

Child Safety Policy

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

All children have a right to feel and be safe. AFL SportsReady is committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people receiving education, employment and support services from AFL SportsReady and their welfare will always be our first priority.

We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where all children are valued and feel safe and supported as they undertake a program with AFL SportsReady and ensure that participants who are placed with Host Employers also receive such an environment.

All children and young people, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from harm and abuse.

AFL SportsReady has a zero-tolerance approach towards harm to children, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our Child Safe policies and procedures.

We recognise our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety and will do so in every event.

We are committed to preventing child harm, identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks. To this end, we have robust recruitment processes for our team members, and we provide regular training and education on child harm and risk of harm.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We will encourage Indigenous children, and children from culturally diverse and linguistically backgrounds to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights. We will encourage the families of these children to be involved with AFL SportsReady.

AFL SportsReady has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our team members to achieve our commitment.

Policy Purpose

AFL SportsReady is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for all children and young people participating in our employment, education and support programs.

This policy establishes AFL SportsReady's commitment to child safety and wellbeing, and outlines the responsibilities of team members in maintaining a child-safe organisation.

AFL SportsReady has zero tolerance for child abuse, neglect, exploitation, grooming, bullying, harassment or any behaviour that places a child or young person at risk of harm.

Scope

This policy applies to all AFL SportsReady workers, including Board members, employees, trainees, apprentices, students, consultants, contractors, volunteers, service providers, and work experience students across all locations.

For the purpose of this policy, all of the above are referred to as **team members**.

Definitions

Term	Definition
AFL SportsReady	Includes AFL SportsReady Ltd, SportsReady Education Ltd and The Ready Foundation Ltd.
Child or (plural) Children	A child or young person under the age of 18 years.
Child Abuse	Includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, neglect, exploitation, and any behaviour that results in harm or risk of harm to a child.
Child Safety	The actions taken to protect children and young people from harm and promote their wellbeing. Child safety also includes the processes, supports and protections put in place for children and young people who report or disclose risk, harm, neglect or abuse.
Child Safety Officer	The person appointed by AFL SportsReady to oversee child safety compliance, reporting, and organisational responses to child safety concerns.
Reasonable Belief	A belief formed on reasonable grounds that a child has experienced, or is at risk of experiencing, harm or abuse. See Child Safety Reporting Guide for detailed definition.

Guiding Principles

Child Safety is Everyone's Responsibility

All team members share responsibility for promoting and protection the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Team members are required to behave in a manner consistent with the Child Safety Code of Conduct and report behaviour that does not meet that standard.

Children Have a Voice

Children and young people are encouraged to express their views, raise concerns and participate in decisions that affect them. AFL SportsReady is committed to ensuring children and young people understand their rights, know how to raise concerns and have access to trusted people who will listen and respond appropriately.

AFL SportsReady also recognises the important role families, carers and communities play in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

Cultural Safety Matters

AFL SportsReady is committed to creating a culturally safe environment where diversity is respected and valued.

Prevention is Better than Response

AFL SportsReady actively identifies, assesses and mitigates risks to children through effective governance, recruitment, screening, training, supervision and continuous improvement.

Policy Statements

AFL SportsReady believes every child and young person has the right to:

- Feel safe and protected from harm.
- Be respected and heard.
- Be treated fairly and with dignity.
- Participate in decisions that affect them.
- Access opportunities in environments that promote their wellbeing and development.

AFL SportsReady is committed to meeting the 10 [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) as well as the applicable state and territory Child Safe Standards, including the state of Victoria which has 11 Standards.

The Standards outline the minimum requirements and expected outcomes organisations must achieve to keep children and young people safe.

The Standards, including Victoria's 11th Standards, are:

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are respected and valued (Victorian only standard).
2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
4. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
8. Team members are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
10. Implementation of the Child Safety Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

AFL SportsReady is committed to complying with the Standards and achieving the outcome and minimum requirements for each Standard.

AFL SportsReady expects all contractors, host employers, service providers and other third parties who engage with children and young people through AFL SportsReady programs to uphold standards consistent with this Policy and applicable Child Safety Laws.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Board

The Board of Directors for each entity within the AFL SportsReady group of companies is responsible for:

- Providing governance oversight of child safety and wellbeing.
- Monitoring organisational compliance with child safety obligations.
- Ensuring appropriate resources are allocated to child safety initiatives.
- Review of deidentified Child Safe risk and incidents reports including trends analysis

Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- Establishing the Child Safety Policy, Processes and Reporting Framework and Code of Conduct
- Ensuring organisational compliance with this policy.
- Promoting a child-safe culture.
- Identifying and understanding child safe risks and ensuring risks are proactively identified, assessed and mitigated across all operational and support service areas
- Managing significant child safety incidents and escalations.

