

# NWMNC'S Child Safety Statement of Commitment

We want children to be **SAFE**, **HAPPY** and **EMPOWERED**.

We support and respect all children and young people, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, so all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently with nwmnc's robust policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities whenever we are concerned about a child's safety or comfort: we follow those obligations rigorously.

NWMNC is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, thereby preventing and removing those risks.

We have robust human resources and recruitment practices to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing board members, staff and volunteers.

We are committed to regularly training and educating our board members, staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We are committed to engaging our local community to ensure the relevance of our child safety policies and practices.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, as well as children from socially, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies and procedures in place that support our board members, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

## NWMNC'S Code of Conduct on Child Safety and Wellbeing

All paid and unpaid staff, including volunteers, interns or trainees of North & West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre (NWMNC) are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who engage with NWMNC. All paid and unpaid staff are expected to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct in their physical and online interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years.

This Code of Conduct provides parents and families with a clear guide to the behaviour expected by NWMNC of its executive, staff and volunteers while in contact with children and young people. Further, it provides a clear guide to behaviours that are unacceptable.

When behavioural expectations are clear, people are more likely to behave appropriately with children and to identify and report any inappropriate behaviour.

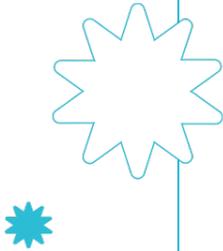
### I will:

- Act in accordance with NWMNC'S **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policies and Procedures** at all times, including:
  - Protocols for communicating with children
  - Online Safety
- Behave respectfully, courteously and ethically towards children and their families and towards other staff at NWMNC.
- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well.
- Promote the human rights, safety and wellbeing of all children at NWMNC, as described in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**
- Demonstrate appropriate personal and professional boundaries, according to the Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and procedures of NWMNC.
- Consider and respect the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and needs of children and ensure that children from all backgrounds feel culturally safe.
- Acknowledge and support the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children, young people and their families. I encourage and actively support them to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.
- Create an environment that promotes and enables children's participation and is welcoming, culturally safe and inclusive for all children and their families.
- Involve children in making decisions about activities, policies and processes that concern them wherever possible.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute, where appropriate, to NWMNC’s policies, discussions, learnings and reviews about child safety and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Identify and mitigate risks to children’s safety and wellbeing as required by NWMNC’s risk assessment and management policy or process, especially if there has been any risky behaviour by Centre workers observed.</li> <li>• Disclose any personal relationships or contact I have with children and young people involved in NWMNC’s programs.</li> <li>• Respond to any concerns or complaints of child harm or abuse promptly and in line with NWMNC’s policy and procedure for receiving and responding to complaints.</li> <li>• Report all suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse as required by the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme and by NWMNC’s child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>I will NOT:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child or young person.</li> <li>• Engage in any activity that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child or young person.</li> <li>• Unlawfully discriminate against any child or their family members.</li> <li>• Be alone with a child unnecessarily.</li> <li>• Arrange personal contact, including online contact, with children I am working with for a purpose unrelated to NWMNC activities.</li> <li>• Disclose personal or sensitive information about a child, including images of a child, unless the child and their parent or legal guardian consent or unless I am required to do so by the law or NWMNC’s policy and procedure on reporting.</li> <li>• Use inappropriate language in the presence of children, or show or provide children with access to inappropriate images or material.</li> <li>• Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs.</li> <li>• Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>If I think this Code of Conduct has been breached by another person in NWMNC, I will:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act to prioritise the best interests of children and young people.</li> <li>• Take actions promptly to ensure that children are safe.</li> <li>• Promptly report any concerns to my manager or The Centre Director.</li> <li>• Follow NWMNC policies and procedures for receiving and responding to complaints and concerns.</li> <li>• Comply with Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme, if relevant, and with NWMNC’s child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures,</li> </ul>
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	<p>noting there are criminal offences in Victoria for failing to act on child safety in organisations.</p>
<p><b>I agree to abide by this Code of Conduct during my employment with NWMNC.</b></p> <p><b>I understand that breaches of this Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action or termination of my employment with NWMNC.</b></p>	<p>..... Signature</p> <p>..... Full Name</p> <p>..... Date</p> 

## NWMNC'S Child Safe Standards Policies and Procedures

North & West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre - A welcoming space to connect, learn and share

North & West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre is committed to developing and delivering the safety, happiness and empowerment of all children within our charge, while notably celebrating the unique and diverse identities and experiences of local Aboriginal children and young people under 18 years of age.

NWMNC follows and promotes a series of Child Safe Standards in compliance with the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People's legislated regulations. Our principle is to ensure all children and young people in NWMNC's care are safe, happy and empowered, while being peacefully respected and stimulated to enjoy their cultural rights with NWMNC's encouragement and support. This complies with Child Safe Standard (CSS)1.1.

Further, with reference to CSS 1.2, NWMNC's philosophical and operational strategies equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture, thereby understanding its vital importance to the wellbeing and safety of local Aboriginal children and young people.

Within CSS1.3 NWMNC has adopted and continually enacts measures to ensure no racism is ever tolerated by anyone at any level in our organisation. Any instances of racism against any child or young person is urgently addressed with appropriate consequences.

Regarding CSS1.4, NWMNC actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within its myriad courses and activities by Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

Enacting CSS1.5, the complete range of NWMNC's policies and systems aim to create a culturally safe and inclusive environment to meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

All paid and unpaid staff – including volunteers, interns and trainees – of NWMNC are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who engage with us. Paid and unpaid staff are expected to act in accordance with NWMNC's Code of Conduct in all their physical and online

interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years. This expectation is regularly emphasised at NWMNC between paid and unpaid staff on all professional levels.

Within our operations NWMNC strives to involve families, carers and communities in our efforts to keep children and young people safe and happy. No matter your age, if you're a North & West Melbourne local, you're a stakeholder in NWMNC.

Amongst new Community Safe Standards operating from July 1, 2022, NWMNC has enthusiastically adopted CSS2, which embodies child safety and wellbeing in our leadership, governance and culture. This is enacted by ensuring:

- 2.1 NWMNC is publicly committed to child safety.
- 2.2 A child safe culture is championed and modelled within all levels of NWMNC from the top down and bottom up. This crucial behaviour is stringently maintained by executives, staff and volunteers.
- 2.3 NWMNC's arrangements at all levels facilitate implementation of our child safety and wellbeing policy.
- 2.4 NWMNC's Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on their expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.
- 2.5 Our risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risk to children and young people.
- 2.6 Staff and volunteers at NWMNC understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.

Child Safe Standard 3 empowers children and young people about their rights to participate in decisions affecting them. It ensures those rights are taken seriously. In compliance with CSS3 NWMNC must ensure, at a minimum:

- 3.1 Children and young people are informed about all their rights, including to safety information and participation details.
- 3.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.

- 3.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, NWMNC may offer children and young people access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant information in an age-appropriate way.
- 3.4 NWMNC's staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise any concerns.
- 3.5 NWMNC has strategies in operation to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.
- 3.6 NWMNC provides opportunities for children and young people to participate and is responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening the youngsters' confidence and engagement.

Child Safe Standard 4 demands families and communities be informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing, so - at a minimum – NWMNC ensures:

- 4.1 Families participate in decisions affecting their child/children.
- 4.2 NWMNC engages and openly communicates with families and the local North & West Melbourne community about our child safe approach and relevant information is accessible.
- 4.3 Families and communities have input in the development and review of NWMNC's policies and practices.
- 4.4 Families, carers and the community are informed about NWMNC's operations and governance.

In compliance with Child Safe Standard 5, equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected within The NWMNC's policy and practice. In compliance, at a minimum NWMNC ensures:

- 5.1 Staff and volunteers understand children and young people's diverse circumstances, so NWMNC provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.
- 5.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.

- 5.3 NWMNC pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, those from culturally and diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.
- 5.4 NWMNC pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people, especially providing and promoting them with a culturally safe environment.

Child Safe Standard 6 stipulates that people working with children and young people must be suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. In compliance, at a minimum NWMNC ensures:

- 6.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasises child safety and wellbeing.
- 6.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current Working with Children checks or equivalent background assessments.
- 6.3 All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.
- 6.4 Ongoing supervision and people management is focussed on child safety and wellbeing.

Within Child Safe Standard 7, processes for complaints and concerns are specifically child focussed. At a minimum in compliance, NWMNC ensures:

- 7.1 An accessible, child focussed complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the role and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaint, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.
- 7.2 Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.
- 7.3 Complaints are taken seriously, with prompt and thorough response.
- 7.4 NWMNC has active policies and processes in place to address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and cooperates with law enforcement.

7.5 Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

Child Safe Standard 8 stipulates that staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training. NWMNC takes pride in ensuring:

- 8.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement this organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy.
- 8.2 The NWMNC's staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise child abuse indicators, including symptoms of harm caused by other children and young people.
- 8.3 Staff and volunteers at NWMNC receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- 8.4 Staff and volunteers at NWMNC receive training and explicit information on how to develop culturally safe environments for children and young people.

Victoria's Child Safe Standard 9 ensures physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising any opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

In complying with Child Safe Standard 9, NWMNC must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 9.1 NWMNC staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in our online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- 9.2 The online environment is used in accordance with NWMNC's Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing practices.
- 9.3 Risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities and our physical environment.
- 9.4 All facilities and services contracted by NWMNC from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people is maintained.

Victoria's Child Safe Standard 10 demands implementation of Child Safe Standards be regularly reviewed and improved. In complying with Child Safe Standard 10, NWMNC ensures that, at a minimum:

- 10.1 Regular reviews are conducted for evaluation and improvement of child safe practices.
- 10.2 Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are regularly analysed to identify causes and system failures to inform continuous improvement.
- 10.3 NWMNC reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community, families and their children and young people.

**Child Safe Standard 11 – NWMNC'S Policies and Procedures document how NWMNC is safe for children and young people.**

In compliance with CSS 11, NWMNC ensures that, at a minimum:

- 11.1 NWMNC policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.
- 11.2 NWMNC policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.
- 11.3 Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs development of NWMNC's policies and procedures.
- 11.4 NWMNC's leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.
- 11.5 NWMNC's staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.