

Child Safety and Wellbeing

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1. Purpose

Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) is committed to safeguarding children and young people from all forms of child abuse and harm. FRV delivers and participates in a range of services, programs, and activities to support the safety of the Victorian community, inclusive of children, young people, and families.

Children and young people may experience:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse including grooming and sexual exploitation
- emotional and psychological abuse including bullying and racism
- neglect
- family violence.

Child abuse and harm may occur in the community, amongst peers, in family contexts and in organisations (in person or online).

The purpose of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to:

- Provide a clear statement of FRV's commitment to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and its zero tolerance for all forms of child abuse and harm.
- Ensure that all FRV personnel are aware of their responsibilities to create a child safe organisation, identifying possible child abuse and/or harm, as well as processes for taking action to report child safety concerns or complaints.

FRV's Child Safety Commitment Statement can be viewed [here](#).

2. Scope and Application

This policy applies to all FRV personnel including, contractors and volunteers.

This policy applies in all FRV environments, both physical and/or online regardless of:

- Where or when an interaction with a child or young person occurs, whether on FRV premises or in other settings (including through any form of technology).
- The age of the child or young person.
- The consent of the child or young person or the consent of parents/guardians.
- Any circumstance where a child initiates an interaction with an FRV personnel.

3. Definitions

The following definitions are specific to this policy:

Term	Definition
Child / Young Person	A person under eighteen (18) years of age.
Child Abuse	<p>Defined in the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> (Vic) as follows:</p> <p>Child abuse includes –</p> <p>(a) any act committed against a child involving –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a sexual offence; or (ii) an offence under section 49M (1) of the Crimes Act 1958; and <p>(b) the infliction, on a child, of –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) physical violence; or (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and <p>(c) the serious neglect of a child.</p>
Child Safe Culture	<p>A child safe culture is characterised by an organisational commitment to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and the prevention of child abuse and harm. It encompasses organisational policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that employees feel confident, enabled, and supported to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a safe and inclusive environment for children and young people • prevent child abuse and harm • effectively raise and manage child safety concerns and complaints. <p>For children and young people (and their families and carers) a child safe culture is characterised by feeling safe and being safe when engaging within an organisation. This includes feeling respected, encouraged to participate and to feel supported in raising child safety concerns or complaints.</p>
Child Safe Organisation	An organisation that creates a culture, adopts strategies, and takes action to promote safety and wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people.
Child Safe Code of Conduct	The Child Safe Code of Conduct outlines the standards and behavioural expectations of FRV personnel when engaging with children and young people.

Cultural Safety	<p>Cultural safety refers to a condition or an environment that is safe for people, where there is respect and no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, meaning, knowledge, and experience of learning, living, and working together with dignity and truly listening.</p>
Direct and/or indirect contact	<p>Direct contact with children is where the FRV personnel's position will have physical or face-to-face contact or contact through written, oral, or electronic communication with children.</p> <p>Direct contact includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supervision, leadership, and control over children and young people • delivering programs and services for children and young people • delivering education and training sessions to children and young people • delivering or supervising coaching or practical training sessions to children and young people. <p>Indirect contact includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a role where decisions are made that impact children and young people • a role that has access to a child and young person's personal information • influence over the organisation's policies and systems covering children and young people • the participation of children and young people in FRV events, programs, and activities.
Duty of Care	<p>The obligation of FRV personnel to take reasonable steps to protect children and young people from the risks of injury that are reasonably foreseeable.</p>
FRV personnel	<p>For this policy, FRV personnel includes:</p> <p>A person employed or engaged by Fire Rescue Victoria on a casual, permanent, full time, part time, contractual or temporary basis. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational Personnel • Corporate Personnel • Technical Personnel • Mechanical Personnel.