Child Safety Officer

AFL SportsReady has appointed the People & Culture Manager as the Child Safety Officer.

The Child Safety Officer is responsible for:

- Acting as the authority on child safety matters across AFL SportsReady.
- Being the first point of contact for child safety concerns, reports and disclosures.
- Receiving and managing child safety reports.
- Supporting mandatory reporting obligations.
- Coordinating organisational responses to child safety concerns.
- Monitoring compliance with child safety requirements.
- Maintaining child safety governance frameworks.
- Engaging and managing third parties and legal counsel where necessary.

Managers

Managers are responsible for:

- Promoting compliance with this policy.
- Proactively identifying and managing child safety risks

- Addressing child safety risks within their areas of responsibility.
- Escalating concerns promptly.
- Ensuring relevant staff complete required training.

Team Members

All team members must:

- Comply with this policy and related procedures.
- Maintain professional boundaries with children and young people.
- Report concerns immediately.
- Participate in required training.
- Support a child-safe culture.
- Proactively report any past or existing relationships to minors engaged in services or programs provided by AFL SportsReady.

5. Standards of Behaviour

All team members are expected to:

- Treat children and young people with respect, dignity and fairness.
- Promote safe, inclusive and supportive environments.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Act in the best interests of children and young people.
- Encourage participation and respect diverse perspectives.
- Report concerns about child safety and wellbeing.

Team members must not:

- Engage in inappropriate physical contact.
- Use abusive, discriminatory, intimidating or offensive language.
- Ignore or fail to report suspected abuse.
- Supply alcohol, illicit substances or prohibited items to children.
- Expose children to inappropriate discussions, behaviour or material.
- Engage in conduct that places a child at risk of harm.

The full behavioural expectations of team members are outlined in the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

6. Recruitment, Screening and Suitability

AFL SportsReady is committed to ensuring suitable people work with children and young people.

Recruitment and screening processes may include:

- Working with Children Checks

- National Police Checks
- Reference checks
- Qualification verification
- Child-safe recruitment practices
- Behavioural interview questions assessing suitability to work with children

Team members must maintain all required clearances throughout their employment or engagement.

7. Child Safety in Placements and Service Delivery

AFL SportsReady recognises that many children and young people participate in its programs while undertaking placements, training or work-related activities with host employers and external organisations.

AFL SportsReady is committed to taking reasonable steps to assess, monitor and manage child safety risks associated with those environments, including through contractual obligations, placement monitoring, reporting processes and responding appropriately to child safety concerns raised by participants, families, team members or host employers.

Where concerns arise regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person in a placement environment, AFL SportsReady may take any action reasonably necessary to safeguard the participant, including suspension or termination of the placement.

8. Child Safety in Teaching, Learning and Assessments

AFL SportsReady is committed to ensuring teaching, learning and assessment activities are safe, age-appropriate and suitable for children and young people.

Learning resources, assessment materials, online learning tools and digital communication methods used with students under 18 years of age will be selected and reviewed to ensure they:

- Are age-appropriate.
- Support child safety and wellbeing.
- Comply with relevant legislation.
- Promote respectful behaviour and safe participation.
- Support safe use of social media, online learning platforms and digital technologies.
- Do not expose children and young people to inappropriate, offensive or harmful content.

9. Training and Awareness

AFL SportsReady will provide appropriate child safety training and education to ensure team members understand:

- Their child safety obligations.
- Indicators of abuse, neglect and harm.
- Reporting responsibilities.
- Appropriate boundaries and behaviours.
- Cultural safety requirements.

Training may be provided on induction and through ongoing refresher programs.

10. Child Safety Reporting

Anyone can report a child safety concern if they become aware of a risk to a child's safety and wellbeing or if the behaviour of a team member raises a child safety concern. All concerns relating to child safety must be taken seriously and early reporting is encouraged.

AFL SportsReady will support children and young people to understand their rights, how to raise concerns and how to access support when needed.

Team members must immediately report:

- Suspected abuse or neglect.
- Actual abuse or neglect.
- A disclosure made by a child.
- Concerns regarding a child's wellbeing.
- Behaviour that places a child at risk of harm.
- Potential breaches of this policy.

Where a child is at immediate risk, emergency services must be contacted on 000.

Reports may be made where a team member, parent or guardian, carer or member of the public forms a reasonable belief that a child has experienced, is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing harm.

