

## **P10 Child Safe Organisation Policy**

### **INTRODUCTION**

MacKillop Family Services trading as McAuley Community Services for Women (McAuley) is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of all children involved in our programs. We will take all necessary steps to prevent child abuse and create a safe environment for children and young people to participate in our services and activities.

All children have the right to protection from abuse. McAuley has a zero tolerance for child abuse, exploitation, and neglect. This Policy outlines the governance arrangements, other policies and procedures that enable child safety to be structurally embedded and practiced throughout the organisation.

The care and protection of the children within our services, and reporting any suspected child abuse, exploitation or neglect is the responsibility of all. This is a shared responsibility between all McAuley staff and volunteers.

Children should be able to express their views and have those views taken seriously. McAuley provides opportunities for children to participate in decisions that affect their lives, and their opinions will be considered in the development of child safety policies and practice.

McAuley recognises that some children are more vulnerable to abuse than others, find it harder to communicate or be heard, and may experience greater challenges in enacting their rights and remaining safe. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. McAuley promotes the rights of children and families living with disability and actively promotes social inclusion and the provision of a safe environment for children living with a disability. McAuley is an inclusive organisation and welcomes lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, gender diverse, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQA+) children at our services.

McAuley seeks to always be an organisation that:

- commits to providing a child-safe environment where children are protected from any form of harm, abuse, or neglect.
- reduces the likelihood of harm to children.
- complies with all relevant laws and regulations regarding child protection.
- promotes a culture of openness and transparency when it comes to child safety.
- has processes and systems that supports the identifying and reporting of abuse and harm.
- responds promptly and appropriately to disclosures, allegations, or suspicions of harm.

### **PURPOSE**

This Policy summarises McAuley's commitment to protect children from harm.

This Policy and related policies and procedures:

- form a framework to promote child safety and to prevent child maltreatment because of McAuley's work.
- help create an open, aware, and initiative-taking environment where concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child can be raised and managed in a fair and just manner, which protects the rights of all.
- sets out the monitoring framework to be enacted to oversee the integrity of the approaches adopted to protect the safety of children and young people.

All individuals engaged by or with McAuley are required to observe this Policy and the standards of child safe practice and meet the expectations for appropriate behaviour towards, and in the company of, children and young people.

Everyone is responsible for supporting the safety, wellbeing, and empowerment of children. This Policy applies equally to all staff whether; employees, carers, volunteers, students on placement and contractors.

McAuley considers child abuse unacceptable in all circumstances and takes its duty of care seriously.

We always aim to provide the safest possible programs and environments for children. This will be achieved by identifying and managing risks that may lead to harm and actively engaging in prevention strategies.

## DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
<b>Child or children</b>	In this Policy, refers to anyone below the age of eighteen years.  This policy acknowledges that different jurisdictions nuance the term "child" differently and may use the terms "child", "young people" or "minors" to describe some or all people under age eighteen. Our use of child in this policy is inclusive of these terms.
<b>Child Safety</b>	In this policy is defined as the responsibilities, measures, and activities that McAuley undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.
<b>Child Abuse</b>	In this Policy is defined as any form of physical abuse, emotional or psychological ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child.  It may be a deliberate act, or it may be failing to act to prevent or report harm.  It consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.
<b>Staff</b>	In this Policy is inclusive of all employees (fulltime, part time and casual) contractors, volunteers (including carers) and students on placement.

## PRINCIPLES

### National Child Safe Standards

McAuley acknowledges the important work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse ("The Royal Commission") in promoting child safe policies and practices to better protect children. The Royal Commission provided essential learning on the key characteristics of a child safe organisation and provided ten National child safe standards which are:

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 for 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.

MacKillop endorses the ten National Child Safe Standards, but as a national organisation must accommodate the specific requirements of each jurisdiction within which MacKillop operates. Whilst most jurisdictions have adopted the ten national Standards, Victoria has adopted an eleventh Child Safe Standards being:

- 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.

MacKillop is committed to quality child safe practice, regardless of the jurisdiction that a service operates in.

### **Commitment to the Standards**

This section summaries McAuley's commitment to meeting each element of the National Child Safe Standards.

#### **4.1 Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance, and culture.**

McAuley recognises that:

- integrity, transparency and accountability, risk management, culture and ethics are fundamental elements of our governance and assist in meeting our obligations to protect the safety of children.
- our Leadership prioritises initiatives for both preventative and responsive child safety.
- leadership, governance, and culture of the organisation reflects an embedded approach to child safety.

