

Child safety policy

1. Scope

All VEC staff, contractors and appointees

2. Policy statement

The VEC:

- is committed to child safety and wants children to be safe, happy and empowered
- has zero tolerance of child abuse and understands its legal and moral obligations to treat concerns seriously and report allegations, safety and wellbeing concerns to authorities
- is committed to the 11 Child Safe Standards as prescribed for organisations by the Commission for Children and Young People Victoria.

3. Statement of commitment to child safety

The VEC has a *Statement of commitment to child safety* regarding the wellbeing of children and young people, which is widely displayed, circulated and promoted.

Copies are available to:

- any school which engages with the VEC's Passport to Democracy program or another VEC incursion
- any school that hosts an onsite voting centre
- parents who may need to bring their children along to electoral education/outreach sessions
- parents of and young people employed to work at electoral events
- anyone who requests a copy.

The VEC's *Child safety policy* is also available to the public on the VEC website.

4. Principles

4.1. Empowering children and young people

The VEC aims to support young people to understand the democracy they live in and inspire them to become active citizens within that democracy. To that end, the VEC aims to stimulate the curiosity of young people in relation to the community-based issues they care about. The VEC provides learning tools and approaches to enable young people to make positive change in their school or local community and consider how they, as active citizens, can take part in Victoria's democracy. A very practical experience of taking part in democracy can be provided through employment or voting at an election.

4.2. Cultural heritage

The VEC is acutely conscious of the requirement for inclusive and supportive culturally safe environments for learning, so that young people have their cultural diversity validated and understand that every elector is equal at the ballot box.

4.3. Working with children checks

All staff members who have direct interaction with children and young people as part of their daily roles (Education and Inclusion Team), are required to provide and maintain a current working with children check, national police check and keep relevant mandatory training up-to-date.

Election staff required to attend school premises to inspect voting centres, must also have a valid working with children check.

4.4. Staff recruitment, supervision and training

The recruitment and selection of all staff aims to support the VEC's commitment to promoting an organisational culture of child safety. The VEC has robust recruitment and selection processes, including reference checks and police record checks to ensure that the right people are recruited.

For positions that involve contact with children and young people, recruitment is based on selection criteria which clearly demonstrate commitment to child safety to assist the VEC in ensuring that the most appropriate staff are employed. Selection policies and guidelines, including pre-screening activities, are to reflect an understanding of, and commitment to, a child safe environment.

VEC election staff may be working around children and young people on occasion at electoral events. Consequently, the VEC includes information about its *Child safety policy* in relevant recruitment advertisements, induction handbooks and processes.

4.5. Physical and emotional safety protection measures

The physical and emotional safety and security of children/young people involved with the VEC is prioritised in the following practical ways:

- adherence to occupational health & safety legislation
- all school incursion bookings include an email statement that the supervising teacher must be present in the classroom at all times
- young people employed within voting centres are under constant supervision by the voting centre manager and are not left alone
- children accompanying their parents/guardians to education/outreach sessions are required to be under the supervision of their parents/guardians at all times
- VEC staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities

4.6. Reporting

The VEC takes all allegations seriously and has a policy and process in place to investigate concerns fairly, thoroughly, appropriately and promptly. The VEC is committed to complying with all legal requirements regarding child safety and where an alleged/suspected incident occurs, provides structured reporting and responding processes that protect and support the health and wellbeing of children.

If any adult in Victoria (including those either employed or representing the VEC) has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident.

5. Policy updates or amendments

The VEC can update or amend this policy at its absolute discretion. Employees will be notified of changes.

6. Endorsement

Approval		
Date approved: 21/01/20	Date of effect: 21/01/20	Next review due: June 2023
Approved by	Executive Management Group	
Owner	Director Human Resources	
Responsible branch	Human Resources	
References and legislation	The <i>Child Safe Standards Victoria (2022)</i>	
Audience	VEC employees, contractors and appointees	

7. Change history

Version	Date	Author	Changes	Approved by
V2	01/06/2022	Angela Kelly Director HR	Updated to new standards requirements and VEC format	EMG