

## DOGS VICTORIA CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAFETY POLICY

*Dogs Victoria acknowledges the Bunurong People, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we operate. We acknowledge and respect their contributions, experience and knowledge as First Nations people. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.*

This Dogs Victoria Children and Young People Safety Policy (Policy) was implemented by Dogs Victoria on **30/04/2024**. It demonstrates the strong commitment of management, staff and volunteers to child safety and wellbeing, and how our organisation keeps children safe from harm, including child abuse.

### Commitment to Children and Young People Safety

All children who come to Dogs Victoria have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children and young people in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create an environment where children feel safe and have fun while enjoying activities with dogs.

### Purpose

This Policy outlines how Dogs Victoria prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

This Policy outlines how Dogs Victoria will deliver on its commitments to safeguarding Children and Young People involved in Dogs Victoria activities, programs, services and facilities. This Policy also sets out the behaviours required of Dogs Victoria People towards and in the presence of Children and Young People. Dogs Victoria People are required to abide by the behaviour standards set out in this Policy (including by complying with appropriate measures to address risks) and report any behaviours that do not comply with it.

The purpose of this Policy is to:

1. Provide a clear statement to Dogs Victoria People forbidding Child Abuse.
2. Prevent Child Abuse occurring within the Dogs Victoria
3. Work towards an organisational culture of child safety within the Dogs Victoria
4. Ensure that all Dogs Victoria People are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible Child Abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
5. Provide guidance to Dogs Victoria People as to action that should be taken where they suspect any Child Abuse within or outside of the Dogs Victoria.
6. Provide assurance that any and all suspected Child Abuse will be reported and investigated as appropriate.

Failure by Dogs Victoria People to comply with this Policy may result in disciplinary action. Such disciplinary action may, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct, include suspension while matters are investigated and/or dismissal. In addition to any internal disciplinary proceedings, Dogs Victoria will report to the police all instances in which a breach of the law has or may have occurred.

## Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, management committee members, members, affiliates, children and other individuals involved in our association. This policy applies to all activities conducted by Dogs Victoria.

## Definitions

For the purpose of this Policy and unless the context otherwise requires the following definitions apply:

Term	Definition
<b>Dogs Victoria</b>	<p>Victorian Canine Association Inc. Reg. No. A00023882W Trading as Dogs Victoria</p> <p>655 Westernport Highway, Skye 3977, Victoria, Australia</p> <p>Telephone: (03) 9788 2500</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:office@dogsvictoria.org.au">office@dogsvictoria.org.au</a></p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.dogsvictoria.org.au">www.dogsvictoria.org.au</a></p>
<b>Dogs Victoria People</b>	<p>The following persons associated with Dogs Victoria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All employees (including casuals); and</li> <li>• All directly engaged volunteers and contractors / consultants who are engaged to provide services to Dogs Victoria that involve an interaction with Children or Young People.</li> </ul>
<b>Bullying</b>	<p>Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person and is generally an act that is repeated over time and is intended to cause distress and risk to a person's wellbeing. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated, and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Verbal</i> (name calling, put downs, threats);</li> <li>• <i>Physical</i> (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting);</li> <li>• <i>Social</i> (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating); and/or</li> <li>• <i>Psychological</i> (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions);</li> <li>• Cyberbullying (any sustained name calling, put downs, campaigns of harassment or trolling in an online environment).</li> </ul>

