



# **AFL BARWON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY**

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## AFL BARWON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 1.1 promote AFL Barwon's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people to the broader AFL Barwon community.
- 1.2 educate all AFL Barwon commissioners, staff, and volunteers of their responsibilities when interacting with children and young people, and to familiarise them with AFL Barwon's processes for responding to any concerns (complaints, incidents, disclosures, allegations or suspicions) of harm or abuse to children and young people.

### 2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This Policy applies to all AFL Barwon People including (but not limited to) staff, volunteers, participants, contractors, officials, coaches, and commissioners.
- 2.2. This Policy should be read in conjunction with AFL Barwon's related policies and procedures, the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Appendix 1) and Commonwealth and Victorian legislation and (Appendix 2).
- 2.3. AFL Barwon is committed to continually reviewing its policies and practises to protect the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis in consultation with all AFL Barwon People.

### 3. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

- 3.1 This policy has been developed with consideration of the [Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards](#), the [Child Safety & Wellbeing Act 2005](#), the [Child Youth & Families Act 2005](#) and other relevant state legislative requirements including:
- [Statutory Duty of Care Wrongs Amendment \(Organisational Child Abuse\) Act 2017](#)
  - [Failure to Disclose Crimes Amendment \(Protection of Children\) Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#)
  - [Failure to Protect Crimes Amendment \(Protection of Children\) Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#)
  - [Grooming Crimes Amendment \(Grooming\) Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#)
  - [Working with Children Check](#)
  - [Worker Screening Act 2020](#)

### 4. DEFINITIONS

**AFL Barwon Person / People** includes staff, volunteers, participants, contractors, officials, coaches, and commissioners.

**AFL Barwon Activities** includes activities, programs, events and tasks carried out by AFL Barwon People or on behalf of AFL Barwon (includes activities delivered by External Partners).

**Clubs** includes all affiliated clubs within the Barwon Region.



**External Partners** includes third party contractors, partner organisations engaged to facilitate programs for children and young people with, or on the behalf of AFL Barwon.

**Child and Young Person** means a person under the age of 18 years.

**Child Abuse** includes all forms of physical, emotional, psychological, verbal and/or sexual abuse. Child abuse also includes sexual exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, grooming, harassing behaviour, bullying or other exploitation of a child or young person and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child or young person.

Child abuse can be a single incident or take place over time.

**Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken in response to a child in need of protection.

**Family violence** occurs when children and young people are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. Family violence includes violence between members of a family, or extended family, or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person's life. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.

**Grooming** is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator builds a relationship with a child or young person with the intent to abuse or harm them. Perpetrators may also groom parents/carers by forming relationships of trust with parents/carers before harming a child or young person. Grooming can take place over a long period of time before abuse occurs or the abuse can happen relatively quickly. Grooming can take in physical (face-to-face) environments or online.

**Peer-to-Peer abuse** is the term used to explain child abuse or harm that can occur through peer-to-peer interactions and may include behaviours ranging from harassment and bullying to sexual contact

**Harm** can be any action that may have a significant impact on a child or young person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm can be caused by:

- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect.

- Sexual abuse or exploitation.

- Family violence.

- a single act, omission, or circumstance; and

- a series or combination of acts, omissions, or circumstances.

**Sexual abuse or exploitation** is any act which exposes a child or young person to or involves them in sexual acts beyond their understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexual offence behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, grooming, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It also includes engaging a child or young person to participate in sexual conversations online.



**Concerns** include any issue that an adult or peer considers may negatively impact on the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person. This includes complaints, incidents, disclosures, allegations or suspicions)

## 5. POLICY STATEMENT

5.1. AFL Barwon is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all children and young people who participate in football and netball activities as players, participants, umpires, officials or spectators.

The safety and wellbeing of all children and young people across the region is a shared responsibility between AFL Barwon, its staff, volunteers, clubs, parents/carers, coaches, officials, umpires, and spectators.

5.2. AFL has a zero tolerance on any form of child abuse or harmful behaviour and will continuously work to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards (appendix 1) to fulfill this commitment.

5.3. AFL Barwon:

5.3.1. acknowledges the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and will promote their cultural safety within the football and netball environment.

