

Policy	ACF-OPS1.1	Safeguarding Children and Young People	Date Approved
			Review Date

Victoria Police Legacy (VPL) is a not for profit charitable organisation established to provide ongoing support to:

- **the families of deceased serving sworn members of Victoria Police and police veterans, and**
- **sworn serving members and police veterans who have lost a spouse or partner.**

Support is also provided to a member, their partners and families and police legatees experiencing grief or hardship caused by imminent or actual death or permanent (or prolonged) disability.

For VPL purposes, a police veteran is a person who was a sworn member of Victoria Police for a minimum period of 20 years.

This policy is part of VPL's commitment to being a child safe organisation.

Guiding Values

In keeping children and young people safe the following values are a mechanism for guiding our actions and assisting in decision-making, they are a reference to which all can refer, to ensure their responsibilities to children and young people are upheld:

- *Safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility, it is reliant on all individuals within our organisation to keep children and young people safe in our care.*
- *Any form of abuse or neglect towards children and young people will not be tolerated and immediate action will be taken upon to report any suspected harmful or abusive behaviours.*
- *The best interest of the child will be the primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person.*
- *We are accountable to the children and young people we work with by fostering high ethical standards in a culture of openness and transparency.*
- *We empower children by informing them of their rights and responsibilities and support them to speak up about any matters of importance to them, including if something goes wrong. We work to include the participation of children and young people in decision making regarding any services or other matters affecting them.*

1. Purpose

VPL has zero-tolerance towards abuse and neglect of children and young people, in all its forms. We are committed to the rights of all children and young people to feel safe and be safe when participating in our organisations' activities, services and programs.

VPL is committed to the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people and has a zero tolerance for all forms of racism.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities, procedures and practices required by all personnel within VPL in relation to keeping children and young people free from abuse and neglect.

This policy supports our international obligations under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the Child Safe Standards recommended by the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* and is aligned with the *Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*.

As such, our policies and procedures reflect child safe legislation and promote best practice and care for the children and young people within our organisation. Our Board approves and endorses our VPL Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

We take seriously our responsibility to deliver an environment of support and learning that is caring, nurturing and safe. We are committed to taking action in advancing the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and ensuring compliance with all requirements set out in this policy.

2. Scope

The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy applies to all Board members, employees, volunteers, ambassadors, VPL Legatees, Friends of Police Legacy, dependents, guests, external customers and suppliers.

This policy applies in all our operational environments (including physical and online environments) and without fail wherever children and young people are participating in our organisation's activities, programs, services and / or facilities.

This policy is approved by the Board who have governance oversight of its implementation and periodic review. The CEO is responsible for implementation of this policy.

3. Definitions

A detailed table of definitions is provided at Appendix C.

4. Responsibilities

Safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility within our organisation. It is the responsibility of all at VPL from Board members to employees, ambassadors and volunteers to :-

- protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation by our people
- be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside the scope of our operations and services that may have an impact on the children and young people to whom we provide a service; and
- create and maintain a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer, support or access our programs and services.

The VPL Board expect all within our organisation, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, to act to safeguard children from such harm by:

- adopting appropriate safeguarding practice and behaviour set within our policy and procedural guidelines, when carrying out their roles, and
- reporting any abuse and neglect of which they become aware to our management and/or to external authorities responsible for child protection or to police, regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by personnel within our organisation, or by those outside our organisation including those from the child's family, extended family, their family's extended network or strangers.

VPL is committed to promoting equity and respecting diversity by:

- actively anticipating children and young people’s diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- informing children and young people of their rights and giving all children and young people access to information, support and complaints processes
- respecting the rights of children and young people to participate in decision making, paying appropriate attention to the needs of the following groups:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
 - Children and young people with a disability
 - Children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex)
 - Children and young people who are unable to live at home

VPL has zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion for children and young people is further outlined in the Engagement Procedure to support Equity and Diversity.

The responsibility of each role in relation to the development and compliance of the VPL Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is detailed in Appendix B

A detailed statement of the Board’s commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People is attached at Appendix A.

5. Monitoring and review

This document will be reviewed by our Board at least annually, after consultation. Some circumstances may trigger an early review, this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the CEO.

When there are any updates or changes to this Policy, they will be communicated to all personnel and stakeholders.

External audit and verification based on a sample, conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation shall occur at 3 yearly intervals.

