



CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Acknowledgement of Country

Woodend Playgroup (WPG) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, the Dja Dja Wurrung people, on which our Playgroup is located. We respect that this land always was and always will be Aboriginal land. Aboriginal sovereignty has never been ceded.

We pay our respect to Elders past and present, as well as all Aboriginal people who have fought, and continue to fight, for equality, self-determination, culture, Country and community.

Purpose

This Code of Conduct sets expectations for how members including committee members and contractors at WPG should behave around children.

Scope

This Code of Conduct applies to all committee members, general members, consultants, contractors, children and other individuals involved in WPG. This policy applies to all activities conducted by WPG.

WPG works within the Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005. Playgroups like WPG are also guided by advice from Playgroup Victoria and Playgroup Australia - peak body organisations that support playgroups to establish and grow.



Statement of commitment

We are committed to providing space for community which is safe for all children where child abuse and harm are not tolerated. Child safety is a priority for WPG and the prevention and reporting of abuse is supported and encouraged.

All committee members, general members and contractors are responsible for promoting the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children.

WPG recognises that discrimination can harm children and we treat all children with dignity and respect.

Principles and Conduct

This Code of Conduct identifies positive child safe behaviours that we ask committee members, general members, volunteers and contractors to demonstrate. It also identifies behaviours that we consider unacceptable and not permitted at our playgroup.

Not following standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is a breach of this Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action. Some behaviours on their own may not be a serious breach of the Code of Conduct but together may indicate a concerning pattern of behaviour that poses a risk to the safety of children.

Members, volunteers and contractors WILL:

- Listen to children and respond to them if they feel unsafe.
- Take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- Take disclosures of harm or abuse made by a child seriously.
- Treat all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability or other characteristics
- Consider the different needs of all children at WPG, support them to participate fully in programs and help them and their families feel included



- Make Aboriginal children and families feel included and welcome at WPG and support Aboriginal children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
- Help WPG be a place where people of all cultures feel safe and included
- Value children and young people's ideas and opinions
- Involve children and their families in decisions about the activities they participate in at WPG.
- Promote friendships and encourage children and young people to support their peers
- Respect the privacy of children and their families, including keeping all personal information confidential unless required by law to share it
- Comply with all relevant Australian and Victorian legislation and our child safe policies and procedures. Uphold the rights of the child and always prioritise their needs
- Report and act on any concerns or observed breaches of this Code of Conduct. Steps detailed below.
- Raise concerns with committee member if risks to child safety are identified. Steps detailed below.

Members, volunteers and contractors WILL NOT:

- Condone or participate in illegal, unsafe, abusive or harmful behaviour towards children – this includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, grooming, neglect or sexual misconduct
- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues
- Use hurtful or offensive behaviour or language with children
- Fail to report information to police if they know a child has been abused
- Persistently criticise and/or denigrate a child
- Deliberately prevent a child from forming friendships
- Verbally assault a child or create a climate of fear
- Offer children and young people alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs
- Show children pornographic images
- Share details of sexual experiences with a child
- Use sexual language or gestures in the presence of children



- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves such as changing clothes
- Develop 'special' relationships with specific children or show favouritism through the provision of gifts or unnecessary or unsuitable attention
- Have unauthorised contact with children and young people online, on social media or by phone
- Take photographs, screenshots or share images of children involved in activities that are not authorised by WPG.

If Members, volunteers and contractors suspect a breach they WILL:

- Act to prioritise the best interests of the child or children
- Promptly take actions to ensure the child or children are safe
- If applicable, report the incident or concerns
- Maintain the privacy of those involved.

To raise concerns with the WPG committee please email woodendplaygroup@gmail.com, noting "breach child safe code of conduct" in the subject line.

Some breaches of this Code of Conduct may need to be reported to

- Victorian Police, or
- Child Protection - Department Families Fairness and Housing.

Reporting to the Police or Child Protection should be the first step especially for breaches that are serious and/or time sensitive. Please also let the WPG committee know via email (details above) if a report has been made.

Committee members, general members, volunteers or contractors who breach our Code of Conduct may also be subject to disciplinary action. This can include termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.



PLEASE NOTE:

If any person in a position of authority within our organisation becomes aware of a substantial risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation, and they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, then they must take all reasonable steps to do so. A person in authority who negligently fails to take appropriate action to address the risk may be charged with the criminal offence of 'failing to protect' and may face a term of imprisonment.

If an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Victoria Police by calling 000 or going to their local police station. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.