

	Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education	Approval Date: 27/5/2021
	Child Safe Policy	Review Date: 05/2024
		Version Number: 3
Authorised by	Board	
Responsible Person	Executive Officer	

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide a clear statement of PRACE’s child safe commitment and zero tolerance for child abuse;
- set out the child safety responsibilities of people at the PRACE, including the legal obligations to prevent and respond to concerns of child abuse, and the consequences of non-compliance; and
- outline PRACE’s child safety strategy.

Scope

This Policy applies to all staff members, volunteers, the members of the Board of Management (**Board**), contractors (together, the **Representatives**) at PRACE, including PRACE College (the **College**).

It applies to all aspects of a Representative’s engagement with PRACE and children in its care, including all students. The scope of this Policy to the College includes any engagement with students that may occur outside of school hours including but not limited to excursions, camps, overseas trips and extracurricular activities, whether face-to-face or online.

Relevant Legislations/ Standards

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
 Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
 Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
 Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) - Section 182: Mandatory Reporting
 Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
 Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (Vic)
 Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
 Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)
 Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)
 Worker Screening Regulations 2021 (Vic)
 Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme
 Ministerial Order No. 870 - Child Safe Standards
 Child Safe Standards

Values and Principles

PRACE’s commitment of child safety is based on the following statement of commitment, values and principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children and students from abuse.

As PRACE strives to develop dynamic, responsive and innovative educational programs, teaching and learning experiences, it will actively promote and protect the interests and safety of children, and provide a child-safe environment for all children and young people in its care.

This will be achieved by:

- having a zero tolerance for child abuse
- working to actively listen to and empower children
- having systems to protect children from abuse, and will take all allegations and concerns very seriously and responding to them consistently in line with its policies and procedures
- engaging only the most suitable people to work with children along with providing high quality supervision and professional development.

The statement is published on PRACE's webpage and volunteer and staff intranets as a means of communicating the PRACE's expectations to staff, students, volunteers and the wider PRACE community.

Embedding an organisational culture of child safety is critical to reducing the risk of child abuse in schools as the organisational culture defines what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour by people within PRACE.

In implementing the minimum child safety standards and in accordance with Ministerial Order No. 870 the PRACE Board and all staff will take account of and make reasonable efforts to accommodate the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.

Definitions

Child / children means any person under the age of 18, unless otherwise defined by law.

Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence.

Child connected work means work authorised by the Principal or PRACE Board and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

College employee means any individual employed by PRACE and / or the College to conduct their employment at the College. All College employees are presumed to engage in child-connected work.

Contractors captures all third party contractors and includes, for example, building personnel, consultants, casual teachers, tutors, sports coaches and the College's cleaners. Contractors may be engaged in child-connected work.

Failure to protect offence: A 'failure to protect' offence applies to people who are in a position of authority in the school who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by an adult associated with school and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so. The offence relates to risk of sexual abuse by adults, 18 years and over.

Grooming: Grooming concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.

Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity – for example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with the child, parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.

The criminal offence applies where an adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years or with a person who has care, supervision or authority

for the child with the intention of facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.

PRACE: means the incorporated association (A0032713Z) which includes the Registered Training Organisation (4036) & PRACE College (2110).

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the PRACE Board for use by a child during or outside school hours including a campus of the school, online school environments or other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events).

Student means any student enrolled at the College, including those over the age of 18.

VCAL means Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning.

Roles and responsibilities

The PRACE Board is responsible for acting as the school governing authority, approving child safety policies and procedures and ensuring that PRACE and the College have appropriate resources to effectively implement the child safe strategy. The PRACE Board oversees the development and implementation of risk management process that takes into account child safety in the PRACE environment including the identification and mitigation of the risk(s) of child abuse in the PRACE environment.

The Executive Officer of PRACE is responsible for developing child safe strategies in consultation with the Board, staff, students and wider PRACE community. They are responsible for ensuring training is conducted with all Representatives on child safety and risk management.

College Subcommittee is responsible for contributing to the annual review of the Prace Child Safe strategy and the Annual Child safety risk assessment/register.

The Principal of the College is responsible for the operational management of the College and implementation of the child safety strategy at the College. The Principal is responsible for taking all practical measures to ensure the implementation of this Policy and other child safety policies and procedures. The Principal is tasked with ensuring a strong and sustainable child protection culture at the College.

It is the responsibility of the Principal, both as Principal and PRACE Child Safe Officer, to promptly manage the school's response to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse, taking into account the sensitivity required in relation to the diversity within the school community.

A **Child Safe Officer** is the person at PRACE who has knowledge of child safety issues, and is the first point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse. They are responsible for championing child protection within the College.

All Representatives are responsible for familiarising themselves with this Policy, Child Safe Code of Conduct and other child safety policies and procedures. They must understand and comply with their child safety and legal obligations, including reporting child abuse. It is each Representative's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse in accordance with the Child Safe Reporting Procedure.

Child safety strategies

Protection of children and child safety at PRACE is ensured through a range of strategies, which aim to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including

- **Human resource and recruitment practices** – procedures for recruiting, screening, monitoring, inducting, supporting and supervision Representatives as
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set out in its

- Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure
- Staff and Volunteer Screening Checks Policy and Procedure
- Staff Induction Policy and Procedure
- Staff Supervision Policy and Procedure
- **Annual risk review** – PRACE puts in place risk management strategies to identify, assess and mitigate the risks of child abuse in the PRACE environment, particularly the College environment. This includes monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls. As part of managing risk, child safety is considered when undertaking risk audits and in developing risk management strategies and procedures. Risk Management Plans are created to mitigate risks and evaluate the effectiveness of controls as set out in the Risk Management Policy and Procedure.
- **Clear expectations of staff and volunteers** – PRACE sets clear standards about the way in which Representatives are expected to behave with children and students in the PRACE Code of Conduct.
- **Staff training** – Staff members are provided with annual training on child safety as set out in the PRACE Staff Professional Development Policy and Procedure.
- **Appointment of Child Safe Officers** – Child Safe Officers are appointed as the first contact for child safety concerns and to act as champions for a child safe culture.
- **Child empowerment and participation** – PRACE ensures its VCAL curriculum includes at all levels education on standards of behaviour for students attending the College, healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality, protective behaviours such as child abuse awareness and prevention & boundaries), resilience and health and their own bodies.
- **Communication strategies with children** – PRACE ensures that children and young people at PRACE know PRACE cares about their feelings and their safety through a range of strategies which are determined by the Child Safe Strategies annual review process available via the PRACE website, VCAL Student Handbook, VCAL induction process and classroom displays. This information is in formats that are easy to understand, and user-friendly to children/young people.
- **Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse** – PRACE has clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse, including reportable conduct and / or misconduct. This is set out in more detail below and in its Child Safe Reporting Procedure.
- **Community communication** – PRACE will ensure that this Policy, its key child safety policies and procedures and child safe strategies are publicised on its website and communicated to its key stakeholders.

The PRACE community is informed of policies and procedures through the PRACE webpage, course handbooks, staff intranet and volunteer intranet. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly as per the Policy and Procedure Review document.

PRACE's child safe strategies are reviewed annually with 3 stages.

1. Identify strategies;

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2. Implement strategies; and
 3. Review/evaluate strategies.

Areas that are considered as a part of the review are:

- Existing policies and procedure/practices;
- Partnerships and contractual arrangements;
- PRACE's risk management plan/register; and
- The diverse needs of children/young people.

Progress in the implementation of strategies is recorded on the Child Safe Annual Plan which is made available to the PRACE Board at each Board meeting and reviewed annually by the Board.

Responding and reporting child protection concerns

PRACE takes seriously all allegations of child abuse committed against a child enrolled with the organisation by a Representative or any other person connected with the organisation. The PRACE Staff & Volunteer Disciplinary Policy and Procedure are followed along with the PRACE Child Safe Reporting Procedure.

PRACE encourages and expects all Representatives, parents, students and members of its community to identify and raise any child safety concerns. It does this in a number of ways including:

- Providing detailed guidance for Representatives on how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns in accordance with PRACE's PRACE Child Safe Reporting Procedure
- Providing training at least annually to staff on identifying and reporting child safety matters
- Supporting its Representatives and members of the PRACE community to make reports of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities as needed
- Cooperating with regulatory authorities and the police on child safety matters as needed
- Empowering students to understand appropriate standards of behaviour and educating them on where they can go for help, both within the College and externally

Allegations of abuse and safety concerns are recorded on the incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored as per the PRACE Records Management Policy and Procedure. Individuals who make a child safety report in good faith will be supported by PRACE.

PRACE recognizes that it can be difficult for individuals, particularly children and students, to raise a child safety concern. PRACE and the College will provide support and pastoral care as appropriate to individuals who make a disclosure.

At all times when responding to a child safety concern or complaint, PRACE's priority will be the safety of all children and students. Where a student discloses child abuse or is otherwise linked to suspected child abuse, the College will provide support by offering the student access to the College's counselling and pastoral care services, making referrals to external support services, working closely with the student's parents / guardians / carers as appropriate to support the student in a holistic manner and

cooperating with regulatory authorities.

Where allegation are made against either the Executive Officer or the Principal, the PRACE Chairperson will be responsible for managing the PRACE's response.

Breaches

Representatives that breach this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, including and up to termination of their employment or engagement.

Review

This Policy will be reviewed every two years or as needed. The PRACE Board is responsible for reviewing and approving this Policy.

Related Policies and Procedures

- Child Safe Reporting Procedure
 - Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure
 - Curriculum and Assessment Policy and Procedure
 - Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure
 - Risk Management Policy and Procedure
 - Staff Professional Development Policy and Procedure
 - Student Welfare and Duty of Care (Prace College) Policy and Procedure
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