YMCA Victoria Policy – Child Safety Policy

1. PURPOSE

Child safety is at the heart of everything we do at Y Victoria. We are committed to fostering a culture of child safety within all of our services – including online environments. The inclusion of child safety within our operations, and physical and online environments, ensures a culture where safety and wellbeing of children and young people is at the forefront of everything we do.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse. Any child safety concern is taken seriously and investigated. We want all children to feel safe throughout their journey with Y Victoria.

2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to The Young Men's Christian Association of Victorian Inc. and related entities including Kingswim and The Victorian YMCA Youth and Community Services Inc. For the purposes of this document we refer to these entities as the YMCA.

3. AUDIENCE

☒ Staff/Volunteers ☒ Managers ☒ Senior Managers/Executives ☒ Board Members
☒ Customers/Patrons ☒ Contractors

4. PRINCIPLES

Y Victoria has embedded child safety throughout its operations, culture and environment – including online.

Y Victoria is committed to a culture that promotes child safety for all children.

Y Victoria is committed to promoting the cultural safety, inclusivity and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and their families.

Organisational leaders support staff, volunteers and community members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

All Y People actively support and facilitate the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families.

Y Victoria is committed to ensuring all children and young people are heard, feel safe and are free from harm.

Y Victoria fosters a culture of continuous improvement, which ensures families and children and young people are involved about decisions which will influence their time at the Y.

Policy Title: Child Safety Policy	Policy No:	Policy Type: Operational
Approved Date: 26/11/2025	Formal Review Frequency: Three years	Approved By: Risk Sub Committee
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5. WHAT CHILDREN HAVE TOLD US KEEPS THEM SAFE AND HAPPY AT THE Y

Children's direct input for this policy highlights that attending our programs are a positive experience for them when:

- *I can play with my friends and make new friends*
- *I feel cared for by my educators and trusted grown ups*
- *Playing with new, fun and exciting toys*
- *Being outside and exploring my surroundings*
- *Cooperation and participation are encouraged.*

Children's direct input for this policy highlights how children can provide feedback by:

- *Talking to educators and/or my mum and dad or carer*
- *Taking a break and drinking water*
- *Using our rooms feelings board*
- *Talking to my friends*

6. CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

STANDARD 1: ORGANISATIONS ESTABLISH A CULTURALLY ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE DIVERSE AND UNIQUE IDENTITIES AND EXPERIENCES OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE RESPECTED AND VALUED.

- Y Victoria has a zero-tolerance approach to racism and discrimination. Y Victoria recognises the absence of racism does not indicate cultural safety.
- The organisation creates an inclusive and welcoming physical and online environment for Aboriginal children and their families by acknowledging and respecting Aboriginal people, communities, cultures, and values.
- All children receive information from the organisation about cultural rights and the organisation takes active steps to encourage Aboriginal children to express their culture. When children express their culture, staff and volunteers in the organisation give them support.
- Aboriginal children, young people and families are consulted about services and programs Y Victoria offers.
- The organisation takes steps to empower Aboriginal children and young people and provides them with opportunities to participate in a way that is culturally safe.
- The organisation takes steps to empower Aboriginal families and provides them with opportunities to participate in a way that is culturally safe.
- The organisation provides members of the organisation's community with information on cultural rights and the importance of culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.
- The organisation provides members of the organisation's community with information on the connection between cultural safety and the prevention of child abuse and harm for Aboriginal children.
- Strategies to keep Aboriginal children and young people safe are developed, implemented, and embedded.

STANDARD 2: CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING IS EMBEDDED IN ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE.

- Child safety is championed in our all levels of management and included in on boarding processes, training and agenda items.
- Senior leaders model our commitment to child safety and regularly review our child safety policy every three years or as required based on legislative changes.
- We have a dedicated child safety team who provide expert advice on all child safety matters and report on child safety to our executive and board members.
- Good governance prioritises child safety and promotes our commitment of child safety in our policy to the organisation by setting clear expectations on child safety behaviours and values.
- Our culture of child safety is embedded in our code of conduct, setting clear expectations of what behaviours will and will not be tolerated.
- All Y people are informed of information sharing and record keeping practices at the Y, to strengthen their confidence when working with children and young people.