Term	Definition
<b>Children and Young People</b>	A person under the age of eighteen years. Child or Young Person shall mean a single person falling within the definition of Children and Young People.
<b>Child abuse</b>	Child abuse includes all forms of physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, grooming, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) exploitation, exposure to family violence, harassing behaviour such as bullying or other exploitation of a Child or Young Person and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a Child or Young Person. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time.
<b>Child Safe Standards</b>	The (Victorian) Child Safe Standards are a set of legislated outcome-based Standards that require organisations providing services and/or facilities to children and young people to comply with. The Child Safe Standards (Standards) aim to support organisations in developing practices that prevent and improve responses to allegations of child abuse and support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by embedding safeguarding practices into everyday thinking. It is the policy of Dogs Victoria and its affiliates to comply with the requirements of these Standards.
<b>Concerns and complaints</b>	<p>A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.</p> <p>A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to Dogs Victoria related to one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• our services or dealings with individuals</li> <li>• allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Dogs Victoria</li> <li>• disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person</li> <li>• the conduct of a child or young person at Dogs Victoria</li> <li>• the inadequate handling of a prior concern</li> <li>• general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Safety</b>	Cultural Safety is an environment where individuals can express their identity in the form they choose without any concerns. Having a culturally safe space acknowledges differences and similarities across cultural values, spirituality connections, family networks, community dynamics and enables shared respect for all individuals.

Term	Definition
<b>Emotional or psychological abuse</b>	Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a Child or Young Person does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a Child or Young Person. Exposure to family violence can also impact the emotional and psychological wellbeing of a Child or Young Person. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, singling out (pointing out), threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviours can result in significant damage to the Child's or Young Person's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.
<b>Family violence</b>	<p>Family violence occurs when Children or Young People are forced to live with violence between adults in their home.</p> <p>It is violence between members of a family, or extended family, or those fulfilling the role of family in a Child or Young Person's life. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Exposure to family violence places Children and Young People at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.</p>
<b>Grooming</b>	Grooming is a term used to describe activities by which a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a Child or Young Person, with a view to physically/sexually abusing them. Perpetrators are also known to build a trusting relationship with those associated with the Child or Young Person's care and wellbeing to help create an environment in which abuse can occur. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of Children or Young People. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the physical abuse begins. The Child or Young Person may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual abuse. Other perpetrators may draw a Child or Young Person in and abuse them relatively quickly; this could occur in both physical and online environments. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as in the context of leisure, music, sports and religious activities, in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.
<b>Harm</b>	<p>Harm to a Child or Young Person is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a Child's or Young Person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional or psychological abuse, physical abuse or neglect;</li> <li>• sexual abuse;</li> <li>• a single act, omission or circumstance; and</li> <li>• a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.</li> </ul>

Term	Definition
<b>Harassment</b>	Any type of behaviour towards a person that they do not want and is offensive, abusive, belittling, or threatening and is reasonably likely to cause harm to the person who is the subject of harassment. Sexual harassment includes unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour towards a person which may make them feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.
<b>LGBTI+</b>	Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and/or Questioning.
<b>Management Committee</b>	Management Committee means the elected or appointed persons consisting of a President, Vice President and ordinary Management Committee members of Dogs Victoria.
<b>Misconduct with a Child or Young Person</b>	Any behaviour involving a Child or Young Person that is objectively age inappropriate and/or places the Child or Young Person at risk of harm.
<b>Neglect</b>	Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide a Child or Young Person with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water or medical attention to the extent that the Child's or Young Person's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. Categories of neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment or desertion, emotional and educational neglect. In the context of a sporting environment, it may involve an adult being aware that a Child or Young Person is at risk of abuse and not reporting these concerns to authorities.
<b>Non-binary</b>	This is an umbrella term for any number of gender identities that sit within, outside of, across or between the spectrum of the male and female binary. A non-binary person might identify as gender fluid, trans masculine, trans feminine, agender or bigender. A non-binary person may or may not use the gender-neutral pronouns of 'they' and 'them'.

