

Introduction

Safe, protective, and healthy environments are fundamental to every child having the opportunity to learn and grow to their full potential. C&K is committed to protecting children's safety and wellbeing. C&K acknowledges that protecting children's safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility.

C&K Child Protection Commitment Statement

Our commitment to children's safety and wellbeing means that we will:

- Ensure children's safety and wellbeing is integral to all decision-making and embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.
- Support children to understand their rights and participate in decisions affecting them.
- Equip board members, employees, students, volunteers and external contractors with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through ongoing education and training.
- Advocate for child abuse prevention and raise awareness of child safety and wellbeing with children, families, colleagues, and our communities.
- Embrace and celebrate the diversity of children, families, and communities. Provide culturally safe and effective programs by acknowledging all children have equal rights to be safe regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, needs, sexual orientation of family, social or cultural background. Children strong in their identity are more able to have a voice and speak out when they do not feel safe.
- Engage and openly communicate with families and the community about our child safe approach. Families participate in decisions affecting their child.
- Establish partnerships with early intervention and prevention services.
- Implement effective recruitment processes so that only suitable people are employed.
- Employ regional child protection champions (i.e., Early Childhood Pedagogy Advisors) to provide appropriate support and advice.
- Immediately report all allegations and suspicions of significant child harm to statutory authorities.
- Implement an accessible, child-focused, and effective complaint management process. Allegations and concerns regarding children's safety and wellbeing will be treated seriously and consistently. A culture of openness supports all persons to safely disclose child safety and wellbeing concerns.
- Maintain physical and online environments that promote safety and wellbeing, while minimising the opportunity for children to be harmed.
- Reference and follow:
 - *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*
 - *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
 - *Australian Early Childhood Code of Ethics*
 - *Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations (2011)*
 - *Child Protection Act (1999)*
 - *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act (2000)*
 - *Working with Children Act (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)*

C&K Child Protection Principles

Principle 1 - Protecting children is everyone's responsibility

- C&K is committed to creating a child safe culture. All employees, whatever their position, acknowledge children's safety and wellbeing is a core responsibility. Children's safety and wellbeing is embedded in daily practice.
- Centres engage in open communication with families and communities about C&K's child protection policies and procedures.
- Organisation and centre risk management strategies focus on identifying and mitigating risks to children. To create and maintain a safe environment for children, all C&K centres are legislatively required to develop, implement and maintain a [Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy](#) under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*. Refer to [Branch/Affiliate Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy](#).
- Suspicions of child harm occurring **externally** to C&K centres are immediately reported to statutory authorities, in accordance with [Responding to and Reporting Child Protection Concern Procedure](#).
- Allegations of child harm occurring **internally**, within C&K centres are immediately reported and escalated as per [Reporting an Allegation of Child Harm Occurring at a C&K Centre Procedure](#).
- Employees are supported when talking about child safety and wellbeing concerns.
- C&K continues to establish genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities, Elders, community leader and families, and ensure that their voices are heard, and that C&K's vision, purpose and objectives are reflective and supportive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's human and cultural rights.
- Employees demonstrate an awareness of issues relating to child abuse and neglect in children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse families.

- Actively implement culturally safe and appropriate services with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families, and other stakeholders.
- Teachers/Educators promptly seek support and guidance of their C&K Regional Early Childhood team to respond appropriately to child protection matters.
- Teachers/Educators collaborate with early intervention, prevention, and family support services to improve outcomes for children.
- C&K invite employees, families, and relevant community stakeholders to participate in child protection policies and procedures reviews.
- Children's safety and wellbeing are regular agenda items at team meetings.
- C&K's commitment to children's safety and wellbeing is clear in the C&K Family and Employee Handbooks and on the C&K website.

Principle 2 - Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children

Practice indicators include:

- Board members and employees consistently follow the *C&K Code of Conduct, Supporting Relationships and Partnerships Procedure* and *Guiding Children's Behaviour Procedure*.
- Interactions with children are calm, respectful, and thoughtful.
- Teachers/Educators genuinely listen and appropriately respond to children's concerns.
- Positive behaviour guidance strategies are implemented as per *Guiding Children's Behaviour Procedure* and in collaboration with families.
- Teaching strategies focus on developing children's self-regulation, are developmentally appropriate, responsive to children's individual needs, and their social and cultural heritages.
- Teachers/Educators respond with sensitivity, warmth and empathy to children who are or have experienced trauma or other difficulties in their lives.
- Teachers/Educators support children to develop a sense of social responsibility, so they become aware of how their actions and behaviour impacts others.
- Teachers/Educators model and encourage core values such as friendliness, acceptance, respect, empathy, kindness, and tolerance.

