Child Safe Policy

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Supporting documents or statements Legislative and policy Framework	HCA Policy Manual Commitment to Child Safety WHS Policy Commonwealth Child Safe Framework 2019 *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) NSW Child Safe Standards National Principles for Child Safe Organisations Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)				

Applies to:

1. Healthy Cities Australia Employees
2. Members
3. Volunteers
4. Student Interns and Placements

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1. CHILD SAFETY

1.1 CHILD SAFE COMMITMENT

Healthy Cities Australia has zero tolerance for child abuse, neglect, exploitation, grooming, violence, discrimination or any behaviour that places a child at risk.

We are committed to:

- Creating environments where children feel safe, respected and valued.
- Actively listening to children and taking their concerns seriously.
- Promoting children's participation in decisions affecting them.
- Embedding child safety into leadership, governance and operations.
- Ensuring concerns are reported and responded to promptly.
- Promoting culturally safe, inclusive and accessible environments.
- Continuously improving child safety practices through monitoring, training and review.

The best interests of the child will always be a primary consideration in decisions affecting children.

1.2. PURPOSE

This policy provides direction to ensure that Healthy Cities Australia (HCA or the 'Association') is a

Child Safe Organisation.

All adults involved with Healthy Cities Australia have a duty of care to the children and young people linked to our facilities, activities and programs. Our community views Healthy Cities Australia as a safe place for their children and young people to interact and participate.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within programs delivered by Healthy Cities Australia;
- To work towards an organisational culture that protects children and promotes physical and psychological safety;
- To guide recruitment and induction procedures to ensure workers are safe and suitable in meeting the Association commitment to protect children;
- To ensure that all applicable workers are trained to identify programs where possible abuse could occur;
- To ensure appropriate recording and reporting of abuse;
- To ensure employees understand their obligations as mandatory reporters of child abuse.

1.3. DEFINITIONS

Child	A person under 18 years of age
Child Abuse	Any action or inaction resulting in actual or potential harm to a child, including: • Physical abuse • Emotional or psychological abuse • Sexual abuse • Neglect • Exposure to family violence • Exploitation
Grooming	Behaviour intended to establish trust or emotional connection with a child or their family in order to facilitate abuse, exploitation or inappropriate influence.
Online Harm	Any form of abuse, harassment, exploitation, bullying or grooming occurring through digital, online or social media platforms.
Cultural Safety	An environment where children feel respected, valued and safe in expressing their cultural identity.
Reportable Conduct	Conduct that may require notification or investigation in accordance with NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme requirements.
Worker	For the purposes of this policy, worker includes an individual who is engaged as an employee, a contractor or sub-contractor, an agent, an apprentice, a consultant, a person who is self-employed, a person who is carrying out work for a sentence, a volunteer, or a work experience student.
Physical abuse	The use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning.

Neglect	The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing.
Emotional Abuse	Refers to a parent or caregiver's inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child, or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Such acts have a high probability of damaging a child's self-esteem or social competence.
Sexual Abuse	The use of a child for sexual gratification by an adult or significantly older child or adolescent. Sexually abusive behaviours can include fondling genitals; masturbation; oral sex; vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object; fondling breasts; voyeurism; exhibitionism; and exposing the child to, or involving the child in, pornography.
Ill Treatment	Disciplining or correcting a child in an unreasonable and seriously inappropriate or improper manner; making excessive and/or degrading demands of a child; hostile use of force towards a child; and/or a pattern of hostile or unreasonable and seriously inappropriate degrading comments or behaviour towards a child.
Domestic or family Abuse	Domestic violence is classified as form of child abuse under mandatory reporting legislation as it recognises the trauma and impact it has on a child even if not directly involved. Abusive behaviour isn't just physical violence. It can be any behaviour meant to control, dominate, humiliate or scare the other person including cohesive control "involves patterns of abuse that have the cumulative effect of denying victim-survivors their autonomy and independence.

1.4. SCOPE

This policy applies to all workers (as defined in clause 1.2) of Healthy Cities Australia which includes:

- Board Directors
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Contractors and consultants
- Researchers
- Students and interns
- Partner organisations delivering activities on behalf of HCA
- Any individual representing HCA

The policy applies to:

- Face-to-face activities
- Community consultations
- Research projects
- Health promotion initiatives

- Events and meetings
- Online and digital engagement
- Social media activities
- Photographic and media activities
- Any activity involving contact with children

1.5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Healthy Cities Australia is a community based, not for profit organisation which is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that ensures all involved in Healthy Cities Australia activities, services and programs act in the best interests of children, young people and vulnerable adults which is outlined in our "Commitment to Child Safety" Healthy Cities Australia is against all forms of abuse and neglect of children and young people and works with the community and appropriate Government Departments to ensure the safety of these important members of our society.

Our Guiding Principles are:

Child Safety and Wellbeing

The safety and wellbeing of children is paramount.

