


WESTERN
LEISURE
SERVICES

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY



WYN | ACTIVE

Approval date: 30th March 2023



Western Leisure Services Pty Ltd (WLS) is committed to providing an environment which protects the health, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We are committed to ensuring the protection of children and young people from any form of abuse or conduct that puts children at risk.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Western Leisure Services (WLS) is committed to safeguarding children and consider any form of abuse intolerable.

Our challenge is to continually improve our services to adequately safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

We are meeting this challenge, in part, through our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy which provides the framework to help us continually embed a child and young people safe culture into our organisation.

We are aiming to systematically build our capacity to keep children and young people safe from abuse and exploitation by any persons and we recognise the vital role we play in the health, well-being, care and education of children and young people.

We

- will establish transparent, safe and nurturing environments for children and young people
- recognise our responsibilities to protect children from harm and to ensure that any incidents of suspected abuse are promptly and appropriately managed
- will ensure our employees understand the process for reporting any concerns they have about a child or young person's wellbeing
- will have clear Policy, Procedures and Guidelines to support our organisational position.

WLS believes that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and we will consciously act to be a child-safe organisation which supports children to flourish.

Regards,

Alison Dixon
CEO





DEFINITIONS

Child, children, and young people: Includes any person or persons who are under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse: Is conduct which puts children at risk and results in a child being harmed physically or emotionally (usually by adults, sometimes by other children), and often by those they know and trust. Child abuse can include verbal and physical actions and people failing to provide them with basic care. It may include the following:

1. **Physical abuse:** occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by an adult. The injury may be inflicted intentionally or may be the inadvertent consequence of physical punishment or physically aggressive treatment of a child. The injury may take form of bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures.
2. **Sexual abuse:** encompasses a broad range of behaviours involving a sexual element that are committed against, with, or in the presence of a child. Behaviour that could amount to sexual abuse spans a broad range of behaviours from sexual misconduct to a sexual offence. This abuse may involve contact like touching or penetration. It also includes behaviours that do not involve contact like 'flashing', possessing child abuse material or grooming.
3. **Emotional or psychological abuse:** emotional or psychological harm is one of the most common forms of child abuse. This may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate, rejected, or causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger. Emotional or psychological abuse often diminishes a child's sense of identity, dignity and self-worth and the impact can be chronic and debilitating.
4. **Neglect:** failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent of the child's health and development is or is likely to be significantly harmed.
5. **Family violence:** occurs when children are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family, or those fulfilling the role of family in a child's or young person's life. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.


6. **Grooming:** is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of children. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation, and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a child in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom children but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.

Safeguarding/safeguard: The term 'safeguard', 'safeguarding' or 'child safeguarding' refers to the actions that address how business operations and work practice impact children's welfare. At its most basic, safeguarding entails the prevention of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and maltreatment by employees and other persons for whom the company is responsible for.

Working with Children Check (WWCC): A working with Children Check is a legal requirement for people doing child-related work, unless they qualify for an exemption under the Working with Children Check Act 2005.

Procedural fairness: A duty to accord a person procedural fairness (also known as natural justice) when making a decision that affects a person individually. Procedural fairness incorporates three principles:

- The right to be heard.
- The right to an unbiased decision maker.
- The right to have a decision based on evidence.



“ Our challenge is to continually improve our services to adequately safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. ”



STATEMENT OF POLICY:

WLS is committed to:

1. Providing opportunities for children to actively engage in activities that are inclusive, meaningful, educational, and positively contribute to the development of children and young people in the community.
2. Implementing systems to safeguard children and minimise the risk of abuse and mistreatment in WLS activities and programs.
3. Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and families. Strategies to embed cultural safety of Aboriginal children include:
 - An acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of formal meetings or public events.
 - Providing opportunities for children to share their cultural indemnity and express their culture.
 - Supporting children and young people who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations.
 - Providing professional development for all employees on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal culture.
 - Celebrating NAIDOC week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week.
 - Consulting and seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families, and communities on their experience of expressing their identity at WLS and further opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices.
4. Supporting and respecting all children:
 - We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTQIA+), children who are unable to live at home and providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
 - WLS has zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion for children and young people is further outlined in the WLS Engagement Procedure.

5. Staff knowledge, skills, and awareness. We do this by:

- Ensuring that all WLS employees are provided with adequate support to achieve these commitments, including identifying the indicators of child abuse and their obligations to report all concerns to relevant authorities.
 - Providing support and guidance to WLS employees in maintaining professional standards relating to relationships with children and young people in the workplace.
 - A thorough induction process which ensures all new employees are informed and supported to understand our safeguarding children and young people policies, procedures, and practices.
 - Ensuring our induction process provides guidance relating to an individual's safeguarding responsibilities. It offers opportunities to seek clarity in relation to the commitments and behavioural expectations set out in our safeguarding policies.
6. Ensuring employees are suitable and supported:
 - Processes to ensure that all employees and volunteers hold and maintain a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) and a police check is conducted prior to commencing employment.
 - A recruitment policy which has appropriate measures in place and require applicants to undergo extensive screening processes prior to appointment. This will minimise the likelihood that we, or an external recruitment agency or contractor, will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work/volunteer with children or young people. We have recruitment procedures that ensure:
 - our safeguarding commitment is communicated to potential applicants for all positions.
 - interviews are held which include safeguarding-related questions.
 - Professional reference checks are undertaken which include safeguarding-related questions.
 - Screening checks are undertaken, including identity, National, and where applicable, International criminal history checks, working with children checks, and qualification checks.