Term	Definition
<b>Physical abuse</b>	Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a Child or Young Person to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a Child or Young Person. Physically abusive behaviour includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, kicking and excessive and physically harmful over-training. It also includes giving Children or Young People harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury, can also be considered physical abuse if they place a Child or Young Person at risk of being hurt.
<b>Dogs Victoria Children &amp; Young People Safety Code of Conduct</b>	The Dogs Victoria Children & Young People Safety Code of Conduct outlines what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour or practice when working with or engaging with Children and Young People as further detailed in this Policy.
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	Sexual abuse is any act which exposes a Child or Young Person to, or involves a Child or Young Person in, sexual processes beyond their understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the Child or Young Person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a Child or Young Person, engaging Children or Young People to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a Child's or Young Person's genitals or breasts, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object. It can involve undertaking sexual acts in the presence of a Child or Young Person or forcing them to watch such acts. Voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing a Child or Young Person to pornographic magazines, websites and videos, or involving them in pornography and Sexual Exploitation are also considered forms of sexual abuse.
<b>Sexual exploitation</b>	Sexual exploitation occurs when a Child or Young Person is forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce pornography. Such pornography can be in the form of actual photos or videos or published on the internet. Exploitation can also involve a Child or Young Person who is forced into prostitution.
<b>Transgender</b>	Someone whose gender does not exclusively align with the one they were assigned at birth. Transgender relates to a person's gender, not their sexual orientation.

Term	Definition
<b>Unlawful discrimination</b>	Includes both: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• direct discrimination such as treating a Child or Young Person less favourably than other people or groups because of personal characteristics; and</li> <li>• indirect discrimination when an unreasonable rule or policy applies to everyone but has the effect of disadvantaging some people because of personal characteristics they share, where such personal characteristics is protected by applicable anti-discrimination legislation.</li> </ul>
<b>Vilification</b>	A public act, conduct or behaviour that incites hatred, serious contempt for, or revulsion or severe ridicule of, a person or group of people because of a particular characteristic they hold, as covered by applicable legislation, including their race, religion, identifying as homosexual, transgender or non-binary.
<b>Vicarious trauma</b>	The experience of trauma symptoms that can result from being repeatedly exposed to other people's trauma and their stories of traumatic events.
<b>Wellbeing</b>	Wellbeing encompasses the health of the whole Child and Young Person – physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional.  Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People includes the connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People have to self, family, community, culture, spirituality, and land/sea which are vital aspects of their wellbeing. It also acknowledges the impact that colonization continues to have on this population groups' health and wellbeing.

## Role of Management Committee

The Management Committee has the role of making sure Dogs Victoria prioritises children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

The Management Committee will champion and model a child safe culture at Dogs Victoria. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Management Committee will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Everyone at Dogs Victoria has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Management Committee will make sure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

The Management Committee will conduct an annual review of how effectively Dogs Victoria is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Dogs Victoria will be sought as part of this review.

## Children's empowerment and participation

Dogs Victoria is a child friendly organisation. We actively seek to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning and delivery of services and facilities.

We want children to develop new friends through Dogs Victoria and encourage children to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and take action if this occurs.

We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights including the right to be safe at Dogs Victoria. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We regularly communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

Dogs Victoria values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families. Dogs Victoria supports children's participation in the following ways:

- Regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- A suggestion box for children that is regularly emptied with suggestions assessed and acted on where appropriate. Children are provided with feedback on their suggestions.
- Consultation with children about any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, programs or staffing. Children's views are collected by staff, provided to management and considered in the decision-making process.
- Information provided to children and families about Dogs Victoria operations, staffing and programs are made suitable for different age groups and diversity of the children.

## Families and Communities

Dogs Victoria recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

At the annual general meeting each year, we ratify the election members of Management Committee and all members are invited to share their thoughts on the direction of Dogs Victoria for the next year.

Dogs Victoria provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:

- publishing this Children and Young People Safety Policy and Code of Conduct on our website
- including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures, in our magazine or newsletter.



## Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families

Dogs Victoria is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country at all Dogs Victoria events
- consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices within Dogs Victoria
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture, including through performance and during Dogs Victoria community activities
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- providing training for staff and volunteers on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at Dogs Victoria, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture.

## Valuing diversity

We value diversity and equity for all children.

