Incorporation No: A0031117T ABN: 94 539 710 877

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy[1]

INTRODUCTION

This Child Safety Policy is prepared to ensure children are safe at all FOSC Inc events and activities and to provide guidance to members, contractors and collaborators (aka personnel) about the standards and procedures they must follow.

The policy conforms to the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards issued by the Commission for Children and Young People that came into force on 1 July 2022.

SCOPE AND APPLICATION

According to Landcare Inc rule 17.15, FOSC Inc is mandated to have a Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and a documented Code of Conduct which covers child safety, bullying, sexual harassment and respect.

A Child is a person who is under the age of 18 years. Types of abuse include sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, grooming, family violence, sexual exploitation, cumulative harm and peer to peer.

Important Note: It is an offence for any adult not to report *sexual* abuse of children.
https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence

FOSC Inc. is committed to child safety in that:

- we want children to be safe, happy and empowered
- we support and respect all children, as well as our personnel
- 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 robust 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
- we are committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and removing/reducing these risks
- we have practices to reduce the risk of child abuse by new personnel
- we are committed to regularly training and educating our personnel on child abuse risks
- we are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability
- we have specific policies and procedures in place that support our personnel to achieve these commitments

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse, report the matter to the Police (Phone 000)

[1] This policy is based on a template provided by Landcare Victoria Inc, July 2022

OUR CHILDREN

This policy is intended to empower children, who are vital and active participants at FOSC Inc events. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.
We promote diversity and acceptance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

In particular, we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally

OUR PERSONNEL

This policy guides our personnel on how to behave with children at FOSC Inc events.

All personnel must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All personnel, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the continuing development and update of the Code of Conduct.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone at FOSC Inc understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all FOSC Inc personnel, families and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our personnel to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our personnel through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New personnel will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand FOSC Inc's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. This will include checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to the FOSC Inc. Code of Conduct for information about appropriate behaviour). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

RECRUITMENT

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legal responsibilities. FOSC Inc understands that when recruiting personnel, we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

There is no general requirement for people to hold a Working with Children Check at FOSC Inc events where children attend incidentally and are under the supervision of their parents or a guardian. However, in all cases, FOSC Inc is committed to ensuring that the event is conducted in a way that is safe for children.

FAIR PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and reasonable to all personnel. 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 a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and actions we as an organisation take.

PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of all personnel involved, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it and who will have access to it. This is intended to protect reporters and to ensure that all members of FOSC Inc. are comfortable to disclose any allegations or concerns in relation to child safety without repercussions.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

FOSC Inc. 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 personnel 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: In addition to the President of FOSC Inc, the CEO of Landcare Victoria Inc. 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.

RISK MANAGEMENT

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

ALLERGATIONS, CONCERNS, AND COMPLAINTS

FOSC Inc. takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our personnel are trained to deal with allegations appropriately. We work to ensure all children, families, and FOSC Inc personnel know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may include:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour

REGULAR REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we will do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Under Rule 17.15 of Landcare Victoria Inc. each Member Group is required to have a documented code of conduct which covers child safety, bullying, sexual harassment and respect. FOSC Inc's Code of Conduct is available on its website and is sent to all new personnel for signing.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about the Child Safe Standards can be found on the Child Safety page on the Commission for Children and Young People's website.

CHILD SAFE POLICY

The Eleven Child Safe Standards

Child Safe Standard 1 Relevant entities establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
Child Safe Standard 2 Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
Child Safe Standard 3 Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
Child Safe Standard 4 Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
Child Safe Standard 5 Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
Child Safe Standard 6 People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
Child Safe Standard 7 Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
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.
Child Safe Standard 9 Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
Child Safe Standard 10 Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
Child Safe Standard 11 Policies and procedures document how the relevant entity is safe for children and young people.