNH is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its programs and to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment for all children and young people who engage with PNH.
2. Staff, volunteers, facilitators and adult members (other than a child's parents or guardians) should avoid being alone with persons under 18 years of age at PNH activities, events and premises (this serves as a protection not only to children, but to our staff, volunteers and members).
3. Activity Facilitators and event managers must ensure that:
  - a. children are safe during an activity or event, including online safety
  - b. children know 'how' to be safe within the activity or event
  - c. the activity or event is inclusive and welcoming of children from diverse backgrounds, including indigenous children, children from different cultural, religious or social backgrounds, children with a disability and LGBTIQ+ children.

4. All incidents or near incidents involving children must be reported to the office or Program Manager, as well as any potential hazard or potential safety issue and any perceived inappropriate behaviours or Code of Conduct non-compliance. The PNH Code of Conduct applies to all members, including children.
5. Any inappropriate or illegal behaviours towards children will not be tolerated. PNH will report to the relevant authorities as required by legislation, including any perceived inappropriate behaviour towards children. Note that in the event of any perceived inappropriate behaviours towards children, PNH will report it and let the authorities investigate. PNH will not investigate these matters.
6. If deemed necessary and practical due to the participation of children in PNH activities, PNH will:
  - a. supply an information sheet for children and their parents with a summary of our Code of Conduct Policy and Child Safe Policy;
  - b. supply a simplified version of the complaints procedures (grievance procedure) that is accessible to children (and their parents);
  - c. ensure children and their families are included in program evaluation and continuous improvement processes (part of the Performance Evaluation Framework).
7. Activity Facilitators who work with children must have a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) and be screened for their suitability to work with children prior to their engagement. Any other staff or volunteers who will have access to children's personal information such as office personnel and committee members will also be required to have a WWCC.
8. All PNH personnel, either as paid personnel or volunteers, required by PNH Policy to obtain a WWCC must ensure that PNH is listed in their WWCC application and in their online WWCC account as their employer or volunteer organisation. A copy of each person's WWCC, including its expiry date, must be provided to the Program Manager. The Program Manager must maintain a register.
9. All PNH operational personnel required to have a WWCC must be trained by the Program Manager, or delegate, in the PNH Child Safe Policy, and a register of training maintained by the Program Manager.

## Audit procedure

The Child Safe Checklist is designed to incorporate PNH's requirements under the Victorian Child Safe Standards (as in Appendix 1).

In March or April each year, this audit checklist will be reviewed for alignment to the Victorian Child Safe Standards, and then a process to carry out the audit decided at CoM meeting, as part of the OH&S Audit.

Any items not meeting the requirements of this checklist will be placed on the **OH&S Action Plan** until completed. The OH&S Action Plan is reported to the CoM regularly and a summary reported to members.



## Relevant documents

- The Victorian Government Child Safe Standards, July 2022.
- Discrimination legislation and other government regulations
- PNH Code of Conduct
- PNH OH&S Policy & Annual OHS Audit
- PNH Constitution
- PNH Activity Facilitator Handbook
- PNH Event Management Handbook
- PNH Office procedures

# Child Safe Checklist

This Check list is to determine compliance to the PNH Child Safe Policy and to the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Some of this audit will be 'desk top'. Some parts will require some research (feedback from parents and facilitators, etc.) to be determined by the auditor.

	<b>PNH Policy and Practices re child safety</b>	<b>AUDIT NOTES - Audit Date</b>	✓
1.	Staff, volunteers, facilitators and adult members (other than child's parents or guardians) avoid being alone with persons under 18 years of age		
2.	The Code of Conduct (public policy) includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) mention of safety</li> <li>b) inclusion as a policy for all ages</li> <li>c) racism will not be tolerated</li> <li>d) discipline actions will be taken for non-compliance to the policy</li> </ul>		
3.	Child safety is included in personnel management, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) regular training for staff, office assistants (volunteers), activity &amp; event facilitators</li> <li>b) on-going supervision and management practices</li> <li>c) performance reviews</li> <li>d) orientation practices for staff and volunteers</li> <li>e) office handbooks (manuals) - including policy and procedures for privacy, OH&amp;S, and complaints (note practices for privacy of children's personal information)</li> <li>f) Facilitator Handbook</li> </ul>		
4.	Cultural support practices for child safety include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) informing young members of their rights, and the desired behaviours (friendly supportive, respectful) in an age appropriate manner</li> <li>b) practices to encourage desired behaviours as per the Code of Conduct (age appropriate)</li> <li>c) reference to culture and safety, including child safety, occasionally in member emails</li> <li>d) providing an inclusive and welcoming environment in activities for children from diverse backgrounds</li> </ul>		