To achieve this, we:

- provide training for all Management Committee members, staff and volunteers on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety
- welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- offer students and families through our enrolment forms the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our students, their interests and cultures
- strive to reflect the diversity of our membership through representation in our staff and Management Committee members
- acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates in our communication
- have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

## Code of Conduct

Dogs Victoria has a Children and Young People Safety Code of Conduct. Staff, volunteers and the committee members must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.

All third-party contractors are also expected to abide by the Children and Young People Safety Code of Conduct, and where they are engaging with children will have to sign an agreement to comply with the code, prior to delivering any services.

## Recruiting staff and volunteers

Dogs Victoria puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for staff and volunteers as outlined in the recruitment and screening policy. We only recruit staff and volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children. Members of the Management Committee must also be screened.

We require a Working with Children Check, Police Checks and referee checks for all staff and volunteers who have a role with children or have access to children's personal information. We require staff to have appropriate qualifications for their roles and check to make sure these qualifications are valid.

Members of the Management Committee must hold a valid Working with Children Check and a National Police Check is required.

## Supporting Staff and Volunteers

Dogs Victoria is committed to ensuring that all leaders, staff and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. Dogs Victoria assists its leaders, staff and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decisions and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

All Dogs Victoria Management Committee members, leaders, staff and volunteers are required to complete annual child safety training. Training will be recorded in the Child Safety Standards Register – Children and Young People Safety Training Plan.

Staff and volunteers will receive supervision to support their engagement with children and for compliance with our Children and Young People Safety Code of Conduct and Wellbeing Policy.

Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed in line with our Code of Conduct, complaint handling policy and disciplinary policy.

## Key Requirements

This Policy addresses the major areas where interaction occurs with the Children and Young People who take part in any Dogs Victoria activities, programs, services or facilities. This Policy also imposes an obligation on Dogs Victoria People who organise such activities, programs, services or facilities to identify where risks to Children and Young People safety may arise and adopt control measures to properly manage those risks (as per Risk Management section) of this Policy.

## Sexual Misconduct

Under no circumstances is any form of 'sexual behaviour' to occur with, or in the presence of, Children or Young People participating in any Dogs Victoria activities, programs, services or facilities. Engaging

in sexual behavior, either by Dogs Victoria People involved in the delivery of such activities, programs, services or facilities, or persons participating in such activities (whether they be Children or Young People or older), is prohibited, even if the young person(s) involved may be above the legal age of consent.

‘Sexual behaviour’ needs to be interpreted widely, and encompasses all actions that would reasonably be considered sexual in nature, including but not limited to:

- ‘Contact behaviour’, such as sexual intercourse, kissing, fondling, sexual penetration or exploiting a child through prostitution; and
- ‘non-contact behaviour’, such as flirting, sexual innuendo, inappropriate text messaging, inappropriate photography or exposure to pornography or nudity.

### **Grooming**

Although Children and Young People can be vulnerable to all types of abuse in sport, the sporting sector needs to be particularly aware of the potential for Grooming of Children and Young People in and around sporting activities. Grooming includes behaviours used to prepare a Child or Young Person with the intention of sexually abusing them. Some common Grooming strategies described in past sporting abuse cases (as reported to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse) include:

- coaching relationships – perpetrators can exploit their power and authority over Children and Young People through the private and exclusive coach or instructor relationship;
- inappropriate activity and adult material – many survivors of child sexual abuse in sport and recreation settings report that alcohol and other enticements were used by perpetrators as a form of Grooming;
- erosion of interpersonal boundaries – coaches can shift the interpersonal boundaries from the acceptable, for example, legitimate touching to correct a technique, to the inappropriate;
- targeting vulnerability – research indicates that young athletes who are experiencing difficulties in their home life can be particular targets for perpetrators. Many survivors describe family conflict, family violence or family break-up at the time of the abuse.

Perpetrators will seek to build a trusting relationship with a Child, Young Person and/or their family and/or act to isolate the Child or Young Person to abuse them.