	FRV personnel also includes, Volunteers, which is any person engaged by FRV to provide a service of their own free will, without receiving financial benefits
Harm	Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.
Child Safety Complaint and/or concern	<p>A child safety complaint and/or concern can include an incident, allegation, observation, or concern about any form of child abuse (see Child Abuse definition). An incident includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any disclosure and/or harm to a child or young person • an allegation, suspicion or observation of abuse or harm to a child or young person • a breach of this Policy • a breach of the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
Racism and Discrimination	<p>Racism is the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race. Racism is more than just prejudice in thought or action. It occurs when this prejudice – whether individual or institutional – is accompanied by the power to discriminate against, oppress or limit the rights of others.</p> <p>Racism and discrimination can include behaviours such as harassment, abuse or humiliation, violence or intimidating behaviour against a person or persons.</p>
Victorian Child Safe Standards	<p>Organisations in Victoria who provide services to children and young people, are legally required to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards (the Standards) under the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> (Vic).</p> <p>There are eleven (11) Standards, which are designed to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and protect them from physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse, and neglect within an organisational context. The Standards work holistically to build a culture of child safety and embed a child safety focus across an organisation.</p>

Please see the [ORG 010 – Child Safety – Glossary of Terms](#) for a full list of Child Safety definitions.

4. Responsibilities

At FRV, protecting children and young people from harm and abuse is everyone's responsibility. However, there are specific roles within FRV who directly support FRV's compliance with the Standards and provide strategic direction and implementation of the organisation-wide strategies, policies and procedures, and practices. These specific responsibilities are defined below.

4.1 Fire Rescue Commissioner

The Fire Rescue Commissioner (FRC) is the head of the organisation and is responsible for implementing and establishing a child safe culture and ensuring FRV's compliance with the Standards. These actions enable the organisation to deliver services safely to children and young people and to minimise the risk of harm and abuse.

The FRC:

- provides strategic direction to the Executive Leadership team to meet the FRV's legal obligation to comply with the Standards
- champions a culture of child safety at FRV and engenders an organisational commitment to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- acts on the findings of child safety investigations consistent with disciplinary action process outlined in enterprise agreements and relevant legislation.

4.2 FRV Child Safety Officer

The Child Safety Officer is responsible for overseeing the implementation of FRV's Child Safety Workplan including the development and implementation of all relevant strategies, policies, procedures, and practices to protect children and young people from harm and abuse.

The Child Safety Officer:

- supports FRV to uphold its responsibility in keeping children and young people safe by ensuring relevant systems, policies and processes are in place
- works with the FRC, Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Consultative Committees to implement the requirements of Standards at FRV.
- collaborates with stakeholders to create a culture of safety, including undertaking and where relevant, delegating the investigation of child safety complaints
- acts on all child safety concerns and complaints to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, upholding confidentiality, and procedural fairness throughout

- reports any inappropriate behaviour through appropriate channels, these being Victoria Police and Child Protection depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

4.3 FRV Organisational Leaders

Organisational leaders are responsible for promoting a culture of child safety at FRV and ensuring that child safety related policies, procedures and practices are adhered to. Where a child safety concern or complaint, in relation to child abuse or harm is identified, organisational leaders are responsible to referring the matter to the Child Safety Officer.

4.4 FRV Personnel

Consistent with FRV's Values, all FRV personnel will demonstrate a duty of care to keep the Victorian community safe, inclusive of children and young people.

All FRV personnel are responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the requirements the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct and relevant child safety related procedures/practice requirements.

Where a child safety concern or complaint in relation to child abuse or harm is identified, FRV personnel must report this to their line manager and the Child Safety Officer as outlined in section 5.7 of this policy.

4.5 FRV Child Safety

Child Safety is one of the responsibilities within the Diversity and Inclusion team in the Organisational Development and Business Partnering Department. The Diversity and Inclusion team will:

- Facilitate the implementation of a child safe organisation and embed child safety in FRV's policies, procedures, and practices.
- Proactively identify risks and opportunities to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people through FRV's services and programs.
- Provide subject matter expertise, support and guidance across FRV.

4.6 FRV Child Safety Working Group

The Child Safety Working Group will use cross-functional expertise to develop and implement the Child Safety Workplan and corresponding tasks, to ensure FRV's compliance with the Standards.

The Child Safety Working Group will ensure FRV meet industrial and legislative requirements and maximise buy-in from employees and employee representatives to create a child safe culture.

4.7 FRV Ethical Standards Unit

The Ethical Standards Unit (ESU) provides guidance, support and advice regarding workplace behaviour and allegations of misconduct.

