
CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING REPORTING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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Responsible Officer: Jacinda Armstrong, CEO

Introduction

Playgroup Tasmania believes that all children have the right to live safely – emotionally, mentally and physically. Playgroup Tasmania is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of all children at all times and in all circumstances and interactions with Playgroup Tasmania. Everyone has a role to play in keeping children safe from harm and creating child safe and child friendly communities. Playgroup Tasmania endorses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and is committed to complying with the [Tasmanian Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023](#).

Playgroup Tasmania takes its duty of care seriously and aims at all times to

- provide the safest possible playgroup activities and environment for children
- identify and respond to any risks that may lead to harm as they arise
- strive for best practice in relation to our work with children and families
- support and provide sensitive assistance to children attending Playgroup Tasmania activities who disclose child abuse or are otherwise linked to child abuse
- support and educate the Playgroup Tasmania community with regard to child wellbeing and safety

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to inform the Playgroup Tasmania community (employees, volunteers, contractors, partner organisations and program participants of Playgroup Tasmania)

- of our responsibilities to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who use our activities and programs
- with guidance on working to provide child safe, child friendly and child protective services and environments
- of how to respond to concerns and allegations of child abuse
- of our procedures for recruitment, support, supervision and training to support child safety and wellbeing within the organisation.

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Who does this Policy apply to?

This policy applies to the following members of the Playgroup Tasmania community.

Staff and Volunteers (including leadership and trainees)	Board Members	Playgroup Leaders	Contractors/ Consultants and Registered Visitors (including employees of contractors)	Playgroup Parents and Caregivers	Playgroup Children
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

This policy applies to all activities run by Playgroup Tasmania Inc. This includes all activities in the organisation which involve, result in or relate to contact with children.

This policy considers the diversity of all children, including but not limited to, the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disability and children who are vulnerable ensuring sensitivity to our whole community.

The policy aims to create an open and aware environment where concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child can be raised and managed in a fair and just manner, that protects the rights of all. The policy provides guidance on how to work respectfully with children and how to respond to concerns and allegations of child abuse. Information is included about the recruitment and supervision of employees, volunteers and contractors.

This policy covers all forms of 'child abuse' as defined in the Tasmanian Children, Young People and Their Families Act 1997, ***abuse or neglect*** means–

- (a) sexual abuse; or
- (b) physical or emotional injury or other abuse, or neglect, to the extent that–
 - (i) the injured, abused or neglected person has suffered, or is likely to suffer, physical or psychological harm detrimental to the person's wellbeing; or
 - (ii) the injured, abused or neglected person's physical or psychological development is in jeopardy.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for monitoring organisational wide compliance with this procedure.

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All employees, volunteers and contractors must adhere to the following:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Reporting Policy and Procedures
- Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework (Tasmania)
- Mandatory Reporting requirements (including the Reportable Conduct Scheme)

Policy

Playgroup Tasmania believes that any form of child abuse and exploitation is unacceptable and has zero tolerance of child abuse. All children have a right to be safe at all times and we, as an organisation, have an obligation to provide child safe, child friendly and child protective services and environments.

Playgroup Tasmania recognises our duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe from harm and will take proactive steps to create child safe and friendly programs and environments. All decisions regarding the safety, welfare and protection of children are made on the basis of the best interests of the child. We want all children to gain the maximum benefit possible from the services we provide and to ensure that the positive impacts from any course of action outweigh any negative impacts.

Playgroup Tasmania will adhere to the Children, Young People and Their Families Act 1997 (updated 2022) and the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023, as legislated by the Tasmanian Government. While most child abuse occurs within families and communities, children can also be at risk of abuse in organisational settings. If it is considered that a child is at risk of harm or has been harmed – whether this has occurred within their family, in the broader community, during a Playgroup Tasmania activity or in any other organisational or social environment – the steps outlined in this policy will be followed. Everyone involved with Playgroup Tasmania has a duty to respond to concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing, whether or not the suspected harm occurred within our programs.

Playgroup Tasmania implements thorough screening practices of staff, volunteers and contractors. We acknowledge that child safety is a continuous process (see Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety and Wellbeing Staffing and Volunteer Procedures). Visitors to playgroups will be assessed on a case by case basis, including risk assessment and the implementation of strategies or actions to minimise any perceived or actual risk to children.