Participation

Children have the right to express their views and contribute to decisions affecting them.

Inclusion

All children should feel welcomed, respected and included regardless of:

- Ability
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Cultural background
- Religion
- Socioeconomic circumstances
- Family structure

Cultural Safety

HCA recognises the importance of culturally safe environments and respects the rights, cultures and identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Accountability

All personnel are responsible for protecting children and reporting concerns.

2. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Children participating in HCA activities have the right to feel safe and protected.

Healthy Cities Australia will execute all principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children will be provided with age-appropriate information about their rights and how to seek help and support.

3. POLICY STANDARDS

The following standards have been derived from the Office of the Children's Guardian Child Safe Standards (https://www.ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-andresources/child-safe-standards) and guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices and policies to protect children from abuse:

1. Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur,
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy has been adopted by the Board to facilitate understanding and implementation of best practice that adheres to legislation for the protection of children accessing organisational programs. Child Protection practices are mandatory for all workers and are introduced as part of induction processes and in line with the Association's approach to managing organisational risk.

To support workers in meeting this obligation, a clear understanding of worker responsibilities and daily practice that are integral to ensuring children are protected are outlined in this Policy and form part of our induction and onboarding programs. These skills and awareness are developed and maintained through access to training.

Healthy Cities Australia Board

The board has responsibility for approving the Child Safe Policy and to ensure that appropriate procedures and guidelines are in place to assist all to comply with the policy. The Board is responsible for:

- Promoting a child-safe culture.
- Ensuring adequate governance arrangements.
- Monitoring child safety risks.
- Receiving annual child safety reports.
- Reviewing child safety incidents and trends.
- Reviewing this policy every two years.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that Healthy Cities Australia complies with its legal, regulatory and procedural obligations through the implementation of this policy and the development of procedures and guidelines to be followed in adhering to this policy. The CEO is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy.
- Ensuring adequate resources and training.
- Maintaining child-safe systems and practices.
- Responding appropriately to child safety concerns.
- Ensuring compliance with legislative obligations.

Child Safety Officer

The Child Safety Officer is responsible for:

- Providing advice and support.
- Receiving reports and complaints.
- Maintaining child safety records.
- Coordinating investigations and responses.
- Monitoring compliance and training.

Employees/Volunteers

Employees and volunteers are responsible for participating in screening on commencement of role as well as complying with this policy and any related procedures and/or guidelines. All personnel must:

- Comply with this policy.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Complete required child safety training.
- Report concerns immediately.
- Act in the best interests of children.

5. RECRUITMENT AND INDUCTION

HCA will take all reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children. Measures include:

- Child-safe recruitment practices.
- Onboarding outlining safeguarding responsibilities.

- Behaviour-based interview questions.
- Verification of qualifications and experience.
- Reference checks.
- Working With Children Check (WWCC) verification where required.

No individual may undertake child-related work without meeting required screening obligations. Contractors, consultants and partner organisations who work in child and family focused programs must demonstrate equivalent child-safe practices.

5.1 EMPLOYEE SCREENING

Healthy Cities Australia operate as a 'Child Safe Organisation' adhering to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) (kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au) guidelines for prevention strategies including compliance to Working with Children Check clearance and monitoring systems.

A working with Children Check is a prerequisite for paid and unpaid child-related work. As such workers must have a working with children's clearance prior to commencement of employment which will be valid for a period of five years. Workers are responsible for renewing their Working with Children Check every five years.

5.2 EMPLOYEE INDUCTION

On commencement of employment/engagement, workers must ensure they are familiar with this policy, completed the Child Safe Training module and any related policies of Healthy Cities Australia Workers will be provided/directed to this information as part of their induction on commencement of their employment/engagement with Healthy Cities Australia.

6. PRIVACY, INFORMATION and Online Safety

Storage of children's information including assessments and reports relating to Child Safety issues is managed with discretion at Healthy Cities Australia, ensuring confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Privacy of individuals (clients/participants and employees) will be maintained unless there is a risk to safety. Healthy Cities Australia will manage practices and policy to ensure personal information is protected whilst working under legislation

HCA recognises that child safety extends to online and digital environments.

Personnel must:

- Use approved organisational communication platforms.
- Maintain professional boundaries online.
- Protect children's personal information.

- Ensure online meetings are appropriately supervised.

- Follow organisational cyber security and privacy requirements.

- Report suspected online harm immediately.

Private communication with children via personal social media accounts is prohibited unless specifically authorised and appropriately monitored.

7. CHILD SAFE TRAINING

Child safe training is arranged for all workers who are engaged in program delivery with children and families as part of commencing work with Healthy Cities Australia. This must be completed within 1 month of starting role and prior to any work with children. HCA will provide:

- Child safety induction training.

- Role-specific safeguarding training where required.

- Guidance on reporting obligations.

- Child safety governance training for Directors.

Training records will be maintained and monitored.

8. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND PROCEDURES

Program Procedures and forms outline expected behaviours of employees when working with children, employee responsibility of, and the process required to record and report child protection issues in line with organisational policy. It is the responsibility of Program Coordinators to ensure all workers are familiar with Program Procedures for the specific program that they work within. Program forms may include but are not limited to:

- Risk Assessments
- Program Registration Forms
- Program Promise
- Program Record forms

- Incident Report forms
- Personal support plans where applicable

Procedures and forms are developed with specific program groups, locations and partners in mind to support daily practice at a local level whilst reflecting the intent of the organisations Child Safe Policy.

9. PHOTOGRAPHY OR FILMING OF A CHILD

At Healthy Cities Australia facilities, events and/or functions, when photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes, whilst adhering to the Policy Manual employees must also:

- Take care to ensure local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to before photographing or filming a child;
- Obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child. Individuals may withdraw consent at any time where practical.
- An explanation of how the photograph or film will be used must be provided;
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts;

  Ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

10. INVESTIGATION

Investigation of alleged abusive activity by workers will be reported and an investigation possibly carried out by child protection services or the police if required. Should the authorities not pursue an investigation, the Board will consult with them to determine if there is a need for an internal investigation. Internal investigations will be conducted in line with the Organisations Code of Conduct, the Corrective Action and Disciplinary Process and current Child Protection Legislation.

10.1 MANDATORY REPORTING

Mandatory Reporting is a legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. In NSW, mandatory reporting is regulated by the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (The Care Act).

Reporting of suspected abusive activity will be carried out in line with the legislation. In situations where the supervisor is suspected to be or involved in the abusive activity or believed to be addressing or dealing with a suspicion or incident inappropriately, the matter will be referred to the CEO or nominated Child Protection Supervisor appointed by the Board.

All staff, volunteers and representatives must report: Actual harm, Suspected harm, Abuse, Neglect, Grooming, Inappropriate conduct, Policy breaches, Child safety risks. NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide provides further clarification: https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg

If a child is in immediate danger:

1. Contact emergency services (000).
2. Ensure the child's immediate safety.
3. Notify the CEO or Child Safety Officer.

Reports may be made verbally or in writing and should be documented as soon as practicable.

No person will be disadvantaged for making a genuine report.

10.2 PROTECTION FOR REPORTERS

Reports made to Healthy Cities Australia are kept confidential. However, a law enforcement agency may access the identity of the reporter if this is needed in connection with the investigation of an alleged serious offence against a child. Under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 if the report is made in good faith:

- The report will not breach the Code of Conduct;
- The report can't lead to defamation proceedings;
- The report is not admissible in any proceedings as evidence against the person who made the report;
- A person cannot be compelled by a court to provide the report or disclose its contents;
- The identity of the person making the report is protected.

A report is also an exempt document under the Freedom of Information Act 1989.

11. Annual Risk Assessment

Healthy Cities Australia will undertake a risk assessment annually to identify any risk to child safety and wellbeing through any programs or contact associated with our operations. Program risk assessments are to be reviewed each term. Where risks are identified, strategies will be put in place to manage those risks.

As part of the risk assessment Healthy Cities will consider three primary areas of focus:

- types of contact
- types of risk factors
- mitigation factors or controls

12. Child Participation and Feedback

Healthy Cities Australia values the voices of children. Where appropriate, children will be

- Included in program design and evaluation.
- Encouraged to provide feedback.
- Informed about their rights and responsibilities.
- Supported to participate safely in decisions affecting them.

Child-friendly mechanisms for feedback and complaints will be available.

13. Complaints and further information

All complaints should be referred to the CEO for management in line with the Complaints Handling Policy.

14. Breaches of Policy

All employees of Healthy Cities Australia working with children have a duty of care to support and protect children. A duty of care is breached if a person:

- Does something that a reasonable person in that person's position would not do in a particular situation;
- Fails to do something that a reasonable person in that person's position would do in the circumstances;
- Acts or fails to act in a way that causes harm to someone the person owes a duty of care.

With this, Management will investigate breaches in a fair, unbiased and supportive manner, ensuring confidentiality at all times. Any worker identified as breaching this policy will be subject to appropriate action as outlined in the Code of Conduct. For employees, depending on the severity, this may include disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. For contractors and/or volunteers working with Healthy Cities Australia, this may include termination of any engagement.

Where the conduct of a member of the Association is deemed unsatisfactory, the member's conduct will be addressed in accordance with the procedural guidelines in the Constitution.

15. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

HCA is committed to continual improvement through:

- Policy reviews
- Incident analysis

- Child and family feedback
- Staff and volunteer feedback
- Training evaluation
- Risk assessment reviews

An annual Safety of Compliance with the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework Report will be provided to the Board, including:

- Training completion rates
- WWCC compliance
- Child safety incidents and responses
- Complaints received
- Emerging risks
- Improvement actions undertaken