#### **4.2 Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.**

McAuley acknowledges that a child safe organisation seeks the views of children. We undertake to:

- listen to their views of our children.
- we will communicate and listen in manners that are age, development, and cognitively accessible and appropriate.
- We are committed to using relevant forms of communication that they may use.

#### **4.3 Families and communities are informed and involved.**

McAuley recognises the importance of collaborative partnerships:

- we collaborate with parents and carers drawing upon their expertise to better protect children and identify and respond to harm.
- where appropriate we partner with other organisations that share these child safe values.

#### **4.4 Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken into account.**

McAuley recognises by active listening to our children's diverse circumstances.

- We recognise that some children are more vulnerable to abuse than others or find it harder to communicate or be heard. We make adjustments to provide all children with active listening to facilitate protection.
- McAuley tailors programs to ensure all participant children have fair access to the relationships, skills, knowledge, and resources they need to be safe, in equal measure with their peers.
- We acknowledge that children with a disability may require additional supports to promote participation and safety.

#### **4.5 People working with children are suitable and supported.**

McAuley is committed to thorough screening and professional conduct to ensure child safety and has:

- Child-focused human resource practices to discourage applications and screen out unsuitable applicants from working or caring with children. Such practices are prioritised in advertising, recruitment, employment screening, selection, and management of all staff.
- All staff adhere to clear professional conduct and behavioural guidelines with child safe expectations reinforced in regular supervision and training.

#### **4.6 Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused.**

McAuley has clear and detailed policies and procedures about how to respond to complaints and allegations of abuse:

- Board Members, staff and volunteers understand their responsibility for reporting a complaint promptly if they become aware of concerning behaviours, as well as their reporting obligations.
- Processes to respond to complaints and allegations of abuse ensure procedural fairness for those whose interests are likely to be affected, have review mechanisms, and ensure any disciplinary action that is taken withstands external scrutiny in accordance with relevant employment law and other employer responsibilities.

#### **4.7 Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.**

McAuley is committed to:

- Promote and provide regular ongoing development opportunities for all staff and volunteers through education and training, beginning with induction. Training is reinforced in supervision and reflective practice.
- Be a 'learning organisation' where staff and volunteers at all levels continually build their ability and capacity to protect children from harm. All staff and volunteers receiving regular training, including induction on the institution's child safe strategies and practices, as well as broader training on child safety.

#### **4.8 Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.**

McAuley is committed to:

- Adapt its physical environments to minimise opportunities for abuse to occur and to balance child visibility with child privacy and encourage their capacity to engage in creative play and other activities. We are committed to:

- Conduct internal audits and inspections to assess properties to support open, welcoming, and home-like environments and cooperate with external audits of facilities.
- Consult children about physical environments and what makes them feel safe.
- Address the potential risks posed in an online environment by educating children and adults about how to avoid harm and how to detect signs of online grooming. We articulate clear boundaries for online conduct, and monitor and respond to any breaches of these policies.

#### **4.9 Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.**

McAuley recognises the necessity to review and improve practice to maintain a safe environment for children. We commit to:

- Maintains leadership vigilance and have in place systems to frequently monitor and improve performance in keeping children safe.
- Using the Sanctuary tools and commitments to open communication and social learning to encourage employees and volunteers to discuss complex decisions and identify and learn from mistakes.
- Using complaints as an opportunity to identify the root cause of a problem and improve policies and practices to reduce the risk of harm to children.
- Use our Quality Management Framework to drive quality practice by having multiple entry points into the quality improvement system to encourage staff from all parts of the organisation to contribute their knowledge and experience and participate in improvement activities. Our Framework consists of:
  - A **Feedback Register** that allows suggestions for innovation and improvement that any staff member can easily submit an idea that they think will result in improved practice or service delivery, and which cannot be easily actioned at the local level or adopted by the whole organisation.
  - **Quality Committees and Colloquia** with membership is open to staff to develop strategies for hearing the voice of consumers, addressing issues identified during complaint processes, responding to audit recommendations, identifying strategies for improved practice, sharing practice wisdom across states or programs.
  - **Quality Steering Committee** with membership of the CEO, Directors, and Quality team staff to oversight the quality Management Framework and review suggestions for Improvement and to determine those added and monitored into the MacKillop Quality Plan.
  - **Development Groups** that are program-based to address specific practice issues and quality improvement referred from the Steering Committee.
  - **MacKillop Quality Plan** which is a central plan that includes all accepted suggestions for improvement, as well as improvement opportunities identified during internal or external audits.