When concerns are raised about the conduct of staff, volunteers and contractors, Playgroup Tasmania will undertake an investigation following the Playgroup Tasmania Reportable Conduct Process Chart and comply with the requirements of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. This process ensures that allegations of reportable conduct are

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investigated appropriately, in a child centred manner, and under the oversight of the Office of the Independent Regulator (OIR). An internal investigation must be started as soon as possible and the OIR must be notified within three business days. Conduct which is reportable under the scheme includes both criminal and non-criminal behaviour and includes the following types:

- Grooming
- Physical violence
- Sexual offence or sexual misconduct
- Significant emotional or psychological harm
- Significant neglect
- Relevant offences such as failing to report child abuse and female genital mutilation

For more information see:

- Playgroup Tasmania Reportable Conduct Process Chart
- The website of Office of the Independent Regulator
<https://www.oir.tas.gov.au/about/reportable-conduct-scheme>

Adherence to this policy is a mandatory requirement for all employees, volunteers and contractors.

Mandatory reporting responsibilities

Who should report?

- All adults have a responsibility to look out for children and keep them safe and can contact Police or Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL)
- All Playgroup Tasmania staff members, volunteers and contractors are prescribed persons and have a legal duty to report concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child (including unborn) to Police or ARL

Reporting Procedure

Playgroup Tasmania values an open culture; one that supports bringing forward observations and concerns. This is especially so with matters that impact the safety and wellbeing of children.

All reports and concerns about child abuse will be taken seriously and be acted on immediately. It is compulsory for all Playgroup Tasmania community members to report concerns and allegations of child abuse and to complete the Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety and Wellbeing Incident Report form. These concerns may either relate to a child or an employee or volunteer involved in the organisation or a concern about a child within his/her family. Any concerns must be reported immediately to the relevant Playgroup Tasmania primary contact person who will report to Playgroup Tasmania CEO.

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If concerns are raised about the conduct of an employee or volunteer the matter will be reported to the Independent Regulator

<https://www.oir.tas.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme>

The Children Young People and their Families Act emphasises that everyone in the community has a responsibility for ensuring that children are safe and protected.

If a prescribed person believes or suspects with good reason that a child is being or is likely to be abused or neglected or is in real danger from the person whom they are living with, the person must contact the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line with this information as soon as practicable. This also applies to unborn children ([s14\(2\), CYPFA](#)). Contact details for services and reporting are available on the [Strong families Safe Kids website](#).

1. Who should report?

Any Playgroup Tasmania community member.

2. What should be reported?

- Disclosure or allegation made by a child and/or Playgroup Tasmania community member
- Observations of concerning behaviour exhibited by a child
- Observations of concerning behaviour exhibited by Playgroup Tasmania staff member, volunteer, community member or any other adult in contact with children
- Injuries or behaviours in children that may be indicators of non-accidental injuries or harm
- Inappropriate use of Playgroup Tasmania photographic and communications equipment that may be indicative of child exploitation
- Concerns about the past conduct of any Playgroup Tasmania staff member, volunteer or contractor

3. Who to report to?

External Reporting

- If there are immediate concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child always call 000
- All staff members, volunteers and contractors are required to make a mandatory report by contacting the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line on 1800 000 123. You can choose to remain anonymous

Playgroup Tasmania Reporting

In addition to the above, **all** concerns are to be reported within 24 hours to your Playgroup Tasmania primary contact person who will promptly notify the CEO.

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The CEO will determine actions to be implemented and the process for reporting incidents to the Board. A Child Safety and Wellbeing Incident Report Form will be completed as soon as practical.

Physical and sexual assault are criminal offences. Where it is believed that a physical or sexual assault offence may have been committed, the matter will be reported to Tasmania Police by the person reporting the allegation or Playgroup Tasmania.

4. Complaints Resolution Procedure

All Playgroup Tasmania community members are supported to come forward if they have any concern or suspicion about the behaviour of a co-worker, volunteer, primary carer or family member. These concerns are to be raised with a Playgroup Tasmania employee who will report to the CEO, or if the concern relates to the behaviour of the CEO, with the Chairperson of the Board, prior to taking any action.

These concerns will be investigated with sensitivity and discretion: the fear of being incorrect or embarrassed should not prevent concerns being raised.

