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Child Protection Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to safeguard and promote the safety, well-being, and dignity of all children and young people involved in SGSCC programs, services, and activities.

SGSCC is committed to providing safe children environments where children and young people are protected from abuse, neglect, harm, exploitation, grooming, bullying, harassment, discrimination, and misconduct.

This Policy applies to all SGSCC services, programs, training, assessment activities, work placement arrangements, online learning, excursions, events, and community engagement activities involving children and young people.

This Policy establishes SGSCC's commitment to:

- promoting and protecting the safety, wellbeing, participation, and empowerment of children and young people.
- preventing child abuse, harm, neglect, exploitation, grooming, bullying, harassment, and misconduct.
- creating and maintaining culturally safe, inclusive, and child safe environments.
- embedding the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations into organisational leadership, governance, culture, and practice.
- complying with all applicable child protection legislation, child safe standards, reportable conduct obligations, and regulatory requirements.
- ensuring children and young people are treated with respect, listened to, informed of their rights, and encouraged to participate in decisions affecting them.
- responding promptly, appropriately, and effectively to child safety concerns, disclosures, allegations, suspicions, complaints, or incidents.
- supporting staff, contractors, volunteers, and students to understand and fulfil their child safety responsibilities.

SGSCC has zero tolerance for any form of abuse, exploitation, grooming, neglect, or any form of misconduct toward children and young people.

All allegations, concerns, disclosures, and complaints relating to child safety will be taken seriously and responded to in accordance with legal and organisational obligations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all SGSCC - including employees, trainers, assessors, volunteers, contractors, consultants, work placement supervisors, governing body members, third-party providers, and students or others engaged in placement or volunteer activities involving children—who may interact with children or young people under 18 years of age.

This policy applies to all modes of learning (face-to-face and online learning), communication, excursions, community activities, work placements, student support services, overseas student arrangements, and all College-owned, leased, or utilised premises.

3. Definitions

- **Child:** Any person under the age of 18 years.
- **Child Abuse:** Any act or failure to act that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child. Child abuse can include physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, grooming, and exploitation.
- **Child Safe Organisation:** A child safe organisation is one that consciously and systematically creates environments where children's rights, safety, and wellbeing are prioritised, prevents harm before it occurs, responds appropriately to concerns and incidents, embeds child safety into governance, leadership, and culture.
- **Mandatory Reporting:** is the legal obligation to report suspected child abuse to relevant authorities. This obligation applies to certain professionals, including teachers, healthcare workers, and those in authority over children.
- **Mandatory Reporter:** A person legally required under NSW legislation to report concerns about children at risk of significant harm.
- **Reportable Conduct:** includes sexual offences, sexual misconduct, ill-treatment, neglect, assault, grooming behaviour, behaviour causing psychological harm to a child, as defined under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

4. Policy Statement

SGSCC is committed to the safety and well-being of all children and has zero tolerance for child abuse. Every child has the right to feel safe, respected, and valued. SGSCC will take all necessary steps to prevent child abuse and to respond promptly and effectively if abuse is suspected or reported.

SGSCC is committed to:

- protecting children and young people from abuse and harm
- listening to and respecting children and young people
- empowering children to speak up if they feel unsafe
- creating inclusive and culturally safe environments
- promoting equity and diversity
- responding seriously to all concerns and allegations
- maintaining robust child safe recruitment, training, and supervision practices
- ensuring leadership accountability for child safety

Children and young people have the right to:

- feel safe and respected
- be heard and taken seriously
- participate in decisions affecting them
- receive support when concerns are raised
- access safe complaint and reporting processes

5. Child Safe Principles:

SGSCC adopts the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and commits to embedding the following principles into organisational practice:

- i. Child safety and wellbeing are embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.
- ii. Children and young people are informed about their rights and participate in decisions affecting them.
- iii. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety.

