

Safeguarding Vulnerable People Policy

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Policy approved by: Governance and Risk Committee

Responsibility: People and Culture, Education, Health & Safety Committee

To be reviewed every two years, or after an incident has been received.

This *Safeguarding Vulnerable People Policy* is to be read in conjunction with

- *NTAV Procedure and Code of Conduct.*
- *Mandatory Reporting - Child Protection Policy*
- *Whistleblowing Protections Policy*

Contents

Purpose	2
Commitment Statement.....	2
Scope.....	2
Recruitment	3
Risk Mitigation.....	3
Reporting and Responding.....	4
Safeguarding Code of Conduct.....	4
Further Assistance	4
Roles and Responsibilities	5
Definitions.....	7
Indicators of abuse.....	10
NTAV incident reporting process and Mandatory reporting requirements.....	10
Whistle blower protections	10
Appendix A - Indicators of abuse	11

Purpose

- This Policy reflects the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)'s outlines the principles that the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) follows to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk.
- This Policy and the *Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct* include guidance for staff and volunteers for the purpose of increasing their awareness and clarifying their accountability.
- This Policy highlights the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)'s commitment to protecting vulnerable people including children, young people and adults at risk.

Commitment Statement

- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is committed to the safety of all people, and especially vulnerable people.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is a child safe organisation and is committed to adhering to the 11 Child Safe Standards.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is committed to providing environments where all people are safe.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) promotes diversity and tolerance and is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the cultural safety of people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for vulnerable people of all abilities.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) has zero tolerance of abuse and harm. All allegations and safety concerns are treated seriously and consistently with robust policies and procedures.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when concerned about a child's safety.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is committed to
 - preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
 - Providing comprehensive human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
 - Regularly training and educating staff and volunteers on safeguarding vulnerable people.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) has policies, procedures and training in place that support the leadership team, staff, and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- Safeguarding vulnerable people, including children, young people and adults at risk is a shared responsibility across the organisation.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) will ensure that images and other communications used will portray children, young people and adults at risk in a dignified, respectful and culturally appropriate way and with the required consent of the parent or guardian and the child where possible and appropriate.

Scope

- All individuals who work in the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) environment are required to comply with this Policy at all times. Such individuals include those who are:
 - directly employed by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
 - a volunteer or a contracted service provider.

- This Policy applies to all National Trust of Australia (Victoria) related conduct and National Trust of Australia (Victoria) related activities.
- This Policy is at all times subject to law and does not supersede or take precedence over any criminal investigation or mandatory reporting requirements prescribed by child safety legislation or criminal law.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) expects all activities operating on its premises to comply with this Policy.
- Disciplinary action will be taken against individuals who breach this Policy, in accordance with the NTAV Staff Code of Conduct Policy. Where a breach (or alleged breach) of this Policy also constitutes a breach of law, NTAV may be obligated to notify relevant authorities such as the police or a government agency.

Recruitment

- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children and vulnerable people. Selection criteria and advertisements clearly demonstrate the organisation's commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities.
- All staff and volunteers will be required to complete training modules about protecting children and vulnerable people within 2 weeks of their employment.
- All staff, volunteers and contractors are required to provide evidence of a current and satisfactory Working with Children Check, and a Police Check.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) will not knowingly engage – directly or indirectly – any person or organisation who poses an unacceptable risk to children, young people or adults at risk.
- National Trust of Australia (Victoria) staff and volunteers who are engaged in National Trust of Australia (Victoria) related activities involving children or adults at risk will be subject to regular supervision and performance monitoring whilst engaging with vulnerable people.
- All National Trust of Australia (Victoria) must adhere to the *Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct*.

Risk Mitigation

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise risks of abuse, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media). Risk assessments are managed in accordance with the NTAV Organisation Risk Procedure & Information document.

- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) expects the active support and cooperation of the entire National Trust of Australia (Victoria) community to manage risk and create safe environments, whether they are working directly or indirectly with vulnerable people.
- Where an activity is determined to pose an unacceptable risk to vulnerable people and the risk cannot be mitigated, the activity should not proceed.
- The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) seeks to empower children, and vulnerable adults to be active participants in decisions that directly impact them.

Reporting and Responding

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.

