

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Section 1 - Key Information

Policy Type	Administrative - Vice-Chancellor
Accountable Executive - Policy	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Responsible Manager - Policy	Executive Director, Human Resources Director, Student Success Director, Health, Wellbeing & Inclusion Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Future Growth)
Review Date	8 December 2024

Section 2 - Purpose

(1) This Policy details La Trobe University's commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment for children, their family members and carers, in accordance with the Victorian [Child Safe Standards 2022](#), the National Principles for Child-Safe Organisations and the [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#).

(2) It also guides the University's approach to child/children safety and wellbeing across all its operations, including its online environments.

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This Policy applies to:

- a. all staff and members of the University community (including Council members, volunteers, students, contractors and associates).
- b. across all campuses and activities, including the University's online environments and where the University is the lead organisation in respect of research activities.

Section 4 - Key Decisions

Key decisions/Responsibilities	Role
University Child Safety Officer	Deputy Director, Student Conduct & Investigations
Notify the Commission for Children and Young People of alleged Reportable Conduct within the prescribed time period(s)	Head of Entity - Vice-Chancellor
Notify Child Safety Officer of students who will be under the age of 17 at commencement	Director, Student Administration

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(4) Children and young people are an important part of the University community. The University engages with children in a range of ways; domestic and international students may enrol at the University while they are under the age of 18, the University regularly hosts children from other institutions, conducts research involving children and provides a range of child-related services, including child-care, sports programs, and school outreach activities.

(5) The University is committed to children's safety and wellbeing. It will promote their rights and safety both in its physical and online environments, and actively identify and respond to safety issues and concerns.

(6) As part of its commitment to child safety and wellbeing, the University:

- a. has a zero tolerance to child abuse and takes all safety concerns and reportable conduct seriously
- b. recognises the importance of and seeks to ensure the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and their families in its activities
- c. has child safety governance measures in place, including risk management practices, to encourage a child safe culture in line with the [Child Safe Standards](#), the proactive identification of risk, the implementation of mitigation measures and a culture of continuous improvement
- d. is committed to equity and inclusion and will consider the needs of and provide a safe environment for children with a disability, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those who identify as LGBTIQ+
- e. acknowledges that it has special responsibilities in respect of international students who are under the age of 18
- f. has robust child safety recruitment and training practices for staff and volunteers and procurement practices for contractors where individuals are involved in child-related work
- g. recognises the importance of family and community involvement in child safety, including in relation to complaint handling subject, always to not compromising a child's right to privacy
- h. seeks to empower children regarding their rights, encourage their participation in decisions made about matters affecting and or about them. Where appropriate, the University will ensure that information is presented in a child-friendly, culturally safe relevant and accessible manner on their right to receive an education or service free from abuse, harm, neglect or exploitation and how to raise concerns and/or lodge a complaint
- i. has developed and regularly reviews its policies and procedures regarding child safety and wellbeing, to guide and support staff and the University community in child safe practices

(7) All staff, students, volunteers, contractors and associates are required to understand their obligations in relation to creating a child safe environment. A failure to comply with this Policy and its associated procedures or the [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) may result in disciplinary and/or other action being taken e.g. termination of contract, referral to other agencies etc.

(8) The University is committed to providing a safe environment for all children that may attend a University site, including children under the care of their parent/carer/guardian or other responsible adults.

(9) As part of providing an accessible, supportive and flexible environment for staff and students, we recognise that parents/carers/guardians may occasionally need to bring their children into the work and teaching environment on campus. Children in such circumstances are not the direct responsibility of the University, but the University nonetheless takes all reasonable steps to ensure that children have a safe experience while on University premises.

(10) This Policy should be read in conjunction with the [Working with Children Policy](#), which details the University's approach to child safety background checks.

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Complaints and Concerns

(11) All employees, students, contractors, volunteers and associates must report any concerns they have:

- a. about child safety and wellbeing
- b. alleged breaches of the [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) or potential 'reportable conduct'
- c. to the University's Child Safety Officer as soon as practicable and maintain confidentiality over such reports.

