



# Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

Date Issued	December 2024
Date Last Reviewed	December 2024
Due For Review	October 2026

## **Purpose**

This policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of the Board, management, staff and volunteers of the Essendon District Football League and its affiliated clubs to child safety and to provide an outline of the guidelines and practices the EDFL has developed to minimise the risk or harm occurring.

### **Our commitment to child safety**

The Essendon District Football League is committed to child safety.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.

We support and respect all children, as well as our Board Members, staff and volunteers,

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

We have zero tolerance of child abuse. 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.

The Essendon District Football League is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.

The Essendon District Football League has robust human resources and recruitment practices to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing Board Members, staff and volunteers.

The Essendon District Football League is committed to regularly training and educating our Board Members, staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies and procedures in place that support our Board Members, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

### **Our children**

This policy is intended to empower children, who are vital and active participants in competitions played under the Essendon District Football League. 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 acceptance in the Essendon District Football League. People from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 Board Members, staff and volunteers**

This policy guides our Board Members, staff and volunteers on how to behave with children who participate in competitions played under the Essendon District Football League.

All of our Board Members, staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All our Board Members, staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

## **Training and supervision**

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone at Essendon District Football League understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all our Board Members, staff and volunteers, families and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

We train our Board Members, staff and volunteers to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our Board Members, staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to develop their skills to protect children from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New Board Members, staff and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand the commitment of the Essendon District Football League to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse.

This will include checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to the League's 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.

## **Recruitment**

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legal responsibilities.

The Essendon District Football League understands that when recruiting Board Members, staff and volunteers, we have ethical, as well as legislative, obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 current Victorian Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check. For more information, please refer to the [Working with Children website](#).

We carry out reference checks and Working with Children's checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. 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.

### **Fair procedures for Board Members, staff and volunteers**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and reasonable to all Board Members, staff 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, we provide updates to children and families on 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 Board Members, staff, 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 persons who make reports and to ensure that all members of Essendon District Football League are comfortable to disclose any allegations or concerns in relation to child safety without repercussions.

### **Legislative responsibilities**

The Essendon District Football League 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 16 have an obligation to report that information to Victoria Police
- **Mandatory reporting:** Any Board Members, staff, or volunteers who are mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teacher, 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 League President must be made aware of any allegations of physical and sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, significant emotional or psychological harm or significant neglect by an employee 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](#) 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.

### **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

The Essendon District Football League takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our Board Members, staff and volunteers are trained to deal with allegations appropriately.

We work to ensure all children, families, Board 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 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 will do our best to work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

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### **The Code**

This Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour by adults towards children.

The Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. It also helps staff and volunteers by providing them with guidance on how to best support children and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations. This Code of Conduct applies to all people involved in the activities of the Essendon District Football League and includes coaches, officials, volunteers and parents.

All Essendon District Football League Board Members, staff and volunteers are responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- Adhering to our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, this Code of Conduct and other related policies of the AFL, AFL Victoria.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- Treating everyone with respect, including listening to and valuing their ideas and opinions

- Welcoming all children and their families and carers and being inclusive
- Respecting cultural, religious and political differences and acting in a culturally sensitive way, particularly when interacting with children who are Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or otherwise culturally or linguistically diverse and those with a disability
- Modelling appropriate adult behaviour
- Listening to children and responding to them appropriately
- Reporting and acting on any breaches of this Code of Conduct, complaints or concerns appropriately and treat them seriously and with respect.
- Complying with our guidelines on physical contact with children
- Working with children in an open and transparent way – other adults should always know about the work you are doing with children
- Respecting the privacy of children and their families, and only disclosing information to people who have a need to know.

Essendon District Football League Board Members, staff and volunteers MUST NOT:

- Seek to use children in any way to meet the needs of adults
- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or language with children
- Engage in rough physical games
- Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- Develop ‘special’ relationships with specific children or show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- Exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking site or email addresses with children
- Have unauthorised contact with children and young people online or by phone.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the League CEO, Andrew Johnston ((03) **9373 2700** or [headoffice@essendonfl.com.au](mailto:headoffice@essendonfl.com.au))

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed by the Essendon District Football League Board Members annually.

I have read this Code of Conduct and agree to abide by it at all times.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Reporting a child safety concern or complaint**

The League has appointed **Andrew Johnston** as Child Safety Person with the specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children. Andrew can be contacted by Phone: **9373 2700** or email [headoffice@essendonfl.com.au](mailto:headoffice@essendonfl.com.au)

## **Social Media Use**

The Essendon District Football League has adopted the AFL Victoria Social Media Guidelines for all communication with children within the League. These guidelines are in addition to the League's Media Policy.

- a. No adult in a role working with children in an AFL Victoria Affiliate should engage in individual social friendships with children from the League/Club/Program/ on personal social media sites.
- b. Multiple adults, including Club President, Senior Manager or Centre Coordinator, should be part of the contact list and included in any social media communication with children from, or on behalf of the League/Club, or regarding League/Club details.
- c. When setting up a social media platform connected with any league, club or individual team within the league/club, an administrator should be appointed as someone who will check on the status of posts and comments.
- d. Confidentiality is important, permission must be obtained from parents for any use of a child's name or photo to be used in any postings, this is particularly important in case of any custody issues or privacy required.

## **Risk Management**

We recognise the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and use this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children. To reduce the risk of child abuse occurring, adults to whom this policy applies should avoid direct, unsupervised contact with children. For example, this should be a consideration when:

- using change room facilities;
- using accommodation or overnight stays;
- travel; or
- physical contact when coaching or managing children.

## **Reviewing this policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually and we undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers involved in the League.