

Child Safety Framework

**Protection of Children & Young People
at RMIT**

Version 1 – June 2022

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Foreword from Vice Chancellor

As a place of education and exploration, a University has no greater responsibility than to provide a safe environment for the young people who put their trust in us. Our commitment to care extends to every member of our community, however the particular vulnerability of the children among us heightens our obligation.

We must also pay particular attention to the most vulnerable, including those with disability or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children. We must accept nothing less than a state where personal circumstances bear no relevance to a young person's capacity to thrive.

At RMIT, we proudly protect the right of our children and young people to learn, interact and participate in our community free of fear or abuse. Their right to safe and productive interactions within our institution must be the same as we expect for any member of our community.

This Framework, developed in response to the Child Safe Standards introduced by the Victorian Government, sets out the requirements that all members of our University community must follow to provide an environment worthy of the children in our lives.

The responsibility of creating and protecting a safe environment is a responsibility we share. I encourage everyone to ensure they know how we can protect the children in our environment and the mechanisms available to support your prompt response should you have concerns.

At RMIT we see education as a path to choice and opportunity in a world where fear and abuse has no place.

Professor Alec Cameron
Vice-Chancellor and President, RMIT

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY



RMIT University acknowledges that children and young people are an important part of our community - as enrolled students, in our onsite childcare, as visitors on campus and as participants in research.

The protection of children is a shared responsibility between all RMIT employees, students, contractors, volunteers, associates, and extended members of the RMIT community. RMIT recognises this responsibility and is committed to protecting all children and young people from harm or maltreatment and supporting them to access all opportunities available to them to develop, progress and live life free of trauma and abuse.

Every child has the right to feel safe, live in a safe environment and be protected from neglect or abuse.

RMIT is committed to:

- Treating all **allegations and safety concerns seriously** and managing any reports consistently with our policies and procedures
- Upholding **legal and moral obligations** to contact authorities when we have reasonable concern about a child's safety, or reasonably believe that a child has been abused or harmed.
- Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and is committed to ensuring their **cultural safety**.
- Ensuring that child safety and wellbeing is **embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture**
- Taking steps to ensure **children and young people are empowered** about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- Ensuring **families and communities are informed and involved** in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Ensuring that **equity is upheld**, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
- Ensuring **people working with children and young people are suitable** and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
- Ensure that there are processes for **complaints and concerns** which are child focused.
- Ensuring staff and volunteers are equipped with the **knowledge, skills, and awareness** to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
- Ensuring that **physical and online environments promote safety** and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
- Regularly **reviewing and improving** implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
- Ensuring policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Child Safe Standards: Background

RMIT University allows the enrolment of domestic and international students from 16 years old, provides childcare services to children from three months to five years of age, hosts visiting children and conducts research with children and young people.

The Victorian Child Safe Standards (the Standards) were developed in response to recommendations from the Victorian Parliament's Betrayal of Trust inquiry and these 7 Standards came into effect in 2016. The Victorian Government has released 11 updated Standards which apply from 1 July 2022.

The Standards aim to ensure that organisations take deliberate measures to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse and neglect. The Standards outline the minimum requirements that organisations must meet; with an overarching aim of embedding a culture of and commitment to child safety at every level of the organisation, ensuring that children's safety and wellbeing is at the forefront of decisions, planning and action by the organisation.

The Standards

- | Child Safe Standards: Background | The Standards |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Standard 1 | Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued. |
| Standard 2 | Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture. |
| Standard 3 | Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously. |
| Standard 4 | Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing. |
| Standard 5 | Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice. |
| Standard 6 | People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. |
| Standard 7 | Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused. |
| Standard 8 | Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training. |
| Standard 9 | Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed. |
| Standard 10 | Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved. |
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Legislative requirements

Protecting and safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility: parents, communities, governments, and organisations all have a role to play. RMIT is committed to the rights of children to be safe and to feel safe.

When a person forms a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, they are morally bound to take action to protect the safety and wellbeing of that child or young person.

In addition to moral obligations, an individual who has the power to reduce or respond to a safety risk to a child or young person must do so. Failure to do so is a criminal offence.

RMIT has a legislative and moral duty to take all reasonable care to prevent the abuse of a child by a person associated with RMIT while the person is under the care, supervision, or authority of the University.

Mandatory reporting

The following are mandatory reporters in Victoria:

- registered medical practitioners
- nurses
- midwives
- registered teachers and early childhood teachers
- school principals
- school counsellors
- police officers
- out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)
- early childhood workers
- youth justice workers
- registered psychologists
- people in religious ministry.

At RMIT, all staff members, students on placement, contractors and volunteers are bound by the Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Reporting Procedure(s) which requires them to:

- Contact Emergency Services if there is a belief that a child / young person is in immediate harm or danger.
- Report any concern for the safety of a child / young person to Safer Community.

The responsibility to report is additionally required by existing Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect legislation.

Reportable conduct scheme

The Scheme requires certain organisations to notify the CCYP about allegations of child abuse and child related misconduct made against their employees, volunteers, or contractors. It also requires organisations to undertake an investigation into any allegations and allows the Commission to oversee those investigations. The Scheme came into effect from 2017 and imposed new obligations for the head of the organisation (at RMIT, the Vice Chancellor) including the requirement to:

- have in place systems to prevent child abuse and, if child abuse is alleged, to ensure allegations can be brought to the attention of appropriate persons for investigation and response,
- ensure that the CCYP is notified and given updates on the organisation's response to an allegation. There are five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005:
- sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm
- significant neglect.

