

Form: OCP- DN - 004	<b>Child Safety &amp; Wellbeing Policy</b>	
Revision: 1		
Review Date: 05/2024		

## 1. Overview

On-Country Pathways directly engages with Indigenous children and young people aged 15 – 24 years, during the coordination, delivery, and evaluation of our employment and career pathways programs, including the following programs:

- a. Driver-Mentor,
- b. Work Experience,
- c. Job Placement Support,
- d. Traineeship, and
- e. Cadetship.

On-Country Pathways is committed to the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous children and young people we engage on our programs, and we have zero tolerance of child abuse of any kind.

In acknowledgment of our responsibility for creating and maintaining culturally safe environments for all program candidates, we understand that cultural safety is fundamental to the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous children and young people.

This Policy describes our commitment and approach to ensuring the Indigenous children and young people we work with are safe, and that they feel respected and heard.

## 2. Who does this policy apply to?

Everyone we work with must be committed to child safety. This policy applies to On-Country Pathways staff, program partners, and authorised persons engaged by On-Country Pathways for coordination, delivery and evaluation of our programs.

## 3. Compliance

There are consequences for failing to keep children and young people safe. Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all persons to whom it applies. Non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of employment or contractual obligations, misconduct, harassment, discrimination or contravention of the law.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in counselling, training, disciplinary action or, in serious cases, termination of employment or engagement, including referral to the relevant authorities.

## 4. Reporting child safety concerns

On-Country Pathways staff, program partners, and authorised persons are responsible for reporting child safety concerns and child abuse, and must know how to make a report.

We encourage anyone with concerns about the behaviour of our people to contact our Child Safety Champion – Darren Moffitt, 0439 184 719, [darren.moffitt@on-countrypathways.com.au](mailto:darren.moffitt@on-countrypathways.com.au).

For any matters requiring urgent or immediate assistance, including concerns for the welfare of a child or young person call 000 and report the matter directly to police.

If risks or concerns relate to the conduct of the Child Safety Champion, these should be reported to the General Manager of On-Country Pathways – Jebb Hutchison, 0402 214 748, [jebb.hutchison@on-countrypathways.com.au](mailto:jebb.hutchison@on-countrypathways.com.au).

Form: OCP- DN - 004	<b>Child Safety &amp; Wellbeing Policy</b>	
Revision: 1		
Review Date: 05/2024		

## 5. What is a culturally safe environment?

Cultural safety underpins all our programs and is about creating an environment where there is no assault, challenge or denial of identity or experience as an Indigenous person.

We understand that cultural safety is fundamental to the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous children and young people.

We recognise the impacts of past government policies and practices on Aboriginal peoples and we challenge discrimination, unconscious bias and racism of any kind.

On-Country Pathways is committed to ensuring every program we deliver is culturally safe and we have an expectation that all those engaged with our programs have an understanding of what cultural safety is and actively contribute to providing culturally safe environments.

We embrace Aboriginal culture throughout our organisation and seek to build positive relationships with communities to advance employment opportunities and wellbeing of Indigenous children and young people engaged on our programs.

We see diversity as a strength and work to ensure all children and young people on our programs are treated with respect.

We support and mentor businesses that work with Indigenous children and young people on our programs to make sure these businesses and the environments they provide are culturally safe. This requires us to model best practice.

## 6. Roles and responsibilities

Every person, at every level, has a role and responsibility in creating a child safe environment at On-Country Pathways and during delivery of our programs.

All staff and authorised persons are responsible for building and maintaining our child safe culture, taking steps to prevent child abuse and operating in a manner consistent with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and procedures.