	<b>PNH Policy and Practices re child safety</b>	<b>AUDIT NOTES - Audit Date</b>	✓
5.	PNH performance feedback practices include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) opportunity for young members to feedback their experiences in an age appropriate manner</li> <li>b) opportunity for parents of associate/child members to feedback</li> </ul>		
6.	Complaints process (Grievance) will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) age appropriate process - understood by families, children, volunteers and staff</li> <li>b) proper action on complaints including reporting to relevant authorities when required by legislation</li> </ul>		
7.	PNH Child Safe Framework will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) this checklist for child safe practices (at least annual audit and review)</li> <li>b) safety mechanisms for children practicing online activities at PNH (e.g. gaming, eSports)</li> <li>c) office personnel have Working with Children Check and Police Check (and anyone who might have access to children's personal information)</li> <li>d) Facilitators who work with children have a Working with Children check (for one off events, someone present representing PNH must have a Working with Children check e.g. the Program Manager)</li> <li>e) Children and their parents are provided a summary of our Child Safe Policy including a summary of the Code of Conduct Policy, complaints (grievance) process and safety (can be a PNH general brochure)</li> <li>f) Children (e.g. teenagers) can easily access a child appropriate version of the complaints process</li> <li>g) All incidents, near or perceived incidents are reported and managed according to our rules</li> <li>h) Appropriate reporting to committee and to members re OH&amp;S reviews, including child safety</li> <li>i) Children at PNH feel safe, and their parents are confident of their safety</li> </ul>		
8.	PNH Risk Management Framework will include child safety		
9.	Decision making practices (including input to PNH policy) include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) opportunity for parents of child members to be involved in decision-making</li> <li>b) opportunity for children members to be involved in decision making</li> </ul>		

## Appendix 1: Child Safe Standards (Victorian Government)

Child Safe Standard (as of 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2022)	Victorian Government Policy
<p><b>Child Safe Standard 1 – Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.</b></p>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 1, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:</p> <p>1.1 A child’s ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported.</p> <p>1.2 Strategies are embedded within the organisation which equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people.</p> <p>1.3 Measures are adopted by the organisation to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences.</p> <p>1.4 The organisation actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within it by Aboriginal children, young people and their families.</p> <p>1.5 All of the organisation’s policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.</p>
<p><b>Child Safe Standard 2 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture</b></p>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 2, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure: 2.1 The organisation makes a public commitment to child safety.</p> <p>2.2 A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation from the top down and bottom up.</p> <p>2.3 Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the child safety and wellbeing policy at all levels.</p> <p>2.4 A Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.</p> <p>2.5 Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.</p> <p>2.6 Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.</p>
<p><b>Child Safe Standard 3 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously</b></p>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 3, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure: 3.1 Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation.</p> <p>3.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.</p> <p>3.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, children and young people are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age appropriate way.</p> <p>3.4 Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.</p> <p>3.5 Organisations have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.</p> <p>3.6 Organisations provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.</p>

<b>Child Safe Standard (as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022)</b>	Victorian Government Policy
<b>Child Safe Standard 4 – Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing</b>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 4, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:</p> <p>4.1 Families participate in decisions affecting their child.</p> <p>4.2 The organisation engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible.</p> <p>4.3 Families and communities have a say in the development and review of the organisation’s policies and practices.</p> <p>4.4 Families, carers and the community are informed about the organisation’s operations and governance.</p>
<b>Child Safe Standard 5 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice</b>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 5, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:</p> <p>5.1 The organisation, including staff and volunteers, understands children and young people’s diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.</p> <p>5.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.</p> <p>5.3 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.</p> <p>5.4 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and provides/promotes a culturally safe environment for them.</p>
<b>Child Safe Standard 6 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice</b>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 6, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:</p> <p>6.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasise child safety and wellbeing.</p> <p>6.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent background checks.</p> <p>6.3 All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.</p> <p>6.4 Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.</p>
<b>Child Safe Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused</b>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 7, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:</p> <p>7.1 The organisation has an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.</p> <p>7.2 Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.</p> <p>7.3 Complaints are taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly.</p> <p>7.4 The organisation has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.</p> <p>7.5 Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.</p>

<b>Child Safe Standard (as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022)</b>	<b>Victorian Government Policy</b>
<b>Child Safe Standard 8 – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training</b>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 8, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure: 8.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement the organisation’s child safety and wellbeing policy.</p> <p>8.2 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people.</p> <p>8.3 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.</p> <p>8.4 Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people</p>
<b>Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed</b>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 9, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:</p> <p>9.1 Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child’s right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.</p> <p>9.2 The online environment is used in accordance with the organisation’s Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing policy and practices.</p> <p>9.3 Risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities, and the physical environment.</p> <p>9.4 Organisations that contract facilities and services from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people.</p>
<b>Child Safe Standard 10 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved</b>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 10, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:</p> <p>10.1 The organisation regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child safe practices.</p> <p>10.2 Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.</p> <p>10.3 The organisation reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.</p>
<b>Child Safe Standard 11 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people</b>	<p>In complying with Child Safe Standard 11, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure: 11.1 Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.</p> <p>11.2 Policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.</p> <p>11.3 Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures.</p> <p>11.4 Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures</p> <p>11.5 Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures</p>