5.3.2. understands the role the Commission and executive play in leading a culture of safety and embedding the relevant structures and systems to support this.

5.3.3. is committed to the active participation of children and young people, ensuring all children and young people know their rights, have their views taken seriously and involve them in decisions that may directly affect them and their peers.

5.3.4. recognises the important role families play in supporting children and young people to participate in football and netball and values the input of families in decision making.

5.3.5. acknowledge children and young people have equal rights to protection from harm and abuse regardless of their race, religion, age, disability cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, or family/social background.

5.3.6. will take the appropriate steps to recruit safe and suitable people and provide appropriate supervision to staff and volunteers to fulfill their safeguarding obligations.

5.3.7. will act promptly and sensitively to protect children and young people should a concern be raised, or an incident occur. All concerns and incidents will be treated seriously, fully investigated, referred to the appropriate authorities if required, and handled confidentially.



5.3.8. is committed to ensuring AFL Barwon People are provided appropriate, relevant education and training to fulfil their safeguarding obligations and this support is extended to the Barwon Region's community clubs.

5.3.9. acknowledges the risks to children and young people associated with the physical and online environments within which AFL Barwon operate and will actively work to continually identify, mitigate, and manage these risks.

5.3.10. Recognise the importance of continuous improvement and will establish mechanisms to ensure policies and practices are regularly reviewed and data informs change and improvement processes.

5.3.11. Continue to review and improve this policy and other relevant procedures and actively promotes these to the AFL Barwon community.

5.4. AFL Barwon is committed to implementing safeguarding practices (Appendix 1).

5.5. Any report of non-compliance or breach of the Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy, Safeguarding Behavioural Standards or related policies and procedures may result in a formal investigation. If a non-compliance or breach is confirmed through the disciplinary process, action may include termination of employment or engagement.

## 6. EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR

6.1. All AFL Barwon People including External Partners are expected to sign and comply with the [AFL Barwon Safeguarding Behavioural Standards](#)

6.2. ALL AFL Barwon People are expected to comply with the AFL's [Expected Behaviours Resource](#).

6.3. Any AFL Barwon Person who does not comply with these expectations will be considered in breach of the Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy and the matter will be handled by AFL Barwon, the AFL Integrity Unit and/or the police and child protection authorities.

6.4. If required, AFL Barwon People are expected to co-operate with police and/or other formal investigations to the best of their ability.

## 7. CULTURAL SAFETY

7.1. AFL Barwon is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is acknowledged and appreciated, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, their families and community members feel safe and included.

7.2. AFL Barwon will:

- Take a zero-tolerance approach to racism and act on any incidents of racism or other forms of unlawful discrimination promptly.



- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to share their cultural identity and express their culture through AFL Barwon Activities.
- Provide training for AFL Barwon People on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
- Promote a Welcome to Country and/or an Acknowledgement of Country for significant meetings and formal events to show respect to the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural traditions.
- Consult with families and members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to identify opportunities to promote culture and practices through AFL Barwon Activities.
- Celebrate NAIDOC Week and acknowledge significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week.
- Listen to views and feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, and communities about their experiences of AFL Barwon Activities, particularly how safe they feel expressing their culture and how it can be improved.

## **8. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP**

- 8.1. The AFL Barwon Commission has an established People, Culture & Safety (sub) Committee that provides oversight, governance and support to the Regional Manager and staff regarding safety, risk and integrity matters.
- 8.2. The People, Culture & Safety Committee is supported operationally by the AFL Barwon Integrity Team that includes (at a minimum) the Regional Manager, the Club Development Lead and the Manager of Operations. Membership can also include an external safeguarding specialist to provide training, advice or guidance as required.
- 8.3. The AFL Barwon Integrity Team receives and responds to community club integrity matters, including those relating to safeguarding. This includes providing guidance to clubs, escalating matters internally (sub committee / commission / AFL Integrity) and externally if required (police, child protection).

Additionally, the AFL Barwon Integrity Team will consider themes and trends identified in matters raised and use these to inform club support, education and resource development and risk management considerations.

