Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Section 1 - Key Information

Policy Type and Approval Body	Administrative – Vice-Chancellor
Accountable Executive – Policy	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Responsible Manager – Policy	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience and Employability)
Review Date	2 June 2027

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 safety and wellbeing across all its operations, including its online environments.

(3) 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 3 - Scope

(4) This Policy applies to:

a. all staff and members of the University community directly engaged by the University to provide services (including Council members, volunteers, contractors, Child Care Centre educators and office holders);
b. all students, short course participants and residents of student accommodation;
c. all campuses and activities, including the University's online environments and where the University is the lead organisation in respect of research activities;
d. all children present at any campus, online environment or University-run activities.

Section 4 - Key Decisions

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Key decisions/Responsibilities	Role
University Child Safety Officer	Manager, Safer Community and Student Conduct
Notify the Social Services Regulator of alleged Reportable Conduct within the prescribed time period(s)	Head of Entity – Vice-Chancellor
Notify Child Safety Officer of students who will be/are under the age of 17 years at commencement	Director, Academic Services
Assign a case manager for students under the age of 17 years at commencement	Deputy Director, Wellbeing Services
Decision to allow child(ren) on a campus or location	Relevant area manager

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(5) Children and young people are an important part of the University community. The University engages with children in a range of ways, including but not limited to:

a. enrolling domestic and international students who are under 18 years of age;
b. hosting children from other institutions;
c. conducting research involving children;
d. occasionally employing people who are under 18 years of age;
e. providing a range of child-related services, including child-care, sports programs, and school outreach activities.

(6) The University is committed to children's safety and wellbeing. It promotes their rights and safety both in its physical and online environments, and actively identifies and responds to safety issues and concerns.

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

a. has a zero tolerance for child abuse and takes all safety concerns and reportable conduct seriously;
b. recognises the importance of and seeks to ensure the cultural safety of Indigenous Australian children and their families in its activities;
c. has child safety governance measures in place to encourage a child-safe culture in line with the Child Safe Standards, including risk management plans and practices, the proactive identification of risk, the implementation of mitigation measures and a culture of continuous improvement;
d. acknowledges that it has special responsibilities in respect of international students who are under the age of 18 years;
e. 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;
f. recognises the importance of family and community involvement in child safety, including in relation to complaint handling, subject to not compromising a child's right to privacy;
g. seeks to empower children regarding their rights, encourage their participation in decisions made about matters affecting and/or about them. Where appropriate, the University ensures that information is presented in a child-friendly, culturally safe, relevant and accessible manner. This includes information 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.
h. regularly reviews its policies and procedures regarding child safety and wellbeing, to guide and support staff and the University community in child-safe practices.

(8) The University is committed to equity and inclusion, which includes a commitment to specifically including children

and young people. The University supports this by:

a. considering the needs of and seeking to provide a safe environment for children with a disability, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those who identify as LGBTIQA+;
b. prioritising inclusivity by offering personalised support during enrolment, and integrating diversity training into child safety training programs;
c. taking a proactive stance against discrimination, providing robust support for cultural inclusion in both physical and online environments, and holding a zero-tolerance policy towards racism and exclusion;
d. fostering a culturally responsive environment through dedicated Indigenous support services and the promotion of cultural respect and awareness.

(9) All members of the University community 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.

(10) 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.

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Complaints and Concerns

(11) All members of the University community must report any concerns they have to the University's Child Safety Officer as soon as practicable in relation to:

a. child safety and wellbeing;
b. alleged breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct or potential Reportable Conduct.

(12) The confidentiality of all parties must be maintained in all reporting.

(13) All reports are taken seriously. The Child Safety Officer will:

a. triage the report and manage the concern in accordance with this and other relevant University processes;
b. update the families of child(ren) concerned as much as is possible and appropriate, having regard to privacy and other legal obligations.

(14) 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), where:

a. a child is at immediate risk of danger or abuse;
b. anyone forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16. It is a criminal offence to fail to disclose such information to the Police.

(15) The University's Child Safety Officer will liaise with Victoria Police to address concerns in an appropriate and timely manner.

(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), as well as persons with certain qualifications working in the health, education or community or welfare services field, have additional

mandatory reporting obligations requiring them to make a report to child protection authorities if, in the course of 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. Fact sheets and detailed information to assist professional groups comply with their mandatory reporting requirements are available at this site [https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting-child-protection-victoria-generic-factsheet].

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 Social Services Regulator.

(18) The Reportable Conduct Scheme applies to the alleged conduct of anyone employed or engaged 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 Social Services Regulator 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 Social Services Regulator of a reportable allegation within three (3) business days and to update the Regulator of progress within 30 calendar days.