Expectations are as follows:

### a. All staff, and authorised persons:

- I. Report all concerns of child abuse about our staff (including executive and senior staff),(using dispute resolution process and complete resolution form)
- II. Uphold our zero tolerance of child abuse approach
- III. Actively support and abide by the our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, our Code of Conduct and related procedures
- IV. Support and participate in the building and maintenance of On-Country Pathway's child safe culture
- V. Prioritise the safety of children and young people in all work

### b. Coordinators – additional responsibilities:

Form: OCP- DN - 004	<b>Child Safety &amp; Wellbeing Policy</b>	
Revision: 1		
Review Date: 05/2024		

- I. Champion zero tolerance of child abuse
- II. Model best practice as a child safe organisation
- III. Prioritise the safety of children and young people in all decisions
- IV. Ensure policies and procedures are current
- V. address the risks of child abuse and ensure these are communicated to staff
- VI. Advise staff of their obligations to comply with the our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Code of Conduct and related procedures
- VII. Monitor for staff compliance with the policy and code and take action if breaches are detected

**c. Managers – additional responsibilities:**

- I. Champion cultural safety
- II. Advise new staff of their roles and responsibilities during the induction process
- III. Coach staff on understanding and managing child safety risks
- IV. Monitor staff contact with children and young people and use supervision to confirm professional boundaries and child safe practice
- V. Support staff to develop their understanding of cultural safety
- VI. Ensure appropriate child safety screening is undertaken in all recruitment processes.
- VII. Facilitate learning on cultural safety and a risk informed approach to child safety
- VIII. Inform organisations we work with about our child safe approach
- IX. Seek feedback on our practices to support continuous Improvement
- X. Act on reports of child safety concerns, including:
  - i. receiving reports from any source
  - ii. enquiring into, investigating reports or commissioning an investigation
  - iii. making a determination and taking action to protect child safety
  - iv. take action in relation to breaches of the Code of Conduct.
  - v. Ensure the Child Safety Officer is appropriately trained and equipped to respond to child safety concerns, and hold the Child Safety Officer accountable for performance of that function

**7. Statement of commitment to child safety**

We describe our commitment to child safety in words and in practice so our people know what is expected of them, and others know what they can expect from us.

We have zero tolerance of all forms of child abuse, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual misconduct including grooming and neglect of any kind.

We are committed to taking the necessary steps to protect children and young people from harm by adopting a preventative and proactive approach to child safety.

We undertake to continuously develop and strengthen our child safe approach.

We uphold our child safe responsibilities across all of our work environments, whether work-site or depot based, office-based, car-based, off-site or at home.

We take any concerns of child abuse seriously and prioritise the safety of children in our response.

Form: OCP- DN - 004	<b>Child Safety &amp; Wellbeing Policy</b>	
Revision: 1		
Review Date: 05/2024		

We know that children face increased vulnerabilities in particular contexts, taking into account their diverse backgrounds and circumstances. We seek to foster inclusive, non-discriminatory environments and activities that encourage children and young people to celebrate and be proud of their Indigenous identity.

### **Adoption of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations**

Some of the ways we demonstrate our commitment to child safety in practice are set out below.

#### **Principle 1 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.**

We have a ***Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy***, a ***Code of Conduct*** and a ***Risk Management Plan*** that set out our organisations procedures, protocols and strategies for Child safety. We adhere to our legal obligations to promote the best interests of children and young people. Child safety matters are routinely discussed at staff meetings, management meetings and governance meetings.

#### **Principle 2 – Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.**

We apply induction and evaluation processes that enable young people to understand what our programs are about and make informed choices around engagement on our programs and participation in post program evaluation. Pre-program induction involves reading and signing our ***Code of Conduct***, an optional ***Image Consent Form***, and procedures for making a complaint or reporting an incident using our ***Dispute Resolution and Complaints Policy***. Program candidates are also provided with contact details of our organisation’s ***Child Safety Champion***.

#### **Principle 3 – Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.**

Our key policies and procedures are publicly available through our On-Country Pathways website, including our ***Code of Conduct***, ***Dispute Resolution and Complaints Policy***, ***Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*** and we publish an ***Annual Information Statement*** and a quarterly ***Footprints Newsletter*** to keep community and our program partners informed about our activities.

