

Sustainable NE Inc.

Incorporated in Australia

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Child Protection Policy

Purpose:

At SustainableNE, we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility. SustainableNE have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing environments in **Australia and Sri Lanka** where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard, and they are safe and feel safe.

The child protection policy reflects SustainableNE's commitment and responsibility in meeting the child safe standards and actively promoting a safe environment for children. SustainableNE has policies and systems to protecting children, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously.

Our commitment to child protection and safety

- Our organisation is committed to child safety and we want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our members and volunteers.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
- Our organisation has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all members and volunteers.
- We are committed to regularly training and educating our members and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our members and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, members and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.
- We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- We promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- We ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our members and volunteers

This policy guides our members and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All our members and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All members and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Training and supervision

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all members and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our members and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our members and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

Any paid workers and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

Please see the Working with Children Check:< <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-working-children-check> > for further information.

The Check is just one of responsibilities in creating and maintaining child-safe environments. Child-related work is not limited to work involving direct and unsupervised contact with children. Any contact with children, unless it is only occasional and incidental, is enough to trigger the requirement to get a Check.

Child- a person under 18 years of age, **Contact-** any contact between a child and an adult that involves:

- (a) Physical contact; or
- (b) Face to face oral communication; or
- (c) Physically being within eyeshot
- (d) Yard Duty
- (e) Unsupervised contact

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment

process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision-making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history, then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Duty of Care

The purpose of this policy is to explain the nature of the legal duties owed by our members towards children. In a legal context, 'duty of care' is an element of the tort of negligence.

Organisation will ensure that they exercise the same level of care and supervision that a parent would. Therefore, teachers must:

- Maintain constant supervision of the children in their charge
- Take immediate action in any situation where there is a threat to the welfare or safety of a child, like: Child abuse
- Attend their allocated yard duty time
- Ensure that a safe and appropriate working environment is created and maintained in the classroom
- Carrying the working with children card while they are on duty.

Reasonable belief

A 'reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse lead to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

Notifications of Abuse

For the purposes of these standards, abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:

- physical violence
- sexual offences
- The infliction on a child
- serious emotional or psychological abuse
- serious neglect.

Organisation's members and volunteers are committed to protecting a child's right to be safe from abuse of any kind. These procedures must be applied in any circumstance where there is an incident.

If any instructor has suspicions of abuse consult the Department of Human Services Victorian Child Protection Service. When someone with mandatory reporting obligations has reasonable suspicion of abuse they need to contact the Child Protection Crisis Line: 13 12 78 or Victoria Police 000 (urgent matters).

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. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Code of Conduct

This Child Protection Code of Conduct is to the requirements of the Child Safe Standards and applies to our members, contractors, volunteers and any other members of the organisation community involved in child-related work with children of the organisation. This Child Protection Code of Conduct identifies inappropriate behaviour with children in organisation's environment. The objective is to guide organisation members in identifying and regulating their own behaviour and the behaviour of other organisation members, and to protect children from abuse in the organisation environment.

SustainableNE ensures that they provide all members and volunteers with a set of clear principles about how they should behave with children.

Organisation uphold the following code of conduct in relation to employers, educators, volunteers, children, families and children:

For members and volunteers:

Ensure that all members and volunteers are:

- Clear about their roles and responsibilities regarding child protection.
- All members, volunteers and board members of SustainableNE are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.
- Adhering to SustainableNE child safe policy at all times / upholding SustainableNE's statement of commitment to child safety at all time
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- Aware of their obligations to immediately report suspected abuse to **Call the police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a child's safety.**
- Aware of the indicators when a child may be at risk of harm or significant harm.

- Provide training and development for all members and volunteers in the recognition and reporting of abuse and harm.
- Provide reporting procedures and professional standards for care and protection work.
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse to SustainableNE's Child Safety Officer / leadership, and ensure any allegation to reported to the police or child protection.
- If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child is safe.
- Enable educators to have access to relevant acts, regulations, standards and other resources in order for them to complete their obligations.
- Treating everyone with respect.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- Encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.
- Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child.

Members and volunteers must not:

- Develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children) (grooming)
- Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometime, for example while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area)
- Put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- Discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- Have any online contact with a child or their family (unless necessary, for example providing families with e-newsletters)
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

Definition of Abuse

'Abuse' –For the purposes of these standards, abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:

- physical violence
- sexual offences
- serious emotional or psychological abuse
- Serious neglect.

(a) **Physical violence** occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons (such as, belts and paddles).

Possible physical indicators:

- Unexplained bruises
- Burns and/or fractured bones

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- Fear of specific people

(b) **Sexual offences** occur when a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.

Possible physical indicators:

- Presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy
- Vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for the child's age
- Difficulty sleeping
- Being withdrawn
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains
- Fear of specific people
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Displaying aggressive behaviour

(c) **Serious emotional or psychological abuse** occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed, or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Possible physical indicators:

- Delays in emotional, mental, or even physical development
- Physical signs of self-harming

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Exhibiting low self-esteem
- Exhibiting high anxiety
- Displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour
- Being withdrawn, passive and/or tearful

(d) **Serious neglect** is the continued failure to provide a child with the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life-threatening situations.

Possible physical indicators:

- Frequent hunger
- Malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing

Possible behavioural indicators:

- Stealing food
- Aggressive behaviour
- Misusing alcohol or drugs

SustainableNE's Child Protection Policy is available on our official website.