



POLICY NAME:	Child Safety	NO.	1.7
Document Owner:	Director of Nursing and Clinical Services	Approval Date:	23/06/2022
Approved By:	Risk Management and Controlled Documents Committee	Next Review Date:	23/06/2025

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from abuse and neglect, and to raise awareness about the importance of child safety within QEC and the broader community.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all QEC employees.

3. DEFINITIONS

The *Child Safe Standards* are a central feature of the Victorian Governments response to Betrayal of Trust Inquiry (2013). These Standards apply to all organisations providing services for children. The focus of the standards is to guide organisations in driving cultural change so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

The Act - Child Safety and Wellbeing Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015.

Aboriginal child - A person under the age of 18 years who:

- Is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- Identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Community.

CALD - culturally and/or linguistically diverse.

Child abuse - For the purpose of the Standards, abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:

- Physical violence
- Sexual offences
- Serious emotional or psychological abuse
- Serious neglect.

Child - a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Child safety - measures to protect children from abuse and neglect.

Child Safe Organisation - One that meets the Child Safe Standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse and neglect.

Cultural competency - a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that came together in a system, agency or among professionals that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Cultural abuse - actions and attitudes that deliberately ignore, denigrate or attack the culture of a person or community.

Cultural safety for Aboriginal children - The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. Supporting connections to their land and kinship ties and to be involved in a culturally respectful delivery of service.

Employee - refers to a person employed by the Queen Elizabeth Centre (QEC) including students, volunteers, casuals and contractors.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

QEC provides a safe and supportive environment for children, families and employees. QEC supports and respects all children and has zero tolerance for child abuse or neglect. QEC is a Child Safe Organisation driving cultural change so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking of all employees.

QEC also values the engagement and feedback of families when planning and delivering services. QEC provides a culturally safe environment including a strong commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children.

QEC has a commitment to evidence based and responsive practice. QEC maintains accurate and up-to date client files and maintains appropriate records incidences or allegations pertaining to child safety (see 1.2.22 Incident Management).

All QEC employees must abide by the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees which specifies the standards of conduct when working with children and their families. QEC also has specific requirements about appropriate behaviour and inappropriate behaviour by our employees towards children, which aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for abuse, neglect or harm to occur. All employees are required to comply with the requirements outlined below. If an employee breaches these requirements, they will face disciplinary action including and up to termination of employment or cessation of engagement with QEC:

- All people involved in the care of children on behalf of QEC will:
 - Establish and maintain a child-safe environment for children
 - Support children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
 - Be fair, considerate, honest, professional with others, maintaining strict impartiality
 - Treat children with respect and value their ideas and opinions
 - Act as positive role models in their conduct with children
 - Respect the privacy of children, their families and carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need to know
 - Operate within the policies and guidelines of QEC and
 - Contact relevant authorities if a child is at immediate risk
- No QEC employee shall:
 - Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children
 - Unlawfully discriminate against any child or engage in any activity with a child that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them
 - Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves
 - Be alone with a child unnecessarily
 - Groom a child for their own needs or show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
 - Arrange contact with children outside of the organisation's programs and activities
 - Photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians
 - Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
 - Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children or use inappropriate language in the presence of children.

QEC applies the best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of employees. We interview and conduct referee checks on all employees and require police checks and Working with Children checks for relevant positions. Our commitment to child safety and screening requirements are included in all advertisements.

QEC seeks to attract and retain the best employees. We provide support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. QEC welcomes feedback, including complaints and has a clearly articulated complaints process, with specific complaint handling timeframes.

QEC recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and use this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

QEC provides training for all employees about their role in promoting and ensuring child safety and wellbeing.

5. PRINCIPLES

QEC, in being a Child Safe Organisation, meets the eleven Victorian Child Safe Standards, which are:

Standard 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

Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

Standard 3: Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Standard 4: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing Standard

5: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

Standard 6: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

Standard 7: Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused

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

Standard 9: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

Standard 10: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

Standard 11: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

QEC regularly reviews its practices to ensure an ongoing commitment to child safety and continual improvement of practices.

6. RELATED QEC DOCUMENTS

- 1.7.1 Mandatory Reporting
- 1.5.1 Cultural Competency – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People
- 1.5.2 Cultural Competency – Demonstration of Respect
- 1.5.3 Cultural Competency – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse People
- 1.5.4 Person Centred Care – Clients with a Disability

7. RELATED LEGISLATION AND EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS

- State Government of Victoria, 2016, Department of Health and Human Services, Child Protection Placement and Family Services, Child Protection Operations
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015
- Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees
- The Betrayal of Trust Inquiry and Report
- Cultural Responsiveness: Guidelines for Victorian Health Services 2009
- Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework 2008
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005
- A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation. Version 2.0, December 2015. Developed by the Commission for Children and Young People

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child.

8. KEY WORDS

Child safe, child safety, mandatory reporting, child abuse, DHHS, cultural inclusion.

9. APPENDIX

None

10. DOCUMENT HISTORY

	Date	Summary of Purpose/Changes
Document Created:	Prior to 2017	NA
Reviewed:	23/06/2022	Incorporates new Child Safe Standards and revisions from Client Advisory Group as well as QEC's Quality Champion.
Reviewed:		