STATEMENT OF POLICY:

- Ensuring employees understand their responsibilities for reporting child abuse and responding to child safety complaints:
- All allegations, complaints and child safety concerns associated with child abuse or mistreatment are investigated and appropriate action is taken in relation to the findings.
- Where an external or internal complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, employees must report this in accordance with the WLS Reporting Policy. Employees are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police.
- Ensuring procedural fairness is applied in situations where a decision is to be taken which could have detrimental effects on the rights, interests, or legitimate expectations of an individual.
- Promoting a child-safe culture to ensure WLS employees and other applicable parties feel supported to speak up and report suspected abuse, neglect, or mistreatment.

Involving families and communities:

- WLS recognises the important role of families and involve parents/caregivers when making significant decisions about their child.
- WLS processes for seeking and incorporating input and feedback with children, young people and their families.

Child Participation and Empowerment.

- WLS promotes participant and empowerment of young people and provide opportunity for their voice and ideas to be heard.
- WLS actively encouraged children and young people to take part in the decision-making process, particularly on matters affecting them.

Documenting our Safeguarding policies and procedures and reviewing as part of continuous improvement:

- WLS will review our Safeguarding policies at least every 3 years, after consultation.
- Where there are any updates or changes to the policy, they will be communicated to all employees and stakeholders.

Employees, volunteers, contractors and user groups will:

- Always act in a professional manner when dealing with children and young people in the workplace.
- Take reasonable steps to not be alone with children and young people, unless as part of a specific WLS program or membership activity.
- Always act in the best interest of children and young people participating in WLS programs and services.
- Always act in a manner that protects and respects a child's individual, cultural and developmental needs.
- Not make direct contact with children and young people by phone social media or email, unless as part of a specific WKS program or membership activity.
- Report their concerns to WLS Management immediately if they have reasonable grounds to believe that a child or young person's safety is at risk, including any abuse committed by employees within our organisation.
- Maintain a valid WWCC.
- Comply with the WLS Code of Conduct.
- We ensure that each person involved in the delivery of our services, understand their role and the behaviour we expect in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We utilise descriptions which clearly state relevant responsibilities and safeguarding requirements.

Privacy:

All personal information reviewed or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they are WLS staff, volunteers, parents, children or external parties unless there is a risk to someone's safety.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Board:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Promote the commitment to this policy and its expectations both internally and publicly.2. Develop opportunities for regular discussion and reviews at all levels to support a culture openness and continued improvement.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure WLS management understand their obligations in accordance with this policy.2. Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation of this policy.
General Manager Aquatic Facilities & General Manager Eagle Stadium	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure the implementation of the policy is integrated into operations.2. Ensure managers, coordinators, and supervisors have access to the policy and to related procedures and understand their obligations in relation to this policy.3. Actively support managers, coordinators, and supervisors in the implementation of the policy.4. Promote and support all employees to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.
General Manager Corporate Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure the implementation of the policy is embedded in corporate policies and procedures.2. Ensure the policy and related procedures are kept up to date.3. Actively support managers and supervisors in the implementation of the policy.4. Ensure the policy and related procedures are monitored through WLS's audit program.5. Promote and support all employees to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal Children.
Managers, Coordinators & Supervisors	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure the policy is implemented within their department and/or business unit.2. Ensure all employees and volunteers have received relevant training in the protection of children and young people.3. Support staff and volunteers reporting concerns of suspected child abuse.4. Develop regular opportunities for discussion and review at all levels, to support a culture of continual improvement and accountability.5. Promote and support employees to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.
Safeguarding Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Assist in providing training to WLS employees on the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Protecting Children and Young People Procedure.2. Provide support to WLS employees raising concerns regarding the safety of children and young people.3. Report concerns regarding the safety of children and young people through WLS incident reporting system.4. Report concerns regarding the safety of children and young people to external authorities including Child Protection and Victoria Police.5. Ensure WLS employees are provided with appropriate support from the WLS EAP support system.
Employees, Directors, Volunteers, Contractors & User groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take reasonable steps to protect and safeguard children and young people from any form of abuse.2. Participate in required training and induction programs on protecting children and young people.3. Immediately report any suspected child abuse to WLS management.4. Maintain a valid WWCC in line with the working with children check procedure.5. Maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this policy, as well as all other policies or procedures related to safeguarding children and young people.6. To support a culture of openness, continued improvement and accountability to children and young people by engaging in regular reviews, discussions and providing feedback.

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