



1. PURPOSE

At Bridge Builders Youth Charity, we aim to create and promote a safe and nurturing environment for our children and young people, our volunteers, and employees. It is our continued commitment to create and maintain a child safe organisation in line with legislation and laws.

This policy aims to convey our ongoing commitment to always create and maintain a child safe environment for anyone that attends our establishment including children, young people, volunteers, employees, and board members.

2. SCOPE & AUDIENCE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, board members, any future employees, work experience students, visitors and contractors and any person that enters our establishment regardless of if they have direct contact with children or young people or not. This policy applies across a range of our organisation's mediums (e.g. camps, website) and outside of business hours. Partner organisations will be made aware of the policy and our organisation's underlying philosophy towards the care of children.

We will also adhere to the 11 Child Safe Standards that are in line with current legislation.

3. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT & PRINCIPLES

- Bridge Builders Youth Organisation is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision making.
- Bridge Builders Youth Organisation has zero tolerance for child abuse.
- Bridge Builders Youth Organisation is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.
- Every person involved in Bridge Builders Youth Organisation has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

4. SENIOR LEADERS

All senior leaders will be responsible for promoting and demonstrating our child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures. They will lead by example and ensure that all other staff and volunteers are in line with said policies and procedures.

Senior Leaders will continue with ongoing training, and it will be their responsibility to ensure junior leaders are up to date with any changes that may be made in the future.

Senior leaders will be always approachable, ensuring that all other volunteers and staff feel comfortable in reporting any concerns or abuse.

5. ALL OTHER STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACTORS

All other staff, volunteers and contractors will familiarise themselves with our policies and procedures and will adhere to our code of conduct. They will also familiarise themselves and adhere to any other policy and procedure relating to child safety and wellbeing.

All other staff, volunteers and contractors are obligated to report any reasonable belief that a child is at risk of harm or abuse, either sexual, physical, or emotional to their senior leader or board member within a 24-hour period.

We will continue with our regular supervision (debrief) of all staff, volunteers, and future employees to ensure that they are confident and comfortable within their roles at Bridge Builders Youth Charity.

We will continue to ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times, unless it interferes with the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person.

6. OUR RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION CRITERIA OF ALL VOLUNTEERS, FUTURE EMPLOYEES AND STAFF

Recruitment practices and procedures of Bridge Builders Youth Charity include:

- Ensuring that all roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
- Comprehensive checks such as, Working with Children Checks and Reference checks will be conducted.
- Positions that involve contact with children, recruitment will be based on a clear demonstration that there is a commitment to the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person
- Any person working with children at Bridge Builders must provide a valid and current working with children's check whilst working with Bridge Builders as defined by the [Working with Children Act 2005](#)

7. MANDATORY REPORTING

As a youth based charity, we are bound by law to report any types of child abuse to Child Protection or Police. All staff, volunteers, board members or future employees are informed of this and are trained accordingly.

Bridge Builders Youth also have a Child Safety Officer who the designated contact for any mandatory reporting situations.

Mandatory reporting is required by law to people who work with children or young people.

Further information regarding mandatory reporting can be found [here](#)

8. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

a. A child safe culture

Vision

We aim to affect recovery, relief and restoration in the lives of young people and their families.

Mission

To create positive opportunities in our community where people can physically, emotionally and spiritually grow, enabling them to reach their God given potential.