(12) The Child Safety Officer will triage the report and manage the concern in accordance with this and other relevant University processes. All reports will be taken seriously.

(13) The Child Safety Officer will keep the families of child/ren concerned updated as much as is possible and appropriate, having regard to privacy obligations.

(14) If a child is at immediate risk of danger or abuse, Victoria Police should be contacted without delay on 000 with a subsequent notification made to the University's Child Safety Officer via childsafety@latrobe.edu.au. The University's Child Safety Officer will liaise with Victoria Police to address concerns in an appropriate and timely manner.

(15) Anyone who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 must report that information to Victoria Police without delay on 000. It is a criminal offence to fail to disclose such information to the Police.

(16) Under the [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#) (Vic) certain professions (including medical practitioners, nurses, registered teachers, early childhood teachers, youth justice workers and registered psychologists) have additional mandatory reporting obligations requiring them to make a report to child protection authorities if, in the course carrying out their professional duties, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. Factsheets and detailed information to assist professional groups comply with their mandatory reporting requirements are available [link]. <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting>

Reportable Conduct Scheme

(17) The Reportable Conduct Scheme was established under the [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005](#) (Vic). It sets out how organisations covered by the scheme (including the University) must investigate and respond to alleged or suspected serious child abuse, including reporting any such allegations to the [Commission for Children and Young People](#) (Commission).

(18) The [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) applies to the alleged conduct of anyone employed or engaged (including as a volunteer, contractor or associate) by the University where the alleged conduct involves any of the following:

- a. sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- b. sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- c. physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- d. any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child, or
- e. significant neglect of a child

(19) More information about what constitutes Reportable Conduct, or the scheme itself, can be found on the [Commission for Children and Young People](#) website. Questions or queries can also be submitted to the University's Child Safety Officer.

(20) Anyone who has formed a reasonable belief that reportable conduct has occurred or is occurring must report their concerns to the University's Child Safety Officer via childsafety@latrobe.edu.au immediately. Reportable conduct concerns can be made by anyone, including staff or students, a child or young person themselves, their family member(s) or another person external to the University.

(21) The [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) does not replace the need to report allegations of child abuse, including criminal conduct and family violence to Victoria Police or other professional reporting obligations.

(22) The [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) requires the Vice-Chancellor (head of the organisation) to initially notify the Commissioner of a reportable allegation within three (3) business days and update the Commission of progress within thirty (30) calendar days.

(23) The Child Safety Officer is responsible for:

- a. notifying the head of the organisation (i.e. the Vice-Chancellor) that a reportable conduct allegation has been received and ensuring the timeframes for reporting to the Commission under the Act are met;
- b. coordinating the investigation into the allegations of reportable conduct;
- c. ensuring the investigation process follows the prescribed actions for investigating a reportable conduct allegation [CCYP - Investigation Guide](#) as outlined by the [Commission for Children and Young People](#);
- d. seeking advice from Legal Services where necessary and assistance from the relevant business areas directly involved in the investigation process;
- e. providing the Commission with updates on who will conduct the investigation, the outcomes of the investigation and any action that the University will take as a result of the outcomes; and
- f. liaising with the Vice-Chancellor, the Commission, Victoria Police and any independent external investigator engaged by the University.

Part B - Child Safety Training, Recruitment and Contracting

Training

(24) All continuing and fixed term staff are required to complete the online Child Safety Training module as part of their induction to the University and again on a regular basis (no later than every three years) or at a time interval determined by the Child Safety Officer.