## **9. ENGAGEMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES**

- 9.1. AFL Barwon supports the active participation of children, young people and their families and welcomes their views, opinions, and feedback to inform the development and update of policies, resources, communication and education in relation to matters affecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- 9.2. Where possible, AFL Barwon will engage with children and young people and their parents/carers about safeguarding practices and help empower them to speak up when they see or hear something that makes them feel unsafe.



## 10. INCLUSION, EQUITY & DIVERSITY

- 10.1. A safe and inclusive environment ensures that people from a range of different backgrounds feel valued and welcomed and have equal access to opportunities and resources, creating a safer environment.
- 10.2. All AFL Barwon activities should encourage and support safe and inclusive experiences for all children and young people including those who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, children and young people with disabilities, children and young people from culturally diverse backgrounds, and children and young people who identify as LGBTI+, transgender and/or non-binary.
- 10.3. AFL Barwon upholds the rights of children and young people to express their culture, celebrate diversity and appreciate the strengths of cultures. AFL Barwon activities must meet the needs of all children and young people (and their families) and provide environments that are inclusive, sensitive and friendly.
- 10.4. AFL Barwon will provide children, young people and their families with access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand via the translated [AFL Safeguarding Resources](#) available.
- 10.5. AFL Barwon prioritises gender diversity and equality as outlined in the [Gender Diversity Policy](#).

## 11. RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

- 11.1. AFL Barwon ensures to recruit people (commissioners, staff, and volunteers), that are suitably qualified and committed to providing professional, safe, and enjoyable programs and services children and young people.
- 11.2. For the purpose of this policy, all roles within AFL Barwon are considered to be child-related positions due to direct and in-direct contact with children and young people across clubs, competitions, programs and other events, and due to having access to the personal information of children and young people.

Exemptions will be considered by the People & Culture Sub Committee on a case-by-case basis, based on a risk assessment and individual circumstances.

- 11.3 The following recruitment, screening and training requirements have been developed to provide a fair, safe, consistent, and comprehensive process to engage personnel across AFL Barwon. Further guidance and tools to support can be found in the [AFL Safe People Resource](#) and also in Sport Integrity Australia's (SIA) [Recruitment and Screening of Staff and Volunteers in Child-Related Positions Booklet](#).

**11.3.1 Advertising:** All positions should include the following statement in the position description and any advertising:

*AFL Barwon is committed to protecting children and young people from harm. We require all applicants to undergo an extensive screening process prior to appointment.*



**11.3.2 Interviews:** AFL Barwon will conduct an interview when seeking suitable applicants for any role, preferably in-person or on a videoconference (e.g., Zoom etc.)

During the interview, questions regarding the applicant's suitability to work with children and young people be included. These will be relevant to the role and taken from the list in SIA's [Recruitment and Screening of Staff and Volunteers in Child-Related Positions Booklet](#).

**11.3.3 Working with Children Checks:** Working with Children Check (WWCC) laws aim to help prevent people who pose a known unacceptable risk from working with children and young people as paid staff or volunteers.

Due to the direct and indirect contact with children and young people, all AFL Barwon People are required to have a WWCC and will supply a copy to AFL Barwon before commencing their role.

This includes those who are considered exempt under the *Worker Screening Act 2021*.  
*For example, a registered teacher may be exempt but, in this case, they will not be working as a teacher so it is expected they would still get a WWCC under the role they are required to fulfil.*

Exemptions will be considered by the People & Culture Sub Committee on a case by case basis, based on a risk assessment, individual circumstances, and in consultation with the [Victorian Government's Working with Children Check Unit](#).

AFL Barwon must not engage a person who does not have a satisfactory WWCC unless an exemption has been granted and provided in writing.

AFL Barwon must monitor all AFL Barwon People's compliance with WWCC requirements twice a year.

**11.3.4 National Criminal History Record Checks:** All newly appointed AFL Barwon People are to provide a current National Criminal History Record Check before commencing in their role.

A criminal history does not automatically preclude an applicant from being appointed unless their criminal history suggests that they may pose a risk to children or young people, or the organisation. If there is information relevant to the employment decision, the applicant will be provided with an opportunity to respond to the contents of their police check (if they wish to do so).