Culture Statement

Love

We make young people feel unconditionally loved

Value

We value every young person

Acceptance

We accept young people regardless of age, race or gender

Belonging

We provide young people a place that is safe and where they belong

Fun

We create a place where young people have fun and make friends

Learning

We are committed to building assets in others and ourselves

Health

We choose to have a healthy body, full life, strong mind and real faith

Contributor

We encourage all young people to be contributors locally and globally

Young people

We believe in the potential of all young people and focus on empowering those aged 12-25

Standards

We promote transparency and the importance of developing character in our lives

b. Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct

As part of the Bridge Builders Crew;

1. I am encouraged to attend all required meetings.
2. I am committed to participating in meetings, it is important to pay attention and not distract others, including the use of mobile phones.
3. I am committed to wear Bridge Builders uniform when representing the organisation to all meetings, events and engagements; feel proud to be a part of the Bridge Builders Crew.
4. I understand while wearing the Bridge Builders uniform, I will not drink alcohol or smoke/vape at any time as I am representing myself, my team and organisation including our business partners.
5. I understand only approved drivers by Bridge Builders are allowed to drive any young people under the age of 18 at any time, unless parent permission has been given and Bridge Builders are aware of this.
6. I am committed to maintain efficiency and productivity and take responsibility for my actions.
7. I am encouraged to complete my role and responsibility to the best of my ability.
8. I will be respectful to all crew and be considerate of their emotions, personal opinions and personal journey.
9. I will conduct myself appropriately with young people and set an example by reinforcing our culture.
10. I will **never** engage in inappropriate or sexual contact with any young person, especially those who are under age.
11. I will report any allegation of child abuse to the Child Safety Officer and ensuring any child criminal matters are referred to Victorian Police.
12. I am committed at all times that I am not involved in any illegal activity.
13. I will talk respect and speak well of all Bridge Builders Crew and if I have any issues arise with any crew, I will address them privately.
14. I am committed to developing my skills and developing new ones
15. I am committed to ensuring Bridge Builders is a violence free environment and that it is a safe place for all

Date:

Signed by Team member:

Signed by Leader:

c. Human resources practices and training

Bridge Builders Youth Organisation is responsible for ensuring that appropriate behaviour with children is clearly defined and expectations are accessible and understood by all employees, contractors and volunteers.

Bridge Builders will appropriately inform, and/or provide training for Councillors, employees and volunteers on child safety, including the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with disabilities.

Child Safe Standards workshops are provided to employees and volunteers who undertake child related work for Bridge Builders. These workshops include training in abuse types, understanding the Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct, disclosures and reporting obligations.

d. Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

Refer to appendix a.

e. Risk reduction and management

Bridge Builders recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur, and uses this approach to inform policies, procedures and activity/events planning.

Bridge Builders has a risk management policy and plan. Bridge Builders risk register includes identified risks of child abuse with the Organisation.

f. Listening to children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. 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 and ensure they feel safe at all times.

g. Confidentiality and Privacy

Bridge Builders is committed to protecting an individual's right to privacy. All personal information considered or recorded during the process of a report or investigation will be handled in accordance with Bridge Builders Privacy Policy.

9. POLICY EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually and following significant incidents if they occur. Feedback received from families and children will be considered as part of the review process. Where possible we will do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability when reviewing this policy.

10. DEFINITIONS

Aboriginal Child	a child or young person up to and including 18 years of age who is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.
Abuse	Abuse is any act that endangers a child and may put them at risk of harm, whether it be their health, wellbeing and/or development. It can include a single event or multiple traumatic events. Abuse is not limited to physical abuse, sexual abuse,

