



# Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

## Purpose

The Engine Swim Aquatic (ESA) Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of ESA's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 and the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

It informs our community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of children across all our facilities.

## Scope

This policy:

- applies to all centre staff, volunteers, and contractors whether they work in direct contact with children. It also applies to ESA Directors and Senior Leadership where indicated.
- applies in all physical locations operated by ESA including Mentone Aquatic, Korowa Aquatics or Toby Haenen Swim Centres.

## ESA Statement of commitment to child safety

Engine Swim Australia (ESA), Mentone Aquatics (MA), Korowa Aquatics (KA), and Toby Haenen Swim Centres (THSC) are a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people, and their families.

We are committed to providing an environment where all children are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to children in our swimming environments.

We promote positive relationships between children and adults and between children and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to children in our swim centres. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our centres has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our children, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **ESA Directors and Swim Centre Coordinators/Managers**

Our ESA Directors and Swim Centre Coordinators/Managers are responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

ESA Directors and Swim Centre Coordinators/Managers will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes, and practices are in place and followed.
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of children, families, and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing.
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all children are considered.
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between children and adults, and between children.
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues.
- ensure child safety as an agenda item on all staff meetings.
- facilitate regular child safety training updates for all staff including casual swim instructors to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of, and responding to abuse.
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.
- Review and/or approve all updates to Child Safety and Wellbeing policies and procedures.

### **Swim Centre staff**

All staff including casual swim instructors will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by ESA or the swim centres, and always follow the child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with Child Safety Responding and Reporting Procedures.
- ensure children's views are taken seriously, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of children.

### **Child Safety Officer**

The ESA Safety and Compliance Manager is the nominated a child safety officer and will support the ESA Directors to implement our child safety policies and practices, including training.

The Safety and Compliance Manager is the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

- The Safety and Compliance Manager is responsible for monitoring the centre's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The Safety and Compliance Manager is responsible for informing the centre community about this policy and making it publicly available.

## **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and children. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that children also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the centre.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

## **Managing risk and recording child safety and wellbeing**

At ESA we identify, assess, and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and practices.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our directors in consultation with the Safety and Compliance Manager will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

## **Family engagement**

Our families and the community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

We are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our child safe policies and practices.

## **Student empowerment**

To support child safety and wellbeing at ESA we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages children and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between children are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the centre to ensure a sense of belonging.

When ESA is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the children involved and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

## Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our children, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths, and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence.
- international children
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

## Suitable staff and volunteers

At ESA we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

### Staff recruitment

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance.
- collect and record:
  - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
  - the person's history of working with children.
  - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

### Staff induction

All newly appointed staff, including all casual swim instructors, trainees and teacher assistants will be expected to participate in our induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Procedures and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that the Directors consider appropriate to the nature of their role.

### Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

## Directors and Leadership education

To ensure our Directors and Centre Leadership teams are equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of child safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our environment, they will attend training at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse.
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our environments
- Any updates to child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices

## Complaints and reporting processes

ESA fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, children, parents, and the centre community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct, or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our Complaint Policy.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers must follow our Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, centre staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the centre.

## Communications

ESA is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Responding and Reporting Obligations Procedure
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at leadership meetings, and staff meetings.

## Privacy and information sharing

ESA collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws.

## Review of child safety practices

We have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident.
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice.
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with centre staff and our centre community.

## Related policies and procedures

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related ESA policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Child Safety Reporting Guidelines
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Complaints Policy
- Child Safety Risk Register

## Policy status and review

The Safety and Compliance Manager is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years.

<b>Created date</b>	<b>July 2023</b>
<b>Created by</b>	Megan Hall – Safety and Compliance Manager
<b>Approved by</b>	Toby Haenen and Andrew Lauterstein - Directors
<b>Approved on</b>	3 August 2023
<b>Next review date</b>	July 2025