

Skillinvest

Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment

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SKILLINVEST LIMITED

CHILD SAFE POLICY AND STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Child Safe Statement of Commitment

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- ensure children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Skillinvest is committed to an inclusive workplace that embraces and promotes diversity through a range of initiatives including a focus on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, migrants, disability, and equal opportunity employment. We value and respect the unique contributions people from diverse backgrounds make to the development and success of Skillinvest. Skillinvest believes all people regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, environment, association, background or sexual identity have the right to be treated in a fair manner that promotes equity and equality.

Skillinvest is committed to child safety and we have a duty of care to ensure the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers, and have a zero tolerance of child abuse. At Skillinvest we take our responsibilities for children's welfare seriously and have a legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety.

Skillinvest is committed to preventing child abuse and we will always endeavour to identify risks early. Once any risks to children have been identified we will act immediately to mitigate those risks by removing and reducing them and where possible, eliminating those risks.

All allegations and safety concerns regarding children will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

Child Safe Policy

The purpose of the Child Safe Policy is to ensure that all employees, consultants, contractors or volunteers engaged by Skillinvest (**staff**) are aware of Skillinvest's commitment and obligation to creating a child safe organisation.

The policy aims to communicate Skillinvest's commitment to child safety in a way that can be understood by all, including children, and it explains key features of Skillinvest's approach to meeting the standards.

Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Government introduced the Child Safe Standards, which are compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children (or are used by children), to protect those children from harm.

Skillinvest has prepared the following policies in order of the government's Child Safe Standards that they directly relate to.

The tables in this document outline the government's child safe standards, followed by Skillinvest's procedures corresponding to the standards.

Child Safe 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
Child Safe Standard 3 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Child Safe Standard 4 – Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
Child Safe Standard 10 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
Child Safe Standard 11 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

Preventing child abuse and responding to allegations is everyone's business. Skillinvest reflects this obligation through embedding an organisational culture of child safety at all levels.

The specific obligations relative to each level within Skillinvest's structure is as follows:

- The Board has a responsibility to monitor the adherence and appropriateness of the organisation's policies and procedures for protecting children from abuse;
- The CEO is responsible for promoting an organisational culture and implementing policies and procedures that aim to protect children from abuse;
- General Managers have a responsibility to raise awareness of the importance of child safety at Skillinvest and in the communities that we operate within. They have a defined role and responsibility for providing information and advice in relation to child safety and managing inquiries, concerns and complaints in relation to child safety or abuse;
- The Training and Operations Managers are responsible for providing information and instruction in the requirements of the Code of Conduct and this Statement to staff and other relevant parties with responsibility for the care and supervision of children and other young people;
- Staff and other relevant parties engaged in child connected work (including volunteers) must agree to abide by our Duty of Care and Code of Conduct that provides guidance on how to behave with children and the standards of conduct;
- Skillinvest also has designated Child Safety Officers who have specific responsibilities relating to the reporting of child abuse.

Skillinvest will also create a culture and environment where:

- Children feel safe and empowered, and are informed about all of their rights, including right to safety, information and participation;
- Child safe commitment and procedures are communicated with families, and they have access to relevant information that is publicly available on Skillinvest's website;

- Staff, volunteers, children and families feel comfortable and supported when talking about child safety concerns;
- The physical and online environment within Skillinvest facilities is inclusive, safe and welcoming for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as disabled people and people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Any report of a child safety concern will be treated seriously and with the utmost expediency and confidentiality while providing support to those expressing the concern or making a report. In addition, Skillinvest will strive for best practice through engaging in continuous improvement by:

- Reviewing all policies and procedures relating to child safety on an annual basis;
- Mitigating risks in the online and physical environments without compromising the children's and young people's right to privacy, access to information, social connection, and learning opportunities
- Engaging with members of various communities to ensure the policies and procedures are sufficient as well as culturally sensitive and safe;
- Reporting and reviewing all incidents at Management level internally to determine whether any improvements to policies and procedures could have prevented any incidents.

