

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

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Drafted by	Isabella	Approved by Committee on	03/10/2022
Responsible person	House Manager	Scheduled review date	Jun-2023

INTRODUCTION

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc. is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for any form of child abuse.

Everyone working, volunteering, or participating at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc. is responsible for children's care, safety, and protection and for reporting information about child abuse.

PURPOSE

This Policy outlines how Goonawarra Neighbourhood House prioritises the safety and well-being of children and what steps we will take to do this.

We aim to:

- provide a safe and supportive environment for children participating in our programs
- facilitate the prevention & identification of child abuse at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc.
- Continuously improve Goonawarra Neighbourhood Houses Inc.'s culture of child safety.
- Ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for supporting child safety and wellbeing, identifying and reporting possible occasions of child abuse.
- Guide staff/volunteers/contractors as to the action to be taken where they suspect any abuse.
- Ensure that all suspected abuse will be reported under Mandatory Reporting Laws.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc. is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its programs and services.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to safety and protection from all forms of abuse.

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc. has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working or volunteering at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc. is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and for reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child safety and wellbeing is a shared responsibility between the Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc., all employees, workers, contractors, associates, volunteers, and members of the Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc. community.

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc. supports and respects all children, staff, and volunteers. Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc. is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children

and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, Committee of Management members, children and other individuals involved in our organisation. This policy applies to all activities, classes, and groups conducted by Goonawarra Neighbourhood House.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Policy	House Manager in collaboration with Committee of Management.
Recruitment and screening practices	House Manager, as per the agreed organisational policies
Staff induction, training, supervision, and support	House Manager in collaboration with program coordinators/facilitators.
Policy and procedure for receiving and responding to complaints	House Manager in collaboration with Committee of Management.
Risk assessment and management process	House Manager in collaboration with Committee of Management.
Policies and procedure on external reporting, record keeping and information sharing	House Manager in collaboration with program coordinators/facilitators.
Code of conduct	All staff, volunteers, Committee of Management members, contractors, and consultants.
Child safety compliance	House manager
Adherence to Child Safety Standards	All staff, volunteers, Committee of Management members, contractors, and consultants.
Mandatory reporting and the Reportable Conduct Scheme	There are no staff at GNH that are mandated to report abuse and neglect. However, all staff have an obligation to report a concern or reasonable belief of a concern for a child's welfare, under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. The procedure is outlined below under "Complaints and Reporting".

DEFINITIONS

Committee of Management means the members of the Committee of Management and refers to the Goonawarra Neighbourhood House governing body.

Child abuse means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing severe emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, arising from a series of actions or events over time.

Child/Children means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

A **concern** refers to any potential issue that could negatively impact children's safety and wellbeing.

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction with Goonawarra Neighbourhood House related to one or more of the following:

- Our services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Goonawarra Neighbourhood House
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Victorian Child Safe Standards 2022
- 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)

RELATED ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaint handling policy
- Recruitment and screening policy
- Misconduct policy
- Risk management plan
- Child safe training plan.

ACCESS TO THE POLICY

- This policy will be published on the Goonawarra Neighbourhood House website.
- A summary poster will be displayed on the House noticeboard.
- A copy will be made available in the staff and volunteer handbooks.
- A copy will also be made available to parents or carers of children attending our programs.

POLICY STATUS AND REVIEW

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House will review all child-safe practices and policies annually. We also review relevant procedures 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 inform our approach to continuously improving our child safety practices. Reviews are overseen by the Committee of Management and will be notified by consultation with children, families, and staff.

ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

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

The Committee of Management will champion and model a child-safe culture at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Committee of Management will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable raising concerns.

Everyone at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House has a role in identifying and managing child abuse and harm risks. The Committee of Management will ensure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks per this policy. They will also identify and complete appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers.

The Committee of Management will conduct an annual review of how effectively Goonawarra Neighbourhood House delivers child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Goonawarra Neighbourhood House will be sought as part of this review.