(25) Human Resources is responsible for monitoring compliance, keeping a record of continuing and fixed term staff training completion and ensuring non-compliance is escalated to the relevant line manager. Those responsible for ensuring casual staff, students, volunteers and contractors complete appropriate child safety training are set out below:

Category	Training Requirement	Training Available	Responsible for monitoring training compliance
Continuing & Fixed Term staff	Must complete training as part of their induction and again on a regular basis (no less than every three years) or as determined by the Child Safety Officer	Online via the LMS Module	Human Resources
Casuals & CONAGOTHS	Must complete any necessary child-safety induction and/or training requirements if involved in any child-related work, or as required by the University	Read and Acknowledge the Child Safety Code of Conduct via HR Induction Intranet	Hiring manager
Students	Must complete training prior to undertaking a work based learning placement	Online via the LMS Module	Office of the Provost - Placement Operations

Category	Training Requirement	Training Available	Responsible for monitoring training compliance
Contractors	Must complete any necessary child-safety induction and/or training requirements if involved in any child-related work, or as required by the University	Read and Acknowledge the Child Safety Code of Conduct via HR Induction Intranet	Hiring manager
Volunteers	Must complete any necessary child-safety induction and/or training requirements if involved in any child-related work, or as required by the University	Read and Acknowledge the Child Safety Code of Conduct via HR Induction Intranet	Manager of the relevant business un

Recruitment

(26) The University has stringent child safety recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers, these are set out in the University's [Working with Children Policy](#).

Contracting

(27) Wherever possible, University contractors will be contractually required to comply with the University's [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) and this Policy. Where a contractor's activities involve child-related work for the University, this requirement is mandatory. More information can be found in the University's [Procurement Policy](#).

(28) Staff engaging contractors must also ensure Working with Children Checks or documentation of relevant exemptions are obtained as required by the [Working with Children Policy](#).

Part C - General Safety and Wellbeing

Risk Management

(29) The risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, including risks that can arise in the online environment and how such risks could be mitigated must be considered and satisfactorily contained before any activities involving children and young people commence.

(30) The level of risk assessment and management required will depend on the nature of the activity. More information about managing risk can be found here [Enterprise Risk Management & Internal Audit \(intranet\)](#).

Diversity and Inclusion

(31) The University is committed to equity and inclusion, which includes a commitment to specifically including children and young people. We aim to achieve this by seeking to ensure:

- a. students and families are offered the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs they may require to participate fully in our programs upon enrolment;
- b. we have and promote a 'AccessAbility Unit,' which provides advice and support to staff and students regarding the making of reasonable adjustments to enable those with disabilities to participate in university activities on a level playing field;
- c. our Child Safety Training includes information on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety;
- d. we have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified;
- e. we have an Indigenous Strategy and Education Unit which aims to ensure the delivery of high quality services to Indigenous Australians as prospective and current students and alumni.

- f. Welcome to Country is delivered where possible at all graduation ceremonies and other formal events by Traditional Owners and Custodians; and encouraging staff and students to Acknowledge the Traditional Owners/Custodians at the beginning of all events at La Trobe. More information, support and resources for staff can be found [here](#).
- g. the physical and online environments we provide actively supports and celebrates diversity.

Additional Support for Underage Students

(32) Any member of staff can refer students under the age of 18 to University support services including counselling and wellbeing services and academic support.

(33) The University recognises that students under the age of 17 may require additional support and the involvement of their parent/guardian as part of their student experience. The University makes available the following wellbeing supports for students who are under the age of 17 years at the date of commencement:

- a. each semester, the Director, Student Administration will notify the Child Safety Officer of all students who will be under the age of 17 years at the time of commencement.
- b. the Child Safety Officer, in consultation with the Director, Health, Wellbeing & Inclusion, will assign a case manager to be the primary contact point between the University, the under 17 year old student and their parents/guardian. They will endeavour to agree a communication plan prior to the student commencing their studies.
- c. The case manager will consult with the relevant School Associate Dean Learning and Teaching regarding the communication plan in relation to academic matters.
- d. The age and maturity of the student will impact on the level of support needed. As a minimum for students under 17 years of age the assigned case manager member:
 - i. will contact the student within their first four weeks of their studies and every four weeks thereafter to check on the student's successful transition to University life and study;
 - ii. be available to respond to queries from the student and their parents/guardian within the limits of Privacy requirements.