A reasonable belief may arise from:

- A direct disclosure made by a child.
- Information provided by another person.
- Observations of a child's behaviour, presentation or circumstances; or
- Observations of conduct which may place a child at risk of harm.

It is not necessary for a person to have proof that abuse or harm has occurred before reporting a concern.

Reports must be escalated to the Child Safety Officer and any relevant external authority in accordance with legislative requirements and AFL SportsReady procedures.

No team member will be disadvantaged, victimised or subjected to detrimental treatment for raising a child safety concern or making a report in good faith.

Refer to the Child Safety Reporting Guide for further information and guidance.

10.1 Participant Reporting Pathways (Reporting as a Student, Trainee, Apprentice, Cadet or Program Participant)

Children and young people participating in an AFL SportsReady program including students, trainees, apprentices and cadets are encouraged to raise child safety concerns through any of the following channels:

- Child Safety Officer
- Educator
- Employment Coach
- First Nations Mentor
- Student Administration Team
- Manager or Team Leader
- Feedback, Compliments and Complaints process

Parents, carers and guardians of participants can also report concerns about a child's safety and team members behaviour via any of the pathways listed in above.

AFL SportsReady will respond to all child safety concerns promptly and appropriately.

11. Responding to Disclosures

Where a child or young person discloses abuse, harm or a safety concern, team members must:

- Listen calmly and respectfully.
- Take the disclosure seriously.
- Avoid asking leading or investigative questions.
- Reassure the child or young person that they have done the right thing by speaking up,
- Not promise confidentiality.
- Report the concern in accordance with AFL SportsReady's Child Safety Reporting Guide.

12. Responding to Child Safety Concerns

When a child safety concern is raised, AFL SportsReady will:

- Act promptly.
- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- Meet mandatory reporting obligations.
- Notify external authorities where required.

- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
- Support affected individuals.
- Ensure procedural fairness during any investigation.

13. Investigations

Where allegations involve actual or suspected misconduct, abuse or breaches of this policy, AFL SportsReady may conduct an investigation.

Investigations will:

- Be conducted fairly and impartially.
- Follow principles of procedural fairness.
- Be undertaken by an appropriately qualified investigator.
- Consider all available evidence.
- Make findings on the balance of probabilities.

Where criminal conduct is suspected, AFL SportsReady will cooperate fully with police and relevant authorities.

Support

AFL SportsReady recognises that child safety matters can be distressing for all involved.

Appropriate support may be provided to:

- The child or young person.
- Parents, guardians or carers.
- Team members involved in the matter.
- Individuals participating in investigations.

Support may include referral to specialist support services or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services where appropriate.

Students, trainees, apprentices and cadets may also access support through:

- Student Support Services
- Educators
- Employment Coaches
- First Nations Mentors
- Appropriate external support and wellbeing services.

AFL SportsReady will make reasonable efforts to ensure children and young people understand how to access support when required.

Privacy and Confidentiality

AFL SportsReady will maintain secure and confidential records of child safety concerns, reports, investigations and outcomes in accordance with legal requirements, privacy obligations and organisational procedures.

Information will only be disclosed where necessary to:

- Protect a child or young person.
- Meet legislative obligations.
- Support an investigation.
- Respond to legal requirements.

Risk Management

AFL SportsReady will identify, assess and manage risks to children and young people associated with its operations, programs, placements, activities and service delivery.

AFL SportsReady maintains a Child Safety Risk Register to identify, assess, monitor and manage risks to children and young people participating in education, training, employment and support services. The Risk Register includes risks associated with teaching, learning, assessment, online engagement, placements and other activities involving children and young people.

Child safety risks will be considered within AFL SportsReady's broader risk management framework and reviewed periodically to support continuous improvement and compliance with Child Safe Standards, National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and applicable legislative and regulatory requirements

Breaches of Policy

Failure to comply with this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, or associated procedures may result in corrective or disciplinary action, including:

- Informal counselling.
- Formal warnings.
- Removal from duties involving children.
- Termination of employment or engagement.
- Referral to external authorities.

Failure to comply with mandatory reporting obligations may also result in criminal penalties under relevant legislation.

Related Policies and Documents

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Reporting Guide
- Child Safety Incident, Concern and Disclosure Form
- Employee Code of Conduct

Policy Review Details

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, following a significant child safety incident, legislative change, identified risk, or where otherwise required to ensure its continued effectiveness.

Version	Effective	Review Approved By	Next Review
1.0	April 2026	AFL SportsReady Audit, Risk and Governance Committee	April 2027
2.0	October 2026	AFL SportsReady Chief Executive Officer	October 2027