- iv. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected.
- v. People working with children are suitable and supported.
- vi. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
- vii. Staff and volunteers receive ongoing education and training.
- viii. Physical and online environments promote safety.
- ix. Continuous improvement and regular review occur.
- x. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

6. Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Chief Executive Officer (CEO):** responsible for implementing and enforcing this policy. The CEO also promotes a child safe culture, ensures adequate resources for child safety, reports reportable conduct matters, and oversees investigation and response processes.
- **RTO Manager:** is responsible for implementing child safe systems and procedures, ensuring operational compliance, monitoring risks relating to children and young people, ensuring appropriate student supervision arrangements, ensuring child safety requirements are integrated into training and assessment operations. Implement effective risk management strategies. This includes identifying and mitigating risks to the safety and well-being of all students, particularly children.
- **People and Culture Manager as the designated Child Safety Officer,** is responsible for receiving concerns and disclosures, maintaining confidential records, coordinating responses and reporting obligations, supporting affected children and families, monitoring policy implementation, coordinating staff training and awareness, and liaising with external authorities as required. If an allegation involves the People and Culture Manager (i.e. Designated Child Safety Officer), the matter must be reported directly to the CEO. If an allegation involves senior management, the matter may be escalated directly to relevant external authorities.
- **Student Support Services:** ensure that learners, including minors, have access to support services that can address safety, welfare, and protection. This encompass ensuring that children are in a safe learning environment, free from abuse or neglect.
- **All Staff and Volunteers:** all staff working with children (under 18 years) must have a valid Working With Children Check and Police Clearance. This requirement is part of SGSCC's broader child protection obligations. Staff and volunteers must maintain the highest standards of professional behavior in their interactions with children. All personnel are required to comply with this policy,

maintain professional boundaries, report concerns immediately, participate in training, support child safe practices, and promote respectful and inclusive behaviour.

- **Students:** must behave respectfully toward others. They must comply with child safe expectations during placement and activities. They must report unsafe behaviour or concerns.
- **Parents and Guardians:** are encouraged to communicate any concerns about their child's safety to SGSCC staff or the Child Protection Officer.

7. Child Participation and Student Voice

SGSCC recognises the importance of children and young people participating in decisions affecting them.

SGSCC will:

- provide information about rights and safety in age-appropriate language
- encourage children to express views and concerns
- provide accessible complaint and feedback processes
- ensure children know who they can speak to for support
- listen respectfully to disclosures and concerns
- involve children in safety discussions where appropriate

Children and young people will not be victimised, ignored, or disadvantaged for raising concerns.

8. Equity, Diversity and Cultural Safety

SGSCC is committed to creating environments that are: culturally safe, inclusive, accessible, and respectful of diversity.

SGSCC recognises and respects:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and communities
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children with disability
- LGBTQIA+ children and young people
- vulnerable or marginalised children
- international students and younger overseas students

Discrimination, harassment, bullying, racism, victimisation, or exclusionary behaviour will not be tolerated.

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RTO: 7091 • CRICOS Provider No: 03122K • NDIS Registered Provider: 4050004600 • ABN: 89 753 440 576

9. Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries

All staff, volunteers, contractors, and representatives must maintain appropriate professional boundaries with children and young people.

The following behaviours are prohibited:

- sexual contact or sexualised behaviour toward a child
- grooming behaviour
- inappropriate physical contact
- humiliating, shaming, or degrading behaviour
- bullying, intimidation, or coercion
- communicating with students through personal social media accounts
- private messaging without legitimate educational purpose
- transporting a child alone without authorisation
- being alone with a child in isolated or unsupervised environments where avoidable
- photographing or recording children without consent
- sharing inappropriate content
- favouritism or gift-giving that creates inappropriate relationships
- using alcohol or drugs while supervising children

Professional Boundaries: Staff and volunteers must maintain appropriate boundaries with children at all times. This includes avoiding any behavior that could be misinterpreted as inappropriate or harmful.

Respect and Dignity: All children must be treated with respect and dignity. Staff and volunteers should listen to children's views and take their concerns seriously.

Safe Environment: SGSCC will ensure that all facilities and environments where children are present are safe and free from hazards. This includes conducting regular risk assessments and implementing necessary safety measures.

Staff must use respectful and professional communication, maintain transparency in interactions, ensure online communication is professional and authorised, immediately report breaches or concerns.