	emotional abuse, cumulative harm, exposure to and experiencing family violence, neglect, grooming and multi-dimensional harm.
Child or Children	means any child or young person up to and including the age of 18 years old.
Child related work	Means to work within one or more of the occupational fields defined in the Working with Children Act 2005 when the interaction with children is direct, unsupervised, and forms part of a person's duties.
Child safe organisation	A child safe organisation is an organisation that takes deliberate and conscious steps to protect all children from abuse and is committed to being a child safe organisation and aims to protect children and must be embedded in an organisation's culture, policies, and procedures and they also adhere to the Child Safe Standards.
Child Safe Standards	The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 was amended in 2015 to include the Child Safe Standards. There are eleven Child Safe Standards (effective from 1 July 2022) and are designed to encourage cultural change and cement the practice of protecting children into the everyday thinking of an organisation.
Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds	Means a child or young person who identifies as having cultural or linguistic associations by way of their birthplace, ethnic origin, religion, preferred language, or language spoken at home, or because their parents identify as similar basis.
Children with disability	In this instance, the term 'disability' is consistent with that in the Disability Act 2006. The use of the word 'disability' includes any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or developmental delay that may affect the child's ability to undertake day to day activities. A disability can occur at any time in life. A disability can be from birth or can be acquired suddenly and unexpectedly through illness or injury. Some disabilities may be obvious and can be seen physically whilst other disabilities are hidden.
Duty of Care	The ongoing obligation of employees, contractors, and volunteers (including students) to take all and any reasonable steps to protect children in their care from the risks of injury or harm that are reasonably foreseeable.
Employee	Means directly employed individual by Bridge Builders Youth Charity including but not limited to agency appointments, and those staff on short and long term employment agreements and volunteers and student placements.
Failure to Disclose	As defined in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), a failure to act on the legal obligation upon all adults to report to Victoria Police where they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult (18 years and over) against a child under the age of 16 (16 being the legal age of consent) is a criminal offence.
Failure to Protect	As defined in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), a person with power and authority who fails to protect a child from criminal sexual abuse, they know of the risk of abuse, and can reduce or remove the risk but fail to do so
Family violence	This is when a child, children or young people have to live with violence in their home. Family violence includes violence between family members, immediate or extended family, or anyone who fulfils the role of family in a child or young

	<p>person’s life. Family violence can be between adults or against a child and can include witnessing of violence against someone else or the receiving the consequences of violence themselves. Isolated or ongoing exposure to family violence can place children and young people at an increased risk of injury and harm and can have a significant impact on their health, wellbeing, and development.</p>
Grooming	<p>As defined in the Crimes Act 1958, the act of communication, including online communication, with a child under the age of 16 or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse. This includes predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual abuse at a later time with the groomer (aged 18 years old or over) or another adult.²</p>
Harm	<p>Means any action that may have a serious impact on a child or young person, whether it be their physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing. Harm can be caused in many ways including (but not limited to) physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect, family violence, sexual abuse or exploitation and can be a single act or a combination of a series of act or omission or circumstance.</p>
Mandatory Reporting	<p>The legal obligation of Bridge Builders and its employees under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005, states certain professionals are to make a report when a child is in need of protection. Mandatory reporters include Medical Practitioners, nurses, midwives, Police Officers, school teacher and Principals school counsellors, out of home care workers, social workers, youth justice workers, registered psychologists. These differ from state to state however anyone can make a report if they feel a child or young person is at risk of harm.</p>
Reasonable Belief	<p>Having a <u>reasonable belief</u> is not the same as having proof and is a belief that is formed by a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the same belief on the same grounds. A person can form a <u>reasonable belief</u> that a child is in immediate need of protection, or their safety or wellbeing is at risk, when the child is more likely to accept rather than reject their suspicion. This <u>reasonable belief</u> can be formed through disclosures, observations or other information received.</p>

11. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

School Policy & Advisory Guide

Duty of Care

Child Protection Reporting Obligations

<http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/>

DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

12. RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

The laws and legislation of the Commonwealth and Victoria are amended from time to time and should be read in conjunction with this policy and include but are not limited to:

- [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment \(Child Safe Standards\) Act 2015 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Crimes Act 1958 \(Vic\) Failure to Disclose Sexual Offence Committed Against a Child Under 16 \(section 327\); Failure by a Person in Authority to Protect a Child from a Sexual Offence \(section 49 O\);](#)
- [Working with Children Act 2005 \(Vic\);](#) and
- [Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012](#)

13. Child Safe Standards

These 11 Child safe Standards came into effect as of 1 July 2022

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. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 1
2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 2
3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 3
4	Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 4
5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 5
6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 6
7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 7
8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 8
9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 9
10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 10
11	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people. Click here for details about Child Safe Standard 11