(23) The Child Safety Officer is responsible for:

a. notifying the Vice-Chancellor that a Reportable Conduct allegation has been received and ensuring the timeframes for reporting to the Social Services Regulator 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 (see CCYP - Investigation Guide) as outlined by the Social Services Regulator;
d. seeking advice from Legal Services where necessary, and assistance from the relevant business areas directly involved in the investigation process;
e. providing the Social Services Regulator 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 Social Services Regulator, 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 (3) years)or at a time interval determined by the Child Safety Officer.

(25) People & Culture is responsible for monitoring compliance, keeping a record of continuing and fixed-term staff training completions 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 listed 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 designated University training portal	People & Culture
Casuals, Contractors, Agency or Other	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 P&C Induction Intranet	Hiring manager
Students	Must complete training prior to undertaking a work based learning placement	Online via designated University training portal	Placement Operations – Office of the Provost
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 P&C Induction Intranet	Manager of the relevant business unit

Recruitment

(26) The University has stringent child safety recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers, as outlined in the Working with Children Policy.

(27) Staff who supervise any staff member under the age of 18 years must be aware of the provisions of this Policy as they apply to such employees.

Contracting

(28) 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 Procurement Policy.

(29) 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

(30) 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 can be mitigated must be considered and satisfactorily contained before any

activities involving children and young people commence.

(31) 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).

Additional Support for Underage Students

(32) Students under 18 years of age are able to access University support services including wellbeing services and academic supports.

(33) The University recognises that students under the age of 17 years 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, Academic Services notifies the Child Safety Officer of all students who are under the age of 17 years at the time of commencement;
b. for any students under the age of 17 years who have accepted and are actively receiving support from Wellbeing Services, the relevant Wellbeing Services staff member will consult with the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) or their assigned representative regarding any academic support;
c. the age and maturity of the student will determine the level of support needed. As a minimum for students under 17 years of age the Wellbeing Services Team member:
    i. will attempt contact with the student within their first four (4) weeks of their studies and advise them of available Wellbeing Services, with a focus on offering support to the student for their 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, should they respond to the Wellbeing Services contact.

International Underage Students

(34) 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.

(35) The Universty's position is that international students under the age of 18 must live with a parent, legal custodian, or an eligible relative as per the requirements of the Department of Home Affairs until the student turns 18.

Accommodation in Student Residences

(36) Domestic students under 18 years of age may apply to reside in La Trobe Student Accommodation where they will reach 18 years of age in the year for which they are applying for accommodation. The Child Safety Officer oversees any approved accommodation requests together with the University's contracted accommodation provider.

(37) Children of residents who will not reach 18 years of age in the year in which they move into Student Accommodation may be approved to reside in Student Accommodation with their parents/guardians where the facilities are deemed suitable and appropriate for children.

(38) Students must meet all the conditions as laid out in the Rules of Residence.

Part D - Children on Campus

(39) As part of providing an accessible, supportive and flexible environment for staff and students, the University 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.

(40) Staff and students wishing to bring a child onto a campus should make a request to their line manager or academic supervisor. Managers and academic supervisors 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 line manager or academic supervisor.

(41) 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. If this occurs, the incident should be reported to the Child Safety Officer.

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

a. children 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.

(43) If a parent/carer/guardian does need to bring their child onto campus, children are not permitted to enter any hazardous area while on campus, 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, or
e. areas containing Sport Science (Physiology) fitness and exercise equipment, floor-based heaters and wet floors (other than for designated programs for children).

(44) If the presence of a child creates an unreasonable interference within the workplace, student operations or a safety/wellbeing risk, the parent/carer/guardian may be asked to remove the child(ren) from the campus or a location by the relevant work area leader, after consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or their nominee.

Part E - Child Safety Governance

(45) The Health and Safety Committee monitors and reviews any systemic issues and improvements with regard to child safety practices.

(46) Any Reportable Conduct allegations are de-identified and reported at the Health and Safety Committee as well as Council's Corporate Governance, Risk, Internal Audit and Safety Committee (CGRIASC) as part of the quarterly compliance report.

(47) Records of complaints, concerns and actions taken will be stored securely in a register in the University’s Record Keeping System.

(48) This Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct will be reviewed at least every two (2) years.

Section 7 - Definitions

(49) For the purposes of this Policy:

a. child abuse: 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. child/children: a person or persons under the age of 18 years;
c. student accommodation: any accommodation that is offered to students or other individuals by La Trobe;
d. underage international student: an overseas student who is under 18 years of age.

Section 8 - Authority and Associated Information

(50) This Policy is made under the La Trobe University Act.

(51) Associated information includes:

a. Working with Children Policy
b. Child Safety Code of Conduct
c. Social Services Regulator
d. ESOS Standard 5 - Younger Overseas Students
e. Reportable Conduct Scheme Factsheets
f. Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
g. Child Safe Standards
h. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Child Protection Policy and Guidance Note
i. Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Status and Details

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Responsible Manager - Policy	Naomi Dempsey Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience and Employability)
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