



Australian Government
Department of Education

Child Safe Policy

FEBRUARY 2026





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The document must be attributed as the (Child Safe Policy).

Contents

- Child Safe Policy1
- 1. Purpose..... 4
- 2. Our commitment to child safety 4
- 3. Scope 4
- 4. Relevant legislation and standards 5
- 5. Child safe professional behaviours..... 5
- 6. Accountability and responsibility 6
- 7. Working safely with children and vulnerable people 7
- 8. Recruitment..... 7
- 9. Mandatory reporting of child abuse or harm 7
- 10. Responding to reports..... 8
- 11. Funding third parties 8
- 12. Sanctions for non-compliance..... 8
- 13. Employee Assistance Program 8
- Appendix A – Glossary of Terms..... 10
- Document details 12

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Department of Education (the department) promotes and maintains a culture that does not tolerate child abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- 1.2 This policy sets clear expectations for all persons undertaking work for the department to provide a safe environment for children and outlines our approach to managing risks to children arising through in departmental activities.
- 1.3 This policy aligns with the [Commonwealth Child Safe Framework](#) (the Framework) and the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).
- 1.4 This policy is supported by the [Child Safe Escalation Procedures](#), to be managed at the Branch level, ensuring reports are assessed and responded to consistently, promptly and proportionately.
- 1.5 For the purposes of this policy, any reference to reports includes complaints, incidents and other forms of disclosure.

2. Our commitment to child safety

- 2.1 The department prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children who have contact with departmental staff, contractors, consultants, officials and providers involved in delivering programs and services for children.
- 2.2 The key priorities and actions that shape our commitment to child safety include:
 - a. **annual child safety risk assessments** to identify and manage risks associated with activities involving children.
 - b. **ensuring staff are trained and compliant** with child safety obligations, including relevant legislation and reporting requirements.
 - c. implementation of the **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations** to foster a child safe culture and practices.
 - d. **publish an annual statement of compliance**, outlining child safety risks and actions taken to address them.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to **all persons** who undertake work for the department.
- 3.2 Service providers who deliver services to children and are funded by the department (e.g. contracted service providers and subcontractors – third party provider/s) must comply with the terms and conditions in their contracts and agreements pertaining to child safety.
- 3.3 While the Australian Government provides substantial funding for childcare and schools in Australia and plays a leadership role in setting and advocating for national education priorities, it does not have a direct role in their administration or operation. State and territory education authorities are responsible for the safety of children within those settings in their jurisdictions.
- 3.4 This policy must be considered when developing, designing and managing the department's policies and programs to ensure they promote children's rights and include relevant child safety considerations.
- 3.5 For the purposes of this policy, a child safe position involves:

- a. work activities where contact (e.g. physical, electronic, verbal and/or written) between the staff member and a child would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the work and such contact is not occasional (i.e. infrequent or irregular) and incidental (occurring by chance) to the work.
 - b. work that requires a Working with Children Check (WWCC), or jurisdictional equivalent (e.g. a Working with Vulnerable People Check (WWVP)) in the state or territory in which the work is being undertaken. Where such a check is required for work purposes, the cost of obtaining and maintaining the check is met by the department.
- 3.6 For example, a child safe WWCC is required for positions that may include:
- a. duties requiring regular access to confidential records or information about children.
 - b. regularly attending events where there is contact with children as part of the duties or work-related activities.
 - c. engaging with children to produce portfolio-related content for policy, program or promotional purposes.
- 3.7 A position will not be an identified child safe position where it involves only infrequent or irregular engagement with children, such as:
- a. attending a one-off event where there is contact with children in a public forum.
 - b. where staff engage with a child visitor in the workplace.

4. Relevant legislation and standards

- 4.1 Staff must comply with all relevant Commonwealth, state, and territory protection laws, as detailed on the [Australian child protection legislation](#) resource page.
- 4.2 A number of international child protection instruments may also apply and should be considered in relation to any reports.

5. Child safe professional behaviours

- 5.1 All staff are expected to treat children with respect and act in accordance with the [APS Code of Conduct and APS Values](#).
- 5.2 Staff working with children, or who come in contact with children in the workplace must:
 - a. comply with all relevant legislation, including obtaining a WWCC (or equivalent) if required, and mandatory reporting requirements.
 - b. professionally introduce themselves and show appropriate Identification documentation to childcare service providers staff or if required a parent/guardian.
 - c. wherever possible ensure another adult is present when working with or near children.
 - d. obtain informed consent from the child's parent/guardian before photographing or filming a child or using a child's image for department's communications.
 - e. ensure the department's communications present children in a dignified and respectful manner and do not reveal identifying information.
 - f. not use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media to exploit or harass children, or access child exploitation material through any medium.
 - g. only use child safe data or information held by the Commonwealth for business purposes and not to be used to exploit or harass children.

- h. not use language or behave towards children in a manner that is inappropriate, harassing, physically or emotionally abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- i. not contact children outside their work duties if that contact has arisen in the course of their duties.
- j. immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse, and any failure to comply with this policy, to their manager or second line manager.
- k. immediately disclose to the department all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse, including those that occurred before or during association with the department.

6.Accountability and responsibility

- 6.1 The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is the responsibility of all persons undertaking work for the department.
- 6.2 To ensure this the department will:
 - a. review this policy annually.
 - b. conduct annual risk assessments using the [Child Safety Risk Management Guide](#) from the National Office for Child Safety.
 - c. publish an annual statement of compliance with the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework.
 - d. maintain a register of staff with a WWCC qualifications.
 - e. coordinate child safe training for staff and monitor compliance.
 - f. maintain a record of relevant child safe reports.
- 6.3 All staff will:
 - a. ensure child safety is considered when developing risk plans for any functions that are associated with children.
 - b. ensure child safety in the design of programs and policies that impact upon children.
 - c. consider child safety implications when managing grants and procurements if the services are for children or for activities which may involve contact with children.
- 6.4 All staff must:
 - a. complete the [Commonwealth Child Safe Framework training](#).
 - b. report potential risk to child safety including any breaches of this policy.
 - c. where a WWCC (or equivalent) is required, obtain and maintain a valid clearance, comply with all relevant legislative requirements, and immediately report any change in circumstances that may affect the clearance or mandatory reporting obligations.
- 6.5 Every branch is responsible for ensuring that all child safety matters arising in the course of their work are promptly identified, appropriately responded to, documented reported and escalated through the [child safe Escalation Procedures](#).
- 6.6 Decisions about escalation will sit with the relevant Assistant Secretary and are informed by the safety and wellbeing of the child, the wellbeing and safety of staff and the severity, complexity or potential impact of the matter, including legal, reputational or systemic risks.

7. Working safely with children and vulnerable people

- 7.1 The department will review staff positions annually to identify any child safe positions.
- 7.2 Staff employed in an identified child safe position must obtain and maintain a valid WWCC (or equivalent) before appointment and maintain this qualification throughout employment in the role.
- 7.3 Depending on the jurisdiction, staff may be required to pay the cost of the relevant check upfront and may seek reimbursement through Expense8, in accordance with departmental arrangements.
- 7.4 The failure to maintain a WWCC (or equivalent) must be reported immediately to People@education.gov.au.
- 7.5 When recruiting a person under the age of 18, supervising staff may be required to hold a valid WWCC (or equivalent) in accordance with the legislation applicable in the relevant state or territory.

8. Recruitment

- 8.1 Business areas are responsible for identifying the need for a WWCC (or equivalent) at the start of the recruitment process and ensuring it is assessed as an essential qualification for the role that the potential staff member will need to obtain and maintain.
- 8.2 All candidates applying for child safe positions within the department must meet child safety requirements, including obtaining a valid WWCC (or equivalent) prior to commencement, and maintaining it throughout their employment.
- 8.3 The WWCC qualification (or equivalent) will need to be sighted and verified prior to commencement with the department by the Recruitment and Capability Team.

9. Mandatory reporting of child abuse or harm

- 9.1 [Mandatory reporting](#) (within 24 hours) is the legislative requirement for the specified individuals to report known or suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. Mandatory requirements vary across Australian jurisdictions, and further information can be obtained from the relevant statutory child protection authority.
- 9.2 The failure to protect a child at risk of child sexual abuse offences and/or failure to report child sexual abuse by a Commonwealth Officer is an offence under section 273B of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.
- 9.3 Failure to protect and report offences only applies where a child is under a Commonwealth Officer's care in their capacity as a Commonwealth officer.
- 9.4 Reports concerning childcare or school settings must also be referred to the appropriate state or territory authority.

10. Responding to reports

- 10.1 The [child safe escalation procedures](#) outline the process to be followed at the branch-level when assessing, managing, and responding to reports.
- 10.2 A report will be escalated based on the safety and wellbeing of the child, the wellbeing and safety of staff and the severity, complexity or potential impact of the matter, including legal, reputational or systemic risks.

