

CHILD SAFE

NARANGA SCHOOL POLICY

Rationale

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 to introduce child safe standards into law. The standards will commence from 1 January 2016 for most organisations working with children, with the aim of promoting cultural change in the way organisations manage the risk of child abuse and neglect.

The child safe standards are part of the Victorian Government's response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations. The Betrayal of Trust Report found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations and in the community, more work could be done to strengthen existing approaches to child safety.

The child safe standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations that provide services for children so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

Purpose

Naranga School's Child Safety Policy sets out the school's commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and provides the policy framework for the school's approach to the Child Safe Standards.

Aim

To create and maintain a child safe organisation through the provision of a variety of codes, practices and documentation that address the seven standards of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements (See Appendix 1).

Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety (See Appendix 2).

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children (See Naranga School Code of Conduct).

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel (See Working with Children Check Policy)

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse (refer to DET Mandatory Reporting policy:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx> and Naranga School Mandatory Reporting Policy)

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse (See Appendix 3)

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children (See Naranga School Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy).

Implementation

Naranga School will implement the Child Safe Standards to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students at the School and promote an organisational culture that manages the risk of child abuse and neglect.

Our School has developed policies and procedures that aim to keep children safe. The standards will provide a framework to identify gaps and improve policy and practices around child safety.

The Child Safety Officer at Naranga is a role shared by the Principal (or nominee) and the school-employed psychologist.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's yearly Child Safety review cycle.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, families and contractors in the school environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy also applies to school council members where indicated.

The policy will apply to the school environment (see Definitions section). The policy covers both school hours and outside of school hours.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....

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Appendix 1

Naranga School School Child Safe Definitions

A full list of definitions for Ministerial Order No. 870 is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).
- School-Based Apprenticeship and Training (SBAT), TAFE, Various work placements
- Meals on Wheels program

School staff means:

- in a government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
 - employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (ETR Act) in the government teaching service or
 - employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
 - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).
- in a non-government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:
 - directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
 - a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary)
 - a minister of religion.

School governing authority means:

- The proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor;
or

- The governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act; or
- The principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.

Appendix 2

Naranga School Our commitment to child safety

Statement of commitment to Child Safety and Child Safety Principles.

Naranga School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. The school's approach to creating and maintaining a child safe school environment is guided by our school values.

At Naranga school our values guide the decisions and behaviours of all members of our school community, including in relation to child safety:

- Respect – for ourselves and others – Caring for, understanding, accepting and appreciating ourselves and others.
- Responsibility – Demonstrating ownership of our actions and words. Being accountable for our actions.
- Safety – Provide maximum levels of safety in all learning environments. Provide an environment where students feel safe to share concerning information.
- Learning – to create a passionate learning community that inspires, challenges and supports all students to achieve their personal best and make a positive contribution to the world in which they live. We know children can struggle to achieve their personal best if they are not safe from abuse.

We are committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, procedures, strategies and practices will be inclusive of the needs of all children, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.

Every person involved in Naranga School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Child safety principles

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Naranga School will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development; Our school has a robust human resources and recruitment processes for all staff and volunteers.
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such concerns;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk;
10. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously
11. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers

12. Naranga School has zero tolerance for child abuse and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
13. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, to providing a safe environment for children with a disability and remain vigilant to the needs of otherwise vulnerable children.
14. Naranga School is committed to child safety.
15. Our school is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
16. If we believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse, we phone 000 or 1300 655 795 (Child Protection).

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say. Gaining input is differentiated to meet the communication needs of each student.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally;
- ensure the school community are sensitive and responsive to the needs of otherwise vulnerable children.

Our staff, families and volunteers

This policy guides our staff, families and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school.

All of our staff, families and volunteers must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

POLICY

Strategies to embed a child safe culture.

Naranga School's culture encourages staff, students, parents and the school community to raise, discuss and scrutinise child safety concerns. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden. All child safety documents, including this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available online and in hard copy, for all staff and students to read at any time.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. **All school staff** are required to:

- Act in accordance with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which clearly sets out the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
- Act in accordance with the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures at all times, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) where necessary
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety
- Act in accordance with their legal obligations, including:
 - Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults)
 - Duty of care (applies to all school staff)
 - Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, registered psychologists, and registered doctors and nurses)
 - Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school)
 - Reportable conduct obligations (applies to all school staff in reporting conduct to the principal, and applies to the principal in reporting to Employee Conduct Branch)
 - Organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation)
 - For more information on these obligations, see [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#).

As part of Naranga's child safe culture, **school leadership** (including the principal and assistant principal) will:

- Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when implementing the Child Safe Standards
- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings
- Encourage and enable staff professional learning and training to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse
- Ensure that no one is prohibited or discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school or from making records of any allegation.

