

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS POLICY

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Purpose

Skills Lab recognises that children and young people should be awarded special protection because of their vulnerability and risk of harm. Skills Lab understands that child protection legislation provides the overarching framework for protecting children and young people from harm or risk of harm.

Skills Lab recognises that children and young people are valued and respected and is therefore committed to promoting the national child safe principles and upholding child protection legislation to ensure children and young people accessing services provided by Skills Lab are safe and secure.

This policy sets out Skills Lab's commitment to creating a child safe environment and demonstrates its compliance with child protection legislation and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

This policy provides guidance on the role of Skills Lab's organisational leadership and governance in promoting inclusive and welcoming environments for children and young people, a culture of accountability and the ways in which a child safe culture is developed and maintained.

Definitions

Applicable legislation: means the child safety legislation framework in the relevant State or Territory.

Children and young people: means a persons who is under 18 years of age.

Child Safety Officer: means the person(s) appointed by Skills Lab to champion a child safe environment at Skills Lab, provide support, awareness and advice in relation to child safety and wellbeing matters.

General Manager: means the person appointed to the role of General Manager of Skills Lab Pty Ltd, from time to time.

Harm: means physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission) including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

Relevant authority: means the authority responsible for child safety in the relevant jurisdiction, as listed in Annexure A.

Staff: means all officers, employees, contractors, subcontractors, volunteers of Skills Lab.

Working with Children Check: means the prescribed screening process in the relevant jurisdiction as per the applicable legislation to determine the suitability of person to work with children.

Policy

1. Commitment to the safety of children and young people

Children and young people are valued and respected. All children and young people are embraced regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background. At Skills Lab, a child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation, from the top down and bottom up. Skills Lab is committed to providing a safe environment to all children and young people. Our policy complies with the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* and aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. We value and respect children and young people and welcome them regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background. Bullying and harassment isn't tolerated.

Skills Lab recognises that a child safe organisation, according to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, is one that creates a culture, adopts strategies, and takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people. Further, it is an organisation that consciously and systematically creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing is the centre of thought, values and actions, places emphasis on genuine engagement with, and valuing of children, creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people, creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm, responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions. Skills Lab is committed to upholding these standards and providing safe physical and online environments where the protection and wellbeing of children and young people is achieved in accordance with relevant legislation and the National Principles for child safe organisations.

All Skills Lab staff members are provided with a copy of this policy to ensure they understand their obligations and to agree to act in accordance with the terms of this policy. This policy is also easily accessible for the wider community on Skills Lab's website, [here](#).

2. Scope of policy

This policy applies to all Skills Lab employees, volunteers, work placement students and contractors referred to throughout the policy collectively as workers.

All workers are aware of this policy and must act in accordance with it.

3. Communication

As mentioned, this policy is available on our website, on our intranet page for workers or by request. This policy is also provided to all workers as part of their induction following recruitment and to all students prior to enrolment with Skills Lab via the student handbook.

Skills Lab delivers training primarily to adults; however, on occasion, may facilitate training within a school environment, where students are supervised by their schoolteachers, within their classroom.

We encourage and respect the views of children and young people and involve them in decision making as appropriate. All children and young people are listened to and can provide feedback or make a complaint if they have a concern which will be listened to and acted upon.

4. Code of Conduct

Skills Lab workers have a shared responsibility for caring for children and young people. All workers have a part in promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- complying with this policy at all times and taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people;
- treating everyone including those of different race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes and religious beliefs with respect and honesty and ensure equity is upheld;
- listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people
- being alert to children and young people who have been harmed, or may be at risk of harm and reporting this to the Child Abuse Report Line within the relevant State / Territory
- responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/ guardian

Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct should be reported as soon as practicable to management either in person, by telephone on 1300 080 302, or via email at skills@skillslab.edu.au. Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently.

All Skills Lab staff are required to comply with the Skills Lab Employee Code of Conduct and Code of Practice which are available on Skills Labs intranet.

Breaches or suspected breaches of the Employee Code of Conduct or Code of Practice should be reported in accordance with Skills Lab's Complaint Policy which is available on the Skills Lab website.

All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the Complaint Policy and in a timely, confidential, fair and equitable manner.

A breach of the Employee Code of Conduct or Code of Practice may result in disciplinary action, including summary dismissal in certain circumstances.

5. Recruitment

In accordance with the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*, our organisation is registered with the DHS Screening Unit and we link all Working with Children Checks (WWCC). All workers over the age of 14 years who will be working in a role with children and young people must hold a current, not

prohibited WWCC issued by the screening unit of the Department of Human Services, provide evidence of this prior to employment and renew this every 5 years. We will verify the accuracy of all WWCCs in the DHS Screening Unit portal as required by law.

We will immediately notify the Department of Human Services Screening Unit when we become aware of assessable information regarding any person involved with our organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.

6. Training, supervision and support for workers

Skills Lab has measures in place to supervise, train and support workers to understand our organisation's child safe policy, their mandatory reporting obligations, how to build culturally safe environments and their responsibilities to create a child safe environment. These strategies include:

- Training:
 - as part of their induction, all workers are expected to read and understand the Mandatory Reporting Information Booklet available [here](#).
 - complete 'Safe Environments Through their eyes' and 'Responding to Risk of Harm, Abuse and Neglect' training every 3 years.
 - Include child safety as a standing item on meeting agendas.
- support:
 - an induction process for all new workers including a copy of this policy
 - appointment of a child safety officer who has an educative role within Skills Lab.

7. Reporting and responding to harm or risk of harm

Skills Lab aims to ensure that children and young people are safe from harm and risk of harm. Section 17 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act* defines 'harm' as physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

Mandated notifiers in our organisation are staff members who:

- provide education services to children and young people; or
- hold a management position within Skills Lab and their duties include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children and young people.

Skills Lab understands that mandated notifiers have a legal obligation to notify of harm or risk of harm within their relevant State or territory as outlined in Annexure A. If the child or young person is at immediate risk, a report must be made to Police on 000.

Following a report to the relevant State or Territory agency and /or the Police, Skills Lab will support the child or young person by referring them and/or their family to other appropriate services.

8. Reporting and responding to general complaints or feedback

Providing opportunities for complaints and feedback ensures that children, young people and their families feel valued and respected and enables us to improve the quality of our service. Children or their parents/ guardians may make a complaint, raise any concerns or provide feedback to any Skills Lab worker within whom they feel most comfortable to do so. This can be done in person, over the phone, by email or in writing.

Compliments, complaints or feedback can be provided verbally to any worker or directly to management either by telephone on 1300 080 302 or via email at skills@skillslab.edu.au.

We will handle all complaints and feedback promptly, sensitively and fairly and:

- listen to the complaint, concerns and feedback;
- if the complaint, concern or feedback is provided verbally, we will make a confidential record of it;
- advise the time expected for an outcome;
- if a worker directly receives a complaint or concern, they will forward it to management as soon as possible, and management will respond in a timely manner;
- ensure procedural fairness is followed at all times;

If the child, young person or their family is unsatisfied with the outcome of the complaints process they may contact the relevant State/ Territory child protection authority as set out in Annexure A. Alternatively, there are government agencies within each State/ Territory that may be contacted if a complaint requires escalation. Further information about the relevant government agencies that complaints may be escalated to can be found on the websites of the relevant state/ territory agency as outlined in Annexure A.

9. Risk management

In addition to above, to minimise risk to children and young people at Skills Lab, the below strategies have been implemented.

Physical environment

As a SAGE Group company, Skills Lab has a Facilities Equipment Learning and Assessment Resources Policy and a Work Health and Safety Policy which aims to ensure Skills Lab has a safe work environment. Skills Lab also ensures that all children and young people are adequately supervised when accessing the services provided by Skills Lab on site.

Further, Skills Lab workers must take reasonable measures to avoid potentially risky situations when it comes to child safety, this includes but is not limited to avoiding one-on-one situations in enclosed spaces, showing favouritism, using inappropriate language or gestures and physical contact with children or young people.

Online environment

Where children access the internet or online activities for the purposes of undertaking training, students are supervised within a classroom, as controlled by their school.

All Skills Lab workers must comply with the SAGE Group ICT Acceptable Use Procedure, which amongst other things, prohibits Skills Lab workers from accessing, downloading or in any way engaging in pornographic or illicit websites, dispersing emails containing inappropriate content and accessing social media.

Skills Lab workers are bound by SAGE Group's policies and procedures regarding online communications which sets out, amongst other things, that:

- Cyber safety and social media guidelines must be followed at all times (i.e. workers must not communicate with children and young people via social media);
- Appropriate supervision is provided by school teachers for all online activities;
- Digital files containing confidential information shall be protected electronically by restricting the access to only workers requiring it to perform their duties.

Privacy & Confidentiality

When dealing with information from children or about children, Skills Lab and its staff have obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the *Australian Privacy Principles*. Skills Lab's obligations for the collection, storage and use of personal and sensitive information are set out in Skills Lab's Privacy Policy, which is available on Skills Lab's website.

Breaches of privacy and confidentiality will not be tolerated by Skills Lab.

10. Related policies and procedures**External Providers & Third Parties**

Skills Lab requires all external providers and third parties who will, or may, work with children at Skills Lab, to provide evidence that all persons engaged in the provision of the relevant services hold a Working with Children Check (where applicable) and are otherwise compliant with the applicable legislation (in South Australia, this includes lodging a child safe environments statement with the Department of Human Services (SA)).

Children's Complaints Process**Reporting of Suspected Harm or Risk of Harm**

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. If a person becomes aware of an incident or allegation of abuse or harm of a child, the priority is to ensure that the child is safe and to mitigate the risks of further harm.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm, immediately contact the Police on 000.

11. Policy Review

Skills Lab understands that it is a requirement under the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* for a prescribed organisation to review its Child Safe Environments policies and procedures at least once every 5 years. However, there are other instances where it is important for Skills Lab to review its policy more frequently, which may include:

- if new or added risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the policy or procedures (such as social or technical advances that exposes children and young people to harm);
- if there is a critical incident where a child or young person has experienced harm through involvement in our organisation;
- where concerns are raised about child safety or welfare within our organisation;
- when awareness of, or compliance with the policy and/or procedures is low.

ANNEXURE A – State / Territory Child Protection Agencies

STATE/TERRITORY	REPORTING AUTHORITY	FURTHER INFORMATION	CONTACT DETAILS
ACT	Child and Youth Protection Services	For more information on mandatory reporting, click here: Keeping Children and young people Safe .	General public 1300 556 729 (24 hours) Mandated reporters 1300 556 728 (24 hours)
NSW	Department of Family and Community Services	For information about mandatory reporting, refer to the Mandatory reporters webpage.	Child Protection Helpline 13 21 11 (24 hours)
NT	Territory Families	In the Northern Territory, every person is required to report suspected child abuse and neglect.	Child Abuse Hotline 1800 700 250 (24 hours)
QLD	Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women	For more information about mandatory reporting, refer to the Mandatory Reporting in Queensland webpage.	For a list of contact numbers during business hours, go to: Regional Intake Services . Child Safety After Hours Service Centre 1800 177 135
SA	Department for Child Protection	For more information about mandatory reporting, click here: Mandated Notifiers and Their Role and Preparing to Report Child Abuse .	Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) 13 14 78 (24 hours) Yaitya Tirramangkotti - an Aboriginal team, via the CARL number above.
VIC	Department of Health and Human Services	For information about child protection and mandatory reporting, refer to the department's Child Protection webpage.	For a list of regional and metropolitan phone numbers: Child Protection Contacts After hours child protection emergency service 13 12 78
WA	Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support	For information about mandatory reporting refer to the department's mandatory reporting information webpage.	Central Intake Team Ph: 1800 273 889 After hours 1800 199 008