5. Policy Principles

FRV is committed to the safety and wellbeing of the community it serves, and safeguarding children and young people from child abuse and harm. FRV's commitment to child safety is based on our duty of care and responsibility to treat children and young people with dignity, respect, and integrity, consistent with our FRV values:

- We serve the Community
- We value Teamwork
- We have Integrity
- We show Respect
- We are Accountable

5.1 Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children and Young People

FRV has zero tolerance to racism and will act on all concerns and complaints related to racism, discrimination, and cultural safety. FRV is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is celebrated and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and community members are welcomed and included.

FRV will do this by:

- implementing the [FRV's Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2024](#) (RAP) and seeking guidance from the FRV RAP Implementation and Working groups
- providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children, and young people children to share their cultural identity and express their culture through various FRV programs.

5.2 Organisational Leadership, Governance and Culture

FRV will embed child safety into organisational leadership and governance to foster a child safety culture and a shared commitment to child safety across FRV.

FRV will do this by:

- ensuring organisational leadership actively support adherence to the Standards and champion child safety through the implementation of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct
- organisational leadership enabling the Child Safety Working Group to provide support on key governance projects across FRV
- educating the FRV workforce on child safety matters, including child safety behavioural expectations, how to make a child safety complaint and how to identify and report a child safety concern.

5.3 Children's Empowerment and Participation

FRV respects the rights of children and young people and will actively seek to include children and young people's views and voices in organisational planning, delivery of services, and engagement with the community.

FRV will do this by:

- providing child friendly versions of key policies and doctrines which relate to children, young people, and their families
- providing child centred information on the rights of a child and how a child or young person can make a child safety complaint
- providing children and young people opportunities to provide their feedback through various avenues including FRV's external website.

5.4 Families and Community Engagement

FRV recognises the important role families play in supporting and promoting the safety and wellbeing of their children. FRV will provide information to families and the community about FRV's child safety practices and encourage parents, carers, families to provide feedback and raise concerns with FRV through appropriate mechanisms.

FRV will do this by:

- providing accessible information via various forms (such as FRV's external website) outlining FRV's Child Safety approach, including how to make a child safety complaint
- providing opportunities through various avenues, (such as questionnaires), for community members, to provide feedback on the development and review of relevant policies and programs to support continuous improvement.

5.5 Uphold Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

FRV is committed to providing inclusive and culturally safe services and programs to the diverse communities we serve. FRV promotes equity and inclusion to ensure children and young people feel valued, respected, and have equitable access to opportunities to participate in and contribute to their community.

FRV will do this by:

- ensuring FRV services and programs (such as FireEd and FireCAP) promote the inclusion of children and young people of all backgrounds and abilities
- promoting a zero tolerance of racism and/or any forms of discrimination
- providing children and young people with accessible information to support their safety and inclusion.

Whilst recognising that all children and young people are vulnerable to child abuse, FRV takes an intersectional approach that recognises that the diverse needs, characteristics, and life experiences may increase vulnerability to child abuse and harm.

5.6 Recruitment, Screening and Supervision

FRV will comply with all relevant regulatory and legal requirements to ensure our recruitment and selection processes prioritise child safety and minimise the risk of engaging employees who may pose a risk to children and young people.

FRV will do this by:

- undertaking regulatory measures including interviews and referee checks, as well as the use of screening tools such Criminal History Checks and Working With Children Checks (WWCC), when applicable
- embedding child safety considerations in the support and supervision of roles which engage directly with children and young people (e.g. FireCAP).

5.7 Reporting a Child Safety Complaint or Concern

FRV takes all allegations of child abuse seriously and will investigate all allegations in a procedurally fair way, complying with legislative obligations and natural justice principles. FRV will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and their families who are making a child safety complaint.

Child safety concerns and/or complaints can be made by:

- Children, young people, their families, and community members. Community members can make a child safety complaint directly to the FRV Child Safety Officer via: ChildSafetyReport@frv.vic.gov.au.
- FRV personnel can make a child safety complaint and/or concern - including concerns around the physical or online environments maintained by FRV, or concerns regarding a breach of the Child Safety Code of Conduct – by reporting to their direct line manager (e.g. Station Officer, Manager) as well as the FRV Child Safety Officer via ChildSafetyReport@frv.vic.gov.au.

