



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Tombolo Academy has developed this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy as an overarching document that provides key elements of our commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe culture and environment. It forms the foundation of the School's procedures, practices, decision-making processes and ultimately the School's culture with respect to child safety and wellbeing.

The School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy has been endorsed by the School Board.

If you are a non-English speaker who needs help to understand this Policy, please contact admin@tombolo.vic.edu.au

1. Objectives

This Policy provides the framework for Tombolo Academy's:

- commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child friendly organisation where children and young people are and feel safe
- implementation of work systems, practices, policies and procedures for a child-safe environment and that promote child safety and wellbeing
- creation of a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families
- the maintenance of a positive and robust child safety and wellbeing culture which is championed and modelled at all levels
- the promotion and open discussion of child safety and wellbeing issues within the School
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child safety and wellbeing in Victoria, including our approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359, which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

2. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Tombolo Academy is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This is the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

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

Our child safe and wellbeing policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and vulnerable students with particular attention paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, queer or querying, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+), children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and international students. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at Tombolo Academy and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Tombolo Academy has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. We regard our child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance. We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Every person involved in Tombolo Academy has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

3. Child Safety and Wellbeing Values and Principles

The School's commitment to child safety and wellbeing is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to promote and maintain child safety and wellbeing and protect children from abuse.

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all school staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers who are engaged in child-connected work*.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child safety training is mandatory for all Board of Directors members, school staff and volunteers engaged in child-connected work*.

10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community.
11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and other children who are vulnerable (such as children in out-of-home care or children of diverse sexuality) have the right to special care and support.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

4. Definitions

Whenever we refer to:

- *'school staff', 'staff or 'staff member''* - this means any individual working in a school environment who is directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority (school proprietor, governing body or principal); a contracted service provider engaged by a school governing authority; or a minister of religion, religious leader or employee or officer of a religious body associated with the school
- *'Volunteer'* - this means a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school in the school environment
- *'child connected work'* - this means work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present
- *'school environment'* - this means all physical, online or virtual places made available or authorised by the school for use by a student during or outside hours, including (but not limited to) a campus of the school, online or virtual school environments and any other locations provided by the school or through a third party provider for a student to use, such as locations used for camps, delivery of education and training, sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

5. Child Safety Program

Tombolo Academy is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Safety Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated.

Tombolo Academy adopts a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety and wellbeing risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our School's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body. We develop and implement risk management strategies that focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in our school environment. We record identified risks relating to child abuse in our Child Safety Risk Register, including risk controls and treatments to reduce or remove risks. We monitor and review the risks related to child safety and wellbeing and the effectiveness of the implementation of the risk controls annually.

Our Child Safety Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators
- clear procedures for responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures and allegations of child abuse
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, parents/carers and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters, including child abuse
- procedures for recruiting and screening Board of Directors members, staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers
- procedures for reporting reportable conduct and/or misconduct
- wellbeing strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe
- policies with respect to cultural safety, diversity and equity and students with disabilities
- a child safety training program
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards as implemented by Ministerial Order 1359 under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*)
- a system for oversight, monitoring, continuous review and improvement.

As a part of Tombolo Academy's induction process, all staff and Volunteers engaged in child-connected work are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Safety Program.

Ongoing child safety training is provided at least annually.

Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers are supported and supervised by the School's Child Safety Officers to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child safety.

6. Responsibilities

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. At Tombolo Academy, the School Board and staff, as well as Volunteers engaged in child-connected work, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children.

We ensure that child safety and wellbeing is embedded in our School leadership, governance and culture. Specific responsibilities include:

6.1. School Board

The School Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Child Safety Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and the Leadership Team accountable for effective implementation.

6.2. The Principal and Leadership Team

The Principal and Leadership Team is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the School's Child Safety Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child safety culture is created and maintained.

The Principal and Leadership Team will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- champion and model a child safe at all levels across the School that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at Leadership Team, staff and other meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and Volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

6.3. The School's Child Safety Officers

The Principal and Assistant Principal are nominated as the School's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child safety issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child safety concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child safety within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

6.4. Staff

All staff members are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct and our Child Safety Program

and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safety Officers.

6.5. Volunteers

All Volunteers engaged in child-connected work are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safety Program, particularly this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct, and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safety Officers.

Volunteers not engaged in child-connected work are also responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment and required to be familiar with our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct. An example of a Volunteer not engaged in child-connected work is someone assisting with School administrative functions.

6.6. Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the school environment.

Third Party Contractors can include, for example, maintenance and building personnel, cleaners, consultants and music teachers and other extra-curricular teachers and instructors who are engaged by students and their families directly, rather than the School, but have an agreement with the School to use the School's facilities.

All Third Party Contractors engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the Third Party Contractor.

6.7. External Education Providers

An External Education Provider is any organisation that the School has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at the School.

The delivery of such a course may take place on School premises or elsewhere.

All External Education Providers engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the school environment.

All External Education Providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Tombolo Academy may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the External Education Provider.

7. Child Safety Code of Conduct

Tombolo Academy's Child Safety Program includes our Child Safety Code of Conduct, also available on our website. The Code sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students in our school environment. We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults at the School.

7.1. Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse Concerns

Our Child Safety Program provides detailed guidance for the School Board, staff and Volunteers engaged in child-connected work about how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse, how to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, and how to report child abuse concerns, including to one of our School's nominated Child Safety Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence, grooming offence (grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time and can include communicating or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer), the infliction of physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm on a child, or the serious neglect of a child (including exposure to family violence and its effects).

