



GLEN EIRA CHELTENHAM ART GROUP

INC. A0006161Y

Rooms 79 to 81, Robert Flavell Wing, Moorleigh Community Village, 92 Bignell Road East Bentleigh

Child Safety Policy

Date approved: October 2022 Review date: October 2024

The Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards have been put in place to protect children and young people from harm and abuse. As a group who provide services and facilities for children, we are required to have a child safe policy or a statement of commitment to child safety. We also have an obligation to comply with the Child Safe Standards.

For the purposes of this policy and in accordance with the Child Safe Standards a child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

Our Commitment to Child Safety

Glen Eira Cheltenham Art Group (GECAG) is committed to child safety and to do so by providing a safe physical and emotional environment.

We support and respect all children, as we support and respect our members, staff, tutors and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety.

GECAG is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

We promote diversity and acceptance at GECAG and children from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome and are made to feel safe.

We are committed to the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of *all* children, regardless of their racial, cultural and/or linguistic background, and to providing a safe environment so that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

We have specific policies and procedures in place for our organisation to achieve these commitments.

Safety and Our Child Members

This policy is intended to empower our child members about their right to be safe. As vital and active participants at GECAG, we listen to their views and respect what they have to say, especially about matters that directly affect them.

It is our policy to encourage any students who either experience or observe bullying, or unsafe behaviour or practices to:

- Make it clear, when it involves their peers, that this is not acceptable behaviour.

- Speak with their tutor, parent or guardian.

Our Members, Staff, Tutors and Volunteers

This policy guides our members, staff, tutors and volunteers on how to behave with children at GECAG. It is a condition of membership that members agree to GECAG's policies. All of our staff, tutors, members and volunteers must abide by this Child Safety Policy, our Child Safety Procedures and Child Safety Code of Conduct. These documents specify the standards of conduct required when working with children. All those in GECAG who are working with children, whether as tutors or volunteers, are required to sign the Child Safety Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities*

Glen Eira Cheltenham Art Group takes its duty of care of its child members seriously. In addition to caring for the students during classes, we take reasonable steps to care for them as they arrive and depart from the studio. This cannot be done without the involvement of our child member's parents/guardians.

- Children may not arrive or leave independently. It is our policy that a parent/guardian must escort children to the studio and hand them across to the care of the tutor. To ensure their safety, we ask parents/guardians not to drop off children at the car park, or have them walk to them as they wait in the car after class. The tutor will only allow each child to leave after sighting their parent/guardian at the studio, or sighting those authorised to collect the child as listed on GECAG's Child Member Information Form. If a parent or guardian needs to have someone other than themselves or those authorised to collect their child, the tutor must be advised beforehand, ideally in writing.
- In the event that emergency circumstances prevent the parent or guardian from collecting their child, it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to contact the tutor, or failing that, to call GECAG's contact number, which is listed under 'Contact Us' on our website.
- Parents and guardians are to advise us in writing if there are any conditions, issues or circumstances that will impact on the safety of a child member while they are in our care.
- The toilet facilities are located adjacent to the studio and are available to other Moorleigh Village users and the public. As this poses a possible risk to the safety of child members, GECAG has a procedure to oversee the use of the toilets by child members, the execution of which is the responsibility of the tutor or another supervising adult.
- It is not the responsibility of the tutor to supervise children going to the toilet if the parent or guardian is present; it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

**Refer to GECAG's Child Safety Procedures document for further details.*

Education and Support

Education is important to ensure that everyone at GECAG understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

GECAG's organisational culture aims for all members, staff, tutors, volunteers, families and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

Our child safety policies and procedures are communicated to all members, the parents/guardians of child members, staff, tutors and volunteers. The child safety policies are published on our website: <https://www.gecartgroup.com.au/classes> .

Members, staff, tutors and volunteers will be supported to ensure they understand GECAG's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. This will include checking that behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to GECAG's Child Safety Code of Conduct for information about appropriate behaviour). 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.