The CEO or Chairperson of the Board, or their representative, will:

- Determine the seriousness of the allegation/concern
- Follow the Child Safety and Wellbeing Reporting Policy and Procedures
- Complete a Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety and Wellbeing Incident Reporting Form
- Notify the Independent Regulator within three business days if the concern relates to a paid worker, volunteer or contractor
- Meet with the respondent/alleged perpetrator to discuss the incident and any potential breaches of this policy or the Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct
- Immediately remove an employee/volunteer from the workplace and suspend with pay (if applicable) whilst an investigation takes place for instances where there is an indication that abuse may have occurred
- Take action if the issue is considered to be serious misconduct as per the employee disciplinary processes in the respective employment award
- Report the incident to Tasmania Police if it is of a criminal nature
- Debrief the volunteers and employees concerned to provide support and ensure duty of care and as part of evaluating Playgroup Tasmania processes
- Review the policies and procedures and update where required
- Playgroup Tasmania CEO will meet with the family involved to:
 - Provide information and support
 - Support the family to access appropriate counselling and ongoing support through community sector organisations

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- Provide debriefing and/or counselling as appropriate to any other families, employees or volunteers associated with the incident for which Playgroup Tasmania will meet the cost
- Additionally, if the matter relates to a worker, the CEO will provide an update to the Independent Regulator (within 30 days) and provide findings at the end of the investigation. For more information see Playgroup Tasmania Reportable Conduct Scheme Process Chart.

5. Breach of Policy

Individuals failing to follow the policy and found to be in breach, may be subject to an employee disciplinary process according to their employment award. Depending on the severity of the case, the consequences for breach of this policy may involve termination of employment/engagement. Any matters involving criminal conduct will be reported to the Police.

If a complaint is found to be of a frivolous or vexatious nature, disciplinary action may be taken against the complainant.

6. Record Keeping

Playgroup Tasmania follows the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse (see [Final Report - Recommendations](#), page 22) and requires that:

- Full and accurate records about all incidents, responses and decisions affecting child safety and wellbeing are created, maintained and kept
- All records relating to child sexual abuse that has occurred, or is alleged to have occurred, be retained for at least 45 years
- Individuals' rights to access, amend or annotate records about themselves is recognised

Relevant Legislation and Standards

[Tasmanian Government, Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023](#) <https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/asmade/act-2023-006>

Tasmanian Government Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (updated 1 July 2022) [View - Tasmanian Legislation Online](#)
https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/children/child_protection_services

[Tasmanian Government, Department of Justice: Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework](#) <https://www.justice.tas.gov.au/carcru/child-and-youth-safe-organisations-framework>

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Tasmanian Government, Office of the Tasmanian Independent Regulator: Safeguarding / Regulation / Education
<https://oir.tas.gov.au>

Registration to Work with Vulnerable People in Tasmania

Regulations <https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sr-2024-016>

Information and requirements <https://www.justice.tas.gov.au/rwvp>

Employer obligations <https://www.justice.tas.gov.au/rwvp/obligations/employer-obligations>

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (www.unicef.org/crc)
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations,
<https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles>

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Final Report
Recommendations
https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_recommendations.pdf

Responsibilities

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for

- Monitoring organisation wide compliance with this procedure.
- Ensuring all employees and volunteers receive bi-annual retraining in Child Safety and Wellbeing practices as well as Mandatory Reporting
- Conducting/overseeing annual staff performance review and development plans to ensure staff suitability for ongoing child centred work
- Ensuring staff are aware of and have access to all policies, procedures and Codes of Conduct relating to Child Safety and Wellbeing
- Conducting investigations and making reports to the Independent Regulator

The Board is responsible for

- Development of strategies to embed a culture of child safety and wellbeing across the organisation
- Monitoring the implementation by the Chief Executive Officer of strategies to ensure the Playgroup Tasmania community are informed about these practices
- Annual review of the effectiveness of the policies, strategies and/or that these strategies are reviewed following any instances of child abuse.

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All employees, contractors and volunteers must adhere to the following

- Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct
- Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety Reporting Policy and Procedures
- The Child and Youth Safe Standards and Universal Principles
- Mandatory Reporting requirements

Related Documents

Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework (Tasmania)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (CSW-PI-001)

Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct (CSW-PI-002)

Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety Reporting Policy and Procedures (CSW-PI-003)

Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety and Wellbeing Signed Declaration (CSW-Fm-001)

Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety and Wellbeing Incident Report Form (CSW-Fm-002)

Playgroup Tasmania Reportable Conduct Process Chart

Playgroup Tasmania Child Safety and Wellbeing Staffing and Volunteer Procedures