



<b>POLICY NAME:</b>	Child Safety and Wellbeing	<b>NO.</b> 1.7
<b>Document Owner:</b>	Director of Nursing and Clinical Services	<b>Approval Date:</b> 02/05/2024
<b>Approved By:</b>	Risk Management and Controlled Documents Committee	<b>Next Review Date:</b> 02/05/2027

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate our commitment to protecting children from abuse and neglect and also to build an environment which is both child-safe and child-friendly, where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.

## PURPOSE IN CHILD'S VOICE

It is very important that QEC does everything it can to keep children safe.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all QEC employees.

## 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.

*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.

*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.

*Child Safe Standards*- the standards established under the Child and Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (VIC).

*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.

*Reportable Conduct Scheme* - A scheme administered by the Commission for Children and Young People that requires organisations to report to the Commission within three business days, certain allegations of child abuse or misconduct towards children made against an employee, including volunteers. Reportable conduct covers: sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child. Behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm, significant neglect of a child and/or sexual offences.

*The Commission for Children and Young People* - responsible for assisting organisations implement the Child Safe Standards

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

QEC is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for children. QEC supports and respects all children and has zero tolerance for child abuse or neglect. QEC values the child's voice and incorporates this focus in all programs. QEC has a strong commitment to equity and inclusion, which includes recognising and respecting the diverse needs of all children.

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 has a commitment to evidence based and responsive practice. QEC maintains accurate and up-to date client files and maintains appropriate records of 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
- Instigate or tolerate racism or any other forms of prejudice
- 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. The recruitment process includes QEC's statement of commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing. Contractors engaged to work at QEC sites are required to have a current Working With Children Check prior to commencing work.

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. See 1.4.2 Family Feedback for more information.

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 endorses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. At each QEC site, UNICEF's 'The Convention on the Rights of The Child: The Children's Version' poster is displayed. These rights are embedded into clinical service delivery and all support services at QEC.

Individual and diverse child needs are identified through the admissions process and are incorporated into the development of the Child and Family Action Plans. QEC will make reasonable changes to support participation by all children and respond to all children's needs (see appendix 4 for identified groups). QEC asks families about existing cultural plans and QEC will engage and support the plan relevant to QEC clinical service delivery. QEC has processes in place to ensure that



children do not experience discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation.

QEC provides a culturally safe environment including a strong commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children. QEC's leadership has a responsibility to help all employees to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children. All employees:

- Encourage and support children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
- Actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion within the organisation by Aboriginal children and their families
- Will not deny or challenge a child or young person their identity or experience
- Promote opportunities to provide feedback that is culturally appropriate.

QEC provides training for all employees about their role in promoting and ensuring child safety and wellbeing. In addition, QEC has nominated Child Safety Officers within each program, the clinical managers. The Child Safety Officers have an in depth understanding of child safety risks and can appropriately act on concerns and complaints related to child safety and wellbeing.

QEC recognises the importance of informing and involving children, families and the community in its approach to child safety and wellbeing. See 3.1.1 Consumer Participation for information about current strategies used by QEC.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **Chief Executive Officer**

- Ensure adequate resources and support systems are provided to enable compliance with this policy
- Ensure employees and management comply with this policy and the related procedures
- Comply with responsibilities under the reportable conduct scheme (see 1.7.2 Reportable Conduct Scheme)

#### **Directors**

- Support the CEO in creating, promoting and embedding a child safe culture of zero tolerance to child abuse
- Work and lead by example at all times and participate in the ongoing implementation of the Child Safe Standards

#### **Child Safety Officers (Clinical Managers)**

- Support the CEO and Directors with the implementation of the Child Safe Standards
- Participate and lead (as required) the development and review of risk management processes regarding child safety.

### **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.

#### RELATED QEC DOCUMENTS

- 1.4.2 Family Feedback
- 1.5 Equity and Inclusion
- 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
- 1.7.1 Mandatory Reporting
- 1.7.2 Reportable Conduct Scheme
- 3.1.1 Consumer Participation

#### RELATED LEGISLATION AND EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Health Records Act 2001 (VIC)
- Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees
- The Betrayal of Trust Inquiry and Report
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Cultural Safety Framework. For the Victorian health, human and community services sector. Published by the Victorian Government, June 2019.
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005 (VIC)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Regulations 2017 (VIC)
- A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation. Version 5.0, April 2022. Developed by the Commission for Children and Young People
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child.
- Child's Voice. Our children have a right to be heard (VACCA), 2009.

#### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

None at present

#### KEY WORDS

Child, safe, safety, standards, mandatory reporting, child abuse, cultural, rights, inclusion.

#### APPENDIX

- Appendix 1 - 'Child Safety is Always a Priority' Poster (available on the Staff Portal)
- Appendix 2 - The Convention on the Rights of The Child: The Children's Version. [convention-rights-child-text-child-friendly-version.pdf \(unicef.org\)](https://www.unicef.org/convention-rights-child-text-child-friendly-version.pdf)

#### DOCUMENT HISTORY

	Date	Summary of Purpose/Changes
Document Created:	Prior to 2017	N/A
Reviewed:	23/06/2022	Incorporates new Child Safe Standards and revisions from Client Advisory Group as well as QEC's Quality Champions.
Reviewed:	17/11/2022	Further refinements to incorporate requirements under the new Child Safe Standards, including an update to the code of conduct about no tolerance of racism, nominated Child Safety Officers and a documented commitment to valuing the child's voice and endorsing/displaying child rights.
Reviewed:	2/5/2024	Updates to name of policy, child's voice, definitions, WWCC in recruitment, additional commitment activities for staff, responsibilities, and related legislation.