

Child Safe Policy and Commitment Statement

Last Review: N/A	Constructed / Reviewed by: Clayton Utz
Next Review: March 2026	Approval Required: Yes
	Board Sign Off Date: Monday 26 th October 2024

1. Statement of Context and Purpose

- 1.1 GISSA has a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse and is committed to promoting child safety, children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse. GISSA runs sports events where staff may come into contact with children. Where staff do come into contact with children or otherwise deal with children in the course of their role, staff must ensure that they comply with the requirements set out in this Policy.
- 1.2 GISSA is committed to the principles of cultural safety, inclusion and wellbeing of children from diverse backgrounds (including Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children) and to the safety, inclusion and wellbeing of LGBTQI, non-binary and gender-diverse children, international students and children who are unable to live at home. GISSA recognises that these principles support the safety of all children.
- 1.3 This Policy sets out key elements of GISSA's approach to child safety and has been developed to create and maintain a child safe organisation in accordance with the Child Safe Standards introduced by the Victorian Government. It also outlines:
- 1.3.1 the overarching principles and values that guide its approach to child safety; and
 - 1.3.2 refers to the Code of Conduct which in turn provides the standards of expected behaviour and appropriate behaviour in dealing with children.

2. Application

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all employees, volunteers and contractors (collectively referred to as **staff** throughout this Policy).
- 2.2 To properly implement this Policy, all GISSA Member Schools must ensure that they implement a Child Safe Policy that complies with the child safety standards and Ministerial Order 1359, which sets out specific requirements for registered schools in relation to child safety.

3. Reference Points / Background Papers

- 3.1 Education Training Report Act 2006 (Vic);
- 3.2 Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005 (Vic);
- 3.3 Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic);
- 3.4 Crimes Act 1958 (Vic);

- 3.5 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);
- 3.6 [DFFH Resources for Child Safe Standards: Child Safe Standards](#);
- 3.7 Ministerial Order 1359 - Implementing the Child Safe Standards - Managing the Risk Of Child Abuse In Schools And School Boarding Premises);
- 3.8 GISSA Child Safe Procedure; and
- 3.9 GISSA Code of Conduct.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 **Child** means a person who is under the age of 18 years who attends a GISSA event.
- 4.2 **Child abuse** encompasses a broad range of matters set out in Part 6 of this Policy.
- 4.3 **Child-connected work** means work organised by GISSA and performed by an adult in GISSA's environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.
- 4.4 **Child safety** includes matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.
- 4.5 **Child Safe Officer** is the first point of contact to provide advice and support to children, parents and staff regarding the safety and well-being of children at GISSA, as set out in the Child Safety Procedure.
- 4.6 **GISSA's environment** means any physical place made available to or used by GISSA for child-connected work.
- 4.7 **Staff** means an individual working in the GISSA environment who is directly engaged or employed by GISSA and/or a volunteer or a contracted service provider for GISSA (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

5. Overarching values and principles

GISSA's approach to child safety and wellbeing is guided by a number of overarching principles and values (which are set out below).

5.1 Commitment to child safety and best interests

- 5.1.1 GISSA is committed to child safety and wants children to be safe, happy and empowered. GISSA supports and respects all children, as well as staff and parents.
- 5.1.2 GISSA is committed to:
 - (a) embedding and promoting a culture of child safety and wellbeing within the physical and online environments;
 - (b) preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks;

- (c) protecting the rights of all children to be safe, without fear of abuse or exploitation as outlined in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and is committed to keeping children safe by all reasonable means;
- (d) acting in children's best interests and keeping children safe;
- (e) ensuring cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- (f) ensuring safety and inclusion for children who are unable to live at home and/or who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex;
- (g) providing a safe environment for children with a disability and promoting their participation;
- (h) recognising and mitigating child abuse risks posed from the online environment;
- (i) encouraging and recognising the importance of consultation with, and participation by, children and their families in relation to decisions affecting the child;
- (j) actively working to empower children; and
- (k) regularly training and educating staff on child abuse risks, and ensuring staff are attuned to signs of harm (see below section 6).

5.2 **Zero tolerance for child abuse**

- 5.2.1 GISSA has zero tolerance for child abuse and will not tolerate any form of child abuse, including by anyone who is working within GISSA's environment or in child-connected work.
- 5.2.2 GISSA has both legal and moral obligations to contact, as appropriate, the parents, school and/or relevant authorities when child safety concerns are raised and will comply with that obligation.
- 5.2.3 All instances of suspected child abuse, allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns must be reported to the Child Safe Officer and will be treated very seriously.
- 5.2.4 If staff believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse, they must immediately phone 000.

6. What is child abuse

6.1 Definition of child abuse as set out in the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic)

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a **sexual offence**; or
 - an offence under section 49M(1) of the *Crimes Act 1958*, that is, the offence of "grooming" which prohibits communicating (including electronically) by words or conduct with a child with the intention of facilitating the child's engagement or involvement in a sexual offence with you or another adult;
- the infliction on a child of:
 - **physical violence**; or
 - **serious emotional or psychological harm**; and
- serious neglect of a child.

6.2 Physical violence and abuse

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons.

Possible physical indicators:	Possible behavioural indicators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unexplained bruises • burns and/or fractured bones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • showing wariness or distrust of adults • wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury) • fear of specific people • unexplained absences • academic problems

6.3 Sexual offences and abuse

Sexual offences occur when a person involves a child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.

Possible physical indicators:	Possible behavioural indicators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presence of sexually transmitted diseases • pregnancy • bleeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for the child's age • difficulty sleeping • being withdrawn • complaining of headaches or stomach pains • fear of specific people • showing weariness or distrust of adults • displaying aggressive behaviour

6.4 Serious emotional or psychological abuse

Serious emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put downs, or persistent and deliberate 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. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Possible physical indicators:	Possible behavioural indicators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delays in emotional, mental or even physical development • physical signs of self-harming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exhibiting low self-esteem or anxiety • displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour • being withdrawn, passive and/or tearful

6.5 Serious neglect

Serious neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardized. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life threatening situations.

Possible physical indicators:	Possible behavioural indicators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frequent hunger • malnutrition • poor hygiene • inappropriate clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stealing food • staying at school outside of school hours • aggressive behaviour • using alcohol or drugs • academic issues

7. Child safety actions taken by GISSA

7.1 GISSA has taken, and/or proposes to take, the actions set out below in order to:

- 7.1.1 demonstrate its commitment to child safety and wellbeing, and monitor its adherence to its Child Safe Policy;
- 7.1.2 support, encourage and enable staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and
- 7.1.3 support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

7.2 Working with children checks

- 7.2.1 As part of the screening process, the following key event personnel must have and, if requested, provide appropriate evidence of a valid WWCC (or other state equivalent) to show that they are suitable to work with children and young people in a school setting:
 - (a) All GISSA staff and Board members
 - (b) those paid by GISSA for their services (excluding bump in and bump out);
 - (c) volunteers;
 - (d) relevant contractors who may have unsupervised access to children; and
 - (e) anyone else who GISSA staff require a WWCC due to the nature of the work that they are undertaking for GISSA
- 7.2.2 Any costs associated with gaining a valid WWCC will be the responsibility of the individual.

7.3 Development, maintenance, implementation and publication of child safe policies, procedures and codes of conduct

- 7.3.1 This Policy (along with the Code of Conduct and the Child Safe Procedure) guides staff on how to behave with children.
- 7.3.2 All staff must abide by GISSA's Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. GISSA welcomes input from staff, as well as children and their families, regarding the development and content of the Code of Conduct.
- 7.3.3 We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. GISSA:
- (a) takes all allegations seriously and has a procedure in place to enable allegations to be investigated thoroughly and quickly; and
 - (b) works to ensure all children and staff know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.
- 7.3.4 All complaints, concerns or safety incidents will be analysed to identify any causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.
- 7.3.5 Mindful of Child Safe Standard 10, GISSA will report in a general way to relevant personal the findings of any properly constituted reviews.

7.4 Child Safe Officer

- 7.4.1 GISSA has appointed the GISSA Executive Officer to be the Child Safe Officer, as a first point of contact to provide advice and support to children, parents and staff regarding the safety and well-being of children during certain GISSA events (see the Child Safe Procedure).
- 7.4.2 The Child Safe Officer will receive appropriate training and support in relation to child safety, prevention of child abuse and responding to allegations of child abuse.
- 7.4.3 GISSA staff can contact the Child Safe Officer for further information regarding child safety and for any questions or concerns or reports of suspected or alleged child abuse.

7.5 Provision of counselling

- 7.5.1 In consultation with its member schools, GISSA will ensure that children who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse have access to the appropriate counselling service through the relevant member school.
- 7.5.2 Where deemed appropriate, GISSA through its Member Schools will offer children access to appropriate sexual abuse prevention programs or to relevant related information in an age appropriate way.

7.6 Risk management strategies

7.6.1 GISSA proactively manages risks of abuse to children.

7.6.2 GISSA has developed and implemented risk management strategies regarding child safety which will identify and mitigate the risk(s) of child abuse in GISSA's environment by taking into account:

- (a) the nature of GISSA's environment, for example risks posed by physical environments; and
- (b) the activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by other volunteers from outside organisations); and
- (c) the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

7.6.3 Where risks of child abuse occurring in one or more of GISSA's environments are identified, the Child Safe Officer will:

- (a) make a record of those risks;
- (b) specify the action(s) GISSA will take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls), which will take into account the nature of the risk and the diversity characteristics of the children affected by the risk; and
- (c) specify the time by which GISSA will reduce or remove the risk(s) identified.

7.6.4 The Child Safe Officer will monitor and review the risks related to child safety and wellbeing at least annually, including evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

7.6.5 GISSA will ensure (at least annually) that staff (including the Child Safe Officer) receive ongoing training and information (taking into account the factors listed at paragraph 7.5 above) on how to:

- (a) recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children;
- (b) respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing, and to support colleagues who disclose harm;
- (c) build culturally safe environments for children;
- (d) implement GISSA's child safety practices (including the Code of Conduct and the Child Safe Policy and Procedure.); and
- (e) identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

7.7 Consultation with children and families

7.7.1 GISSA through its member schools recognises the importance of participation as a tool for empowering children and making them safer within organisations, as it provides them with opportunities and support to voice their views and concerns, GISSA also understands the importance of families and communities in promoting child safety and wellbeing as it fosters a more open and transparent child safe culture for families and communities.

7.7.2 GISSA through its member schools will ensure that:

- (a) children are informed about all of their rights (for example, those in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), including to safety, information and participation;
- (b) children are provided with opportunities to participate in decisions affecting them;
- (c) GISSA will be responsive to the contributions of children, and will take their input and participation seriously;
- (d) families participate in decisions affecting their child;
- (e) GISSA engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach;
- (f) families and communities have the opportunity to review GISSA's child safe policies and practices, and have input into their development; and
- (g) families, carers and the community are informed about GISSA's operations and governance.

8. Consequences for Breach of this Policy

GISSA emphasises the need to fully comply with the requirements of this Policy. Any staff found to be in breach of the requirements of this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment (or engagement, where appropriate). Breaches may also result in disclosure to appropriate authorities and/or the Police.

9. Enquiries and Complaints

9.1 Any person may request further information about the way in which GISSA complies with the requirements of this Policy, by submitting a request to:

The GISSA Executive Officer

Geelong Independent School Sports Association

29-31 Kardinia Drive

Bell Post Hill VIC 3215

Contact number: 0438393266

Email: j.waight@kardinia.vic.edu.au

- 9.2 A person who wishes to make a complaint about GISSA's compliance with this Policy, can submit the complaint to:

Secretary/Treasurer

Geelong Independent School Sports Association Board

29-31 Kardinia Drive

Bell Post Hill VIC 3215

Email: Andrew Richardson andrew.richardson@tgc.vic.edu.au

- 9.3 The Board will investigate any complaint and will notify the person who made the complaint of its decision as soon as practicable after it has been made.

10. Implications for Practice

10.1 At Board Level

To properly implement this Policy, GISSA must:

10.1.1 ensure that this Policy is reviewed and endorsed on an annual basis and following significant incidents if they occur;

10.1.2 ensure that copies of this Policy are made available to all staff,

10.1.3 ensure that this Policy is incorporated into GISSA's record of current policies;

10.1.4 ensure that this Policy is incorporated into GISSA's induction program and any ongoing training, to ensure that all staff (particularly those who are engaged in child-connected work) are aware of the Policy, have read and understood the Policy, and acknowledge their commitment to comply with the policy;

10.1.5 ensure that all staff are directed towards the Code of Conduct and the Child Safe Procedure; and

10.1.6 ensure that this Policy is accessible to the public (including children and parents).

10.2 At Other Levels

To properly implement this policy, all GISSA staff must ensure:

10.2.1 that they will abide by this Policy, the Code of Conduct and the Child Safe Procedure and assist GISSA in the implementation of this Policy; and

10.2.2 that they have read and understood the definitions of child abuse outlined in this Policy.

10.3 **At GISSA Member School Level**

10.3.1 To properly implement this Procedure, all GISSA Member Schools must ensure that they implement a Child Safe Policy that complies with the Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359, which sets out specific requirements for registered schools in relation to child safety.

10.3.2 GISSA will require Member Schools to sign an annual attestation of compliance with this policy.