



Royal
Botanic
Gardens
Victoria

Child Safe Policy

Policy Owner: Royal Botanic Gardens Board

Date approved: 19 June 2024

Reviewing Officer: Head of People and Culture

POLICY STATEMENT

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria is committed to safeguarding children and young people in our Gardens by providing a safe, supportive and enriching environment that respects and fosters their dignity and self-esteem as they connect with nature and develop a deeper understanding of biodiversity, conservation and the natural world.

Through the Child Safe Policy, we document our clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We communicate this commitment to all of our personnel, share an understanding of its purpose, document expected behaviours in the related Child Safe Code of Conduct and give them access to a copy of our Policy and Code.

To support our commitment to safeguarding children and young people, our Child Safe policies and procedures are: accessible in forms that are easy to understand; have been informed by stakeholder consultation; and are communicated to children, young people and their families or carers, our staff, volunteers, stakeholders and the general public.

Our policy is underpinned by the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* and the eleven Victorian Government Child Safe Standards that are required to be met by organisations that provide services to children and young people.

APPLICATION

This Child Safe Policy applies to all workplace participants which includes employees, Executive Team and Board members, volunteers, tenants (onsite partners), Friends' groups, work experience students, visiting researchers and other contractors. All groups must demonstrate appropriate behaviour towards children and young people as detailed in the Child Safe Code of Conduct, which should be read in conjunction with this Policy.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

We do not tolerate child abuse. We strive to create a culture of child safety that reduces opportunities for harm and neglect. We aim to provide personnel with a clear process to share child safety concerns and report abuse.

At Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, children and young people of all backgrounds are treated fairly and with respect. We value diversity, and do not tolerate discriminatory practices or behaviours.

To support inclusion, we pay particular attention to promoting:

- cultural safety, participation and empowerment for Aboriginal children and young people and their families or carers
- cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people from culturally and/ or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families or carers
- the participation and empowerment of children and young people with disabilities or other special needs and their families or carers
- the participation and empowerment of children and young people who identify with the LGBTIQ+ community and their families or carers.

RBGV is committed to implementing the eleven Child Safe Standards as follows:

Standard 1: Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

RBGV respects and values the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children. Our senior leaders take responsibility for ensuring staff acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children. We support increased self-determination for Aboriginal people and work to ensure that Aboriginal children are safe, resilient and able to thrive in culturally rich and strong Aboriginal families and communities.

To achieve this, we:

- make Aboriginal cultural safety a priority in our Reconciliation Action Plans and our Gender Equality Action Plan.
- work in partnership with Aboriginal communities through initiatives such as the Balee Bubup Bush Playgroup program at Cranbourne Gardens and our NAIDOC week activities.
- require all staff to complete an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Appreciation module as part of e-learning program either on commencement or every 2 years.
- Support and train line managers of First People's employees.
- Require all on-site contractors to adhere to RBGV's Child Safety Policy.
- take a zero-tolerance approach to racism in our organisation and deal with inappropriate behaviour through our Appropriate Workplace Behaviours Policy.
- Provide positive duty training to our managers outlining their obligations to be proactive in identifying, preventing and eliminating discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation as far as practically possible.

Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

We work to embed child safety and wellbeing in our leadership, culture and governance arrangements. To achieve this, we:

- publicise our commitment to child safety and wellbeing in this policy and on our website.
- document duty of care obligations in recruitment policies and staff position descriptions.

- require all staff to complete a Child Safe Program within 3 months of commencement at RBGV. This includes a Child Safety Code of Conduct and the signing of a Child Safety Commitment Statement.
- Conduct risk assessments on learning programs available to visiting schools based on specific audiences.
- Require all incidents involving children or young people to be reported via our incident reporting process and to the Child Safety Officer as a matter of course. These are reviewed daily.
- Display posters in all employee buildings and bathrooms confirming our commitment and the policy and code of conduct is available on the RBGV Intranet.

Standard 3: Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

We recognise the importance of empowering children so they can understand their rights and have a say in decisions about their lives. We also recognise the need to be responsive to their views. To achieve this, we:

- Require our staff to encourage children and young people to express their views. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all children and young people who use our services to 'have a say' about things that are important to them.
- Conduct Gender Impact Assessments that provide a voice to children and young people where new public spaces or major programs targeting this demographic are developed.

Standard 4: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

To achieve this we:

- publish information about our child safe policies and practices on our website <https://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/about-us/childsafes/>

Standard 5: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

We work to create an environment that recognises children's diverse circumstances and where all children feel safe, welcome and included, including Aboriginal children, children from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds, children with disability and LGBTIQ+ children.

To achieve this, we:

- train our staff on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- act when we identify racism, discrimination or exclusion in our organisation and services.
- acknowledge or celebrate important cultural dates such as NAIDOC in our workplace.
- maintain a physical and online environment that celebrates diversity and inclusion.
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities include children of all abilities.
- Provide our staff who interact with children, specific training in how to speak more inclusively to young people.
- Undertake gender impact assessments which means new buildings and programs will consider things like gender neutral bathrooms etc.

