

### 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.

This policy should be read and followed in conjunction with the *Child Protection Procedures* and the *C&K Code of Conduct*.

### C&K's 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.
- Advocate for child abuse prevention and raise awareness of child safety and wellbeing with children, families, colleagues and our communities.
- Provide culturally-safe programs by acknowledging all children have equal rights to be safe regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, needs, sexual orientation or family, social or cultural background.
- Work with parents / guardians and support them in their parenting role.
- Establish partnerships with early intervention and prevention services.
- Implement effective recruitment processes so that only suitable people are employed.
- Employ regional child protection champions 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.
- Equip board members, employees, students, volunteers and external contractors with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through ongoing education and training.
- Maintain physical and online environments that promote safety and wellbeing, while minimising the opportunity for children to be harmed.
- Implement, document and regularly review child protection policies and procedures that reflect the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* (2018), the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *Australian Early Childhood Code of Ethics* and comply with relevant legislation including the *Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations* (2011), the *Child Protection Act* (1999) and the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act* (2000).

### C&K's 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.
- Suspicions of child harm occurring externally to C&K centres are immediately reported to statutory authorities, in accordance with *Procedure Responding to and reporting child protection concerns*.
- Allegations of child harm occurring internally, within C&K centres are immediately reported and escalated as per *Procedure Responding to allegations of child harm*.
- Employees are supported when talking about child safety and wellbeing concerns.
- Employees demonstrate an awareness of cross-cultural issues relating to child abuse and neglect in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse families.
- Educators promptly seek support and guidance of their Wellbeing and Inclusion Advisor to respond appropriately to child protection matters.
- 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*, *Procedure Supporting relationships and partnerships* and *Procedure Guiding Children's Behaviour*.
- Interactions with children are calm, respectful and thoughtful.
- Educators genuinely listen and appropriately respond to children's concerns.
- Positive behaviour guidance strategies are implemented as per *Procedure Guiding Children's Behaviour*.
- Teaching strategies focus on developing children's self-regulation, are developmentally appropriate, responsive to children's individual needs, and their social and cultural heritages.
- Educators respond with sensitivity, warmth and empathy to children who are or have experienced trauma or other difficulties in their lives.
- Educators support children to develop a sense of social responsibility, so they become aware of how their actions and behaviour impacts others. 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.
- 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 and obligations relating to children's safety and wellbeing.
- 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.
  - All 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 *Procedure Responding to allegations of child harm* and *Procedure Workplace investigation*.
- 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 *Procedure Responding to and reporting child protection concerns*.
- 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.

### Principle 5 – Child protection advocacy and prevention

Practice indicators include:

- Centres have established 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.
- Educators work with families and actively support them in their parenting roles, including linking them with relevant support agencies.
- Employees respect, acknowledge and honour the diversity of children and families, recognising the complex challenges that impact upon families.
- 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

- Educators acknowledge children have the right to be safe, have a say in matters affecting them, and have their opinions taken seriously. Children are encouraged and welcomed to express their views, feelings and concerns.
- Educators work collaboratively with children to provide a safe and supportive environment for all.
- Children are invited to contribute to child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and local level protocols in developmentally appropriate ways.
- All child disclosures of alleged harm are heard, escalated and treated seriously.
- Educators facilitate programs that support children's physical, emotional, social, intellectual, cultural and familial safety. 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.

### Acknowledgements and references

- Moores (2016). *The Child Protection Tool Kit – What every not-for-profit organisation must do now*.
- State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services (November 2015). *An overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards*.
- Queensland Government (2018). Response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse [Queensland Government response](#)
- Australian Human Rights Commission (2018). National Principles for Child safe Organisations, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/National%20Principles%20for%20Child%20Safe%20Organisations.pdf>
- Australian Human Rights Commission (July 2018), Child Safe Organisations National Principles (Draft) <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/National%20Principles%20for%20Child%20Safe%20Organisations.pdf>