If a child is in immediate risk, ring 000.

All other child safety enquiries can be made to the Child Safety Program Lead via ChildSafetyOfficer@frv.vic.gov.au.

5.8 Education, Training and Support for FRV Workforce

FRV will ensure that appropriate behaviour with, or in the presence of children and young people, is clearly defined and expectations communicated and understood by all FRV personnel, including contractors and volunteers.

FRV will do this by:

- providing FRV personnel, including contractors and volunteers with a suite of child safety educational training and materials which align to FRV's child safety risk management system
- supporting and educating FRV personnel, including contractors and volunteers, through a variety of educational delivery methods, to understand the child safety complaints process, which will align to the needs of the FRV workforce.

5.9 Managing Child Safety Risks in Physical and Online Environments

FRV recognises the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated and managed by FRV.

FRV will do this by:

- liaising, supporting, and educating FRV personnel, to undertake child safety risk assessments on events, programs, and activities (either online or on FRV premises)
- ensuring risk assessments clearly identify potential risks of harm to children and young people
- ensuring risk assessments document appropriate risk mitigation mechanisms to enhance the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, which FRV interact with.

5.10 Review and Continuous Improvement

FRV commits to undertaking regular reviews of relevant child safety policies, procedures and supporting materials to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the organisation and Victorian community.

FRV will do this by:

- providing FRV's ELT with quarterly reports on the child safety work and progress as well as ensuring all appropriate information is updated, risks highlighted, and risk mitigation is included in future reviews.

5.11 Child Safety Policy and Procedures

FRV establishes and maintains policy and procedures which are designed to safeguard children and young people, as well as help to promote and protect the integrity of FRV personnel.

FRV will do this by:

- ensuring relevant human resources and recruitment policies and program guidelines consider child safety
- ensuring FRV personnel are supported to follow the child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures through training, supervision, and ongoing review.

5.12 Child Safety Code of Conduct

FRV's Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out responsibilities and expectations for how FRV personnel should behave with and in the presence of children and young people. The Child Safety Code of Conduct identifies positive child safe behaviours that FRV expects all personnel to demonstrate and identifies behaviours that are considered unacceptable and not permitted. These behavioural expectations are designed to safeguard children and young people and promote and protect the integrity of FRV personnel.

FRV's Child Safety Code of Conduct can be found [here](#).

Please see section 5.7 of this policy if you have a concern or complaint regarding a breach of [ORP 036 – Child Safety Code of Conduct](#) or this policy.

6. Policy Non-Compliance

Failure to comply with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy may result in disciplinary action. Non-compliance with this policy will be managed in accordance with relevant legislation, FRV policies, procedures, and practices and the current Enterprise Agreements. FRV's Ethical Standards Unit (ESU) and FRV's Legal Department may also be consulted in this process to ensure a just, fair, and equitable process is upheld.

Such disciplinary action may, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct, include suspension while matters are investigated and/or dismissal. In addition to internal disciplinary proceedings, FRV will report to Victoria Police all instances in which a breach of the law has or may have occurred.

7. Authorising Documents

This policy is compatible with:

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic), Section 17 The Right to Protection of Families and Children.
- Worker Screening Act 2005 (Vic)
- Worker Screening Regulations 2021 (Vic)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

8. Supporting Documents / Links

- [POL 040-02 – Child Safety Commitment Statement](#)
- [ORP 036 – Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)
- [ORG 010 – Child Safety – Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Fire Rescue Victoria Reconciliation Action Plan December 2022 - June 2024](#)
- Victorian Child Safe Standards

9. Document Information

9.1 Document Control

Doctrine Number	POL 040-01
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Custodian	Director Organisational Development & Business Partnering People & Culture
Subject Matter Advisor	Senior Manager Diversity & Inclusion Child Safety Project Lead
Writer	Senior Manager Diversity & Inclusion Child Safety Project Lead

9.2 Version Control

Version	Date Amended	Date Approved	Next Review Date	Nature of Amendment
1.0	N/A	14/08/2024 (Ops CC) & 28/08/2024 (CTE CC)	28/08/2026	N/A