Standard 6: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria has a recruitment and screening process in place to ensure that all new personnel at Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria understand their role and the behaviour we expect in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. To do this, we use clear job advertisements and position descriptions which clearly state our child safety commitment and outline our requirements. We also have a Child Safe Code of Conduct, which is approved and endorsed by our Board, that outlines our expectations for behaviour towards children and young people. We have appropriate measures in place to minimise the likelihood that we will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work or volunteer at the Gardens. We have recruitment procedures that ensure:

- our safeguarding commitment is communicated to potential applicants for positions.
- Face-to-face interviews are held that include child safe-related questions.
- two professional reference checks are undertaken and documented.
- screening checks are undertaken, including identity, criminal record, Working with Children Checks and qualification checks.
- Our contractors ensure all on-site personnel have current working with children checks.

Upon commencement of employment, our personnel are given a copy of the Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct. Our personnel indicate, in writing, that they have read and are committed to the Child Safe Code of Conduct by reading and signing the Child Safe Statement of Commitment. All personnel at Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria are required to secure and maintain a current Working with Children Check with no exceptions.

Standard 7: Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused

We want all staff, families and children to feel confident about reporting child abuse, family violence and other child safety concerns. We are committed to making our systems easy to access, responsive and focused on the needs and rights of children.

To achieve this, we:

- give people a choice about how to report their concerns, such as by phone, email, mail or online through our feedback page.
- register complaints and concerns in our systems, respond within a reasonable time and keep people informed on progress and any delays
- record all service delivery incidents that result in harm to children
- require staff to treat allegations of child abuse and harm seriously, and make this clear in our Child Safe Code of Conduct
- provide information and/or training for staff about how to respond to allegations and concerns
- notify the appropriate authorities of alleged or suspected child abuse in accordance with the law.

We manage information arising from complaints, notifications and investigations under the law and our Privacy Policy.

Standard 8: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

We are committed to making sure our staff and volunteers have knowledge and skills to keep children safe. To achieve this, we:

- incorporate this information in our Child Safe Code of Conduct and the incident reporting process.
- provide our Learning teams with regular professional development on topics that improve diversity and inclusion across children's programming.

Standard 9: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

We promote child safety and wellbeing in RBGV-operated physical and online environments. We:

- ensure all online delivery is with a teacher present.
- We have protocols for web conferences which support child safety.

Standard 10: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

We review this policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Child Commitment Statement and the overall Child Safety Program at least once every three years or when legislation changes.

Standard 11: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

This policy and our Child Safe Code of Conduct and Commitment Statement document our approach to child safety and wellbeing and our expectations of staff.

When developing policies and procedures, we draw on research, best practice and feedback from a range of sources, including unions, regulatory and integrity bodies, other government departments and the community.

This revised policy will be rolled out to all staff and is available on the RBGV intranet and also externally on our website.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibility
Board	The Royal Botanic Gardens Board is responsible for the strategic oversight and monitoring of obligations set out in the legislation and referenced in this policy by: • Promoting the commitment to this Policy and its expectations • Overseeing compliance to the Policy via regular reporting