CHILDREN'S EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House actively seeks to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning and delivery of services.

We want children to develop new friends through Goonawarra Neighbourhood House 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 children's rights and provide them with information about their rights, including the right to be safe at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House. 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.

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

- Seek to actively engage children through inclusive practices, program planning and facilitation.
- Regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- 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 Goonawarra Neighbourhood House operations, staffing and programs are suitable for different age groups and the diversity of the children.

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House recognises the vital role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their children. Parents, families, and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns with us.

As we value working in partnership with our families and community, we will seek to have parent feedback regularly presented to the Committee of Management.

CREATING CULTURALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House 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 the Country at all events
- consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices in the Goonawarra Neighbourhood House and our programs
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture
- 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 well-being 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 Goonawarra Neighbourhood House, 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 Committee of Management members, staff, and volunteers on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety
- welcome and support the 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 children 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 for racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our children, their interests, and their cultures

- strive to reflect the diversity of our community through representation in our staff and Committee members
- acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates in our classes
- have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote the inclusion of children of all abilities.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Staff, volunteers, and the Committee of Management 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 Child Safe Code of Conduct, and where they are engaging with children will have to sign an agreement to comply with the code before delivering any services.

RECRUITING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House 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 positions and check to make sure these qualifications are valid. Members of the Committee of Management must hold a valid Working with Children Check, and a National Police Check is required.

SUPPORTING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House is committed to ensuring that all leaders, staff, and volunteers receive training to understand their responsibilities concerning child safety and support their engagement with children. Goonawarra Neighbourhood House assists its leaders, staff, and volunteers in incorporating child safety considerations into decisions and promoting a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

All Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Committee members, leaders, staff, and volunteers must review the child safety training annually. Training will be recorded in the Child Safety Training Action Plan.

Staff and volunteers will receive supervision to support their engagement with children and for compliance with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety 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.

COMPLAINTS AND REPORTABLE CONDUCT

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether an adult or a child makes them and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child.

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House 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 support 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 Goonawarra Neighbourhood House must report it to the head of the organisation (GNH Manager) per the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

There are five types of 'reportable conduct':

- sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the fact of a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

For more details, please see our information sheet. [What is reportable conduct?](#)

The head of the organisation is required to investigate complaints or concerns and make notifications of reportable conduct to the Commission for Children and Young People within three days of being informed.

If the safety concern is about the head of the organisation, then the notification must be made directly to the Commission: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/report-an-allegation/notify-about-a-reportable-allegation/>.

REPORTING A CONCERN

If the report involves family violence or you are worried about somebody's safety, please get in touch with Victoria Police. If your account describes potentially criminal conduct, you must report it to Victoria Police. Organisations cannot commence investigation until Victoria Police have given you clearance.

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 Goonawarra Neighbourhood House
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House
- removing their access to the Goonawarra Neighbourhood House IT system and facilities.
- Complaints can be emailed to isabella@goonawarranh.com.au.

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

RECORD KEEPING

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House is committed to making and keeping complete and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.

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

Records that 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 indefinitely by Goonawarra Neighbourhood House.

INFORMATION SHARING

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children where it is appropriate and in their best interests. Goonawarra Neighbourhood House will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond appropriately to complaints or 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 child harm and abuse risks in the physical and online environments operated by Goonawarra Neighbourhood House.

We conduct regular risk assessments and have a risk management plan to address the risk of child abuse and harm at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House. The risk management plan will be developed with our staff, volunteers, parent representatives and children. We will ensure that any risk controls balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House. The Committee of Management 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 in the presence of children as practical.

NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THIS POLICY AND THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House will enforce this policy, Code of Conduct, and other child safety and wellbeing policies. Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement or other corrective action. More information can be found in our disciplinary policy.

AUTHORISATION



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Chairperson

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc.



Lockie Flenley

Secretary

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc.