



Policy

Child Safety and Wellbeing

Endorsed by:	CEO	Document Owner:	Organisational Management
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Section 1: Preamble

Goulburn Options acknowledges its responsibility to uphold and promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and to respect, listen to the opinions of the children and young people we support.

Goulburn Options recognises the importance of developing and implementing systems which protect children and young people from risk of harm, and of fostering a culture of safeguarding children and young people.

Goulburn Options has zero tolerance of child abuse.

This policy outlines Goulburn Options' commitment to safeguarding the safety and wellbeing of all participants under the age of 18.

Section 2: Policy Statement

2.1 Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children

Goulburn Options commits to creating an inclusive and welcoming physical and online environment for Aboriginal children and their families. Goulburn Options recognises the great value of diversity in our community, and the value and contribution of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to our organisation.

Goulburn Options supports all members of our workforce to understand the important role family and connection to culture plays in maintaining the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through initial induction and ongoing training, development and supervision. The organisation understands that when children are supported to positively engage with their cultural support networks, communities and identities, they are more likely to provide feedback, make complaints and/or allegations, or report instances of abuse or harm.

Goulburn Options' workforce will support all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to enjoy their cultural rights free from racism or discrimination by supporting all participants to understand their inherent rights, by celebrating diversity of culture within service, and by responding efficiently and sensitively to all alleged or actual incidents of racism or abuse.

Goulburn Options has a zero tolerance for racism or abuse of any sort.

2.2 Ongoing Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

Child safety and wellbeing are embedded at the core of Goulburn Options' leadership, governance, and organisational culture. Through our Biggest Life Possible (BLP) Quality Framework, we ensure that all children receiving our services do so in a safe, positive, and supportive environment.

Our commitment is documented and upheld through various policies and procedures, including:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure
- Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing
- Code of Conduct
- Protecting and Promoting Human Rights Policy and Procedure
- Incident Management and Reportable Incidents Policy and Procedure
- Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure
- Service Access Policy and Procedure
- Individual Planning and Outcomes Policy and Procedure

We adhere to all relevant child safety obligations, including the Victorian Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme, as well as the NDIS Practice Standards. Regular audits and reviews ensure our practices remain current, consistent, and effective in promoting child safety across the entire organization.

2.3 Empowerment and Participation of Children

Goulburn Options values the contribution and participation of children within service and asserts the rights of children to access services of their choice, to raise concerns, and to be involved in decisions which affect them.

Children and their families are provided with clear, accessible information about their rights at the time of intake and throughout their time with us. This includes guidance on complaints, feedback, privacy, and how to report incidents of abuse or harm.

We actively seek input from children and their families in the review and development of our policies, procedures, and practices that affect them. Children are encouraged to participate in goal monitoring meetings, surveys, and forums such as the Participant Voice Committee, ensuring their voices are heard and valued.

Goulburn Options particularly seeks the feedback and input of children and their families in the review and development of policies, processes, practices and procedures which are relevant to children, and related issues.

All stakeholders of the organisation are made aware of the rights of children and trained to uphold and promote these rights.

2.4 Families and Communities

At Goulburn Options, we recognise that families and communities play a vital role in the wellbeing and safety of children. We actively engage families and community members in the development and delivery of supports, ensuring they are informed and empowered to contribute to child safety.

We welcome the involvement of families, carers, and community members in all aspects of service delivery, from intake through ongoing support planning. Their insights and contributions are critical to providing safe, tailored supports that meet the unique needs of each child.

Family and community involvement is integral to our approach to child safety, helping children feel secure, supported, and confident to speak up if they feel unsafe. We invite families to participate in goal monitoring check-ins and provide feedback throughout the service journey, ensuring we continuously improve our child-safe approach.

2.5 Equity and Diversity

Goulburn Options is committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, has access to safe, inclusive, and respectful services. We acknowledge that children from diverse backgrounds, from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, and those who identify as LGBTQIA+, may face additional barriers to safety and wellbeing.

The organisation actively works to identify and address these barriers, ensuring equitable service delivery. We strive to create a culture where diversity is celebrated, and all children feel valued and supported to thrive. This commitment includes proactive engagement with participants and their families to address individual needs and cultural considerations. Additionally, Goulburn Options ensures that all staff are trained in cultural competency and are equipped to work with participants from diverse backgrounds.

2.6 Safeguarding

Goulburn Options takes the safeguarding of children very seriously, implementing robust procedures to prevent harm and abuse. Safeguarding is embedded within all organisational practices and encompasses both proactive prevention and responsive action when necessary.

Prior to beginning work with Goulburn Options all staff and volunteers must successfully obtain both an NDIS Worker Screening Check and a Working with Children Check regardless of if they will ever actually work with children directly.

Our safeguarding procedures include mandatory reporting, regular risk assessments, and clear guidelines for identifying and responding to child safety risks. These procedures extend to online environments, ensuring the protection of children in digital contexts. All staff members are trained in recognising and reporting signs of abuse or neglect, with a zero-tolerance approach to any form of harm.

2.7 Complaints

Goulburn Options encourages an open and transparent culture where children and their families feel safe to provide feedback and raise concerns. We are committed to addressing all complaints swiftly, sensitively, and in a manner that prioritises the child's safety and wellbeing.

Children are informed about their rights to make complaints and provided with accessible information on how to do so. Goulburn Options ensures that complaints involving children are handled with additional care, with support offered to children and their families throughout the process. Feedback is seen as a critical tool for continuous improvement in maintaining a safe environment.

2.8 Workforce Training, Education and Awareness

All members of the Goulburn Options workforce are required to undertake comprehensive training on child safety and wellbeing. This includes initial induction training and ongoing professional development, with a focus on recognising and responding to risks, maintaining safe environments, and supporting the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as well as children from other diverse backgrounds.

Training is designed to build staff awareness of their responsibilities under the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Additionally, regular updates ensure that staff remain informed about changes in child protection laws and best practices. Goulburn Options fosters a culture of continuous learning, with supervision and reflective practice sessions contributing to workforce development.

2.9 Safe Environment

Goulburn Options is committed to providing a physically, emotionally, and culturally safe environment for all children. This includes ensuring that facilities are welcoming, accessible, and secure, and that risk management strategies are in place to identify and mitigate potential safety hazards.

The organization ensures that environments, both physical and online, are monitored and assessed regularly for safety risks. We encourage children to voice any concerns they may have about their environment and take swift action to address those concerns. Additionally, Goulburn Options recognises the importance of creating a safe emotional space, where children feel supported and heard. This is facilitated through person-centered practices including seeking direct feedback from the participant regarding their supports, including their families/carers/networks/peers in their supports, and ensuring the participant's wishes and goals are at the forefront of all service decisions.

2.10 Continuous Improvement

Goulburn Options is dedicated to continually improving its child safety practices through regular reviews and audits. Our approach to continuous improvement includes evaluating incidents, feedback, and audit outcomes to identify areas for improvement in our policies, procedures, and practices.

We use the findings from audits and participant feedback to inform organisational learning and adapt our strategies to ensure we maintain the highest standards of child safety and wellbeing. Goulburn Options will continue to align its practices with evolving legal requirements and best practices in the field of child safety and protection.

2.11 Policies and Procedures

Goulburn Options ensures that all policies and procedures related to child safety are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect legislative changes, sector developments, and internal improvements. This includes a thorough review of related

documents, ensuring alignment with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission requirements.

All staff, volunteers, and stakeholders are provided with clear guidance on how to implement these policies and procedures in their day-to-day roles. Goulburn Options fosters a culture of accountability, ensuring that everyone understands their responsibilities in upholding child safety.

Section 3: Roles

Role	Responsibilities and Accountabilities
Board	Ensures child safety and wellbeing is integrated and embedded into all levels of the organisation through education and monitoring
Organisational Management	- Ensures the policy is implemented across the organisation. - Monitors compliance with child safety standards. - Reviews the policy regularly.
Team Leaders	- Supports staff to follow safeguarding procedures. - Provides training and guidance on child safety practices.
Administration	Maintains records related to child safety checks and training.
Workforce (<i>DSW, Students, Volunteers</i>)	- Complies with the Child Safety and Wellbeing policy. - Undertakes child safety training. - Reports any risks or incidents of harm.
Participants and families	- Provide feedback and report concerns - Participate in service planning and feedback

Section 4: Related Documentation

Document Name	Document Type
Protecting and Promoting Human Rights	Policy
Code of Conduct	Policy
Participant Handbook	Handbook
Participant Service Charter	Information
Individual Planning and Outcomes	Policy
Service Access, Transition and Exit	Policy
Goal Monitoring	Procedure
Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing	Statement
Complaints and Feedback	Policy, Procedure
Complaints and Feedback Pamphlet	Form
Complaints and Feedback Register	Register
Key Elements of Participant Safety and Wellbeing	Policy
Protecting and Promoting Human Rights	Policy
Incident Management and Reportable Incidents	Policy, Procedure
Incident Register	Register
Quality Improvement	Policy
Employee Handbook	Handbook
Volunteer Handbook	Handbook
Volunteers	Policy

Safeguarding	Policy, Procedure
Participant Intake Checklist	Form
Board Handbook	Handbook
Policy Review	Policy, Procedure
Routine Health and Safety Procedures	Policy
Choice and Advocacy	Policy

Section 5: Definitions

Term	Definition
Child	A person under the age of 18 (unless otherwise specified in relevant legislation).
Child Abuse	All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.
Cultural Safety	Creating an environment that is safe for people of all cultures, free from discrimination and racism.
Reportable Conduct Scheme	A legal framework for reporting and responding to allegations of child abuse and other misconduct involving children.
Mandatory Reporting	The legal obligation to report any suspected or known child abuse or harm to the appropriate authorities.
Working with Children Check	A background check to assess the suitability of individuals to work with children.
NDIS Worker Screening Check	A background check required for workers supporting people with disabilities to ensure they meet safety and suitability standards.

Date of Last Review:	June 2025	Date of Next Review:	June 2027
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