Governing documents

	Child Safe Policy		
New child safe specific documents	Child Safe Reporting Procedure (Vietnam)	Child Safe Reporting Procedure	Child Safe Code of Conduct
	Child Safe Images Instruction	Child Safe Reporting Instruction	Child Safety Statement of Commitment
Existing supporting documents	Children on Campus and at Work Guideline	Privacy Policy	Code of Conduct Commitment Statement on Staff-Student Relationships



Responsibilities

RMIT Council is responsible for:

- ensuring systems and structures are in place within RMIT to implement and monitor the effectiveness of the Child Safe Reporting Procedure
- monitoring the effectiveness of complaints handling processes via reports from the Vice-Chancellor's Executive
- overseeing complaints handling where complaints are escalated to Council
- responding to and overseeing complaints made about or referring to the Vice-Chancellor
- following appropriate reporting processes when a concern, report or disclosure of child abuse arises
- Championing child safe practices and leading by example, modelling the behaviour expected of staff and volunteers and not tolerating behaviours harmful to children.



The Vice-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor's Executive are responsible for:

- ensuring the Child Safe Reporting Procedure is addressed at the strategic level and implemented across RMIT
- ensuring all RMIT staff are aware of their obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- meeting the obligations of the Reportable Conduct Scheme by reporting to relevant child safety authorities within a set period if they become aware of a report of child abuse by of child abuse by an RMIT student, staff, or associate
- receiving, reviewing, and responding to organisational incidents and outcomes (e.g., summary reports, aggregate recording of reports on a quarterly basis)
- reporting complaint trends and information to Council
- Championing child safe practices and leading by example, modelling the behaviour expected of staff and volunteers and not tolerating behaviours harmful to children.
- The Vice Chancellor is the nominated head of organisation and is primarily responsible for RMIT's compliance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

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Safer Community is responsible for:

- maintaining oversight of child safeguarding related complaints
- ensuring child-friendly complaints mechanisms are in place
- receiving and responding to complaints in line with the Child Safe Reporting Procedure
- supporting RMIT staff and children, young people and families who have identified, responded to, or reported child abuse by ensuring they are linked in with appropriate community supports.
- monitoring, managing and continually improving RMIT's child safe reporting practices
- collating, reviewing, and responding to organisational incidents and outcomes
- Working with relevant authorities to remove harmful content online
- ensuring that the Child Safe Reporting Procedure and pathways to complaints are communicated with RMIT students and families
- managing the reports to the Reportable Conduct Scheme on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor.

All students, staff and associates are responsible for:

- understanding the signs of child abuse and how to respond
- following appropriate reporting processes when a concern, report or disclosure of child abuse arises
- following the Child Safe Code of Conduct when engaging with children
- Calling Emergency Services (000) where a child is in immediate danger, and then notifying Safer Community as soon as possible.



Contractor management

Individual areas will manage contractor engagement using clauses, specific agreements, and the Child Safe Code of Conduct to ensure that contractors understand their obligations, responsibilities and risk management strategies whilst representing the University.

Contract owners will be responsible for:

- obtaining and maintain valid Working with Children Checks
- completing training modules as part of the onboarding procedure to ensure
 - Contractors receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm
 - Contractors receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety
 - Contractors receive training and information on how to contribute to RMIT's culture of child safety.

Training

Training and education are important to ensure everyone at RMIT understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility. RMIT aims for individuals to feel confident and comfortable to discuss any concerns for the safety of a child / young person.

With proper information, training and support, RMIT's staff and volunteers are more likely to uphold child safe values and more likely to report concerns to Safer Community.

At a minimum, RMIT will

- require all staff members, contractors and volunteers to complete a Child Safety training module upon commencement of engagement with RMIT
- require all staff members to complete a refresher training module every 2 years thereafter.

Being a child safe organisation cannot be achieved as a one-off exercise but requires ongoing effort. RMIT will equip its staff and volunteers with the knowledge and skills to keep children / young people safe. This means providing ongoing education and training so a culture of child safety can thrive, and appropriate child safety practices can be implemented in day-to-day activities.

Empowering children / young people

Children / young people are more likely to raise concerns or complaints at RMIT when we empower and listen to them.

- Empowerment means ensuring that children / young people are fully informed and in strengthening their confidence in themselves and in an organisation. It involves equipping children / young people with the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions and enabling them to increase control of their lives.
- Just like adults, all children / young people have rights. Rights are basic entitlements that belong to each person, regardless of any differences.
- Empowering children / young people about their rights means all people in an organisation, including leaders, staff and volunteers:
 - uphold and respect children's rights at all times
 - take a proactive role in educating them about their rights
 - support them to exercise their rights.

Children / young people have a right to participate in the decisions that affect them. RMIT is committed to seeking the involvement of children / young people in age-appropriate, inclusive and accessible ways, and listening to their feedback to inform appropriate and continued strengthening of child safe practices at RMIT.

Parents / families

Parents, carers and families are welcome at RMIT and are an important part of building and maintaining an inclusive child safe culture, which is respectful of different kinds of families, supports children / young people to feel safe and to be safe.

- RMIT is committed to empowering families and communities to play a part in RMIT's child safe framework to ensure that:
 - there are accessible ways for parents and families to work with RMIT so we can better support individual children with the benefit of insights from their families
 - parents, carers and the community will feel empowered and know what to do if they are concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child
 - RMIT's child safe approach continues to improve.
- RMIT will ensure that all families and communities are supported to take an active role in promoting and maintaining child safety and wellbeing by:
 - providing accessible information about RMIT's Child Safe Policy and supporting documentation,
 - providing information about the organisation's governance and operations, how complaints are handled and how the organisation manages disciplinary actions and child safety risks.
- RMIT is committed to seeking the involvement of families and communities in decisions that impact the safety of their child and listening to their feedback to inform appropriate and continued strengthening of child safe practices at RMIT.



