

## Child Safety Policy

### Introduction

Melbourne Sports Institute (MSI) is an organisation dedicated to the development of grassroots sport through the provision of specialised sports coaches, umpires & officials. MSI endeavour to raise the profile of sport through increased participation and skill development to address health concerns such as diabetes and obesity in children. The primary aim of the Melbourne Sports Institute is to nurture the development of sport from grassroots to professional levels in Victoria while embracing Australian values of fair play, team unity and morale. Melbourne Sports Institute sporting programs are comprehensive learning opportunities for students of all cultures and ages as the games-based learning focus incorporates not only the cognitive and physical development of the child but also the emotional and social development that is learnt through team play.

### Purpose

This policy was written to demonstrate MSI's strong commitment towards the management of staff in relation to child safety, and to provide an outline of the policies and practices we have developed to keep students safe from harm; including all forms of abuse at all MSI events, on campus at schools and in other locations serviced by MSI.

### Principles

MSI has a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create a nurturing environment where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard, they feel safe and are safe.

### The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at MSI staffed events:

- All students deserve, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- Our organisation works in partnership with schools to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.
- All staff within MSI have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.
- The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of students are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.
- Policies and practices demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements and cooperation with client schools, governments and the police.
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.
- Staff and students should feel free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by MSI management.
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

### Definitions used in this Policy

**Child:** A child or a young person enrolled as a student at any MSI member school.

**Child abuse** includes:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving:
  - (i) a sexual offence
  - (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming)
- (b) the infliction, on a child, of:
  - (i) physical violence
  - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm
- (c) serious neglect of a child. (["Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment \(Child Safe Standards\) Act 2015"](#))

**Child safety** encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse. (["Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment \(Child Safe Standards\) Act 2015"](#))

**Child neglect:** The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are able to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

**Child physical abuse:** Generally, child physical abuse refers to the use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also considered physically abusive behaviour. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

**Child protection:** Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

**Child sexual abuse:** Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person two or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse can also be:

- Any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them (e.g. a coach, umpire or teacher); the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated
- Any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion
- Sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion
- Non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year-old and an 11-year-old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not considered abuse. ([Safe Schools Hub](#))

**Reasonable Belief:** When staff are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

**School environment** means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- (a) campus of the school
- (b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- (c) other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events). (["Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment \(Child Safe Standards\) Act 2015"](#))

**School staff** means an individual working in a school environment (on or off-campus and including MSI events) who is:

- (a) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- (b) a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary). E.g. MSI staff are considered as contracted service providers.

## Policy Commitments

### Commitment to child safety

The welfare of the students involved in our programs will always be our first priority and we have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where students feel safe and have fun.

MSI is committed to the principles of cultural safety and inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds and to the safety and inclusion of children with disability, and we recognise that these principles support the safety of all students.

## Our commitment to students

- (a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all students enrolled in our client schools.
- (b) We commit to providing students with positive and nurturing experiences.
- (c) We commit to listening to students and empowering them by taking their views seriously and addressing any concerns they raise with us.
- (d) We commit to taking action to ensure that students are protected from abuse or harm.
- (e) We commit to seeking input and feedback from students regarding the creation of a safe school sporting environment.

## Our commitment to our staff

- (a) We commit to providing all staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
- (b) We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people's protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.  
We commit to providing opportunities for MSI staff and management to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

## Valuing diversity

MSI value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we ensure all staff members:

- Support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students.
- Support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students from culturally and/ or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Welcome students with disabilities and act to promote their participation
- Welcome same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students
- Have a physical environment that actively celebrates diverse cultures and recognises cultural difference
- Commit to ensuring our programs promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

## Responsibilities of MSI Staff

- Treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
- Following the legislative and internal school processes in the course of their work, if they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- Providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- Undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people
- Assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
- Following the *MSI Child Safety Code of Conduct*

## Expectations – Child Safety Code of Conduct

All staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and to comply with all requirements. MSI has a *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, which recognises the critical role that staff play in protecting the students at events and establishes clear expectations of employees for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect.

Our Code also protects staff and school employees through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

## Student Safety and Participation

At MSI staffed events, we actively encourage all students to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

Our client schools teach students about what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns students, or their parents or carers, raise with us.

## Responsibilities and Organisational Arrangements

All MSI employees have a responsibility to understand the important and specific role each individual plays and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

### Recruiting staff

MSI applies the best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff. The MSI Recruitment and Selection procedures must ensure that child safety requirements are addressed in the recruitment process

### Advertising

- All positions are advertised with the Melbourne Sports Institute statement of Commitment to Child Safety.
- Positions will clearly state the responsibilities with regard to children.
- Advertised positions will state that referee checks will be performed for shortlisted candidates.

### Selection

Before commencing the role:

- The applicants Working with Children Check is to be confirmed
- Proof of personal identity and any qualifications will be obtained
- At least 1, preferably 2 references to be contacted and their suitability to work with children to be assessed
- Successful applicants to sign the MSI Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Successful applicants to attend an induction session which includes a section devoted to MSI child safety policies, procedures and responsibilities.

### Supporting staff and volunteers

MSI is committed to ensuring that all management and staff receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety. MSI encourages staff members to incorporate child safety considerations into decision-making and their session planning.

Mandatory training requirements for MSI staff are as follows:

- Read and sign Child Safety Code of Conduct and Child Safety Policy
- Engage with the child safety induction video presentation
- Scenario based discussions to identify appropriate and inappropriate behaviour

As these training requirements are essential to support MSI's zero tolerance of child abuse approach, management and staff are required to undertake all of these components before being allowed to work in a child-related role.

### Child Safety Person

MSI has an identified Child Safety Person who has specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by schools, staff members or students.

### Reporting procedures

MSI Incident Reporting Policy and Framework includes how MSI staff will respond to an allegation or incident of child abuse. The Incident Reporting Policy and Framework includes the following elements:

- Initial report/gather initial details
- Contact to relevant authorities
- Conducting interviews
- Further consultation with relevant authorities
- Creation of an official incident report
- The information is only shared with the necessary parties and is otherwise kept confidential.

All reports of child abuse are treated as serious, whether they are made by an adult or a child.

Our organisation records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements.

The child safety review date may be brought forward if an incident calls for an immediate review of policies and procedures.

The *MSI Child Protection – Reporting Obligations and Procedures*, sets out the actions required under the relevant

legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child within our supervision needs protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

## **Risk management**

We recognise the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and use this to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning.

The following elements are considered:

- All existing and new activities must be assessed for risks of child abuse
- All identified risks of child abuse are actively reduced by designing and implementing appropriate preventative measures and education.
- Staff and contractors are made aware of their responsibility for identifying risks of child abuse and their obligation to work with management on reducing those risks.

## **Breach of Policy**

Where any person is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, MSI management is to take appropriate action, in accordance with the Child Safety – Reporting Process.

## **Reviewing this policy**

At MSI we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

This policy will be reviewed every 6 months as to ensure we are agile within the ongoing education and assessment of child safety procedures.

The most recent review was completed 29/05/2020. Details of this review are available upon request.