The decision to appoint or not appoint an applicant because of a police check result, along with the rationale for that decision, must be communicated to the applicant by the Relevant Organisation. A copy of the police check must not be retained.

The original must either be returned to the applicant if requested or be destroyed in a secure manner on completion of the recruitment process. If the applicant is appointed, a record of the date and certificate number of the police check should be recorded in their personnel file.





**11.3.5 International Criminal History Record Checks:** Any applicant who has resided overseas for 12 months or more in the last ten years should obtain an international criminal check.

Some countries will not release information regarding an individual for personal or third-party purposes. Where police records checks cannot be made, reference checks should be conducted with at least two referees that personally knew the individual whilst they were residing in the other country.

Overseas applicants should not commence until this process is satisfactorily completed.

**11.3.6 Reference checks -** AFL Barwon will conduct a minimum of two reference checks for the preferred applicant to gather additional information about the applicant's suitability to work in the role for which they have applied.

The selected referees should:

- be able to provide information relating to the applicant's suitability to work with children and young people;
- have known the applicant for at least 12 months;
- not be related to the applicant;
- be able to vouch for the applicant's reputation and character.

**Please note:** Written character references are not sufficient unless also followed up and verified through direct contact.

Referees should be asked directly about any concerns they may have about the applicant working with children and young people using the list of questions provided in [AFL Safe People Resource](#) and also in Sport Integrity Australia's (SIA) [Recruitment and Screening of Staff and Volunteers in Child-Related Positions Booklet](#).

**11.3.7 Training** – all new AFL Barwon People will complete any prescribed safeguarding training requirements as identified in the [AFL Barwon Safeguarding Education Plan](#).

## 12 CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS AND REPORTING

12.1 AFL Barwon may receive information regarding safeguarding matter regarding the behaviour of a) an AFL Barwon Person; or b) a member of the AFL Barwon community.

12.2 Matters raised may be a concern, a complaint or a direct report of a breach of policy or the law. These may be received verbally (in person or over the phone) via email, text message or another online mechanism or in writing.

AFL Barwon will consider all matters regardless of how they are received.

12.3 AFL Barwon will take all concerns, complaints or reports seriously, whether they are raised by an adult, child or young person. All child related concerns and complaints will be responded to promptly and confidentially in line with the [AFL Barwon Receiving and Responding to Safeguarding Concerns Flowchart and Guide](#).

12.4 AFL Barwon will actively promote the reporting process on the website, via social media and onsite across facilities to help children, young people, their families, and club



personnel to understand how they can raise a concern or a complaint with clubs and/or AFL Barwon / AFL Integrity Unit.

12.5 If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child or young person, immediately call the Police '000'.

12.6 If a child or young person is not in immediate danger but an AFL Barwon Person believes on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from any form of child abuse or harm, they will disclose that information to the Police, Child Protection or the Commissioner for Children & Young People.

12.7 If a concern or complaint received includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, AFL Barwon must report it in accordance with AFL Barwon's Receiving and Responding to Safeguarding Concerns Flowchart and Guide.

12.8 Any AFL Barwon Person who is the subject of a child or young person related concern or complaint may be requested to stand down from their position during an investigation, have their duties altered so they do not engage with children and young people and/or have their access to AFL Barwon's IT system/database removed.

12.9 When concerns of inappropriate conduct and/or a breach of policy involving a child or young person are raised, AFL Barwon will assess the matter in line with section 23.2 of the National Community Football Policy Handbook and either:

- Escalate to the AFL Integrity Unit
- Support the complainant to refer their matter to the AFL Integrity Unit
- Engage a qualified investigator to consider the matter and provide recommendations for actioning.

AFL Barwon will handle all matters in accordance with procedural fairness and s in a confidential and sensitive manner.

12.10 AFL Barwon will keep a register of any allegations regarding inappropriate conduct.

## **Reporting Sexual Abuse**

12.11 If an AFL Person receives information that leads them to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed, that person has a legal obligation to disclose that information to the Police as soon as it is practicable.

12.12 Individuals who fail to comply with this obligation under the [Failure to Disclose Crimes Amendment \(Protection of Children\) Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#) and the [Failure to Protect Crimes Amendment \(Protection of Children\) Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#) may be subject to a penalty of imprisonment.

