

Child Protection Policy

1. Purpose

This Child Protection Policy sets out GCLA's commitment to the uphold the right of all children and young people to be cared for in a safe environment during their care. This policy provides the framework to guide all employees and volunteers on expectations of behaviour while with working with children and young people and on how to promote safe participation in all services, free from harm in accordance with relevant legislation and ensuring any suspicions of neglect is reported.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to employees, volunteers, contractors, stakeholders, and customers of GCLA regardless of whether they work in direct contact with children or young people.

3. Policy Statement

GCLA is committed to ensuring the safety, protection and wellbeing of children by providing child friendly environments where all children are respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. We understand the risk and ongoing impact of child abuse and neglect in our society. We have a collective responsibility to embed a leading culture of child safety and protection that seeks to remove the secrecy surrounding child abuse and neglect. The best interest and wellbeing of the child is the primary consideration for GCLA. Our commitment is demonstrated by how GCLA implements the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations as follows.

Child Safety and Wellbeing

- Having governance arrangements in place to guide prevention, record keeping, information sharing and external reporting obligations.
- Providing the GLCA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct outlining expected behaviours, interactions, conduct and mandatory reporting obligations.
- Undertaking risk assessments and management process to minimise risk to children on an individual basis.

Ensuring staff and contractors are suitable and supported

- Ensuring recruitment, including advertising, selection criteria, pre-employment screening, referee checks and duty statements outline the GCLA commitment to being a child safe organisation. This should act as a deterrent for unsuitable candidates.
- Having systems in place that ensure all relevant employees, volunteers and contractors who come into contact with GCLA customers, or their information have current working with children checks.
- Providing induction and ongoing training regarding their child safety and wellbeing responsibilities, including external reporting obligations as outlined in the GLCA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Child focused complaint system

- Having accessible policies for receiving, responding to, and investigating complaints of child harm or abuse prioritising the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Responding effectively to concerns or complaints where harm is caused to a child.
- Having processes in place for reporting to external authorities, record keeping and information sharing to ensure GCLA meets its reporting requirements, employment law and privacy obligations.
- Providing information to staff on the complaints process, their roles and responsibilities, and reporting and privacy obligations when responding to children who disclose abuse.

Team member knowledge, skills, and awareness

- Providing periodic training and information for team members regarding relevant safety and wellbeing policies, children's rights, child development, recognising signs of harm or abuse, responding to disclosures, understanding, and responding to harmful behaviours by a child towards another child, record keeping, risk assessment and management, external reporting obligations and creating culturally safe environments.
- Ensuring team members and volunteers who disclose harm or risk to children are supported.

4. National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Principle 1	Child Safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance, and culture
Principle 2	Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Principle 3	Families and communities are informed and involved.
Principle 4	Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are considered.
Principle 5	People working with children are suitable and supported.
Principle 6	Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused.
Principle 7	Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.
Principle 8	Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
Principle 9	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
Principle 10	Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

5. Definitions

For the Purpose of this policy the following terms are used:

TERM	DEFINITION
Child abuse and neglect	<p>The World Health Organisation defines child abuse and neglect as:</p> <p>“All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”</p> <p>The five main subtypes of child abuse and neglect are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical abuse/ assault • emotional abuse/ Ill-treatment • neglect • sexual abuse • exposure to family violence.
Child Protection	Is the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.
Child Protection Reporting Standard	Mandatory reporting of any reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed or neglected or is at risk of harm or neglect.
GLCA Code of Conduct	A collection of rules, social norms and responsibilities that include what is and is not acceptable or expected behaviour or proper practice and company expectations.
Complaint	A statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.
Cultural Safety	A safe and friendly environment where children feel respected, valued, and encouraged to reach their full potential.
Disclosure	The act of making something known.
Grooming	Action by an adult of preparing a child for sexual activity, often this will involve progressive desensitization to sexual activity (such as with increased physical contact or exposure to sexual material and acts), finding opportunities to be alone unsupervised together, encouraging secrecy in the relationship and/or utilising power and control over the child such as through threats, use of force or authority and making the child fearful of reporting unwanted behaviour.
Mandatory Reporters	Persons who have regular contact with vulnerable people and are therefore legally required to ensure a report is made when abuse is observed or suspected.
Mandatory Reporting	Legislated requirement for selected groups of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities.

6. Responsibilities and Delegations

Children come first, and this is non-negotiable. We expect staff to treat all children with respect, dignity and understanding. All actions and interactions are to be in the best interest of the child and consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The expected behaviour of GCLA team members is detailed in the GLCA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Employees	<p>Our Employees will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to upholding the GCLA core values and behavioural competencies. • Provide an environment that supports all children's emotions and physical safety. • Hold themselves and other colleagues to account and be vigilant in reporting any breach of the code. • Verify their commitment to upholding the GLCA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct by signing a declaration of intent. • Be observant and maintain vigilance to recognise, respond, refer, and follow up any child protection incident. • Report any suspicion, made on reasonable grounds, that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and/or the state-based child protection service), fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters and apply the Child Protection Reporting Standard contained within the Child Protection Practice Manual. • Embed cultural safety principles of inclusiveness and acceptance to offer greater protection for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a culturally, linguistic, or diverse background and children with a disability. • Familiarise themselves with relevant national and state legislation, the GCLA policy, procedures, and the GLCA Code of Conduct in relation to child protection and comply with all requirements. • Always maintain dignity, privacy, and confidentiality.
Managers & Supervisors	<p>Our Managers & Supervisors will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster a proactive leadership approach to promote openness and transparency. • Provide induction, training, and ongoing information in recognising and responding to suspicion, allegation or disclosure of child abuse, neglect, and grooming. • Provide all team members, children and young people, and their families with regular information to increase awareness of child abuse and neglect indicators including grooming behaviours as a lead indicator for intervention. • Ensure our information management systems and practices are secure to protect children and their information.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure vigilance is applied in pre-empting harm that may occur. • Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities. • Be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.
Executive Team	<p>The CEO/Managing Director will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster a proactive leadership approach to promote openness and transparency.
Board of Directors	<p>The Board will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the risk profile of GCLA and ensure mitigation strategies are effective in managing and responding efficiently to any serious incident, suspicion, or allegation. • Ensure appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place for the detection and prevention of child abuse and neglect. • Ensure appropriate policies and procedures, are in place to define expected behaviour and guide interactions.

7. Policy Context

Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDIS Quality Standards (NDIS) • National Child Safe Standards
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Act • Adoption Act
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GLCA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct • Behaviour Support and Restrictive Practice • Incident Management Policy
Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalation Chart • Incident Management Flow Chart – Child Safety