14. POLICY STATUS AND DETAILS

Status	Current & Active
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Version	
Effective Date	1st Jan 2023
Review Date	Jan 2024
Approval Authority	Chief Executive Officer (Phil Stenhouse)
Approval Date	02 Jan 2023
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Author	Bonnie Knight
Lead Process Review	Beck Mitchell
Legislation Review and compliance	Beck Mitchell
Enquiries & more information	Policy Review Officer

Appendix a: referral to child protection

A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST

Protective concerns

You are concerned about a child because you have:

- received a disclosure from a child about abuse or neglect
- observed indicators of abuse or neglect
- been made aware of possible harm via your involvement in the community external to your professional role.

At all times remember to:

- record your observations
- follow appropriate protocols
- consult notes and records
- consult with appropriate colleagues if necessary
- consult with other support agencies if necessary

STEP 1	RESPONDING TO CONCERNS	STEP 2	FORMING A BELIEF ON REASONABLE GROUNDS	STEP 3	MAKING A REFERRAL TO Child FIRST	STEP 4	MAKE A REPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION
	<p>1. If your concerns relate to a child in need of immediate protection; or you have formed a belief that a child is at significant risk of harm*.</p> <p>Go to Step 4</p> <p>2. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services.</p> <p>Go to Step 3</p> <p>3. In all other situations</p> <p>Go to Step 2.</p> <p>* Refer to Appendix 2: Definitions of child abuse and indicators of harm in the Protocol – <i>Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people</i></p>		<p>1. Consider the level of immediate danger to the child.</p> <p>Ask yourself:</p> <p>a) Have I formed a belief that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm? YES / NO and</p> <p>b) Am I in doubt about the child's safety and the parent's ability to protect the child? YES / NO</p> <p>2. If you answered yes to a) or b) Go to Step 4</p> <p>3. If you have significant concerns that a child and their family need a referral to Child FIRST for family services. Go to Step 3</p>		<p>Child Wellbeing Referral</p> <p>1. Contact your local Child FIRST provider.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See over for contact list for local Child FIRST phone numbers. <p>2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</p>		<p>Mandatory/Protective Report*</p> <p>1. Contact your local Child Protection Intake provider immediately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See over for contact list for local Child Protection phone numbers. For After Hours Child Protection Emergency Services, call 131 278. <p>2. Have notes ready with your observations and child and family details.</p> <p>* <i>Non-mandated staff members who believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection are able to report their concerns to Child Protection</i></p>

For further information refer to *Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people – A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children's Services and Victorian Schools*

Contact Numbers

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

METROPOLITAN REGIONS	
Eastern	(03) 9265 2400
Northern	(03) 9488 9488
Western	(03) 9291 6500
Southern	(03) 9794 3555
RURAL REGIONS	
Barwon South Western	5225 1000
Gippsland	5127 0400
Grampians	5337 8444
Hume	5761 2100
Loddon Mallee	5440 3111

Office for Children and Licensed Children's Services:

METROPOLITAN REGIONS	
Eastern	(03) 9265 2400
Northern	(03) 9412 5333
Western	(03) 9275 7000
Southern	(03) 9096 9555
RURAL REGIONS	
Barwon South Western	5225 1000
Gippsland	5127 0400
Grampians	5337 8444
Hume	5761 2100
Loddon Mallee	5440 3111

Important information for government schools

Principals of Victorian Government schools must report all incidents to the Emergency and Security Management Unit on 03 9589 6266.

Victorian Government schools should contact the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit (SCIAU), Student Wellbeing Division, for advice and support when responding to allegations of student sexual assault or inappropriate sexual behaviours.

The SCIAU can be contacted on 03 9637 2934 or 03 9637 2487.