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

Skillinvest's Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to child safety conforms with the requirements of Standard 2 through providing an overarching set of principles that guide the development of policies and procedures to protect children from child abuse. This document is publicly available through Skillinvest's website or copies can be provided on request.

Skillinvest has a Duty of Care and Code of Conduct that complies with the requirements of Standard 3 in that it establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

All employees employed in accordance with the Skillinvest Enterprise Agreement, and volunteers engaged in a Skillinvest program, advisory, consultative or reference group/committee are made aware of and must abide by Skillinvest's Duty of Care and Code of Conduct.

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

Child Safe 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

Skillinvest has robust human resources and recruitment practices in place for all staff and volunteers which ensure staff members working with children have certified clearances to be able to work with children.

Skillinvest is committed to training all of our staff and volunteers in being able to identify risks to children and in responding to signs of abuse and neglect.

Skillinvest is also committed to providing cultural awareness training to all staff on a biennial basis. The commitment for this training to specifically incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness is also embedded in Skillinvest's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Upon commencing with Skillinvest, all staff are provided with a comprehensive induction that outlines Skillinvest's commitment to child safety as well as the expectation that all staff have a responsibility to support that commitment and obligation to creating a child safe environment.

Procedures relating to how Skillinvest further upholds this standard are outlined in the Child Safe Procedures document.

Child Safe Standard 5 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

Child Safe Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused

In the event that someone witnesses an incident, has a disclosure from a child, or forms a reasonable belief that a child is at risk of harm from child abuse or exposure to family violence they have a moral and legal obligation to act.

All incidents or allegations of child abuse should be reported to a Skillinvest Child Safety Officer. Skillinvest's Child Safety Officers are the Training Manager located at the respective site (i.e. Metro, Regional or Longerenong) or in their absence, the General Manager or Chief Executive Officer. Allegations or incidents can be reported by children, families, employees, students, contractors or volunteers.

All reports of child abuse will be treated as serious, whether they are made by an adult or a child. When an allegation of child abuse is received, all mandatory reporting requirements (as specified in the *Children, Youth & Families Act 2005*) must be met.

Where appropriate, following a report of a child safety concern, Skillinvest will provide support to the person making the report, the victim as well as Skillinvest staff that may be impacted.

Procedures relating to how Skillinvest further upholds this standard are outlined in the Child Safe Procedures document.

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

Skillinvest takes a risk management approach to ensure the identification, reduction or removal of risks of child abuse.

Procedures relating to how Skillinvest further upholds this standard are outlined in the Child Safe Procedures document.

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

Skillinvest is committed to ensuring that children not only feel safe and comfortable reporting concerns or allegations of abuse but are also aware of how they can report abuse, inappropriate behaviour or concerns for their safety.

Procedures relating to how Skillinvest further upholds this standard are outlined in the Child Safe Procedures document.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. Subject to Privacy restrictions, copies of these forms or the information contained within them will be provided to the relevant authorities upon a report being made in accordance with the Child Safe Reporting Process outlined above. All records are to be securely stored.

Privacy

In order for Skillinvest to perform its functions under the Child Safe Standards, it may be required to collect personal information about an employee, consultant, contractor, student or volunteer and disclose that information to a third party. Personal information which is collected or disclosed about an individual will be managed in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*.

Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities, and people with a disability.

Definitions

Child means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Child Abuse means any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* or the infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional harm, or the serious neglect of a child.

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

Reasonable Belief is a belief based on facts that would lead a reasonable person to think that reportable conduct may have occurred.

Related Policies & Documents

Child Safe Procedures

Duty of Care and Code of Conduct

Privacy Policy

Reconciliation Action Plan

Skillinvest Diversity and Inclusiveness Clause:

Skillinvest values and promotes diversity, fairness and inclusiveness in the workplace and is committed to ensuring workplace diversity and inclusiveness through establishing proactive strategies, policies and procedures. Skillinvest aims to ensure that all employees, clients, business partners and stakeholders are treated with respect, dignity and fairness to ensure Skillinvest promotes inclusiveness and positive working relationships.

Skillinvest is committed to recognising the value of diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace and ensures that work practices promote equal opportunity and are non-discriminatory.