The Children's Tutor will receive assistance and support to develop their skills in regards to child safety. GECAG will identify an appropriate course for them to complete. (Refer to GECAG's Child Safety Procedures document under Training Course and Further Resources). GECAG will remunerate the tutor for the cost of the course and the hours spent completing it.

Recruitment

GECAG takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to tutor our child members. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legal responsibilities. GECAG understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers, we have ethical as well as legal obligations.

We accept all applications. We will not refuse applications from First Nations people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people who are engaged in child-related work and who are not exempt, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Card and to provide evidence of this check.

For more information, please refer to the [Working with Children website](https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/) (<https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/>)

We carry out reference checks and require at least two recommendations. Written references must be followed up with verbal validation with the referee. If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

All short-listed children's tutor applicants will be provided with a copy of our child safety policies. Once engaged, the Children's Tutor must confirm that they have read and understood all of the material in GECAG's Child Safety Policy, our Child Safety Procedures and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and that they understand that they have a duty of care to adhere to all requirements in relation to child safety. This confirmation will be obtained by them signing the Child Safety Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

Fair Procedures for Members, Staff, Tutors and Volunteers

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and reasonable to all members, staff, tutors and volunteers. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, the President will, depending on the nature and severity of the allegations, inform the relevant authorities, so they may undertake an investigation. For minor matters, the allegation will be dealt with internally in a fair and reasonable manner. We will provide updates to children and families on the progress and actions we, as an organisation, take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be members, staff, tutors, volunteers, families or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it and who will have access to it. This is intended to protect reporters and to ensure that all members of GECAG feel able to disclose any allegations or concerns in relation to child safety without repercussions.

Legal Responsibilities

GECAG takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 18 have an obligation to report that information to Victoria Police.
- Mandatory reporting: Any members, staff, tutors or volunteers who are mandatory reporters (registered medical practitioners, registered nurses, midwives, teachers, principals and police officers) must comply with their duties.
- 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.
- Reportable conduct: The President of GECAG must be made aware of any allegations of physical and sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, grooming, significant emotional or psychological harm or significant neglect by a member, staff, a tutor, or volunteer towards a child. We are also legally required to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of the allegation.
- Duty of care: If a child is abused by an individual associated with our organisation, our organisation is presumed to have breached its duty of care unless it can prove that it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse in question. For more information, please refer to the [new organisational duty of care to prevent child abuse page](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new) <<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/betrayal-of-trust-fact-sheet-the-new>> on the Department of Justice and Regulation's website.

Risk Management

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

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

Child members may only use the internet at the studio for study purposes and while under the supervision of the tutor.

Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

GECAG takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to ensure that the appropriate authorities are informed quickly (Refer to Child Safety Procedures document). Our members, tutors, staff and volunteers have procedures to follow and will make every effort to deal with allegations appropriately.

We work to ensure all children, families, members, 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. If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may include:

- 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

Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually and following every reportable incident. The review will assess whether GECAG's protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the child members when under our care. We will ensure that those involved in the children's classes will have the opportunity to contribute to the review.

To keep up to date on the Child Safe Standards, GECAG has subscribed to the Victorian Government's Commission for Children and Young People's email list to receive information and updates on any new resources and events.

Resources and References

- GECAG's Child Safe Policy is based on the Sample Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment, Child Safe Standards Toolkit: Resource 2A from the Department of Health and Human Services.
- As per our Licence Agreement with the Glen Eira City Council, GECAG must comply with the Child Safe Standards: [Child Safe Standards](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards) <<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>> Department of Health and Human Services.

The 'Short Guide to the Child safe Standards' is available via the [Child Safety page](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/) <<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/>> on the Commission for Children and Young People's website.

- Moore's 'Child Safety Toolkit: How to Create a Child safe Organisation', published by Our Community Pty. Ltd., March 2019 Edition, ISBN: 978-1-876976-58-3