



Ballarat Agricultural and Pastoral Society

Child Safe Policy

Our Commitment to Child Safety

Ballarat Agricultural and Pastoral Society (BAPS) is committed to child safety and wellbeing.

We want children to feel safe, happy and empowered.

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.

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

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

BAPS has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all volunteers.

BAPS is committed to regularly training and educating our volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children, as well as our volunteers. 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, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Our Children

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. 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 tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

Our Volunteers

This policy guides our volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All 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 is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train

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

We also support our volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of all children.

New volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to Heytesbury Agricultural Society's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). 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 when recruiting volunteers to carry out reference checks and Working With Children checks to ensure we have people who are fit 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 legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check. This includes, but is not limited to, all judges, stewards, ride operators and children's entertainers as well as committee members who, under reasonable circumstances interact with children in carrying out their duties to the Society. Please see the Working with Children Check website (www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) for further information.

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 Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is of primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. 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, including investigation updates. 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 any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community wide responsibility. 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 the police. #
- **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. *
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties ^

Risk Management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). 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 (for example, no volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media)

Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following any significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where appropriate we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families 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 (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. 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 abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour

A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website

www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence

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^ Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse. See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about how to make a report to child protection. www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protecton-or-child-first

+ For example behaviour, please see An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc