



## CFA EXECUTIVE POLICY SUITE

# 7. Health, Safety, Environment & Wellbeing

## HEALTH, SAFETY, ENVIRONMENT & WELLBEING

### EXECUTIVE POLICY

- 7.1 Health, Safety, Environment & Wellbeing executive policy
- 7.2 **Child Safety executive policy**

# Health Safety Environment & Wellbeing Suite

# Child Safety



## Business Rules & Processes

Child Safety and Protection business rule (under development)

## Additional Guidance

### Objective:

This policy provides that CFA has a high level of commitment to child safety principles and practices embedded across all aspects of the organisation. This commitment reaches from management through to all service delivery functions and is upheld by all CFA employees, volunteers and any cohort engaged by and representing CFA (including, but not limited to, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) secondees).

This policy confirms CFA's commitment to child safety principles and practices being led, and paramount in all considerations, from CFAs Board and at the Executive level. CFA will continue to develop and maintain a positive and proactive child safe culture that values the engagement and contributions of young people, whilst recognising the unique safety risks across the broader organisation.

### Statement:

1. CFA recognises that children's rights to safety and participation are embedded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights for the Child and protected in Victorian legislation through the Child Safe Standards.
2. CFA will not tolerate any form of child abuse, under any circumstances (This includes and covers all forms of abuse as defined in this policy).
3. CFA will ensure that appropriate strategies and process are in place to enable the organisation to be well prepared, and be in a position to, protect children from abuse and/or neglect when involved with CFA, regardless of whether the abuse or neglect has occurred through or outside CFA.
4. CFA will willingly embrace its obligations, responsibilities and duties to act with integrity and transparency in continuously improving the organisation's child safety approach. The foundation of CFA's child safety approach will be underpinned with effective mechanisms to facilitate and ensure the voice of the child is heard and included on matters that affect them.
5. CFA will establish appropriate and effective systems and processes to ensure that children involved with CFA are kept safe and engaged when participating in or exposed to CFA activities.
6. CFA will align and act in compliance with the established Child Safe Standards governed by the Commission for Children and Young People and with legislation that directly or indirectly impacts the safety of children.
7. CFA will hold its employees, volunteers and FRV secondees to a high ethical and behavioural standard focused on the prevention of child abuse. CFA child safe practices will be visible and timely in all instances.
8. Where child abuse or neglect occurs or has occurred through any involvement with or through CFA, the organisation will prioritise a child focused, immediate and effective response.

### Principles:

9. CFA's approach to child safety will be informed by a set of guiding principles based on evidence assured management practices.

10. The principles established for all child safety considerations across CFA are as follows:
- a) All children have a right to feel safe and to be safe, and their safety is CFA's paramount consideration.
  - b) CFA aims to ensure that a child safe approach becomes a part of CFAs everyday practice and is embedded into CFAs culture.
  - c) All CFA employees, volunteers and FRV secondees have a responsibility to keep children safe when they participate in CFA activities or are involved, engaged or exposed to CFA in any way.
  - d) CFA will advocate and ensure that children have the right for their voices to be heard and their participation is valued.
  - e) CFA acknowledges that a child safe culture will not occur without CFA taking the necessary steps to create a child safe environment.
  - f) CFA will employ appropriate risk management strategies required to identify and remove risks to children.
  - g) CFA recognises that the online environment presents risks that must be managed to keep children safe.
  - h) All child safety concerns, or allegations of child abuse and/or neglect, must be reported and investigated by CFA in line with best practice standards.
  - i) All CFA policies, *business rules* and other documentation aimed to keep children safe must be continuously reviewed and strengthened to protect and support children.

## Definitions:

*(Note: Commonly defined terms are located in the CFA Policy Dictionary. Any defined terms below are specific to this document)*

**CFA employee** means a person who is directly employed by CFA, including those employees on a fixed term or casual employment contract, consultancy or contractor and also includes members of the Authority (the Board).