## **Mandatory Reporting**

12.13 A number of professions in the community (including but not limited to teachers, nurses and doctors) are also required under the [Child Youth & Families Act 2005](#) to report to Child Protection where they have formed a belief, on reasonable grounds, that



a child is in need of protection because they have suffered (or are likely to suffer) significant harm due to physical or sexual abuse.

This report must be made as soon as practicable, and on any occasion where they become aware of other allegations and have reasonable grounds for belief.

### 13 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 13.1 AFL Barwon recognises the responsibility to proactively identify and reduce or remove risks to children and young people. Risk management strategies are in place to identify, assess, and recognise safeguarding risks, and these risks are managed via an annual risk assessment, plan and register.
- 13.2 AFL Barwon People will act in accordance with the [AFL Barwon Safeguarding Behavioural Standards](#), the [Child Safe Practices](#) and the guidance in the [AFL Safeguarding Resources](#) to address and minimize risks to children and young people.
- 13.3 AFL Barwon will take all reasonable and practical steps to ensure that safe physical environments will be provided to children and young people. Safety assessments will be conducted on the main facilities utilised to ensure they are suitable and safe for activities, and programs with children and young people. These can be conducted using the AFL's [Club Risk Assessment Template](#).
- 13.4 Wherever possible, children and young people will be involved in risk assessment, identification, and mitigation strategies.
- 13.5 AFL Barwon will take all reasonable and practical steps to ensure a safe online environment and will have an awareness of safe practice when communicating with children and young people via online and electronic systems and regarding the use, sharing and storing of photos and images of children and young people.
- 13.6 Further guidance can be sought from the AFL's [Communicating with Children & Young People Resource](#), or [Professional Boundaries Resource](#) and from SIA's [Photography and Filming of Children and Young People in Sport Guide](#).
- 13.7 External Partners may be engaged to work on specific programs with children and young people. Partnership Agreements between AFL Barwon and an External Partner who will be working with children and young people will include clauses outlining requirements for compliance with relevant legislation and [AFL Barwon's Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy](#) and [Safeguarding Behavioural Standards](#).
- 13.8 AFL Barwon's Risk Register and Risk Management Plan will be updated regularly, based on complaints, concerns and incidents data, with oversight from the AFL Barwon Integrity Team and the People, Culture & Safety Committee.

### 14 REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- 14.1 AFL Barwon aims to continuously improve our safeguarding practices and strategies and actively seeks feedback from stakeholders (staff, volunteers, partners, children, young people, families, clubs) to do so.



14.2 AFL Barwon's will review identified risks to child and young people through the incident management and record keeping processes and will incorporate those risks into the risk management plan.

14.3 AFL Barwon will also use the outcomes of concerns, complaints and reports to influence and inform decision making, policy review, resources, education, and investment in personnel.

14.4 AFL Barwon will engage in review processes and education and training regularly to ensure the organisation is up to date and across changes in the safeguarding landscape and that these are reflected in the continuous improvement processes.

## **15 RECORD KEEPING AND INFORMATION SHARING**

15.1 AFL Barwon is committed to making and retaining accurate records of reports of safeguarding related concerns and complaints.

15.2 AFL Barwon will maintain records and outcomes of investigations and resolutions of concerns and complaints. In maintaining records of reports about child safety, AFL Barwon will maintain confidentiality and privacy for children and families in accordance with legislation.

15.3 From time to time, AFL Barwon may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people where appropriate and in their best interest. This may include sharing information with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise the safety of a child or young person.

## **16 RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Privacy Policy;
- Constitution;
- AFL Barwon Safeguarding Behavioural Standards
- Member Protection Policy;
- Complaints and Reporting procedures;
- Photography and Videography Policy; and
- Social Media Policy
- National Community Football Policy Handbook.

## **17. RELATED SAFEGUARDING EDUCATION RESOURCES AND LINKS**

- AFL Safe Footy Safeguarding webinars and resources  
[www.afl.com.au/clubhelp/safeguarding-children](http://www.afl.com.au/clubhelp/safeguarding-children)
- eSafety Commissioner (safe online environments and sporting organisations)  
<https://www.esafety.gov.au/communities/sport>