- It is mandatory for all National Trust of Australia (Victoria) staff and volunteers to immediately report witnessed, suspected, disclosed, or alleged cases of child exploitation, harm, abuse, or a breach of this Policy, to a senior manager of NTAV.
- In emergency situations, that is where there is imminent risk or threat to personal safety of an individual, staff must respond in accordance with the Critical Incident Management Policy of the NTAV property and contact Emergency Services by calling 000.
- All reports of witnessed, suspected, disclosed or alleged cases of harm, abuse, exploitation or breach of this Policy will be handled confidentially and in a timely manner. Reports will be kept confidential in a secure location, accessible to appropriately authorised staff

Staff Support

- NTAV staff can access counselling services through Employee Assistance Program at no cost to the individual.

Safeguarding Code of Conduct

All National Trust of Australia (Victoria) staff and volunteers should adhere to NTAV's *Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct* and should familiarise themselves with the appropriate behaviours and approach for working and engaging with vulnerable people, children, young people and adults at risk.

Further Assistance

Any staff member or volunteer who requires assistance in understanding this Policy should first consult their Property Manager, Executive Manager or personnel responsible for operation in their work area.

Roles and Responsibilities

Position	Role/responsibility
NTAV Board Members Chief Executive Officer Executive Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall accountability and strategic responsibility for safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk within the NTAV. • Actively promote NTAV's commitment to the protection of all children within the organisation. • Cooperate with any internal or external investigation regarding the safety, wellbeing and dignity of a child, young person or adult at risk.
Executive Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that this Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct is implemented across all areas of the organisation. • Ensure safeguarding is integrated into all operations and work environment. • Ensure NTAV operates in a way that is consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations as set out by the Australian Human Rights Commission • Ensure Safeguarding children, young people and adult at risk is incorporated and promoted in staff induction and training, and at all NTAV events and activities. • Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities under this Policy and that there is effective delegation, training and promotion of this Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct. • Ensure safer recruitment procedures are adhered to in accordance with this Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct. • Ensure all staff understand and adhere to their responsibilities as outlined in this Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct. • Ensure risk management assessments are conducted on all NTAV related activities involving children, young people and adults at risk. • Where appropriate, engage children, young people and adults at risk in decisions affecting them. • Ensure staff are appropriately trained and supervised when engaging or interacting with children, young people and adults at risk. • Report all concerns or incidents.
People and Culture Executive Manager Safeguarding Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure any changes to relevant legislation, policies and regulations are promptly brought to the attention of the Executive Team and incorporated into this Policy where applicable. • Oversee the implementation of NTAV's Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct. • Develop and implement resources to support NTAV staff and volunteers to implement the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct.
Managers of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all direct reports complete all induction components.

Managers of volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all direct reports are aware of and understand their responsibilities as per this Policy, the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct, and the Mandatory Reporting – Child Protection Policy. • Display steps for reporting all concerns and incidents in a location that is accessible by staff and volunteers • Receive and action all reports from staff/volunteers of concerns or incidents regarding vulnerable people.
NTAV Staff and Volunteers Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with this Policy, the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct, and the Mandatory Reporting – Child Protection Policy. • Ensure the safety, well-being and dignity of children, young people and adults at risk at all times when engaged in NTAV related events, activities, and tasks. • Be caring and respectful towards vulnerable people. • Report all concerns or incidents to a Manager.

Definitions

The following terms are informed by the National Office of Child Safety (<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/>, Sourced April 2024), and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>, Sourced April 2024)

Abuse

An act, or failure to act, that endangers a child's or person at risk's physical or emotional health, development or dignity. Abuse includes (but is not limited to) the following types:

- Physical abuse: Physically abusive behaviour. The use of physical force that results in harm.
- Neglect: The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child or person at risk (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing
- Emotional abuse: A continuing pattern of inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a person at risk.
- Sexual abuse: When a child, young person or adult at risk is used, forced, or enticed into taking part in sexual activities. The Royal Commission's definition of child sexual abuse is: 'any act that exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes that are beyond their understanding, are contrary to accepted community standards, or are outside what is permitted by law'.
- Relationship violence and abuse is a pattern of behaviours generally used by someone to maintain power and control over another person. This includes behaviours that physically harm, intimidate, manipulate or control a person or otherwise force them to behave in ways they do not want to, including through emotional abuse or educational control or manipulation.

At risk or vulnerable person

A person 'at risk' is a person who is experiencing disadvantage and might access a regulated activity or service in relation to the disadvantage. "Disadvantage" refers to but is not limited to physical or mental disability; social or financial hardship; and difficulty communicating in English.

Children and young people

People under the age of 18.

Cultural safety

Cultural safety refers to an environment 'where there is no assault, challenge or denial of [a person's] identity, of who they are and what they need'. It refers specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' own assessment of their safety and capacity to engage meaningfully and on their own terms with a non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person or organisation. This requires a non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person or organisation to listen, enable and support these environments, with accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues or service users.

Grooming

Grooming describes behaviours that manipulate and control a child, their family, kin and carers or other support networks, or organisations. The intent of manipulation is to gain access to the child, obtain the child's compliance, maintain the child's silence, and/or avoid discovery of sexual abuse.

Grooming can be done by people already well known to the child, including by a child's family member, kin or carer. Grooming can take place in person and online, and is often difficult to identify. Behaviours related to grooming are not necessarily explicitly sexual, directly abusive or criminal. They may only be recognised in hindsight. Some grooming behaviours are consistent with behaviours or activities in non-abusive relationships. In these cases, the main difference between acceptable behaviours and grooming behaviours is the motivation behind them. Online child grooming refers to the process of establishing and building a relationship with a child through the use of the internet or other technologies to facilitate sexual contact with that child, either physically or online. Online grooming may include perpetrators encouraging victims to engage in sexual activity or to send the perpetrator sexually explicit material. It may lead to perpetrators meeting the victim in person or blackmailing the victim to self-produce explicit materials. To evade detection in the grooming phase, perpetrators may also convince the victim to migrate to and from multiple online platforms, including those using encrypted technologies.

Harm

Any detrimental impact on the physical, psychological, emotional or social safety, wellbeing and development of a child, young person or adult at risk.

Informed Consent

Ensure that children, and their parents or carers understand the implications, purpose and potential uses of photographs, videos or other personal information.

Intergenerational trauma

Intergenerational trauma refers to trauma that is passed from the first generation of survivors who have experienced trauma, down to future children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. If the trauma is unresolved, next generations have a higher risk of developing trauma symptoms. An example is where parents have been denied the right to develop safe attachments with their children and provide those children with predictable home environments. In that case, children may be vulnerable to developmental delay, poor education outcomes, interpersonal issues, disability, and higher chances of coming into contact with the criminal justice system. The likelihood of intergenerational trauma is high in families of once Stolen Generation children.

Mandatory reporter

A person who is required by either state or territory law to report known and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to a nominated government department or agency.

Offender or Perpetrator

Offender refers to a person who is found by a court to have done something that is prohibited by law. Perpetrator refers to an adult who has sexually abused a child, including offenders who have been convicted by a court.

Reasonable Belief

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused

- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused
- signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

Safeguarding

The policies, procedures and practices put in place to create and maintain protective environments for all children, young people and adults at risk with whom the National Trust of Australia (Vic) come into direct and indirect contact.

Trauma-informed

Trauma-informed approaches ensure practices, policies and culture recognise and respond to the effects of trauma on a person's wellbeing and behaviour. A trauma-informed approach is distinct from trauma-specific interventions or therapeutic treatments.

National Trust of Australia (Vic) related activities, events, tasks

Any activity that is connected to the National Trust of Australia (Vic), including

- Activity that refers to NTAV activities or events, or its board members, staff members, volunteers, and contractors engaged to perform NTAV activities;
- Activity that occurs on, or in connection with NTAV properties;
- Activity that occurs using, or is facilitated by, NTAV information technology resources or other NTAV resources;
- Activity that occurs during, or relates to, the performance of duties for the NTAV;
- Activity that occurs during, or in connection to, any NTAV related function or event, or when representing the NTAV in any capacity.

Vulnerable Populations, vulnerable peoples

As defined by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Vulnerable Populations are people who:

- experience homelessness
- are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- are in contact with criminal justice systems
- identify as LGBTIQ
- experience mental health conditions
- inject drugs
- are older or younger
- are of low socio-economic status
- have an intellectual disability
- are diagnosed with a mental disorder

Working with children

Being engaged in an activity with a child where the contact would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the activity and the contact is not incidental to the activity, Working includes volunteering or other unpaid works.

Working with Children Check

The Working with Children Check is a screening process for assessing or re-assessing people who work with or care for children in Victoria. A detailed review of the criminal history and relevant professional conduct findings of applicants is undertaken by the Victorian Government to ensure protection of children from sexual or physical harm. For more information visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/working-with-children-check>

All NTAV staff, volunteers and contractors are required to hold and provide evidence of a valid Working With Children Check.

Indicators of abuse

The National Trust of Australia (Vic) is a child safe organisation, and puts in measures to protect vulnerable peoples including children. The Child Safe Standards require organisations that provide services or facilities for children to have processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse. NTAV adheres to this through its policy, the Mandatory Reporting – Child Protection Policy, and the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Procedure and Code of Conduct.

All NTAV staff and volunteers are encouraged to review Appendix A of this Policy ‘Indicators of abuse’ sourced from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-09/Indicators%20of%20abuse.docx>

NTAV incident reporting process and Mandatory reporting requirements

Refer to Mandatory Reporting – Child Protection Policy

<https://sites.google.com/a/nattrust.org/intra/staff-induction/ohs/ohs-policies/mandatory-reporting-child-protection-policy>

Whistle blower protections

NTAV Whistleblowing Policy is informed by The Corporations Act. The National Trust of (Australia) Victoria and the National Trust of Victoria Foundation (collectively for the purposes of this policy “NTAV”) recognise the important role whistleblowers play in protecting the community and upholding the law. Consistent with its obligations under the Corporations Act, NTAV seeks to ensure that it has in place the necessary protections to protect whistleblowers when a whistleblower comes forward with a Disclosable Matter. This includes providing a safe and secure means for reporting Disclosable Matters and remedying any necessary matters arising from the Disclosable Matters.

This document was reviewed by: Education & Public Programs Manager

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Appendix A - Indicators of abuse

This information is sourced from the Victorian [Department of Health and Human Services](#) (Accessed April 2024)

Identifying child abuse

Physical violence

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer 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 objects.

Physical indicators include (but are not limited to):

- unexplained bruises, burns or welts
- fractured bones, sprains or dislocation
- cuts, grazes or scratches
- ligature or bite marks
- bald patches or hair missing in tufts
- missing or loosened teeth
- poisoning or medication overdose.

Behavioural indicators include (but are not limited to):

- inconsistent, vague or unlikely explanations of an injury
- wariness, fear or distrust of adults
- avoidance of physical contact
- disproportionate reactions or limited emotion displayed when hurt or threatened
- wearing clothing that is unsuitable for the weather conditions (to hide injuries)
- unexplained absences and decline in academic performance
- substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts.

Sexual offences

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.

Physical indicators include (but are not limited to):

- bruising, bleeding or discharge from the genital or rectal area
- signs of pain, itching or discomfort in the genital or rectal area
- presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- frequent urinary tract infections
- pregnancy (actual or suspected)
- self-mutilation.

Behavioural indicators include (but are not limited to):

- displaying age-inappropriate sexual behaviour or knowledge
- promiscuity or inappropriate expressions of affection
- sudden fears of specific places or particular adults
- obsessive and compulsive washing
- complaining of headaches, stomach pains or nausea
- sleeping difficulties
- poor self-care or personal hygiene

regressive behaviours such as bedwetting and speech loss
substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts.

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 of violence. It can include derogatory name-calling, put-downs or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person, to the extent where the child's behaviour is disturbed and/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.

Physical indicators include (but are not limited to):

- delays in emotional, mental or physical development
- speech impairments such as stuttering or being selectively mute
- rocking, thumb-sucking or other infantile behaviours
- eating disorders.

Behavioural indicators include (but are not limited to):

- exhibiting high anxiety or symptoms of stress
- poor self-image or low self-esteem
- displaying aggressive, demanding or attention-seeking behaviour
- compulsive lying or stealing
- unexplained mood swings or depression
- poor social and interpersonal skills
- excessive neatness or cleanliness
- substance abuse, self-harm or suicide attempts.

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, jeopardised. 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.

Physical indicators include (but are not limited to):

- frequent hunger or signs of malnutrition
- poor personal hygiene
- appearing dirty and unwashed
- lack of adequate or suitable clothing
- unattended health problems
- appearing pale and weak
- inadequate shelter or unsanitary living conditions.

Behavioural indicators include (but are not limited to):

- stealing or begging for food
- aggressive or self-destructive behaviour
- involvement in criminal activity
- poor, irregular or non-attendance at school
- refusal or reluctance to go home
- limited positive interaction with parents, carers or guardians
- poor academic performance

substance abuse.

Responding to suspected child abuse

When responding to an incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse, staff and volunteers should follow the steps provided in the NTAV Mandatory Reporting – Child Protection Policy. For more information about reporting suspected child abuse, please read [What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made factsheet](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/what-do-when-allegation-child-abuse-made-word) <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/ what-do-when-allegation-child-abuse-made-word>.

Further information

Further information can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) website. This includes an [overview of the Victoria Child Safe Standards](#) to help organisations to understand the requirements of each of the Child Safe Standards. For information about the Child Safe Standards, visit the [Child Safety page](#) on the Commission for Children and Young People's website.