**CFA volunteer** means an officer or member who receives no remuneration for their services in relation to a brigade, but does not include an officer or member of an industry brigade.

**Child/Children** means a person under 18 years of age.

**FRV Secondee (secondee)** means an officer or employee of Fire Rescue Victoria made available to CFA pursuant to section 25B of the FRV Act.

**Abuse** in relation to children, ill treatment or neglect including emotional, physical or sexual abuse or injury, or any physical or psychological damage that is detrimental to a child's well-being or is capable of jeopardizing a child's development.

- **Emotional abuse** (*Child protection within the family setting and organisational setting*) means when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, frightened by threats or is experiencing family violence. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent 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.
- **Neglect** (*child protection within the family setting*) means a failure to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision to the extent where the health or development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at risk. A child is neglected if they are abandoned or left uncared for over unreasonable periods of time that is inconsistent with their age, stage and development.
  - a) **Serious neglect** in this context potentially constitutes a criminal offence on the part of a parent and includes situations where a parent fails to meet the child's basic needs for food, shelter, hygiene or adequate supervision to the extent that the child's health and physical safety is jeopardised.

- **Neglect** (*child safety within an organisational setting*) means when a staff member or volunteer does not meet their obligations and responsibilities to keep a child safe and well.

Examples of different types of neglect include:

- b) supervisory neglect, which is the absence or inattention of a staff member or volunteer which places the child at risk of physical harm or injury, sexual abuse, or allows other criminal behaviour towards the child
  - c) physical neglect, which is the failure to provide basic physical necessities for a child, such as adequate food, clothing and housing.
- **Physical abuse** (*Child protection within the family setting*) means any non-accidental form of injury or serious physical harm inflicted on a child by any person. Physical abuse does not mean reasonable discipline though it may result from excessive or inappropriate discipline. Physical abuse can include beating, shaking, burning and assault with weapons. Physical injury and significant harm to a child may also result from neglect by a parent or caregiver or within the context of family violence.
  - **Physical abuse** (*Child safety within an organisational setting*) means physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child can fall into two categories. Physical violence can be either:
    - a) Actual physical violence - a staff member or volunteer intentionally or recklessly uses physical force against, with, or in the presence of a child without a lawful reason, which can cause injury or harm to the child. Actual physical violence can include hitting, punching, kicking, pushing or throwing something that strikes a child or another person.
    - b) Apprehended physical violence - a staff member or volunteer intentionally or recklessly engages in conduct or behaviour against, with, or in the presence of a child that is capable of causing a child to think that physical force is about to be used against them or another person. This could include words, gestures or actions that cause a child to believe physical force is about to be used against them, regardless of whether the worker or volunteer intended that any physical force would be applied.
  - **Sexual abuse** (*child Protection within the family setting*) means when any person uses their authority over the child to involve the child in sexual activity. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity including fondling genitals, masturbation, vaginal or anal penetration by a finger, penis or any other object, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution.
  - **Sexual abuse** (*Child safety within an organisational setting*) means, in Victoria, it is an offence to engage in certain sexual behaviours against, with or in front of, a child.

This can include:

- a) sexual assault
- b) indecent acts
- c) possession of child abuse material
- d) 'grooming' a child in order to commit a sexual offence.

Sexual misconduct captures a broader range of inappropriate behaviours of a sexual nature that are not necessarily criminal that occurred against, with, or in the presence of a child. This may include crossing professional boundaries.

*\*Child Protection within the family setting* – content taken from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services – Child Protection Manual

*\*Child safety within an organisational setting* – content taken from the Commission for Children and Young People – Reportable Conduct Scheme Information Sheets

#### Policy Office Use Only

<b>Policy owner</b>	<b>Doc Authority</b>	<b>Review date</b>
Executive Director People, Culture & Safety	CFA Executive	10/2022

<b>Revision history</b>				
<b>Approved</b>	<b>Reviewed</b>	<b>Amended</b>	<b>Revoked</b>	<b>Date</b>
x				Xx/10/2020

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION