

## **Child Safe Reporting Policy Organisational Culture**

### **Policy Statement**

We want children who participate in our preschool to have a safe and happy experience. We support and respect our children, their families and our Quirindi Preschool Kindergarten (QPK) staff. To help keep children safe, we must create, maintain and improve our child safe reporting practices to ensure they remain effective. Everyone at QPK must:

- Know **what** to report, **who** to report it to and **how** to report it
- Report any concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or young person immediately
- Feel confident that concerns and allegations will be dealt with honestly and fairly
- Feel confident in reporting unacceptable behaviour around children and young people
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child is paramount when an allegation is made

### **Definitions of harm and abuse (what to report)**

#### **Psychological abuse**

Includes bullying, threatening and abusive language, intimidation, shaming and name calling, ignoring and isolating a child, and exposure to domestic and family violence.

#### **Physical abuse**

Includes physical punishment such as pushing, shoving, punching, slapping and kicking, resulting in injury, burns, choking or bruising.

#### **Sexual abuse**

Includes the sexual touching of a child, grooming, and production, distribution or possession of child abuse material (often known as photography).

#### **Grooming**

The process where a person manipulates a child or group of children, and sometimes those looking after them, including parents, carers, teachers and leaders. They do this to establish a position of trust so they can then later sexually abuse the child.

#### **Misconduct**

Inappropriate behaviour that may not be as severe as abuse, although could indicate that abuse is occurring and would often be in breach of an organisation's Child Safe Code of Conduct, including showing a child something inappropriate on a phone, having an inappropriate conversation with a child.

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Quality Area 5: Relationships with children  
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Reviewed: March 2023  
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### **Lack of appropriate care**

Includes not providing adequate and proper supervision, nourishment, clothing, shelter, education or medical care.

Please refer to our Child Safe Code of Conduct for a full list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours at our organisation.

Note: As a relevant entity, our organisation must also report reportable conduct.

### **Types of complaints (what to report)**

All complaints should be reported. This includes

- Criminal conduct
- Risk of significant harm (ROSH)
- Disclosure of abuse
- Unacceptable behaviour around children and young people that breaches our Child Safe Conduct
- Suspicion of harm or abuse to a child or young person
- Reportable conduct

### **Making a complaint (who can report)**

Everyone in QPK has the right to make a genuine complaint and will not be punished if they do. This includes children and young people, staff members and volunteers. Reporting abuse is mandatory and encouraged – it is never obstructed or prevented.

### **Reporting obligation (who to report to)**

#### **Reporting criminal conduct**

Contact NSW Police on 131 444 for anything you consider could be a criminal offence. This includes sexual assault, physical assault, grooming offences, and producing, disseminating or possessing child abuse material.

Note: It is a criminal offence for adults not to report to police if they know or believe that a child abuse offence has been committed. In addition, people employed in child-related work may be subject to a criminal offence if they fail to reduce or remove the risk of a child becoming a victim of child abuse.

#### **Reporting risk of significant harm**

Any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child or young person is at risk of significant (ROSH) can report to the **Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)** on 132 111 (this is a 24-hour service).

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Mandatory reporters must report to the **ChildStory Reporter Community** if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at ROSH.

### **Reporting allegations and convictions**

Relevant entities must notify the Office of the Children's Guardian of reportable allegations or convictions (that is, reportable conduct). This includes sexual offences, sexual misconduct, ill-treatment of a child, neglect of a child, an assault against a child, failure to protect or report if a child has been harmed, as well as any behaviour that causes significant psychological harm to a child.

### **Reporting breaches of our Child Safe Code of Conduct**

All complaints must be reported to our child safe contact officer. This is the Nominated Supervisor and/or the Responsible Person of QPK.

### **Risk management strategies (how to report)**

To ensure the immediate and ongoing safety of the child:

- Establish the welfare and safety of the child and take steps to ensure the child is removed from the risk
- Reassure them and remain calm
- Listen carefully without interrupting
- Do not ask leading questions or any additional questions once you have established there is a genuine concern (to not compromise future investigations by NSW Police or DCJ)
- Support them, reassuring the child that they have done the right thing, that you believe them and that the abuse is not their fault
- Explain what will happen, including timeframes
- Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Do not confront the alleged perpetrator
- Seek guidance if you are unsure about what to do

It is the child safety officer's role to conduct a risk assessment after receiving an allegation, to ensure the safety of all people involved and maintain the integrity of the investigation.

### **Procedural fairness, including privacy and confidentiality (how to report)**

Any allegation of abuse will be treated in a fair, transparent and timely manner. QPK staff subject to an allegation will be notified when a disciplinary hearing will take place and what will occur at the hearing. We follow the obligations defined under the Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth), and relevant reportable conduct investigations are conducted with the OCG's Reportable Conduct Directorate.

Additionally:

- All information is recorded on our reporting form for complaints and allegations
- All reporting forms for complaints and allegations are stored securely and only accessed by those in the organisation with responsibility for oversight of the investigation

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- Information may be exchanged under Chapter 16A of the *Child and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* with other agencies who have responsibilities relating to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children and young people.
- QPK maintains the privacy of those involved in accordance with our obligations under the *Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998*
- If an incident is found to be substantiated, likely outcomes or responses will be determined by HR or from advice given by relevant authorities (police, DCJ or OCG)

### **Complaint process (how to report)**

Once a complaint has been made, use this step-by-step process to make sure it's appropriately followed up:

- Steps taken to remove child from harm
- Incident recorded
- Reporting obligations met, if necessary
- Investigation conducted, keeping everyone involved up to date with what is happening
- Offering ongoing support to the child as needed
- Reviewing the incident and updating the QPK's child safe policies, if necessary

### **Legislation**

*Crimes Act 1900*  
*Child and young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*  
*Children's Guardian Act 2019*  
*Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)*  
*Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*

### **How we publicise our Child Safe Reporting Policy**

To ensure everyone in our organisation is aware of our Child Safe Reporting Policy and their reporting obligations we:

- Hold information sessions about our child safe policies and how they apply to families, staff and children
- Create and display important information from our child safe Reporting Policy that describes what to report to and how to report, including fact sheets, brochures and posters
- Provide QPK staff with internal and external training opportunities so they understand our processes for complaints and allegations
- create and promote age- and ability – appropriate programs for children and young people that explain what to do if they feel sad, angry or concerned

### **Review date**

This policy will be reviewed annually and after any critical incidents, to ensure continuous improvement of our child safe practices and that we keep up to date with relevant legislation requirements.

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#### **Related Guidelines, Standards, Frameworks**

- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 5: Relationships with children
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

#### **Sources**

**Office of the Children's Guardian** [www.ocg.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ocg.nsw.gov.au)