6. Records and Documentation

We retain records that document each review undertaken. Records may include minutes of meetings and documentation of changes to policies and procedures that result from a review.

7. Supporting Resources

- Appendix A – Victoria Police Legacy Commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People
- Appendix B - Roles and Responsibilities
- Appendix C - Definitions

8. Related Policies and Documents

- **Legislation**

Our guidelines comply with relevant legislation.

In upholding this policy, the following legislation and frameworks must be considered by all VPL personnel:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020
- Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012
- The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Reportable Conduct Scheme 2017
- Working with Children Act 2005
- Crimes Act 1958
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2018
- World Health Organization, (2006)
- Child Family Community Australia (CFCA), (2016).
- Australian eSafety Commissioner, (2020).

- **Policy**

The following VPL policies must be considered in relation to this document:

- ACF-OPS1.2 Commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People Form
- ACF-OPS1.3 Risk Management Policy
- ACF-OPS1.4 Risk Management Process
- ACF-OPS1.5 Safeguarding Children Governance Framework
- ACF-OPS2.1 Code of Conduct Policy
- ACF-OPS3.1 Recruitment Policy
- ACF-OPS6.1 Reporting Policy

Appendix A - Detailed Statement of Commitment

Safeguarding Governance

Victoria Police Legacy is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our activities, programs, services or facilities. VPL has a safeguarding children and young people governance structure with robust systems in place which support personnel and service users to report safeguarding concerns and facilitate effective risk-based and informed decisions that ensure accountability to children and young people.

VPL's governance structure, including a Risk Committee, defines the roles and responsibilities associated with providing oversight, management and implementation of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people.

Our Commitment

VPL is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our activities, programs, services and / or facilities. Our policies and procedures seek to address risks to child safety and to establish a safeguarding culture and practices.

Our safeguarding policies and procedures are:

- publicly accessible, online and in forms that are easy to understand;
- informed by stakeholder consultation; and
- communicated to all Board members, employees, volunteers, ambassadors, VPL Legatees, Friends of Police Legacy, dependents, guests, external customers and suppliers
- To inform and review our safeguarding policies, we seek feedback from all our services users and providers. We gain endorsement and advise stakeholders of any changes.

We are committed to safeguarding children and young people

Through our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy we document our clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We communicate our commitment to all of our personnel and ensure that our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is available in child-friendly versions that reflects the ages, developmental stage, diversity and abilities of the children and young people whom we deliver services.

We have a zero-tolerance approach towards child abuse and neglect in all its forms and take seriously any raised concerns / incidents.

Our approach to risk management recognises the potential risks to children and young people associated with our organisation's service delivery and considers online and physical or psychological environments, and any vulnerable or diverse circumstances of children or young people utilising our services.

We are committed to creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families

We are committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety of Aboriginal children include:

- An Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of formal meetings or public events
- Providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture

- Supporting children and young people who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- Providing professional development for all personnel on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- Celebrating NAIDOC week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- Consulting and seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience of expressing their identity at Victoria Police Legacy and further opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices.

Our personnel know the behaviour we expect

We ensure that each person involved in the delivery of our services understands their role and the behaviour we expect in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We utilise position descriptions which clearly state relevant responsibilities and safeguarding requirements.

Our organisation requires all personnel to acknowledge, in writing, their commitment and adherence to our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

We have a Code of Conduct which is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation that outlines our expectations for behaviour towards children and young people.

We monitor and supervise all personnel, including contractors and partner organisations, for appropriate practice and behaviour in the delivery of our service to children and young people.

Any failure to observe our behavioural guidelines is taken seriously, and we are committed to taking appropriate disciplinary and legal action wherever necessary.

We minimise the likelihood of recruiting a person who is unsuitable

We have appropriate measures in place and require applicants to undergo extensive screening processes prior to appointment to minimise the likelihood that we, or an external recruitment agency or contractor, will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work / volunteer with children or young people. We have recruitment procedures that ensure:

- our safeguarding commitment is communicated to potential applicants for all positions
- face-to-face interviews are held which include safeguarding-related questions
- two professional reference checks are undertaken which include safeguarding-related questions
- screening checks are undertaken, including identity, National, and where applicable, International criminal history checks, working with children checks and qualification checks.

We require our personnel to disclose criminal convictions or charges affecting their suitability to work with children and young people both prior and subsequent to their employment, and we review police records and Working With Children Check or equivalent periodically.

We ensure that there will be no discrimination as part of the recruitment process, with respect to inclusion and equal opportunity and where possible, hire appropriate personnel that represents the diverse range of children and young people and their families involved in our organisation.

Induction and training are part of our commitment

We have an induction process ensuring all new personnel are informed and supported to understand our organisations safeguarding children and young people policies, procedures and practices. Our personnel are provided with copies of our organisations Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Policy and where applicable Recruitment Policy.

Our induction process provides guidance relating to an individual's safeguarding responsibilities and offers opportunities to seek clarity in relation to the commitments and behavioural expectations set out in our safeguarding policies.

We have a Training plan that outlines how and when we support ongoing education for all our personnel in relation to how keeping children and young people safe will be fulfilled. Our organisation's plan includes training regarding children's rights, voices and participation, cultural safety and humility.

We encourage the involvement of children, young people and their families

We have processes for seeking and incorporating input and feedback with children, young people, their families and community members. We respect diversity and seek to facilitate effective communication and engagement.

We promote participation and empowerment of young people and provide opportunity for their voice and ideas to be heard, and space to express their needs and concerns. We actively encourage children and young people to take part in the decision-making process, particularly on matters affecting them. We create opportunities for involvement and seek input and feedback through a diverse range of mechanisms including evaluation processes (interviews, surveys) direct feedback, and interaction through Field Liaison Officers during home visits, events and activities and online compliments and complaints processes, to inform our policies, procedures and practices.

We involve and communicate with children, young people, and their families in developing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. We recognise the important role of families and involve parents/caregivers when making significant decisions about their child. We provide information to children, young people and their families about:

- our commitment and approach to upholding and safeguarding the rights of children and young people
- the behaviour we expect of our personnel
- the behaviour we expect from the children, young people and their families who access our services
- our policy and mechanism for reporting abuse or concerns.

Our personnel understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse and responding to child safety complaints

Our policy for reporting and responding to child abuse is approved and endorsed from the Board and applies to all our personnel. The policy states that:

- personnel must immediately report abuse or neglect and any concerns with policies, practices or the behaviour of personnel
- personnel must meet any legislated mandatory reporting requirements

- all complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly
- personnel must follow a specified process when reporting abuse or neglect including who will receive reports
- failure to report is serious misconduct

Where an external or internal complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then personnel must report this in accordance with VPL Reporting policy. Personnel are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victorian Police.

Our personnel are given a copy of and have access to the policy and understand the implications of the policy for their role. We document any allegation, disclosure or concern regarding child abuse and monitor responses to all allegations, disclosures or concerns.

We maintain and improve our policies and practices

We are committed to maintaining, continuously review and improve our policies, procedures and practices to safeguard children and young people from abuse and neglect. The responsibility for implementing and reviewing our safeguarding children and young people approach is led by the Operations Manager who fulfils the requirements of a 'Safeguarding Children Program Coordinator'.

To identify any key improvements needed, our organisation incorporates findings from - internal audits / reviews that assess our ongoing compliance with our responsibilities to keep children and young people safe, input and feedback received by children and young people and their families, feedback gained from communication with our personnel and feedback gained from 'complaints and compliments' received.

APPENDIX B - Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of each role in relation to the development and compliance of the VPL Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is detailed below:

Role	Responsibility
Chief Executive Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy and its expectations. • Promote the commitment to this Policy and its expectations both internally and publicly. • Support policy review annually as a minimum or at a time governed by legislation, regulations, or organisational learnings that promote a change to the Policy and all relevant policy or procedural guidelines. • Ensure compliance to the Policy via an inbuilt mechanism for ongoing monitoring and review. • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow for the development, effective implementation, communication and continuous improvement of this policy. • Develop opportunities for regular discussion and review at all levels to support a culture of openness and continued improvement and accountability to keeping children and young people safe from abuse and neglect.
Operations Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy. • Ensure all Personnel understand their obligations in accordance with this Policy and any relevant policy and procedural documentation. • Ensure this Policy is implemented and adhered to amongst personnel. • Ensure the development and implementation of required internal policy/procedures and guidelines are in place to support safeguarding children and young people practices in accordance with the expectations of this Policy. • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation of this Policy. • Ensure to fully support Personnel with any decision to initiate action to protect a child from abuse, neglect, grooming or exploitation. • Ensure appropriate supports, such as counselling and formal debriefing, are provided for any Personnel involved in a matter relating to responding to a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person. • Proactively share resources and experience in the development of child safe initiatives as they are identified. • Develop opportunities for regular discussion and review at all levels to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of keeping children and young people safe from abuse and neglect.

<p>Operations Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all personnel are aware of the appropriate recruitment, screening and employment practice in relation to safeguarding children and young people. • Promote and support all personnel to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children. • Review and update this Policy and supporting resources in consultation with relevant stakeholders • Support the coordination of the Safeguarding Children and Young People framework and its implementation • Evaluate and analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents relating to this Policy • Provide training and advice in the application of this Policy
<p>Employees / Volunteers/ Ambassadors/ Contractors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy. • Maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy, as well as all other policy relevant to safeguarding children and young people. • Ensure compliance with this Policy, fully implementing and adhering to the commitments and expectations • To undertake any induction and training anticipated in this Policy, in relation to policy and procedures relevant to safeguarding children and young people. • To support a culture of openness, continued improvement and accountability to children and young people by engaging in regular review and discussion of organisational policies and practices and providing feedback to support improvement • To seek guidance from a supervisor or manager if there is ever any lack of understanding in relation to the commitments and expectations as set out in this Policy. • To adopt appropriate safeguarding practice and behaviour • To take action to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, neglect, bullying and exploitation. • To report any abuse committed by personnel within our organisation or by others. • To assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety.

Appendix C Definitions

Term	Definition
Bullying	<p>Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal (name calling, put downs, threats); • Physical (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting); • Social (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating); and/or • Psychological (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).
Child or young person	A person under the age of eighteen years.
Code of Conduct	<p>The Code of Conduct aims to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to children and young people in our Police Legatee community. The Code of Conduct outlines what is, and what is not acceptable behaviour or practice when working with or engaging with children and young people.</p>
Emotional or psychological abuse	<p>Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child or young person does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a child or young person. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviours continue to an extent that results in significant damage to the child or young person’s physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.</p>
Family Violence	<p>Family violence occurs when children are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person’s life. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.</p>
Grooming	<p>Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of children. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a child in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom children but abuse them without forming a relationship at all.</p>

Term	Definition
	Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.
Harm	<p>Harm to a child, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; • sexual abuse or exploitation; • a single act, omission or circumstance; and • a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
LGBTQI+	(Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex) as outlined in <i>Rainbow Tick National Accreditation</i> program for LGBTI inclusive practice throughout Australia. https://www.qip.com.au/standards/rainbow-tick-standards/
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles)	The National Principles are designed to build capacity and deliver child safety and wellbeing in organisations, families and communities and prevent future harm. The Principles have been endorsed by all Commonwealth, state and territory governments. https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles
Neglect	Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child or young person with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the child or young person's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed. Categories of neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment or desertion, emotional neglect and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available.
Online environment	Anywhere online that allows digital communication, such as: social networks, text messages and messaging apps, email and private messaging, online chats, comments on live streaming sites and voice chat in games.
Personnel	All who work for the organisation whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, including; employees, casual employees, volunteers, Ambassadors, Board and committee members and contractors.
Physical abuse	<p>Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child or young person to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child or young person.</p> <p>Physically abusive behaviour includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, suffocating, excessive and physically harmful over training, and kicking. It also includes giving children and young people harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison.</p>

Term	Definition
	Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child or young person at risk of being hurt.
Risk management	In the context of creating safe environments for children and young people, risk management consists of assessing and taking steps to minimise the risks of harm to children and young people because of the action of an employee, volunteer, contractor or another child or young person. Risk management includes planning the work of the organisation to reduce or minimise situations where children and young people may be abused.
The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission).	An independent inquiry established in 2013 by the Australian Government to examine and report upon responses by institutions to instances and allegations of child sexual abuse in educational institutions, religious groups, sporting organisations, state institutions and youth organisations. The findings provide recommendations to the Government on how to improve laws, policies, structures and practices to prevent such harm from re-occurring. https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or a person of authority (e.g. older) involves a child or young person in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a child, engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a child's genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a child. Encouraging a child to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also sexual abuse. Engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet is also considered sexual abuse.
Sexual exploitation	Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where offenders use their power, (physical, financial or emotional) over a child or young person, or a false identity, to sexually or emotionally abuse them. It often involves situations and relationships where children and young people receive something (food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money etc.) in return for participating in sexual activities. Sexual exploitation can occur in person or online, and sometimes the child or young person may not even realise they are a victim.
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	Is an international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities. https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx