

Version Control			
Name	Version	Confirmed by Board on	Review Date
Child Safety and Wellbeing	V2	17 August 2022	July 2024



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Saltbush, Balnarring Beach (Saltbush) is a not for profit, charitable organisation that exists to enrich the lives of people experiencing hardship by providing a peaceful environment for rest, play, growth and connection.

Our vision is **restorative holidays and experiences for those who need it most.**

Saltbush acknowledges the Bunurong/Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work. We acknowledge and respect their contributions, experience, and knowledge as First Nations people. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Saltbush seeks to create welcoming space where children and young people thrive. At Saltbush, children and young people are always in the care and under the responsibility of their parent or guardian, including for all activities and school holiday programs. Saltbush provides families with a rich environment for intergenerational experiences that enhances the lives of children and young people.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates the strong commitment of the Saltbush team to child safety and wellbeing and shows how our organisation keeps children safe from harm, including child abuse.

Commitment to child safety

All children who come to Saltbush have a right to feel and be safe. We have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe and have fun with their families and/or other significant people in their lives.

Purpose

This Policy outlines how Saltbush prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, board members, guests, and others involved in our organization and who visit Saltbush. This policy applies to all activities at Saltbush including independent holidays, retreats and school holiday programs.

Definitions

Child abuse means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including because of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological harm. Harm

can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

Child/Children means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Concerns and complaints

A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to Saltbush related to one or more of the following:

- our services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Saltbush
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person at Saltbush
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity

Role of the Board of Management

The Board has the role of making sure Saltbush prioritises children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

The Board will champion and model a child safe culture at Saltbush. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Board will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Everyone on the Board has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Board will make sure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

Children's empowerment and participation

Saltbush seeks to provide a peaceful environment for rest, play, growth, and connection for all people experiencing hardship. Children and young people are valued as part of our multi-generational approach to program development. We actively seek to include children's views and ideas in our planning, activities, and development of our site.

We aim to create the environment for children to connect with the natural world, with each other, and with themselves. We allow children and young people choice and autonomy in how they choose to participate or engage in programs and activities, and to what extent. Children and young people are not judged about their decisions and are supported in their choices.

Saltbush supports children's participation by regularly seeking informal feedback through discussions with children and their families, and through regular surveys.

Families and communities

Saltbush recognises the important role of families, parents and carers. Parents, carers, family members and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

Saltbush provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices. We:

- publish our Child Safe Statement and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy on our website
- provide information in our Nano Community Space about our commitment to child safety and contact information to report concerns
- review and update our Child Safe Statement, Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, and Child Safe Code of Conduct as needed
- include articles on child wellbeing and children's experiences at Saltbush in our newsletter

Creating culturally safe environments for all Indigenous Australian children and their families

Saltbush is committed to creating environments where Indigenous Australian culture is celebrated and children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Indigenous Australian children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country at all Board meetings and public gatherings
- engagement with local Indigenous Australian organisations
- Indigenous recognition on our website and email signatures
- an Environmental Charter published on the website that acknowledges the role of Indigenous communities in managing their land
- learning about Indigenous custodianship of the land that Saltbush inhabits

We are working toward including the following:

- liaising with Indigenous people to share information about Indigenous custodianship of the land that Saltbush inhabits
- creating visual information to share with guests, including signage, naming of plants, maps

Valuing diversity

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- welcome and support participation of all children, including children with a disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children and their families
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities, including an accessible office, two houses with accessible bathrooms and access (one with a ramp), accessible Nano Community Space with parking spaces
- have a masterplan that seeks to create a fully accessible site
- offer families, carers, and children the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs
- actively promote intercultural peace and connection by bringing children and their families/carers from diverse backgrounds together. We provide relaxing and enjoyable activities for children that encourage connection and friendship.
- seek to support asylum seekers and refugees through our connection with the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project (BASP) and people from CALD backgrounds. We also seek to provide opportunities for these guests to participate in programs alongside other guests.
- draw on the lived experiences of our diverse staff and board to inform our programs and activities

Child Safe Code of Conduct

Saltbush has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Staff, volunteers, and the board must comply with the Child Safe Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.

All independent contractors are also expected to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and where they are engaging with children (e.g. delivering school holiday program activities) will have to sign an agreement to comply with the code, prior to delivering any services.

Recruiting staff and volunteers

Saltbush places importance on child safety and wellbeing when recruiting staff and volunteers. We only recruit staff, volunteers and board who we deem to be appropriate to engage with children.

We require a Working with Children Check, Police check and referee checks for all staff.

We require all adult volunteers who have a role with children to have a Working with Children Check.

We require Saltbush staff to have appropriate qualifications for their roles and we check to make sure these qualifications are valid. Board members must hold a valid Working with Children Check and a national Police Check.

Supporting staff and volunteers

Saltbush is committed to providing board members, staff and volunteers training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. Saltbush assists its board, staff and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decisions and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

Complaints and reporting

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

Saltbush staff and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response, and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police. If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then staff and volunteers must report it. Staff and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
- having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at Saltbush
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at Saltbush

Complaints can be made to the following people:

1. The CEO of Saltbush, Rachel Connor rachel@saltbushbb.org.au or 5983 1819
2. The Saltbush Board Chairperson, Phillip Steele phillip.steele1@gmail.com or 0419 311 582

If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.

Record keeping

Saltbush is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns. All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in our incident report records.

Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

Records will be stored securely and kept by Saltbush.

Information sharing

Saltbush may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. Saltbush will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety.

Risk management

We recognise the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse. We conduct regular risk assessments which include potential risks to children and young people while at Saltbush and while engaging in activities with Saltbush. We ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating in activities with Saltbush.

Non-compliance with this policy and the Child Safe Code of Conduct

Potential breaches of this policy by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement, or other corrective action.

Review

Saltbush will review child safe practices and policies every two years. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near misses'. Findings from reviews will inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices. Reviews are overseen by the Saltbush Board of Management and will be informed by feedback received from children, families and staff.

Supporting documents – Saltbush child safety and wellbeing system

The following policies and procedures work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all our operations:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Statement
- Saltbush Risk Management Framework
- Child safe training

Supporting legislation

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* (including Child Safe Standards)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* (including reporting to Child Protection)
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- *Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)