11. Funding third parties

- 11.1 If an approval for a commitment of relevant money is required, including a grant or procurement, child safety matters obligations must be considered for inclusion. Child safety clauses are not required to be applied to arrangements with State and Territory Governments.
- 11.2 Prior to entering into an arrangement (e.g. a contract, agreement, deed or understanding) staff must include child safety obligations if the arrangement is for:
 - a. services directly to children; and/or
 - b. activities that involve contact with children that is a usual part of, and more than incidental to, the funded activity.
- 11.3 Staff may consider imposing child safety obligations if the funded activity involves children more broadly, even if it does not meet the description above based on the risk of harm to children.
- 11.4 Staff will undertake procurement and grants activity in accordance with the child safety clause in the ClauseBank and the Department of Finance, Grants Toolkit.
- 11.5 Further advice can be obtained from the Procurement and Grants Policy and Services Team at procurement@education.gov.au or grants@education.gov.au.
- 11.6 Whole of government child safety grants information can be found on the Department of Finance website under [Grants Toolkit](#).

12. Sanctions for non-compliance

- 12.1 A failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may constitute a breach of the [APS Code of Conduct](#) and may result in disciplinary action that could include termination of employment.
- 12.2 A failure to adhere to relevant WWCC requirements (or equivalent) and mandatory reporting requirements under relevant state, territory and Commonwealth legislation may result in penalties to the department and staff including imprisonment for non-compliance.
- 12.3 If a supplier has reported non-compliance with their legislative obligations for WWCC (or equivalent) or mandatory reporting, this may constitute an offence in the relevant state or territory for failure to comply with the legislative requirements. Any incidences of non-compliance should be referred to procurement@education.gov.au.

13. Employee Assistance Program

- 13.1 Discussions around child safety can be distressing for some individuals and teams.

- 13.2 The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to provide immediate and confidential counselling and resources for work, life, health, family or financial concerns. This includes support to staff who may be affected by a child safety report.
- 13.3 Further advice can be found at [Employee Assistance Program](#) or from Healthandwellbeing@education.gov.au.

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Child or Children	In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, child means any human under the age of 18 years.
Child Exploitation	One or more of the following: a. committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of abuse against a child; b. possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting child exploitation material; c. committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of grooming or online grooming; d. using a minor for profit, labour, sexual gratification, or some other form of personal or financial advantage.
Child Protection	An activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm, particularly that arising from child exploitation and abuse.
Child Safeguarding	In accordance with Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, protecting children from harm, abuse, and neglect. It includes making sure children are safe, supported, and cared for in all environments, and that any concerns about their safety are taken seriously and acted on quickly.
Child safe position	A departmental position that has been identified where contact between the staff member and a child would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the work and such contact is not occasional (infrequent or irregular) and incidental (occurring by chance) and therefore is required to obtain and maintain a WWCC (or equivalent) in order to be engaged in that position.
Commonwealth Officer	Defined broadly in the legislation to include employees, contractors, subcontractors, persons hired under a labour hire agreement, who work for, or on behalf of the Commonwealth.
Emotional Abuse	A parent or caregiver’s inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child and/or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. Such acts of commission or omission are likely to damage a child’s self-esteem or social competence.
Mandatory Reporting	The legal obligation to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to government authorities.
Neglect	The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for the physical and emotional development and wellbeing of the child.
Physical Abuse	The use of physical force against a child that results in harm for the child’s health, survival, development or dignity. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating.

Reports	For the purposes of this policy, any reference to reports includes complaints, incidents and other forms of disclosure
Sexual Abuse	The Australian Institute of Studies (AIFS) defines child sexual abuse as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Children can be sexually abused by both adults and other children who are – by virtue of their age or stage of development – in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the victim.
Supplier	An individual, business, or organisation engaged by the department through a contract, agreement, grant, deed, or other formal arrangement to deliver goods or services. For the purposes of this policy, this includes any third party funded by the department to provide services directly to children or to undertake activities where contact with children is a usual part of, and more than incidental to, the funded activity.
Working with Children	Being engaged in an activity with a child where the contact would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the activity and the contact is not incidental to the activity. This includes volunteering or other unpaid work.
Working with Children Check	An assessment of whether a person poses an unacceptable risk to children. As part of this process, the applicant's criminal history, child protection information and other information is checked. A WWCC may also be known under other names, such as a Working with Vulnerable People Check, a Blue Card, Working with Children Clearance, Ochre Card, etc.
Working with Vulnerable People Check	Vulnerable people include children and adults who may be unable to protect themselves due to age, illness, disability, trauma, or other factors. The check helps ensure that individuals in these roles do not pose a risk of harm, abuse, or exploitation. It typically involves a criminal history check and may include other relevant assessments, depending on the jurisdiction.

Document details

Policy Owner	People Branch
Document Status	Draft
Point of Contact	Hermione Finemore
Approver	Cate Leyland
Approval Authority	Assistant Secretary, People Branch Parliamentary and Communications Division Department of Education
Date of Approval	February 2026
Date of Review	February 2027
