



PEOPLE OF PEONY'S CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING AND CHILD SAFETY ENVIRONMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Definitions

Child or Young Person – a child is a person who is under the age of 16 years. A young person is a person who is aged 16 years or above but who is under the age of 18 years.

Child harm or Abuse – an intentional action towards a child or young person that has resulted in or appears likely to result in:

- physical abuse or injury,
- emotional abuse,
- neglect,
- sexual abuse, or
- exposure to family violence.

Child Safe Environments – are safe and friendly settings where children and young people are protected and feel respected, valued, and encouraged to reach their full potential.

Child Safety - protecting children from harm as well as promoting wellbeing in face-to-face and online environments, informing children on what their rights are, and empowering children and young people to have a say in decisions that affect them.

Children with Vulnerabilities – children who may be exposed to greater risk due to their experience, ability, location, or background. They may include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disability, the very young, those who have experienced prior trauma, those who have gender differences, or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or questioning, and those who live in remote locations. Not every child in these categories should be considered 'vulnerable'. Like all children, they have the capacity for strength and resilience.

Cultural Safety – an environment that is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children and young people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and experience of learning together.

Mandatory Reporting – the legal obligation of certain professionals and community members to report when they believe, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person needs protection from harm.

Neglect – the failure to provide a child or young person with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that their health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.



People of Peony's Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

People of Peony is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

People of Peony wants children and young people to be safe, well, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children and young people, as well as our staff.

People of Peony is committed to the safety, wellbeing, participation and empowerment of all children and young people. We want to promote and protect their rights.

People of Peony has zero tolerance of placing children or young people at risk of harm, including abuse and neglect, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

People of Peony is committed to preventing risks of harm to children and young people, including abuse, by identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.

People of Peony has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child or young person's safety or wellbeing, which we follow rigorously.

All People of Peony's staff and volunteers have obligations to act ethically towards children and young people to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

People of Peony has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff. People of Peony is committed to regularly training and educating our staff on identifying and responding to potential risks of harm to children and young people, including abuse risks.

People of Peony is committed to upholding the right to Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, as well as children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It is also committed to providing a safe environment for children and young people with a disability.

People of Peony is committed to protecting children and young people's personal information, and the personal information of their parents and families. All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children and young people, 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. People of Peony has processes in place to seek parental and children and young people's consent for relevant activities and information gathering.

People of Peony has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our staff to achieve these commitments.

Participation of Children and Young People

People of Peony regularly seeks the views of children and young people and encourages their participation in decisions affecting them, including on safety and wellbeing issues.

To support this, all staff are required to:

- tell children and young people about their rights.
- build trust and positive relationships with the children and young people People of Peony supports.
- ask children and young people how they wish to participate in their service delivery.



- encourage friendships and peer support amongst the children and young people People of Peony supports.
- ensure children and young people have opportunities to participate in making decisions.
- tell children and young people how they can give feedback or make a complaint to People of Peony (see the *Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure*) and
- encourage children and young people to be themselves, share their thoughts and feelings, and speak up about things they are concerned about.

Staff must also ensure information or support given to children and young people such as that outlined above is recorded in children and young people's files.

- give children and young people the opportunity to participate in youth-led working groups or advisory committees that provide feedback directly to the Senior Management Team and support People of Peony's governance (documented in *Meeting Minutes*).
- ensure children and young people are provided with information and training about protective behaviours, so they can recognise unsafe situations and feel confident speaking up (documented in children and young people's files) and
- ensure posters and brochures that provide information about support services for children and young people are freely available to staff and children and young people.

Equity and Diversity

People of Peony recognises that all children are vulnerable, although some children are more vulnerable to abuse than others or find it harder to speak up and be heard. Children have diverse needs, abilities, and backgrounds, and may be particularly vulnerable if they:

- have a disability.
- come from specific religious or cultural backgrounds.
- are very young.
- have been exposed to trauma.
- feel vulnerable because of their gender identity or sexuality.
- come from diverse family backgrounds or
- live remotely.

Staff are expected to:

- ensure that the right to Cultural Safety of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children is respected.
- take into account children and young people's diverse circumstances.
- treat children and young people, and protect and support children and young people, equitably (give opportunities or provide support appropriate to their abilities, as opposed to treating them equally, which is treating everyone the same way)
- consider whether children or young people need to be provided with aids or equipment to support their participation and
- make all children, young people, and their families and carers feel welcome, respected, and included.



Fair Procedures for Staff

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is People of Peony's primary concern. People of Peony is also fair and just to staff. The decisions People of Peony makes when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

People of Peony records all allegations of abuse and safety concerns as per its Incident Management policies and procedures. All records are securely stored, as per People of Peony's *Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure*.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, People of Peony will provide updates to children and young people and families on progress and any actions the organisation takes (without compromising the privacy and confidentiality of its staff and ensuring they are supported also).

Responding to Allegations, Concerns, and Complaints

People of Peony takes all allegations concerns and complaints seriously and has practices in place to investigate them thoroughly and quickly. People of Peony's staff are trained to deal appropriately with allegations, concerns, and complaints.

People of Peony works to ensure all children and young people, families and staff know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

People of Peony staff and stakeholders all have a responsibility to report an allegation of harm or abuse if they have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. 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 harm or abuse but is unwilling to report it and
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Mandatory Reporting processes are clearly set out in People of Peony's *Participant Incident Management Policy and Procedure*. As per the policy and procedure, records are kept about any concerns raised about the behaviour of staff, and people who wish to raise concerns about child safety are supported to do so.



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