



Country Women's Association of Victoria Incorporated

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Policy number	Version	2.0
	Approved by Board	25 June 2025
Responsible person	State President	Scheduled review date
		Every 2 years

PURPOSE

CWA of Victoria (CWA) is committed to child safety.

We want children to be safe, happy, and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

SCOPE

This document sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviour between adults and children involved in CWA events and activities. It also clarifies behaviours that are unacceptable.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy applies to all people who conduct work for, or are connected to, the CWA of Victoria, in a paid or unpaid capacity. This may include board members, Management Committee, executive leadership, staff, volunteers, contractors, members, and consultants.

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy applies to all activities in the organisation which involve, result in, or relate to contact with children.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk, phone 000.

DEFINITIONS

Child-related work:

- involves an adult working with children under 18 years old (both paid and unpaid work)
- having direct contact with children (physical, face-to-face, written, oral or electronic contact) and
- is a usual part of the person's duties (and is not occasional or incidental to their work)

Child-connected work:

- work authorised by the CWA and performed by an adult in an environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present
- occasional direct or indirect contact with children that is incidental to the work

Note: Working with Children clearance is required for all CWA members

Child Abuse:

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving

- A sexual offence
- Grooming
- Physical violence
- Serious emotional or psychological harm
- Serious neglect of a child

Source: Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

RESPONSIBILITIES

All adults involved in child-connected work with the CWA, including contractors, volunteers, and visitors, are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour. They must be aware of, and comply with the CWA Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct Policies in addition to the expectations set in this policy.

Appropriate behaviour includes:

- acting with respect, courtesy and integrity toward children, their families and fellow volunteers and staff
- avoiding interactions with children other than those essential to carrying out the contracted tasks or purpose of the visit or event
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- demonstrating appropriate personal and professional boundaries
- identifying and mitigating risks to the safety and wellbeing of children involved in CWA events
- if incidental contact with children does occur, ensure the interaction is respectful and sensitive to the child's unique diversity or vulnerabilities (such as students who may be First Nations Australian children, culturally and linguistically diverse, gender diverse, or may have a disability)
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are reporting that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another child
- ensuring as far as practicable that unauthorised adults are not left alone in an area with a single child

- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the State President, Executive Director and/or the CWA member supervising the contracted works or visit and ensuring any allegation is reported to the police or child protection as soon as possible
- reporting any child safety concerns to the State President, Executive Director and/or the CWA member supervising the activity, contracted works, or visit as soon as possible
- if an allegation of abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that all students are safe.
- create an environment that promotes and enables children's participation and is welcoming, culturally safe and inclusive of all children and their families

Unacceptable behaviour:

- do not engage in unlawful behaviour with any person
- do not have any physical contact with children
- do not disclose personal or sensitive information or images about a child
- do not have discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children, or make jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature
- do not use or condone obscene gestures or pornographic material on CWA property or at an CWA event
- do not permit access to sexually explicit material on CWA property or at an CWA event
- do not express personal views on cultures, race, or sexuality in the presence of children
- do not discriminate against any child, including because of age, disability, vulnerability, culture, race, ethnicity, sexuality, or gender preference.
- do not work with children while under the influence of alcohol, prohibited drugs or prescribed drugs that may impair your judgement

Additional information:

- do not initiate contact with a child outside of the CWA event (in-person, online or via telephone)
- do not have contact with a child outside of the CWA event (in-person online or via telephone) except with the permission of the child's parent or guardian
- report to the State President, Executive Director and/or the CWA member supervising the activity any conduct encountered online which you consider may put a child's safety at risk
- do not take photographic images of children except for designated CWA purposes, and for which parental permission has been given. Such images should not be stored on a personal device but must be transferred to a CWA file within seven days

- do not publish or upload photographic or audio material of a child to any location without the consent of the child's parent and the CWA State President or Executive Director.

Legislative responsibilities

CWA takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: 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 Victoria Police
- Mandatory reporting: Any board members, staff or volunteers who are mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teacher, principals, and police officers) must comply with their duties
- Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation 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
- Reportable conduct: The State President must be made aware of any allegations of physical and sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, significant emotional or psychological harm or significant neglect by an employee or volunteer towards a child. We are also legally required to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of the allegation.
- Duty of care: If a child is abused by an individual associated with our organisation, our organisation is presumed to have breached its duty of care unless it can prove that it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse in question. For more information, please refer to the new organisational duty of care to prevent child abuse page <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new> on the Department of Justice and Regulation's website.

BREACHES

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and reasonable to all staff and volunteers. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and actions we as an organisation take.

The Association's Grievance Policy and Procedures sets out the process for handling and resolution of complaints or grievances involving members that are unable to be resolved through respectful conversations/communications between members. It is important to deal with such matters in a timely and supportive manner.

Members and employees should be aware that where the standards of this Code of Conduct are not met, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken against the member or employee. Any form of inappropriate conduct or behaviour that breaches this policy will not be tolerated by the Association under any circumstances.

AUTHORISATION

[Signature of State President]

[Date of approval by the Board]

Documents Related to this Policy:	
Related Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Code of Conduct Policy ▪ Bullying Policy ▪ Discipline Policy ▪ Code of ethics Policy
Forms or Other Organisational Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Constitution
Further Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Child Safe Standards <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards> can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) website. ▪ Also refer to the information and resources available on the Child Safety page <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/> on the Commission for Children and Young People's website.