#### **4.10 Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.**

MacKillop has a suite of documents called our "Policies and Procedures Framework." These are Policies, Procedures, Agency -Wide and Operational Manuals and Forms that operationalise how we maintain a safe environment for all children. We commit ourselves to:

- Ongoing, regular, and systematic review and updating of the Policies and Procedures Framework

- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of our procedures in ensuring child safety is embedded in all our services
- Embedding staff practice to this Framework and its content.

## REFERENCES

### External Documents Referenced

- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017) *Final Report Volume 6: Making Institutions Child Safe*, Commonwealth of Australia.

### MacKillop Policies and Procedures Framework

Selected MacKillop Policies, Practice Manuals and Procedures relevant to this Policy:

#### National Policies

- P01 Governance and Strategic Direction Policy
- P02 Ethos and Living Heritage Policy
- P03 Client Rights and Safety Policy
- P04 Practice Framework Policy
- P05 Strategic Alliance Policy
- P06 High Quality Services Policy
- P07 Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- P08 People and Workplace Policy
- P09 Marketing, Communications and Fundraising Policy
- P10 Child Safe Policy
- P11 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Policy
- P12 Risk Management Policy
- P14 Sustainable Development Policy

#### MacKillop Board:

- B-F-02 Board Code of Conduct
- B-M-01 Board Practice Manual

#### National Practice Manuals

- Agency-Wide-CO-M-01 Agency-wide Practice Manual
- Agency-Wide-CO-M-02 Client Incident Management Manual
- BF-M-03 Risk Management Practice Manual
- BF-M-07 Property Practice Manual
- PQ-M-02 Quality Practice Manual



- WHS-M-01 Work Health and Safety Practice Manual
- VOL-M-001 Volunteer Involvement Manual

#### **National Human Resources Procedures & Forms**

- HR-P-001 Recruitment Selection and Appointment of Employees
- HR-P-004 Probation
- HR-P-005 Prevention of Unlawful Harassment Bullying and Discrimination
- HR-P-021 Induction and Orientation Procedure
- HR-P-022 Training Procedure
- HR-P-035 Managing Misconduct and Serious Misconduct
- HR-P-013 Code of Conduct
- Agency-Wide-CO-F-068 Carers and Social Media Usage Agreement

#### **State & Program Practice Manuals**

- ACT-M-001 Residential Care Manual
- AFV-M-001 Safe Relationships Practice Manual
- CS-M-001 Therapeutic Specialist Practice Manual
- NDIS-M-001 NDIS Disability Services Practice Manual
- NSW-M-001 Permanency Support Program Practice Manual
- NSW-M-005 Residential Homes Manual
- PQ-M-02 Quality Practice Manual
- VIC-EDU-M-001 Trauma-informed Behaviour Support Manual
- VIC-FRC-M-001 FRC Practice Manual
- VIC-IFS-M-001 Family Services Practice Manual
- VIC-OHC-M-001 Out of Home Care Practice Manual
- VIC-OHC-M-002 Home Based Carer Manual
- VIC-OHC-M-004 Residential House Manual
- WA-M-001 MacKillop WA Foster Carer Manual
- WA-M-003 WA Practice Manual
- WA-SWE-M-001 SWECC Practice Manual

#### **State Foster Carer Agreements & Recruitment Procedures**

- NSW-F-001 Code of Conduct and MacKillop Authorised Carer Agreement
- NSW-P-009 Authorised Carer Recruitment, Initial Training and Assessment
- NSW-P-011 Carer Authorisation, Suspension, Cancellation and Exit

- NSW-P-001 Principal Officer and Head of Entity
- VIC-OHC-F-050 Lead Tenant Code of Conduct
- VIC-OHC-F-069 Code of Conduct and Foster Carer Agreement
- VIC-OHC-F-176 Foster Care Assessment Panel Members Code of Conduct
- VIC-OHC-P-051 Home Based Carer Recruitment Procedure
- VIC-OHC-P-044 Lead Tenant Assessment and Approval
- WA-P-001 Foster Carer Recruitment Procedure
- WA-F-043 Assessment Panel Code of Conduct

#### **MacKillop Education**

- VIC-EDU-P-001 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- VIC-EDU-P-003 Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure
- VIC-EDU-P-004 Child Safety Recordkeeping Policy
- VIC-EDU-M-001 Trauma-informed Behaviour Support Manual

#### **Reportable Conduct Procedures**

- ACT-P-016 Responding to Allegations of Abuse and Reportable Conduct
- NSW-P-048 Responding to Allegations of Abuse and Reportable Conduct
- VIC-EDU-P-007 Reportable Conduct Policy