Dogs Victoria People are strictly prohibited from engaging in any conduct that may reasonably be considered to be of the nature of Grooming or in any way exploitative of the power imbalance that may exist in relationships with Children and Young People.

### **Positive Guidance**

The Dogs Victoria strives to ensure that Children and Young People participating in any Dogs Victoria activities, programs, services or facilities are aware of the acceptable limits of their behaviour so that we can provide a positive experience for all participants.

Wherever possible, Children and Young People are encouraged to ‘have a say’ and participate in all relevant organisational activities and decision making in relation to those activities, especially on issues that are important to them. Children and Young People are to be given access to relevant

information to assist them in their involvement, including about Dogs Victoria approach.

However, there are times when Dogs Victoria People may be required to use appropriate techniques and behaviour management strategies, to discourage, prevent or discipline particular behaviour, to ensure:

- an effective and positive environment; and
- the safety and/or wellbeing of Children and Young People or Dogs Victoria People.

Dogs Victoria People are required to use behaviour management strategies that are fair, respectful and appropriate to the developmental stage of the Children or Young People involved. The Child or Young Person needs to be provided with clear directions and given an opportunity to redirect any misbehaviour in a positive manner.

Under no circumstances are Dogs Victoria People to take disciplinary action involving physical punishment or any form of treatment that could reasonably be considered as degrading, cruel, frightening or humiliating. Please refer to Physical Contact with Children and Young People section of this Policy for further information on when a Dogs Victoria Person may make physical contact with a Child or Young Person when carrying out a behaviour management strategy.

### Promoting equity and diversity

All Dogs Victoria People must ensure that their approach and interactions with Children and Young People are sensitive, respectful and inclusive of all backgrounds and abilities. In particular Dogs Victoria People are expected to:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Children and Young People (for example, by never questioning an Indigenous child's self-identification);
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Children and Young People with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination); and
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of Children and Young People with a disability (for example, during personal care activities).

### Adhering to professional role boundaries

Interactions between Dogs Victoria People and Children and Young People should be limited to interactions directly associated with the Dogs Victoria activities, programs, services or facilities and Dogs Victoria People should not act outside the confines of their duties (as specified in their position description, the activity description or similar documents formulated in advance).

Without express authorisation from Dogs Victoria senior management, all Dogs Victoria People **should not**:

- provide unauthorised transportation, for example, giving Children or Young People lifts in their car to an activity without consent from a parent or guardian (see section 0 below);
- engage in activities with Children or Young People who are participants in or members of our programs or organisation outside Dogs Victoria activities, programs or services;
- provide support to a Child or Young Person, or their family, unrelated to Dogs Victoria activities, programs or services; for example, tutoring or financial support;
- seek contact with Children or Young People (or former participants) outside Dogs Victoria programs, activities or services, including through social media;
- where there is no existing social, personal or family relationship prior to engaging in Dogs Victoria services, accept an invitation to attend any private social function at the request of a Child or Young

Person who has participated, or is participating, in any Dogs Victoria program, activity or service – or at the request of their family (for example, graduation ceremony);

- develop any 'special' relationships with Children or Young People that could be seen as favouritism, such as the offering of gifts, special treatment or singling specific Children or Young People out, or being secretive with relationships; or
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature with or in the presence of Children or Young People.

If a Dogs Victoria Person's position description or similar document does not expressly grant that Dogs Victoria Person the right to do any of the above, such authorisation may not be inferred and instead the Dogs Victoria Person must seek express authorisation from their Dogs Victoria manager or person in authority to do any of the above.

Any Dogs Victoria Person that becomes aware of a situation in which a Child or Young Person requires assistance that is beyond the confines of that person's role, or beyond the scope of usual services, they should at the earliest opportunity:

- contact the Child or Young Person's parent or guardian to discuss, and/or
- seek advice from their nominated Dogs Victoria manager or person in authority.