Victorian Government School Principals should refer to the flowchart – *Responding to Allegations of Student Sexual Assault Compulsory Actions for Principals* at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/childprotection/childprotection.htm>

Department of Human Services Child Protection

METROPOLITAN REGIONS		METROPOLITAN REGIONS	
Intake Unit	Regional Office	Regional Office	Regional Office
Eastern	1300 360 391	Box Hill	(03) 9843 6000
North and West	1300 664 977	Preston	1300 664 977
		Footscray	1300 360 462
Southern	1300 655 795	Dandenong	(03) 9213 2111
RURAL REGIONS		RURAL REGIONS	
Intake Unit	Regional Office	Regional Office	Regional Office
Barwon South Western	1800 075 599	Geelong	(03) 5226 4540
Gippsland	1800 020 202	Traralgon	(03) 5177 2500
Grampians	1800 000 551	Ballarat	(03) 5333 6530
Hume	1800 650 227	Wangaratta	(03) 5722 0555
		Wodonga	(02) 6055 7777
Loddon Mallee	1800 675 598	Bendigo	(03) 5434 5555

After hours Child Protection Emergency Services (AHCPEs)

Statewide number for all emergency child protection matters outside of normal business hours (24 hours, 7 days a week): **131 278**

Victoria Police 000

Catholic Education Offices

Catholic Education Office, Melbourne	(03) 9267 0228
Catholic Education Office, Ballarat Diocese	5337 7135
Catholic Education Office, Sale Diocese	5622 6600
Catholic Education Office, Sandhurst Diocese	5443 2377

Independent Schools Victoria

Other (03) 9825 7200

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association, Inc.	(03) 9481 0800
Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit	(03) 924 76666
Centre Against Sexual Assault	1800 806 292
Gatehouse Centre, Royal Children's Hospital	(03) 9345 6391
(for specialist counselling and medical assistance)	
Child Safety Commissioner	(03) 8601 5884
Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency	(03) 8388 1855

CHILD FIRST

Local Catchment Area	Contact
Barwon South Western	Greater Geelong, Queenscliff, Surf Coast 1300 551 948
Western	Colac – Otway, Corangamite 5232 5500
	Warrambool, Moyne, Glenelg, Southern Grampians 1300 889 713
Gippsland	East Gippsland 5152 0052
	Wellington 5144 7777
	La Trobe, Baw Baw 1800 339 100
	South Gippsland, Bass Coast 5662 5150
Grampians	Northern Grampians, West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Yarrambat, Horsham 1800 195 114
	Ararat, Pyrenees, Hepburn, Ballarat, Golden Plains, Moorabool 1300 783 341
Hume	Wodonga, Towong, Indigo 1800 705 211
	Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield, Wangaratta 1800 705 211
	Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Moira 1300 854 944
	Mitchell, Murrindindi 1800 663 107
Loddon Mallee	Greater Bendigo, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander 1800 260 338
	Buloke, Goonawarra, Swan Hill, Mildura 1800 625 533
	1800 MALLEE
Eastern Metropolitan	Yarra Ranges, Knox, Maroondah 1300 369 146
	Monash, Whitehorse, Manningham, Booroondarra 1300 762 125
North and West Metropolitan	Nullumbik, Whittlesea, Banyule, Yarra and Darebin (03) 9450 0955
	Brimbank, Melton 1300 138 180
	Hume, Moreland 1300 786 433
	Hobson's Bay, Maribymong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Wyndham 1300 775 160
Southern Metropolitan	Casey, Cardinia, Greater Dandenong (03) 9705 3939
	Aboriginal children and families (Casey, Cardinia and Great Dandenong) (03) 9794 5973
	Frankston, Mornington Peninsula 1300 721 383
	Kingston, Bayside, Glen Eira, Stonington, Port Phillip 1300 367 441

15. References

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Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. (2020, April 2). *Child protection - DHHS Services*. [Services.dffh.vic.gov.au](http://services.dffh.vic.gov.au). <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection>

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