STANDARD 3: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EMPOWERED ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS, PARTICIPATE IN DECISIONS AFFECTING THEM AND ARE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

- We create easy to read and age appropriate documents to educate and engage with children about their rights, safe environments and how to raise concerns and access support services
- All children are provided with the opportunity and encouraged to make friends and participate in a number of activities in their enrolled program or service line.
- We ensure our policies and procedures are created with the intention to empower and support children with decision making.
- Our staff are trained on the importance of creating environments where children can learn, engage in peer activities and also responding to any child's needs regarding their safety and wellbeing.

STANDARD 4: FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ARE INFORMED AND INVOLVED IN PROMOTING CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING.

- We provide regular, accessible information about the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policies via newsletters, emails and online.
- We approach families with opportunities to become involved in policy development regarding child safety and wellbeing.
- Families from linguistic and cultural backgrounds are provided with resources to build cultural safety when accessing our programs.

STANDARD 5: EQUITY IS UPHELD AND DIVERSE NEEDS RESPECTED IN POLICY AND PRACTICE.

- We are committed to ensuring children from all backgrounds are respected and can freely express their identity.
- We promote inclusion of all nationalities, religions, abilities and gender identity, in all our programs, policies and procedures.
- We provide regular, accessible information about the organisations child safety and wellbeing policies in a number of languages.

- We ensure children, young people, their families and communities receive information on where they can provide feedback in a culturally safe and easy to understand manner.
- Our staff and volunteers are trained to recognise and respond to allegations of abuse and neglect that are culturally safe for children and young people.

STANDARD 6: PEOPLE WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SUITABLE AND SUPPORTED TO REFLECT CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING VALUES IN PRACTICE

- We commit to recruiting the right people through using best practice standards in recruitment, screening and employment.
- Our recruitment protocols ensure that all staff and volunteers must have a current Employee Working with Children Check and clear Criminal Check prior to being offered a position at the Y, and respond to mandatory child safety questions as part of the interview process. Two references are required for all staff, volunteers, students on practicum placement and work experience successful in their interview process.
- All staff and volunteers must undergo child protection training prior to commencing at the Y.
- We integrate child safety responsibilities in supervision, annual appraisals and performance management processes for all our staff and volunteers.
- Our child safety procedures clearly outline the steps involved to report and escalate child safety concerns.
- We foster a culture of continuous improvement and ongoing professional development.

STANDARD 7: PROCESSES FOR COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS ARE CHILD-FOCUSED.

- We ensure all children and young people have access to complaints processes in age appropriate and culturally safe resources.
- Our staff and volunteers are trained to take all complaints seriously, respond and escalate complaints to relevant authorities.
- Our policies and procedures outline clear processes for mandatory reporting obligations.
- We offer support to those who have raised disclosures and complaints and communicate as required throughout the resolution.

STANDARD 8: STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ARE EQUIPPED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND AWARENESS TO KEEP CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE THROUGH ONGOING EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

- Our staff and volunteers must complete child safety training upon commencement of employment with Y Victoria.
- We continue to strengthen our staff and volunteers child safety knowledge through annual child safety training to ensure they know how to identify indicators of abuse, support a person making a disclosure about harm to a child, respond to issues of child safety including internal and external reporting requirements, notifying families and carers and managing risks to children and how to support cultural safety.

STANDARD 9: PHYSICAL AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS PROMOTE SAFETY AND WELLBEING WHILE MINIMISING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE HARMED.

- We commit to physical and online safety of children and young people in our work, policies and procedures and environments.