### **Uniform**

Dogs Victoria People should only wear Dogs Victoria uniform (where uniform has been provided) or use any Dogs Victoria accreditation, pass or badge while involved in delivering a service associated with the Dogs Victoria or as required by the Dogs Victoria such as when representing the Dogs Victoria at designated functions, or travelling to and from work.

### **Use of language and tone of voice**

Dogs Victoria People should use language and tone of voice in the presence of Children and Young People that:

- provides clear direction, boosts their confidence and encourages and affirms them;
- is not harmful to Children or Young People;
- does not include language that is:
  - discriminatory, racist or sexist;
  - derogatory, belittling or negative, for example, by calling a child a 'loser' or telling them they are 'too fat';
  - intended to threaten or frighten; or
  - profane or sexual in nature.

### **Supervision**

Dogs Victoria People are responsible for supervising Children and Young People participating in a Dogs Victoria program, activity or service to ensure those participants:

- engage positively with our program or activity;
- behave appropriately toward one another; and
- are in a safe environment and are protected from external threats.

Dogs Victoria People are required to avoid one-to-one unsupervised situations with Children and Young People participating in a Dogs Victoria program, activity or service and, to the extent possible, conduct all activities and/or discussions with Children or Young People in view of other adults.

### Use of electronic and online communications

Where possible, all email, text messages and other forms of messages sent to a Child or Young Person should be copied to their parent or guardian.

Where a parent is **not included** in a communication between a Dogs Victoria Person and a Child or Young Person, the Dogs Victoria Person must:

- restrict such communication to issues directly associated with delivering the Dogs Victoria program, activity or service, such as advising that a scheduled event is cancelled;
- limit the personal or social content in such communication to what is required to convey the service-related message in a polite, friendly manner. In particular, the communication must not contain anything that a reasonable observer could view as being of a suggestive or sexual nature;
- not request (or accept a request) to be “friends”, “follow” or communicate with Children or Young People using any personal social media account including, internet chat rooms or similar forums, game sites or instant messaging services;
- not use such communication to promote unauthorised ‘social’ activity or to arrange unauthorised contact; and
- not request a Child or Young Person to keep a communication a secret from their parent or guardian, nor keep the communication a secret from the Dogs Victoria Person’s manager or person in authority.

Dogs Victoria People are required to report to Dogs Victoria senior management if they become aware of any Children or Young People who may have been placed at risk of abuse or exploitation via social networking sites, gaming sites or through web searches, or inappropriate email communication.

### Giving gifts

Dogs Victoria People may only give a gift to a Child or Young Person engaged in a Dogs Victoria program, activity or service when:

- the Dogs Victoria Person’s supervisor or manager has provided their consent being satisfied that the giving of the gift is appropriate and proportionate in the circumstances; and
- parents/guardians are made aware of any gift given.

### Photographs or filming of children and young people

Subject to any applicable terms of entry of a venue, under this Policy:

- Children and Young People are to be photographed or filmed while involved in a Dogs Victoria program, activity or service only if:
  - consent is obtained from the Child’s or Young Person’s parent or guardian;
  - the Child or Young Person consents to being photographed or filmed;
  - the context is directly related to participation in the program, activity or service;
  - the Child or Young Person is appropriately dressed and posed; and
  - the image is taken in the presence of other Dogs Victoria People where possible.
- If a Child or Young Person does not wish to be photographed or filmed or a Child’s or Young Person’s parent or guardian has not provided permission for the Child or Young Person to be photographed or filmed, the Child or Young Person is not to be singled out or made to feel purposely excluded.
- Images are not to be distributed (including as an attachment to an email) to anyone other than the Child or Young Person photographed without Dogs Victoria senior management’s knowledge and approval.
- Photographs and films are not to be taken in the presence of or whilst Children or Young People

are getting dressed.

- Images are to be stored in a manner that prevents unauthorised access.
- Dogs Victoria People must comply with applicable privacy laws including *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) in relation to holding and disclosing images and any other personal information. In particular, Dogs Victoria People should inform a Child's or Young Person's parent or guardian about the nature of the use of the image(s) as well as how the image(s) will be stored and how the image(s) can be accessed by the parent or guardian.

