

LARITA ACADEMY

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

1. Purpose

Larita Academy Pty Ltd (**Larita Academy**) is committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and empowerment of all children and young people who engage with our services, programs, or facilities.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy outlines our dedication to creating and maintaining a child-safe environment in accordance with the 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards, effective July 1, 2022.

Our goal is to protect children from all forms of harm—physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, and cultural—and to promote their rights to safety, participation, and equity.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff, including permanent, casual, and contract employees.
- Volunteers, including board members, committee members, and community helpers.
- Contractors, consultants, and third-party providers engaged by Larita Academy.
- Any individual or group interacting with children through our physical spaces (e.g., offices, venues) or online platforms (e.g., websites, virtual programs).

It covers all activities, services, and programs involving children under 18 years of age, whether delivered in-person, online, or in community settings.

3. Our Commitment to Child Safety

Larita Academy believes that:

- The safety and wellbeing of children is our highest priority and a shared responsibility.
- All children have the right to feel safe, be heard, and participate in decisions affecting them, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Child safety must be embedded in our leadership, governance, and culture.
- Diversity, equity, and cultural safety—especially for Aboriginal children—are essential to our mission.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse or neglect and pledge to act swiftly and decisively in response to any concerns, allegations, or incidents. Our commitment is visible through actions like displaying child safety messages in our spaces and involving children and relevant community organisations in safety discussions.

4. Alignment with the 11 Child Safe Standards

This policy reflects and implements the 11 Child Safe Standards:

1. **Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children:** We create environments where Aboriginal children feel safe and respected, partnering with Aboriginal communities to honor their cultural heritage and address historical impacts.
2. **Leadership, Governance, and Culture:** Child safety is a core focus of our leadership, integrated into strategic planning, resource allocation, and organisational culture.
3. **Children and Young People Are Empowered:** We inform children of their rights, provide opportunities for participation, and support them to raise concerns confidently.
4. **Families and Communities Are Informed and Involved:** We engage communities as partners, sharing safety information and seeking their input. Where input is received from families, it is considered by Larita Academy.
5. **Equity Is Upheld and Diverse Needs Are Respected:** We ensure all children—regardless of ability, background, or identity—experience safety and inclusion.
6. **People Working with Children Are Suitable and Supported:** We recruit, screen, and train individuals to ensure they are fit to work with children.
7. **Complaints Processes Are Child-Focused:** We maintain accessible, fair, and responsive processes for children, relevant community organisations and families (where appropriate) to report concerns.
8. **Staff and Volunteers Are Equipped with Knowledge and Skills:** We provide training to recognise and address child safety risks effectively.
9. **Physical and Online Environments Promote Safety:** We identify and mitigate risks in all settings where children engage with us.
10. **Review and Improvement of Child Safety Practices:** We regularly evaluate and enhance our safety measures.

11. **Policies and Procedures Document Child Safety:** We document our commitment and practices in clear, practical policies like this one.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- Leadership Team (e.g., CEO, Board, Manager):
 - Champion a child-safe culture through visible leadership (e.g., attending training, prioritising safety in meetings).
 - Ensure resources (e.g., budget, staff time) support child safety initiatives.
 - Oversee compliance with the Standards and report to regulators like the CCYP as required.
- Point of contact:
 - Act as the primary contact for child safety matters (e.g., reachable by phone/email).
 - Coordinate training, risk assessments, and complaint responses.
 - Maintain secure records of incidents, training, and compliance activities.
- Staff and Volunteers:
 - Adhere to this policy, the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and related procedures.
 - Report any child safety concerns within 24 hours to the Child Safety Officer or leadership.
 - Complete mandatory child safety training.
- Children and Communities:
 - Encouraged to provide feedback on safety practices and raise concerns through accessible channels (e.g., surveys, direct contact).

6. Key Procedures

6.1 Promoting a Child-Safe Culture

- Child safety is a standing agenda item in staff and leadership meetings.
- We celebrate diversity through events (e.g., acknowledgements of country) and visible commitments (e.g., posters in our spaces).

6.2 Recruitment and Screening

- All personnel undergo pre-employment screening, including Working with Children Checks, police checks, and child safety-focused reference checks.
- Job descriptions and interviews emphasise our child safety commitment.

6.3 Responding to Concerns

- Any suspicion, allegation, or disclosure of abuse must be reported immediately to the Child Safety Officer and, where required, to external authorities (e.g., Victoria Police, Child Protection).
- We follow our Grievance Policy to ensure child-focused, trauma-informed responses.

6.4 Risk Management

- We conduct risk assessments of physical spaces (e.g., unsupervised areas) and online platforms (e.g., social media, virtual events) as required.
- Mitigation strategies are documented in our Risk Management Plan (e.g., supervision ratios, secure digital access).

6.5 Empowering Children

- We provide children with age-appropriate resources (e.g., “Your Safety Matters” flyers) and opportunities to contribute ideas (e.g., feedback sessions).
- Children’s input is considered in program design where feasible.
- Larita Academy events are scheduled for school holidays so that children who are enrolled in school are able to participate in Larita Academy events without compromising their schooling commitments.

6.6 Training and Awareness

- All staff and volunteers complete induction training on recognising abuse, cultural safety, and reporting duties, followed by annual refreshers.
- Training uses practical examples, appropriate resources and subject matter experts

6.7 Review and Improvement

- This policy is reviewed annually or after significant incidents, with input from children, relevant community organisations, and staff.

- Updates are documented and communicated to all stakeholders.

7. Legal and Reporting Obligations

- We comply with:
 - Mandatory reporting laws under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005.
 - The Reportable Conduct Scheme administered by the CCYP.
 - Privacy obligations.
- Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action (e.g., termination) or legal consequences, depending on severity.
- Records of incidents, complaints, and training are securely stored and retained as required by law.

8. Accessibility and Communication

- This policy is available on our website, and in accessible formats (e.g., large print, translations) upon request.
- A child-friendly summary is provided to children and their referring community organisations at the start of their child's engagement with us.
- Updates to this policy are communicated promptly via email, newsletters, or meetings.

9. Monitoring and Compliance

- The Point of Contact conducts checks (e.g., verifying WWCC validity, reviewing risk logs).
- We cooperate fully with CCYP audits or investigations and act on findings.
- Non-compliance is reported to leadership and addressed within 14 days.

10. Contact Information

- Points of Contact
 - Anita Pahor, Managing Director, anita.pahor@lkg.com.au
 - Jennifer Newton, Program Manager, Jennifer.newton@lkg.com.au
- External Reporting:
 - Victoria Police: 000 (emergencies) or local station.

- Child Protection: 131 278 (after hours: 13 12 78).
- CCYP: 1300 78 29 78 or contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au.

11. Review and Approval

This policy is reviewed annually before each annual Larita Academy program or sooner if triggered by legislative changes, incidents, or stakeholder feedback. Updates are approved by the Board of the Larita Academy and shared with all relevant parties.

Signed:

Anita Pahor

Anita Pahor

Founder and Managing Director

Larita Academy