Reporting child abuse is a community wide responsibility. In addition to certain adults having mandatory reporting obligations based on their occupation (including school principals, registered teachers, school counsellors and nurses), people in authority at relevant organisations (including schools) who fail to protect children from a substantial risk of sexual abuse by an adult may commit a criminal offence. Adults who have a reasonable belief that an adult has sexually abused a child under 16 in Victoria (including the offence of grooming under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)) and fail to report this to the Police as soon as practicable may also be guilty of a criminal offence. Tombolo Academy also has reporting obligations to the Victorian Institute of Teaching and to the Commission for Children and Young People under the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Tombolo Academy takes all complaints and concerns of child abuse seriously. All allegations, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse will be reported to relevant authorities and we will cooperate with law enforcement regardless of whether there is a legal obligation to report.

Staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, students, parents/carers and other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact the School's Senior Child Safety Officer, the Principal by phoning (03) 9598 7552 or emailing principal@tombolo.vic.edu.au. If the Senior Child Safety Officer is unavailable or the subject of an allegation, please contact the Assistant Principal, admin@tombolo.vic.edu.au.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know basis'.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police or Emergency Services should be called on 000.

For more information, see Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures available on our website.

8. Complaints

We foster a culture that encourages staff, contractors, volunteers, students, parents and our School community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the Code of Conduct, misconduct or child abuse to occur and remain hidden.

For child abuse related concerns or complaints, see above. For any other complaints, please see our Complaints Policy and Procedure, which is available on our website.

Our Complaints Handling Policy is child focused, culturally safe and easy to understand and outlines:

- the process for making a complaint about Tombolo Academy or any person within the School (for example, staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors, families, children or students)
- the roles and responsibilities of leadership, school staff and Volunteers in relation to handling complaints
- the process for dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Child Safety Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report
- how we ensure complaints are responded to promptly and thoroughly
- how we ensure all record keeping, reporting, private and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints and concerns.

9. Establishing a Culturally Safe Environment

Tombolo Academy is committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, values and practices are respected and valued.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

For more information, see our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Procedures on our website.

9.1. Student Empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing, Tombolo Academy works to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

We have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation, is responsive to student input, provides opportunities for student participation and strengthens confidence and engagement through being responsive to their contributions.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the School to ensure a sense of belonging and to help students feel safe and be less isolated,

We inform students of their rights, including to safety, information and participation and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers.

School staff are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns on our website.

When the School 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 student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

We ensure students have access to age and disability appropriate sex abuse prevention programs and relevant related information.

10. Family Engagement

Families and carers of Tombolo Academy students are encouraged to participate in decisions related to child safety and wellbeing that affect their child. Families, carers and the School community also have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

We openly communicate with families, carers and the School community about our child safe approach and ensure the accessibility of relevant information.

To support family and carer engagement, Tombolo Academy is committed to providing families, carers and the School community with accessible information about the School's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families and carers to have input into the development and review of our child safety and wellbeing policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement. We do this by:

- through the parent portal, school website, newsletters, other communications, student, staff, and parent meetings etc.
- all of our child safety policies and procedures are available for students and parents on our website
- newsletters and the parent portal inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters are displayed across the school.

11. Diversity and Equity

Tombolo Academy celebrates the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promotes respectful environments that are free from discrimination. We ensure that equity is upheld and the diverse needs of our students are respected in policy and practice. 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 the School community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and providing and promoting a culturally safe environment for them

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

Our Inclusion Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity. These include ensuring that school staff, Volunteers, Third Party Contractors and the School community understand the diverse circumstances of our students and provide support and respond appropriately.

12. Suitable Staff and Volunteers

We apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training and supervision practices as appropriate to ensure that all school staff and Volunteers engaged in child-connected work are suitable to work with children.

When recruiting staff to perform child connected work we ensure that:

- all job advertisements have a clear statement that sets out the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing and essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing
- all applicants for jobs are informed about our child safety practices, including the Code of Conduct
- we sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance where required under the *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic) or equivalent background check such as registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching and, where the person will be engaged in child-related work at or for Tombolo Academy that usually involves direct contact with a child), we collect and record:
 1. proof of the person's identity
 2. information about any essential or relevant professional or other qualifications
 3. the person's history of working with children
 4. references that address suitability for the job and for working with children.

When we engage Volunteers to perform child-connected work, we make them aware of this Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct and:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance where required under the *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic) or equivalent background check

- consider the child safety risks relevant to the Volunteer's role and, if reasonable and appropriate, collect and record the same information as we do for staff undertaking child-related work as set out above.

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

In addition to induction, staff engaged in child-connected work will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment. Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and include guidance on:

- the School's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm, including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and record keeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities, including for Volunteers engaged in child-connected work. This includes training on any identified or emerging needs or issues to equip them with the knowledge, skills and awareness required to keep students safe.

13. Privacy and Information Sharing

Tombolo Academy collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. Our Privacy Policy sets out how our School collects, uses and discloses information, and is available on our website.

14. Records Management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with our Records Management Policy.

15. Review

Tombolo Academy is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety Program. We have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety related laws, regulations and standards.

Tombolo Academy reviews the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years or after any significant child safety incident. We seek feedback from families and our School community in the development and review of our child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures. We record and analyse all complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to identify causes and systemic failures and inform continuous improvement. We report on the outcomes of relevant reviews to staff, Volunteers, the school community, and families and students.

16. Approval

Created date	March 2023
Policy Owner	The Principal
Consultation	School Staff School Board
Legislation	Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) Victorian Child Safe Standards as implemented by Ministerial Order 1359 Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)
Endorsed by	School Board.
Endorsed on	June 2023
Last review	June 2023
Next review	June 2025