Principle 3 - Robust recruitment, training, and management processes

Practice indicators include:

- Applicants are directed to key C&K policies and the *C&K Code of Conduct* available on the C&K Website.
- During recruitment, applicants are asked questions to ascertain their understanding of and commitment to child protection.
- A National Police Check (relevant to position) and a Working with Children Check application (Blue Card) are completed before employment is confirmed. (Branch centres/offices only)
- All board members, employees, students, volunteers, and external contractors undertake child protection training during induction and then annually to maintain knowledge of their legislative and C&K responsibilities to children's safety and wellbeing, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.
- Managers supervise and provide feedback to employees, students, volunteers, and external contractors, noting any specific concerns regarding children's safety and wellbeing. An *Annual Professional Performance Record* is completed for all employees.
- Employees less than 18 years of age, students, volunteers, external contractors, and visitors are supervised by a C&K employee and not placed in sole charge of children.

Principle 4 – Clear and consistent reporting procedures

Practice indicators include:

- All allegations and concerns regarding children's safety and wellbeing are treated seriously and consistently. Board members, employees, students, volunteers, and external contractors immediately report all:
 - Reasonable suspicions of significant harm to children occurring externally to a C&K centre to statutory authorities.
 - Allegations of harm to children occurring within a C&K centre to the Early Childhood Education Manager or Regional Manager. All allegations of child harm are escalated and investigated as per [Reporting an Allegation of Child Harm Occurring within a C&K Centre](#) and [Workplace Investigations Procedure](#) (branch only).
- Teachers/Educators are well-informed about their roles and responsibilities as mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect. Although not mandatory reporters, all other employees, board members and C&K volunteers, students and external contractors are undertaking annual child protection compliance training so they are well-informed of their child protection responsibilities as per this policy and the [Responding to and Reporting Child Protection Concerns Procedure](#).
- Reporting policies and procedures are detailed in induction and annual training modules (for all board members,

employees, students, volunteers, and external contractors), and summarised in the *C&K Family and Employee Handbooks* and accessible on the C&K website. Families and communities are invited to participate in the review of child protection policy documents.

Principle 5 – Child protection advocacy and prevention

Practice indicators include:

- C&K will provide a variety of opportunities, both formally and informally, for staff, families, and communities to be involved in conversations about child safety e.g., social media/online events, community events, newsletters, family focus groups.
- Centres have and continue to establish partnerships and work collaboratively with organisations that support children and families.
- Centres participate in and facilitate child protection advocacy activities and regularly share information regarding child safety and wellbeing with families.
- Teachers/Educators work with families and actively support them in their parenting roles, including linking them with relevant support agencies.
- Teachers/Educators respect, acknowledge and honour the diversity of children and families, recognising the complex challenges that impact upon families.
- Teachers/Educators acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are considerably more than a nuclear family unit and make efforts to include all significant people in a child's life in the decision-making process.
- Teachers/Educators will take a strengths-based approach that respects and values the knowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities can contribute about keeping their children safe.
- Child safety and wellbeing initiatives are prioritised and documented within business plans and centre Quality Improvement Plans.
- Risk management strategies are implemented to protect children's safety and wellbeing.
- Child protection and complaint data is collated and analysed to implement organisational and centre child safety and wellbeing improvement initiatives.

Principle 6 – Empowering children

- Teachers/Educators acknowledge children have the right to be safe, have a say in matters affecting them, and have their opinions taken seriously.
- Teachers/Educators will build children's capacity and confidence to speak out, by listening intently and responding positively when children voice their opinions.
- When including children in decision-making, Teachers/Educators will be mindful of traditional cultural family structures and the child's place within these structures. Educators will adapt processes for some children and their families in a way that they understand and feel comfortable with.
- Children are invited to contribute to child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and local level protocols in developmentally appropriate ways.
- Teacher/Educators are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child friendly and culturally safe ways for children to raise their concerns. All child disclosures of alleged harm are heard, escalated, and treated seriously.
- Teachers/Educators facilitate programs that support children's physical, emotional, social, intellectual, cultural, and familial safety. Teachers/Educators appropriately incorporate personal safety concepts within the curriculum. Children are encouraged to identify safe and unsafe situations and know the people from whom they can seek help.
- C&K and centres initiate and participate in advocacy activities and regularly share information about children's rights with families and communities.

Legislative requirements for providing a child safe environment

Section 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
Section 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
Section 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
Reg 166	Children not to be alone with visitor
Reg 168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
Reg 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
Reg 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
Reg 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
Reg 175 (d) (e)	Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority

Acknowledgements and references

- Australian Human Rights Commission (2018) - *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*
- Commonwealth of Australia (2021) - *Keeping our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*