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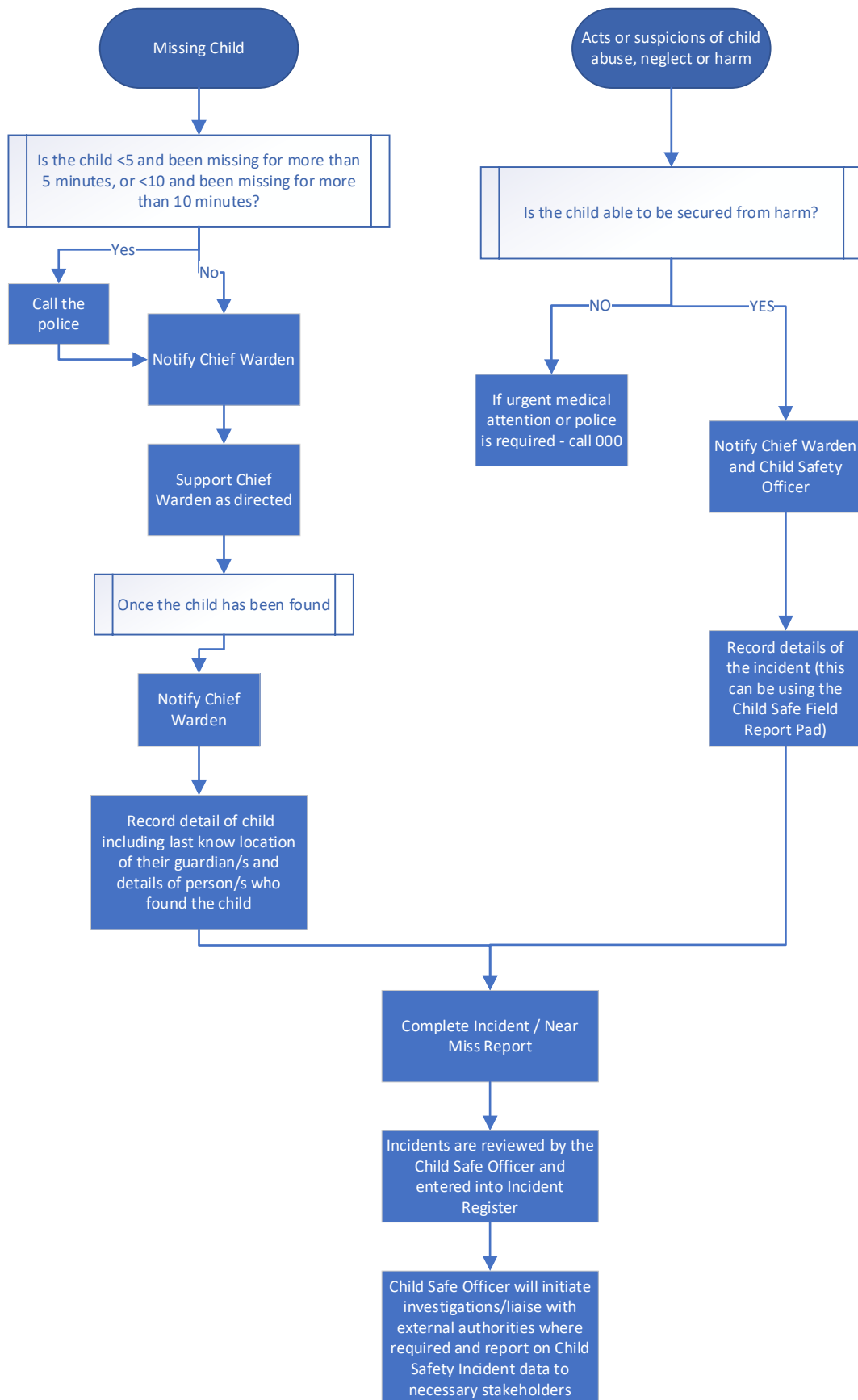
Role	Responsibility
Director and Chief Executive/Executive Team/Senior Leadership Group and Team Leaders & Supervisors	Executives and Managers must comply with the responsibilities of all staff. They also have a responsibility to: Promote awareness of this policy, the RBGV's commitment to child safety and wellbeing and the application of the Standards to their team's work Encourage reporting of breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct Act on breaches by reporting them to the Chief Warden or Child Safety Officer or in serious circumstances, to the police or authorities.
All staff, volunteers and on-site contractors	Be aware of this policy, the RBGV's commitment to child safety and wellbeing and the Standards' application to their work Comply with the Child Safe Code of Conduct, including: • taking reasonable steps to protect children from harm and abuse • treating allegations of child abuse and harm seriously • reporting alleged or suspected child abuse
People and Culture	Implement the Standards in staff recruitment and training and development policies and practices
Child Safety Officer	Responsible for assessing child safety incidents that are reported, leading or initiating investigations where required, liaising with external authorities where required, reporting on Child Safety Incident data.

REPORTING

Reporting of all child safety incidents is a requirement for all staff. Incident reporting templates provide guidance to ensure the child safety aspects are captured and each report is reviewed daily by the Child Safety Officer who determines if further action is required.

A flowchart outlining the reporting process is as follows:

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DEFINITIONS

“Aboriginal” throughout this document refers to both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Child means a child or young person under the age of 18 years

Child Safe Standards mean the Standards made under section 17(1) of the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or an offence under section 49M (1) of the *Crimes Act 1958*; the infliction of physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm on a child; or the serious neglect of a child

Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction with services provided, contracted, funded or regulated by the RBGV. A complaint relates to a specific episode, occurrence or provision of service that has resulted in an impact on any individual or group. This can include the complaints handling process itself.

Cultural safety is an environment that is safe for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity and experience.

Family violence is behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour is physically or sexually abusive; emotionally or psychologically abusive; economically abusive; threatening; coercive; or in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person.

It is also behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, the above behaviours.

Reportable conduct means:

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of, a child
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child

Reportable conduct scheme means the scheme that operates under Part 5A of the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*. It requires some organisations to respond to and notify allegations of reportable conduct against their employees, volunteers, contractors, officeholders and officers.

BREACH OF POLICY

Any breaches of this policy will be addressed via the appropriate channel subject to whether it is determined to be unsatisfactory performance, misconduct or a breach of Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures.

RELATED DOCUMENTATION

- Child Safe Statement of Commitment
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

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- Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan
- Gender Equality Action Plan
- Appropriate Workplace Behaviours Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Incident Reporting Procedure
- OHS Policy

FURTHER INFORMATION

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Code of conduct for Victorian Public Sector employees*

If you need counselling or support If you or anyone you know needs support, please contact the National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service on 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732), Lifeline 131 114, Beyond Blue 1300 224 or Lifeworks Employee Assistance Program 1300 361 008.

CONTACT

For further information regarding this policy, please contact the Head of People and Culture via hrhelp@rbg.vic.gov.au.

VERSION CONTROL

Policy Name	Version No.	Approved By	Date
Child Safe Policy	1	Executive Team	28 March 2018
Child Safe Policy	2	Executive Team	May 2020
Child Safe Policy	3	RBG Board	19 June 2024

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier as required.