(34) Students aged 17 and over will be treated as independent, mature individuals. Students who are aged 17 and over will not be provided with additional underage student support and monitoring unless specifically requested by the parent/guardian of the underage student or the underage student and agreed to by the University.

International Underage Students

(35) The University must comply with the prescribed wellbeing and accommodation arrangements for underage international students set out in Standard 5 of the ESOS [National Code of Practice](#).

(36) The University's position is that international students (under the age of 18) must live with a parent or suitable nominated relative as per the requirements of the Department of Home Affairs until they turn 18.

Part D - Children on Campus

(37) The University recognises that there may be an occasional need for parents/carers/guardians to bring their child onto campus. In such circumstances, the safety and wellbeing of the child, as well as the safety and wellbeing of all members of the University community, is a key consideration.

(38) Staff and students wishing to bring a child onto a campus should make a request to their manager or subject coordinator. Managers and teaching staff are required to consider each request individually, taking into account alternative and flexible options, considerations of child safety and wellbeing, and any disruption that may be

detrimental to other students or colleagues in the workplace. Approval/denial is at the discretion of the teaching staff member or the staff member's manager.

(39) A child who is unable to attend school or normal childcare facilities due to illness or mandatory or recommended isolation must not be brought to campus as this may compromise the safety of other staff/students/visitors.

(40) If a parent/carer/guardian does need to bring a child onto campus, the University expects that (except in the case of children attending campus childcare or La Trobe child sports activities):

- a. children brought onto a campus or an associated site are fully supervised at all times by their parent/carer/guardian
- b. the parent/carer/guardian must not ask or expect other staff or students to supervise their child(ren)
- c. responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the child(ren) resides with the parent/carer/guardian
- d. respect and consideration is shown in respect of noise level, University resources and property; and
- e. children (with the exception of infants) will not attend meetings or staff discussions regarding confidential/sensitive issues.

(41) If a parent/carer/guardian does need to bring their child onto campus, while on campus, children are not permitted to enter any hazardous area including:

- a. laboratories, workshops, plant rooms and clinical areas
- b. agricultural, horticultural or other science-based areas that store chemicals, liquids or equipment
- c. construction sites, including areas where minor works or maintenance are being conducted or where machinery may be in use
- d. food preparation areas, kitchens, or areas where cleaning or associated chemicals may be found; and
- e. areas containing Sport Science (Physiology) fitness and exercise equipment, floor-based heaters and wet floors (other than for designated programs for children).

(42) If the presence of a child creates an unreasonable interference within the workplace or student operations or safety/wellbeing risk, the parent/carer/guardian may be asked to remove the child(ren) from the campus or a location by their manager or subject coordinator.

Part E - Child Safety Governance

(43) The Campus Safety Committee will oversee the development of the University Child Safety Action Plan and will monitor and review any systemic issues and improvements with regard to child safety practices.

(44) Any Reportable Conduct allegations will be de-identified and reported at the Campus Safety Committee as well as Council's Corporate Governance, Audit and Risk Committee (CGARC) as part of the quarterly compliance report. Records of complaints, concerns and actions taken will be stored securely in a register in the University's Record Keeping System.

(45) This Policy and the [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) will be reviewed at least every 2 years.

Section 7 - Definitions

(46) For the purpose of this Policy:

- a. Child abuse: means any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or the infliction of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, or the serious neglect of a child.

- b. Underage international student:an overseas student who is under the age of 18.

Section 8 - Authority and Associated Information

(47) This Policy is made under the [La Trobe University Act](#).

(48) Associated information includes:

- a. [Working with Children Policy](#)
- b. [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- c. [ESOS Standard 5 - Younger Overseas Students](#)
- d. [Commission for Children and Young People](#)
- e. [Reportable Conduct Scheme Factsheets](#)

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	15th December 2022
Review Date	8th December 2024
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	8th December 2022
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Policy Officer	Jessica Vanderlelie Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students)
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"child/children" - A person or persons under the age of 18 years as defined in the Workers Screening Act 2020 (Vic).