#### **Principle 4 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.**

We ensure staff are provided opportunity to be trained in Aboriginal Youth Mental Health First Aid, giving them skills and knowledge to be able to recognise and support program candidates experiencing a mental health problem and provide information about types of supports available and to encourage someone to seek professional help when required. We have a ***Child Safety Champion*** in the Program Manger role, that actively promotes and champions attitudes and behaviours that respects the human rights of all program candidates and we have procedures in place to detailed in our ***Dispute Resolution and Complaints Policy***, and ***Induction Plan*** which aim to support and respond to the diverse needs of our program candidates.

#### **Principle 5 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.**

We recruit our staff using a selection criterion that includes processes to ensure they are suitable, for example all staff are required to hold valid Working with Children Checks and a suitable National

Form: OCP- DN - 004	<b>Child Safety &amp; Wellbeing Policy</b>	
Revision: 1		
Review Date: 05/2024		

Police Check. These requirements are reflected in the **Position Descriptions** for each role. All staff undertake an **Induction Program** at the start of their employment in accordance with our **Induction Plan**, that includes introduction to and signing off on all On-Country Pathways policies and procedures. Regular team meetings are held where program candidates are discussed including standing agenda items of **Child Safety** and **Cultural Safety**. Quarterly **Supervision and Performance Management Meetings** are held with all employees with a particular focus on Child Safety and Cultural Safety.

**Principle 6 – Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focussed.**

We have an **Induction Plan** with that all On-Country Pathways staff, program candidates and program partners undertake to ensure everyone involved in our programs are well-informed of our **Code of Conduct** and relevant supporting policies and procedures. We also have a **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan** that enables program participants, including program partners to provide direct feedback on the conduct of a program. The induction process and monitoring and evaluation plan enables and empowers those involved on our programs to feel supported to draw attention to any breaches of relevant policies or Code of Conduct. On-Country Pathways has a **Dispute Resolution and Complaints Policy**, with a focus on minors (under 18 years) to ensure any issue or complaint made that involves a minor is handled appropriately and ensures the safety of the minor in the first instance. The reporting process in this policy includes a document that records details of complaints, including timelines and the outcomes.

**Principle 7 – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.**

At Induction, all staff are introduced to On-Country Pathways **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy** and all staff are provided the opportunity to undertake **Aboriginal Youth Mental Health First Aid** training upon employment.

**Principle 8 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.**

On-Country Pathways staff and program participants are required to sign up to our **Code of Conduct**, we have an **Information Technology and Social Media Policy**, that outlines expectations around the use of IT and social media and we have a **Risk Management Plan**, that outlines the inherent risks and control measures for our programs and we review this annually and involve all staff in the risk identification and assessment process.

**Principle 9 – Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.**

On-Country Pathways is committed to implementing the national child safe principles and continuously improving on the delivery of our programs by annually reviewing all policies and procedures, with staff input and incorporating feedback from the implementation of our **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan**, that seeks direct feedback for program staff, participant and partners organisations on delivery of our programs. This includes regular analysis of complaints, where applicable and improving systems in response to outcomes of complaints or disputes.

**Principle 10 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.**

Form: OCP- DN - 004	<b>Child Safety &amp; Wellbeing Policy</b>	
Revision: 1		
Review Date: 05/2024		

On-Country Pathways has a **Risk Management Plan** and a **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy** which addresses all ten national child safe principles, including how we are implementing these in our organisation’s culture and within our policies and procedures to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people engaged on our programs. As an Indigenous organisation, we value and champion cultural safety in the delivery of our programs. As with all systems, we believe this is an ongoing process of continual improvement and we are committed to reviewing and updating our policies and procedures to model best practice.

<b>Employee Name:</b>	<b>Sign:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Inductees Name:</b>	<b>Sign:</b>	<b>Date:</b>