- Our dedicated Risk, Safety, Environment and Quality Team exists to support service operations, including ensuring child safe risk mitigation strategies are employed, monitored and reviewed.
- We provide training for our staff and volunteers on maintaining physical and online safety for children and young people.
- All risks of harm and abuse of children, and actions identified to mitigate and eliminate the risk of abuse of children are recorded centrally on the Y 's incident management system.
- Children, young people, families and communities are engaged to provide feedback on how we can continue to improve and maintain safe physical and online environments.

STANDARD 10: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS IS REGULARLY REVIEWED AND IMPROVED.

- We have established an operational requirement that all policies and procedures are reviewed every three years, and updated as required within this time.
- Child safe incidents and complaints are reviewed by our dedicated child safety team for specialist review and external reporting where thresholds have been met.
- Incident management procedures outline the process for how we respond, classify, communicate, investigate and learn from incidents.

STANDARD 11: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES DOCUMENT HOW THE ORGANISATION IS SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

- Our child safety Policy and Procedure sets mandatory organisational expectations around child safety protocols
- Our child safety policy is available in child friendly and teen friendly versions to support their accessibility to children and young people.
- We conduct regular risk assessments and audits to identify risks to children and young people and action mitigating strategies to reduce and/or eliminate the risk.
- Children, young people, their families and the community are actively invited to provide feedback on child safe polices and processes.

7. STATE SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

Our Responding to Child Safety Concerns and Complaints Procedure details our process of reporting and investigating child abuse matters. The below overview details our obligations of reporting child abuse concerns under each state legislation Y Victoria operates in.

VICTORIA: REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME

Y Victoria has responsibility to report child abuse matters to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

Our child safety specialists will assess all child safe incidents, provide advice for staff and volunteers, and liaise directly with the Commission for all reportable conduct matters.

All reportable conduct matters will be reported to the Commission within 3 business days.

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We will provide a mandatory 30 day update should the investigation not be finalised by this time

We will conduct thorough investigations and provide findings to the Commission as promptly as possible.

The 11 Child Safe Standards are legislated requirements for all organisations in Victoria who work and volunteer with children and young people.

NEW SOUTH WALES: OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN

Y Victoria has responsibility to report child abuse matters to the Office of the Children's Guardian.

Our child safety specialists will assess all child safe incidents, provide advice for staff and volunteers, and liaise directly with the Office of the Children's Guardian for all reportable conduct matters.

All reportable conduct matters will be reported to the Office of the Children's Guardian within 7 business days.

The 10 national principles are legislated are legislated requirements for all organisations in New Sales Wales who work and volunteer with children and young people.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY: OMBUDSMAN

Y Victoria has responsibility to report child abuse matters to the ACT Ombudsman.

Our child safety specialists will assess all child safe incidents, provide advice for staff and volunteers, and liaise directly with the Ombudsman for all reportable conduct matters.

All reportable conduct matters will be reported to the Ombudsman within 30 days.

8. NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THIS POLICY AND THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Y Victoria will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies (see list below). Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement or other corrective action. More information can be found in our disciplinary policy.

9. DEFINITIONS

Please refer to the accompanying Child Safety Procedure, and Responding to Child Safety Concerns and Complaints Procedure for further related definitions.

Child	Anyone under the age of 18

Code of Conduct	A Code of Conduct outlines the standards of behavior expected of people belonging to a certain organization or group.
National Principles	10 nationally consistent principles promoting a culture of child safety and wellbeing within organisations. The principles give effect to the child safe standards that were recommended by the Royal Commission.
New South Wales Child Safe Standards	The NSW Child Safe Standards are the 10 national principles regulated by the Office of the Children's guardian.
Victorian Child Safe Standards	The 11 Child Safe Standards are set of legal requirements all organisations in Victoria that work or volunteer with children and young people must comply with.
Commission for Children and People	An independent non-government organisation that oversees the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct scheme in Victoria.
Reportable Conduct	Conduct by staff/ volunteers which is within scope for reporting to the Commission for Children and Young People, under the Child Wellbeing and Safety act, 2005 (Vic). Types of conduct which would be considered Reportable Conduct include: • sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child • sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child • physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child • any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child • significant neglect of a child.

10. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Department / Role	Responsibility
Y Victoria Board	Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation
Executive and Senior Leaders	• Ensure management understand their obligations in accordance with the Child Safety policy and procedure. • Plan organisational resources and requirements for policy and procedure implementation • Ensure annual organisational reporting is completed
Senior Managers, Area Managers, Business Partners and Specialists	• Implementation of the Child Safety policy and procedures within Sectors. • Ensure Y Staff and Volunteers have access to and understand this policy and related procedures.

	• Ensure all managers/supervisors have access to support and advice to understand and implement these procedures, including incident management and reporting.
Site/Program Managers	• Responsible for ensuring all Staff, Volunteers, and contractors/consultants have access to, understand and comply with this policy and other relevant policies and procedures. • Ensure induction, recruitment, competency-based training, supervision and reporting requirements are undertaken in accordance with these procedures and relevant legislation. • Build and promote a local culture that reflects the Y's commitment to Child Safety, where all Y Staff, Volunteers and contractors are encouraged and empowered to show extended guardianship to protect children and young people.
Staff and Volunteers/Students on placement or work experience	• Take all reasonable steps to protect and safeguard children and young people from any form of child abuse. • Undertake annual Child Safety Policy and Procedure review, and sign the Child Safety Commitment Statement. • Participate in approved training and education programs. • Review, understand and adhere to the Child Safety Policy and Procedure. • Obtain and maintain a valid WWCC, as required in the Working with Children Check procedure. • Comply with all organisational and local procedures relating to Child Safety.
Contractors/ consultants /other involved persons	• Demonstrate satisfactory completion of appropriate child protection training and education programs • Work within the provisions of these procedures • Participate in required Incident Management Procedure **Note:** This procedure applies to contractors/consultants who will have or are likely to have direct contact with children and young people, or that are unsupervised and in the presence of children or young people, pending a risk assessment.
Parents/Guardians	• Reading and complying with the Child Safety Policy • Being involved in promoting the child safe policy by actively participating in decisions that affect their child. • Reporting concerns of child abuse to relevant authority including Police, Child Protection and Y management.

11. QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES

- This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required based on legislative changes.
- The ongoing monitoring and compliance to this procedure will be overseen by the Chief Risk Manager and Child Safety team.

- The evaluation of the procedure will be facilitated by the policy owner, using stakeholder feedback to drive continuous improvement and reflect service users' comments where practical.
- Assurance initiatives will involve stakeholders independent of Y Victoria to conduct gap analysis, identification of compliance indicators and continuous improvement.

12. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Y Victoria Child Safety Procedure
- Y Victoria Child Friendly Policy
- Y Victoria Responding to Child Safety Concerns and Complaints Procedure
- Code of Conduct
- Y Victoria E – Commitment
- Customer Feedback Policy
- Stay Safe Tell Someone posters
- Child Safety Commitment and Sign-off form (Staff and Volunteers)
- Child Safety Commitment and Sign-off form (Contractors)

13. LEGISLATIVE AND INDUSTRY REQUIREMENTS

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 including Child Safe Standards
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (including reporting to Child Protection)
- Crimes Act 1958, section 327
- Crimes Act 1958, section 49C
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2015,
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Wrongs Act 1958, Part XIII
- Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations
- Children's Services Act and Regulations

Meeting Approved:	Risk Sub Committee
Meeting Approval Date:	26 November 2025
Policy Review Date:	November 2028
Policy Owner:	Dan Coathup: Chief Risk Officer
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14. AMENDMENTS

Version	Date	Author	Change Description
V1.0	26/11/2025	Rosina Mastrantuono	Creation of Y Victoria Child Safety Policy.