### **Physical contact with Children and Young People**

Any physical contact with Children and Young People must be appropriate to the delivery of the program, activity or service, such as assisting with skill learning, and based on the needs of the Child or Young Person.

Under no circumstances should any Dogs Victoria People have contact with Children or Young People participating in our program or activity that:

- involves touching of:
  - genitals;
  - buttocks; or
  - the breast area,
    - other than as part of delivering medical or allied health services by a medical professional or in the process of administering first aid;
- would appear to a reasonable observer to have a sexual connotation;
- is intended to cause pain or distress to the Child or Young Person (e.g. physical punishment);
- is overly physical (e.g. wrestling, horseplay, tickling or other roughhousing);
- is unnecessary (e.g. assisting with toileting when a child does not require assistance);
- is initiated against the wishes of the Child or Young Person, except if such contact may be necessary to prevent injury to the Child or Young Person or to others, in which case:
  - physical restraint should be a last resort;
  - the level of force used must be appropriate to the specific circumstances, and aimed solely at restraining the Child or Young Person to prevent harm to themselves or others; and
  - the incident must be reported to Dogs Victoria senior management and the Child or Young Person's parent or guardian as soon as possible.

All Dogs Victoria People are required to report to Dogs Victoria senior management as soon as possible any physical contact initiated by a Child or Young Person (whether directed to another Child or Young Person, to a Dogs Victoria Person or any other person) that is sexual and/or inappropriate, for example, acts of physical aggression, to enable the situation to be managed in the interests of the safety of the Child or Young Person, Dogs Victoria People and any other participants.

### **Overnight stays and sleeping arrangements**

Overnight stays are to occur only within or part of a formal program, activity or service. Written authorisation of the parent or guardian of each Child and Young Person involved must be obtained including medical forms.

Practices and behaviour by all Dogs Victoria People during an overnight stay with Children and Young People must be consistent with the practices and behaviour expected during delivery of Dogs Victoria programs, activities or services at all other times.

Standards of conduct that must be observed by Dogs Victoria People during an overnight stay

include:

- minimum of two adults on any overnight stay with Children or Young People present. If an exemption is required, written permission from Dogs Victoria senior management and each parent or guardian must be obtained in advance;
- providing Children and Young People with privacy when bathing and dressing;
- observing appropriate dress standards when Children and Young People are present (e.g. no exposure to adult nudity);
- not allowing Children or Young People to be exposed to pornographic material (e.g. through movies, television, the Internet or magazines);
- not leaving Children or Young People under the supervision or protection of other Children or Young People or unauthorised persons such as hotel staff or friends;
- not allowing sleeping arrangements that may compromise the safety of Children and Young People such as unsupervised sleeping arrangements, or an adult sleeping in the same bed as a Child or Young Person;
- the exercisable right of Children and Young People to contact their parents, guardians or others if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable or distressed during the stay; and
- ensuring an appropriate gender balance of adult supervisors is present if male and female Children and Young People are participating in the overnight stay (e.g. female supervisors available if female Children or Young People are involved and vice versa).

### **Change room arrangements**

Dogs Victoria People are required to supervise Children and Young People in change rooms while balancing that requirement with a Child or Young Person's right to privacy. In addition:

- Dogs Victoria People should avoid one-to-one situations with a Child or Young Person in a change room area;
- Dogs Victoria People should avoid being present in a change room area with a Child or Young Person of the opposite sex whilst they are changing;
- Dogs Victoria People are not permitted to use the change room area to undress or dress, while Children and Young People are present;
- Dogs Victoria People need to ensure adequate supervision in 'public' change rooms when they are used, providing the level of supervision required for preventing abuse by members of the public, adult users, or general misbehaviour, while also respecting a Child's or Young Person's privacy; and
- phones, cameras and recording devices are not to be used in changing rooms and in particular whilst Children and Young People are getting dressed.

### **Use, possession or supply of alcohol or drugs**

Whilst supervising Children or Young People, Dogs Victoria People must not:

- use, possess or be under the influence of an illegal drug;
- use or be under the influence of alcohol;
- be incapacitated by any other legal drug such as prescription or over-the-counter drugs; or
- supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to Children or Young People.

Use of legal drugs, other than alcohol and tobacco, is permitted, provided such use does not interfere with the Dogs Victoria Person's ability to care for Children and Young People involved in our sport.



## Transporting children

The Dogs Victoria acknowledges that from time to time there are valid reasons for transporting Children and Young People.

Children and Young People are to be transported only:

- in circumstances that are directly related to the delivery of a Dogs Victoria program, activity or service; and
- with prior authorisation from Dogs Victoria senior management and from the Child or Young Person's parent or guardian.

It is recommended that the Child or Young Person being transported sits in the back seat of the car and expected timelines of travel are to be communicated to the parent or guardian and management.

## Complaints and reporting

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

Dogs Victoria has a complaint handling policy that includes information for staff and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. An easy-to-understand complaints information sheet will be provided for children, families and the community to know about the complaint process and the supports available to those making a complaint and those involved in the complaint process.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then staff and volunteers at Dogs Victoria must report it in accordance with the complaint handling policy. Dogs Victoria staff and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police. Under the complaint handling and disciplinary policies, staff and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
- having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at Dogs Victoria
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at Dogs Victoria
- removing their access to the Dogs Victoria IT system and facilities.

Complaints can be emailed to [compliance@dogsvictoria.org.au](mailto:compliance@dogsvictoria.org.au) or you can contact the Dogs Victoria Office on 03 9788 2500 or speak to the Compliance Team Members at the Dogs Victoria Office located at 655 Westernport Hwy Skye VIC 3977.

*If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.*

## Compliance Team

Dogs Victoria has a Compliance Team with responsibility for responding to all complaints or concerns, including those made by Children and Young People.

Contact details for the Compliance Team are displayed on our website and magazine/gazette.

If a person does not feel comfortable making a report to a compliance team, they may report their concern to the Dogs Victoria Chief Executive or President.

## Record Keeping

Dogs Victoria is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns, including child-related occurrences.

All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system.

Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

Records will be stored securely and kept by Dogs Victoria for at least 45 years.

## Information sharing

Dogs Victoria may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. Dogs Victoria will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety. More information is available in our complaint handling policy.

## Risk Management

We recognise the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated by Dogs Victoria.

We conduct regular risk assessments and have a risk management plan to address the risk of child abuse and harm at Dogs Victoria. The risk management plan will be developed in consultation with our staff, volunteers, parent representatives and children. We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at Dogs Victoria. The Management Committee is responsible for approving the risk management plan.

Any contractors or other providers of services will always be supervised by a member of staff while working with us to ensure child safety. See also Code of Conduct above.

## Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct

Dogs Victoria will enforce this Policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies (see list below). Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or a member's privileges of membership or other corrective action. More information can be found in our disciplinary policy.

## Review

Dogs Victoria will review all child safe practices and policies at least every two years. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'. Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and also inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices. Reviews are overseen by the Management Committee and will be informed by consultation with children, families and staff.

## Supporting Documents – Dogs Victoria Children and Young People Safety System

The following policies and procedures work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all of our operations:

- Children and Young People Safety Commitment Statement
- Children and Young People Safety Policy
- Children and Young People Safety Code of Conduct
- Children and Young People Incident Report
- Dogs Victoria Complaint Policy and Procedures
- Dogs Victoria Recruitment and Screening policy
- Dogs Victoria Responsible Business, Contact and Procurement Policy
- Dogs Victoria Disciplinary Procedures
- Dogs Victoria Risk Management Plan
- Dogs Victoria Children & Young People Safety Training Plan

## Supporting Legislation

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* (including Child Safe Standards)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* (including reporting to Child Protection)
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- *Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)