As part of Naranga School's child safe culture, **school mandatory reporting staff** are required to:

- Complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations](#) online module every year
- Read the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document
- Read the school's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction, and maintain familiarity with that document.

As part of Naranga School's child safe culture, in performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, **school councils and school council members** will:

- Ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- Consider the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable, when making decisions regarding the Child Safe Standards
- Undertake annual guidance and training on child safety, such as the [Child Safe Standards School Council Training PowerPoint](#).
- Approve the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members, and if updated, note the new document in its school council meeting minutes
- When hiring employees, ensure that selection, supervision and management practices are child safe (unless delegated to the principal).

School leadership will maintain records of the above processes.

Roles and responsibilities

School leaders will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, which sets out clearly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Specific child safety responsibilities:

- The Principal is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy annually.
- The Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The school community should approach The Principal, the Assistant Principal or the School Psychologist (Child Safety Officer) if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety Policy.
- The Principal and the Child Safety Officer are responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.
- Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in Naranga School's other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and risk assessment register.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this school's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Copies of Working with Children Check and VIT registration cards are maintained and kept up to date by the Business Manager.

Naranga School provides annual Child Safe training to all staff and volunteers. All staff are required to sign an annual agreement that they understand and comply with Child Safe standards. This record is maintained by the Business Manager.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. The Principal develops selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence to the Business Manager of this check. The Business Manager refers to the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> for information.

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. If, during the recruitment process, a person's records indicate a criminal history then that person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting systems, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

We take our legal responsibilities seriously. The Naranga School Mandatory Reporting Policy addresses these in detail. It is noted that:

- Victorian teachers are 'Mandatory Reporters', and have a legal responsibility to report incidents where a child's safety is at risk. Victorian Government School employees are expected to follow the DET Mandatory Reporting policy which can be found at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/childprotection.aspx>
- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under the age of 16 have a legal obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our school will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.
- Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities contained in the procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of abuse.
- All staff must complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations](#) online module every year

Risk management

In Victoria, schools are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), psychological harm, and online environments.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our school takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves).
- behaviour is consistent with that of an abuse victim.

- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it.
- suspicious behaviour is noted.

Documentation

The Child Safety Officers (Principal and School Psychologist) works with the reporting teacher to complete the PROTECT document: “Responding to suspected child abuse: template for Victorian schools”. The Child Safety Officer is responsible for ensuring the documentation is completed and maintained. Once completed, the Child Safety Officer scans the PROTECT document for attachment to a confidential Sentral entry. The original is placed in a sealed envelope labelled “CONFIDENTIAL – to be opened by the Child Safety Officer only”.

Support for students and staff when reporting

When a student discloses to a staff member, the Child Safety Officer provides support to all parties – student, staff member and parent/carer – within 24 hours.

Appendix 3

**Naranga School
Child Safety Risk Management Program**

At Naranga School our child safety risk management strategy is a formal and structured approach to managing risks associated with child safety. Our school Child Safe Policy and Student Engagement Policy clearly outline our commitment to implementing the 7 standards for child safety as outlined in the Ministerial Order No. 870.

At Naranga School our process includes risk assessment (see matrix below), implementation of controls and a monitoring and review process to ensure the currency of the risk management approach.

Risk Rating Matrix

RISK RATING		Consequence				
		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Likelihood	Almost Certain	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	Likely	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

Child Safety Risks and Risk Management Strategies

The list below comprises an inventory of potential child safety risk and risk management strategies.

Risks

- Lack of an organisational culture of child safety.
- Familiarity breeding a culture of not reporting issues.
- Natural trust of long term employees (who may have developed issues over time).
- Children alone with one other person unsupervised.
- Recruitment of an inappropriate person.
- Inappropriate behaviour not reported.
- Harassment via email, SMS or other media.
- Unsupervised recreational or other activities.
- Ad-hoc contractors on the premises (e.g. maintenance).
- Vulnerability of staff and students due to unknown personal issues.
- Unknown people and environments at excursions and camps.
- False allegations.

Risk Management Strategies

- Implement an effective child safety risk management strategy.
- Child safety code of conduct.
- Child safety reporting procedures.
- Induction for all visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors.
- Train students and staff to detect inappropriate behaviour.
- Counselling and other resources.
- Clear windows in walls and doors to enable visibility of occupants.
- Non-lockable doors.
- Assessment of new or changed physical environments for child safety risks.
- Supervision or monitoring of activities.
- Supervision of and filters for online activity (Google, Facebook etc).
- Performance management procedures.
- Pre-employment reference checks that include checking for child safety, including criminal history check for teachers.

At Naranga School we believe that our in-depth Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct enable the monitoring of risk and risk management.