



Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment

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Next Review: **February 2025**

Contact: The Secretary - secretary@madpotters.org.au

The Child Safe standards set by the Australian Federal Government require organisations that provide services for children to have a child safe policy or a statement of commitment to child safety.

Mansfield & District Potters (MAD Potters) is committed to child safety -

- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
- Our organisation has consideration of these child safety requirements for all staff and volunteers at the point of commencement of involvement.
- Our organisation is committed to raising awareness and endorsement of best practice for staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation. All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Child Safe Policy

Education and supervision

Education and Supervision are important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. Our staff and volunteers are supported to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

Those new to our organisation will be advised of our child safe policy and procedures to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and their obligations. Everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the

Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the Working with Children Check website www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au for further information

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

If need arose, we would record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns and secure storage of confidential and/or sensitive information.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: 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.
- Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has a commitment to investigate thoroughly and promptly. We report to the police in these situations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it.
- observing suspicious behaviour.

The Working with Children Check is a screening process for assessing or re-assessing people who work with or care for children in Victoria.

The Check takes a detailed look at the criminal history and relevant professional conduct findings of applicants to ensure we're helping to protect children from sexual or physical harm.

Apply for a Working With Children Check:

<https://service.vic.gov.au/services/working-with-children>

Why is having a WWC Check so important?

Mansfield & District Potters (MAD Potters) is committed to the safeguarding of children and young people and acknowledges a safeguarding organization doesn't just happen; it requires conscious action to protect children from harm.

It is imperative that we provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people, that focus on fun, education and building the confidence of our people through positive learning and development.

Mansfield & District Potters (MAD Potters) is a unique organisation that has multiple purposes including community service, education and leadership opportunities and programs. Each of these individual aspects inter-relate with each other.

It is due to the multifaceted nature of MAD Potters, that members 18 years of age and over, that this policy must be broadly applied.

Who needs to have a WWC Check within MAD Potters?

Any person 18 years and over, in a voluntary or salaried position, who works with person's under 18 years of age in any capacity is required to have a valid Working with Children Check registered to Mansfield & District Potters (MAD Potters). The Department of Justice WWC Check website defines "Child related work as contact with a child that is 'direct' and part of the person's duties.

Mansfield & District Potters Organisational Responsibilities:

- Not engage or continue to engage anyone in child-related work who doesn't have a valid Working with Children (WWC) Check, unless they are exempt under the Worker Screening Act 2020 (the Act) or have lodged an application for a Check that's currently being assessed (subject to the below)
- Not engage or continue to engage anyone who would otherwise be exempt from holding a valid Check, if they have received a WWC Exclusion and not subsequently received a Check
- Not engage or continue to engage anyone in child-related work who is subject to obligations or orders specified in clause 1 of Schedule 5 of the Act
- Not allow people who are charged with, convicted or found guilty of sexual, violent or drug offences specified in clause 2 of Schedule 5 of the Act to work with or care for children while their application is processed or their Check reassessed
- Not offer the services of any person who doesn't have a Check to another organisation if the work to be undertaken with that organisation is child-related work
- Know how to check if a person is allowed to work with children while their application is processed by using the Status Checker
- Know how to check if a person has a valid Check by using the Status Checker
- Ensure paid workers doing child-related work have an Employee Check, not a Volunteer Check
- Know when your workers' Checks expire, and respect and protect workers' privacy.

Enquiries to: secretary@madpotters.org.au

Related Documents

MAD Potters Organisation Code of Conduct & Volunteers Policy

MAD Potters Privacy Policy