10. Recruitment, Screening and Induction

- **Recruitment:** SGSCC will conduct thorough background checks, including Working with Children Checks (WWCC) and National Police Check, on all staff, volunteers, and contractors who work with or have access to children. References will be verified, and gaps in employment history will be investigated. Identity, qualifications, and employment history will be verified. Behaviour interview questions relating to child safety. No person may commence child-related work without required screening clearances. All new personnel must complete: child safe induction, code of conduct acknowledgement, mandatory reporting awareness, online safety awareness, and professional boundaries training. Records of screening and training will be maintained in staff's file on VTDOCs.
- **Training:** All staff and volunteers who work with children will receive mandatory child protection training. This training will cover recognizing signs of abuse and neglect, mandatory reporting obligations, responding to disclosures, trauma-informed practice, cultural safety, online safety, professional boundaries, reportable conduct obligations, managing risks in educational environments. Training will occur during induction, periodically throughout employment, when legislation or practices change, after incidents where additional learning is identified.
- **Induction:** New staff and volunteers will receive a comprehensive child safe induction that includes a review of the Child Protection Policy, acknowledgement of Code of Conduct, and training on mandatory reporting, online safety, and professional boundaries.

11. Child Safety Training and Awareness

SGSCC will provide ongoing child safety training for all relevant personnel.

Training may include:

- recognising signs of abuse and neglect
- mandatory reporting obligations
- responding to disclosures
- trauma-informed practice
- cultural safety
- online safety
- professional boundaries
- reportable conduct obligations
- managing risks in educational environments

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Training will occur:

- during induction
- periodically throughout employment
- when legislation or practices change
- after incidents where additional learning is identified

12. Reporting and Responding to Concerns, Disclosures and Allegations

All child safety concerns must be taken seriously. SGSCC will respond promptly, fairly, confidentially, and in a trauma-informed manner.

- **Immediate Safety:** if a child is in immediate danger:
 - contact emergency services (000)
 - ensure the child is safe
 - notify relevant authorities as required
- **Responding to a Disclosure:** Personnel must:
 - remain calm and supportive
 - listen without judgment
 - reassure the child they have done the right thing
 - avoid asking leading questions
 - document factual information accurately
 - report the matter immediately

Personnel must not:

- promise secrecy
- investigate the matter independently
- confront the alleged offender

- **Reporting Obligations:** All personnel must report concerns immediately to the Child Safety Officer. Mandatory reporters must comply with NSW legal reporting obligations. Where required, SGSCC will report matters to:
 - NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)
 - NSW Police
 - Office of the Children’s Guardian
 - other regulatory authorities
- **Reportable Conduct:** SGSCC will comply with NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme. Allegations involving reportable conduct by employees, volunteers, or contractors will be:
 - assessed promptly
 - reported where required
 - investigated appropriately
 - documented confidentially
 - managed in accordance with procedural fairness requirements
- **Confidentiality:** All reports of child abuse will be handled with strict confidentiality. Information will only be shared with those who need to know in order to protect the child and to fulfill legal obligations. Confidentiality obligations do not prevent mandatory reporting.
- **Investigation:** The People and Culture Manager (the designated Child Protection Officer) will coordinate the investigation of any allegations of child abuse, in conjunction with law enforcement or child protection agencies if required. All investigations will be conducted promptly and fairly.
- **Support for the Child:** SGSCC will provide appropriate support for any child who is the subject of abuse or allegations of abuse. This may include counselling services or wellbeing services, academic support adjustments, interpreter assistance, disability support services, safety planning, medical care, and ensuring the child’s safety within the program or activity.

13. Complaints and Feedback

Children, students, families, staff, and community members may raise concerns or complaints regarding child safety. SGSCC will provide accessible complaint pathways, confidential reporting options, culturally appropriate support, interpreter assistance where needed, support persons if requested, protection from victimisation or retaliation. Complaints may be made verbally, in writing, anonymously where appropriate, through designated staff, through external agencies. All complaints will be managed fairly and promptly.

14. Record Keeping

- **Record keeping:** SGSCC will maintain secure and accurate records relating to disclosures, complaints, incidents, investigations, risk assessments, staff screening, training completion, corrective actions. Records will be stored securely, have restricted access, be retained according to legal requirements, be protected from unauthorized disclosure.
- **Documentation:** Detailed records of any allegations, reports, or investigations of child abuse will be maintained securely by the People and Culture Manager (the designated Child Protection Officer). These records will be kept in accordance with legal requirements and SGSCC's record retention policy.
- **Access to Records:** Access to child protection records will be restricted to the RTO Manager, CEO, and relevant authorities as required by law.

15. Risk Management

- **Risk Assessments:** Regular risk assessments will be conducted for all SGSCC activities involving children. These assessments will identify potential risks to children's safety and outline strategies to mitigate these risks. Risk management includes supervision strategies, environmental safety reviews, excursion risk assessments, online learning safety controls, visitor management procedures, placement risk assessments, incident review processes, monitoring high-risk situations. Risk assessments must consider physical environments, online environments, one-to-one interactions, vulnerable students, transportation arrangements, overnight activities where relevant, cultural and accessibility considerations.
- **Supervision:** Children participating in SGSCC programs and activities will be appropriately supervised at all times by trained and qualified staff or volunteers.
- **Online Safety:** SGSCC recognises the importance of protecting children in digital and online environments. SGSCC will use approved communication platforms, monitor online learning

environments where appropriate, implement cybersecurity and privacy protections, educate students about online safety and respectful behaviour, prohibit inappropriate digital communication with students, and respond to cyberbullying or online misconduct promptly. Staff must not use personal communication channels to engage with children unless authorised for operational reasons. For activities involving online interactions with children, SGSCC will implement measures to protect children from online abuse, cyberbullying, and exposure to inappropriate content.

- **Work Placement and Third-Party Arrangements:** Where SGSCC arranges work placement, vocational placement, or third-party activities involving children or young people, SGSCC will:
 - assess risks associated with placements
 - ensure host organisations understand child safe expectations
 - clarify supervision and reporting responsibilities
 - verify suitability of placement environments
 - provide students with reporting pathways and support contacts
 - monitor placement arrangements where appropriate
- Third-party providers engaged by SGSCC must comply with child safe requirements.

16. Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement

- **Policy Monitoring:** The implementation of this policy will be monitored regularly by the People and Culture Manager – the designated Child Protection Officer and the CEO to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with legal requirements.
- **Annual Review:** This policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently if required, to ensure it remains current and effective in protecting children. Updates will be communicated to all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders.
- **SGSCC is committed to continuous improvement of child safe practices.** The college will regularly review child safety systems, monitor compliance with legislation and standards, analyse incidents and complaints for improvement opportunities, seek feedback from students and stakeholders, conduct audits where appropriate, and periodically review risks and controls. This policy will be reviewed annually, following legislative changes, after significant incidents, where audits identify improvement requirements.

17. Breaches of Policy

- Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, removal from duties involving children, termination of employment or engagement, referral to authorities, reporting to regulatory bodies.
- Criminal conduct will be referred to police.

18. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This Policy is informed by and aligned with:

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)
- Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
- Reportable Conduct Scheme (NSW)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Disability Standards for Education 2025
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011.
- Privacy Act 1988.
- NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) Child Safe Standards and guidance
- SGSCC Code of Conduct
- SRT0 2025 Standard 4.3 Risks to VET students, staff and the RTO are identified and managed. Where the RTO offers training or assessment to VET students aged under 18, risks to their safety and wellbeing are identified and managed consistent with principles for child safe organisations, having regard to the training content and mode(s) of delivery.
- SRT0 2025 Standard 21 Compliance with Commonwealth, State and Territory and regulatory requirements relevant to its operations.
- National Code 2018 – Standard 5. Younger Overseas Students outlines several specific child protection obligations for education providers.
- National Code 2018 – Standard 6. Critical Incident Policy: Providers must have processes to deal with emergencies and situations where the safety or welfare of students under 18 is at risk.
- National Code 2018– Standard 10. Compliant and Appeal Process: Providers must have a transparent complaint and appeal process that is accessible to all students, including minors. This ensures that students under 18 can report concerns related to child protection or welfare issues, and these concerns must be addressed in a timely and fair manner.