

Bendigo Kangan Institute

Child Safety Policy

1.0 Purpose

This policy ensures that Bendigo Kangan Institute (BKI) is a child-safe organisation. It is designed to protect all children and young people at BKI from abuse and neglect, whether current or historical, recognising the lasting impact these experiences can have.

By taking a preventive, proactive, and inclusive approach to child safety, and maintaining zero tolerance for any behaviour that puts children at risk, BKI upholds ethical practice and complies with child safety laws.

2.0 Scope

The policy covers all children and young people, students and visitors, including those attending open days, school tours, or visiting with a parent or carer.

The policy applies to all adults at BKI, including employees, volunteers, contractors, service providers, labour hire workers, students on placement in child-related work, secondees, directors, and business owners operating within or connected to BKI. It also applies to anyone bringing children onto campus.

3.0 Legislative Context

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (VIC)
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (VIC)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (VIC)
- *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012* (VIC)
- *Crimes Act 1958* (VIC)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (VIC)
- *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (VIC)
- *Health Records Act 2001* (VIC)
- *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (VIC)
- *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth)
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (VIC)
- *Worker Screening Act 2020* (VIC)

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4.0 Policy Statement

BKI is committed to making sure all children and young people feel safe, supported, and protected. We follow the *Child Safe Standards* (the Standards) from the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (VIC), which guide how we keep children safe in everything we do. These standards align with the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*.

We have dedicated Child Safety Officers who act as the central reporting authority and subject matter experts. Alongside this policy, we provide clear procedures to guide staff on what to do if there are concerns about a child's safety. These include:

- Child Safety Procedure – what to do if there is a concern or disclosure of abuse or neglect.
- Reportable Conduct Investigations Procedure – outlines how this is investigated.
- Working with Children Check Procedure – helps make sure people are safe.

Child safety considerations are part of many other BKI policies and processes, showing how important it is across the whole organisation.

4.1 Leadership Oversight and Monitoring

Child safety is everyone's responsibility at BKI, especially our leaders. When serious concerns arise, such as Reportable Conduct, they are escalated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to ensure safety is prioritised and appropriate reporting occurs, such as to the Social Services Registrar

The CEO, Board, and governance committees regularly review:

- Child safety trends and incident data
- Legislative updates and new initiatives
- Risks and insights from reviews

These updates help improve our planning and ensure child safety remains a priority.

4.2 Statement of Commitment

BKI is a child-safe organisation. We are committed to providing a safe environment and opportunities for children and young people to participate in education and empowering all children under 18. We do this by:

- Providing a culturally safe environment where First Nations children and young people's diverse and unique identities and experiences are respected and valued.

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- Organisational leadership, governance, and culture committed to child safety and wellbeing.
- Empowering children and young people about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- Paying particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, from CALD backgrounds, those who are LGBTI+, or First Nations.
- Include families and communities in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Ensuring people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Provide physical and online environments that promote safety and wellbeing.
- Facilitate ongoing training and continuous improvement practices to keep this child-focused and child safety at the forefront of minds.

4.3 Student Empowerment and Support

Students are supported to make decisions about their safety and wellbeing. Staff consider each student's maturity and circumstances when offering guidance.

Students learn about their rights, how to raise concerns, and where to get help through orientation and support programs. Services include wellbeing support, complaint processes, and student-led initiatives.

BKI is committed to creating a safe, inclusive environment for all students—especially those from diverse backgrounds or with additional needs. Support is available through dedicated teams and cultural programs.

4.4 Families and Communities: Partnership and Communication

We value strong partnerships with families and carers. BKI is committed to:

- Sharing clear, accessible information about child safety
- Involving families in decisions that affect their child
- Encouraging feedback to improve our policies and practices

Students and families can share feedback or raise concerns at any time. If there are safety worries or concerns about abuse, the Child Safety Team is available:

Approval Authority: Head of Student Support and Success

Doc Custodian: Manager, Safer Community

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- Regional campuses: childsafety@bendigotafe.edu.au
- Metropolitan campuses: childsafety@kangan.edu.au

Interactive posters indicating our commitment and information about accessing support, joining student voice, rights, giving feedback, and reporting concerns are available and for more information visit the child safety page Bendigo TAFE and Kangan Institute Websites.

4.5 Information Sharing for Safety and Wellbeing

To support a child's safety and wellbeing, BKI staff may share relevant information with other staff or services. This is allowed under privacy laws when it helps:

- Support learning and wellbeing
- Fulfil duty of care
- Make adjustments for health or disability needs
- Keep the workplace safe

If child abuse or neglect is suspected or disclosed, staff may share information to:

- Monitor and support the child
- Create safety plans
- Fulfil legal obligations
- Consult or report to the Child Safety team

Staff may also share information with Child Protection (DFFH) or Victoria Police when legally required or to prevent serious harm.

4.6 Mandatory Reporting: Criminal Law Reform and Legal Obligations

BKI follows all laws related to child safety, including recent changes introduced by the Victorian Government to better protect children. This includes serious criminal offences that may lead to jail time if someone is found guilty.

These laws are in place to make sure children, and young people are safe, and that any harmful behaviour is taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

- **Failure to Comply:** It is a criminal offence for a head of an organisation to fail to comply with the three-day and 30-day notification obligations without a reasonable excuse.
- **Failure to disclose offence:** All adults (18+) must report to Victoria Police if they reasonably believe someone has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16, unless they have a reasonable excuse (e.g., mandatory report already made to DFFH).

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- Failure to protect offence: Individuals in positions of authority must act to reduce or eliminate substantial risk of sexual abuse to a child under 16 by someone associated with the organisation.
- Grooming offence: Intentional communication (including online) and behaviours by an adult with a child, their parent/carer, or guardian, with the intent to sexually abuse the child.

Mandatory Reporting Requirements

Under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), mandatory reporters, as listed in section 182 (i.e., teachers, psychologists, counsellors, and wellbeing staff), must when, in the course of practising their profession or carrying out duties of their office, position or employment, they form a reasonable belief a child is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse make a mandatory report to the Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH), Child Protection, even if the principal, or equivalent, does not share their belief.

Mandatory reporters must report to DFFH Child Protection as soon as practicable after forming a reasonable belief and make a report each time they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.

4.7 Safe People

BKI ensures all staff and contractors are appropriately screened, trained, and supported to work safely with children and young people. This includes:

- Valid Working with Children and Police Checks
- Rigorous probity and screening processes
- Ongoing Child Safe training and induction
- Strong risk management practices
- Promotion of a child-friendly culture

4.8 Child Safety Code of Conduct

Below is a list of appropriate and unacceptable behaviours and is not exhaustive. Unacceptable behaviour toward or in the presence of children or young people may result in disciplinary action.

Appropriate behaviours when working with children and young people:

- Always Upholding the Institute's statement of commitment to child safety and child safety policy.

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- Treating students and families in the community with respect, equity and fairness both within the institute environment and outside the institute environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Promoting the safety, participation, and empowerment of students with a disability.
- Promoting the safety, participation, and empowerment of students of diverse sex and gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the institute's child safety officer.
- Understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- If child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.
- Always Observing professional boundaries with children, including when interacting with children from the Institute and outside of BKI.

Unacceptable behaviours when working with children and young people:

- Condone or participate in any behaviour with a child that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions, or disclosures of child abuse.
- Use hurtful, discriminatory, racist, or offensive behaviour or language with a child.
- Develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts or special treatment).

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- Exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context.
- Engage in any unnecessary physical contact with a child unless in the context of the learning environment.
- Ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate.
- Discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting.
- Treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, sex, gender identity, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, or ethnicity.
- Communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc.) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extracurricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter.
- Photograph or video a child in an institutional environment except per institute policy or where required for duty of care purposes.
- Use any computer, mobile phone, or other digital devices to exploit or harass a child or in any way access inappropriate material or content related to children.
- Work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs

4.9 Children on Campus

Children brought to campus must always be supervised by their parent or carer. Requests to bring children onsite should be made in advance to:

- The Lead Educator (for students), or
- The Line Manager (for staff)

Lead Educators must seek approval from the Education Director, and where possible, remote learning or working from home is preferred. People and Culture can provide advice, and some requests may be declined due to safety reasons.

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5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Chief Executive Officer	Oversee and ensure a culture of child safety, the Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme.
Executives and Chief Officers	Ensure a culture of child safety and the Standards are reflected in practice within the respective program areas roles and functions.
Head of areas / Directors	Ensure a culture of child safety and the Standards are reflected in practice within the respective program areas roles and functions.
Managers	Manage teams to ensure a culture of child safety and the Standards, manage OH&S responsibilities-students and staff- when dealing with a child safety incident in collaboration with Child Safety Team.
Head Governance Risk and Compliance	Oversee registration requirements and compliance. Oversee Reportable Conduct Scheme requirements, record management, policy reviews, and team functions.
Head of People and Culture	Oversee worker rights and responsibilities to the child safety code of conduct and processes to investigate misconduct.
Registrar	Oversee student records to ensure processes compliant for under 18 students.
Head of Student Support and Success	Oversee Safer Communities and Child Safety teams, records keeping and confidentiality requirements within the Client Management System (CMS). Report on child safety trends and initiatives to relevant committees.
Manager Safer Communities	Manage the Safer Communities and Child Safety teams. Custodian of policies and procedures related to team functions. Report progress of team functions and initiatives to Head of Student Support and Success.
Child Safety Officer	Promote a culture of child safety. Central point of contact as the SME for concerns regarding child abuse, neglect, child safety laws and policy compliance, including Reportable Conduct.
Safer Community Officers	Promote a culture of child safety. Central point of contact as the SME for concerns regarding student misconduct. Collaborate with the Child Safety team to promote student safety and wellbeing outcomes.
Head of Health Safety and Wellbeing	Oversee a culture of health, wellbeing and safety for staff and students and on campus incidents resulting in emergency response, incident or hazard reporting (ESS).
All Managers	Promote a culture of child safety and the Standards, ensure team aware of responsibilities. Support employees and students impacted, work in collaboration with the child safety team.
Workers and volunteers	Promote a culture of child safety and the Standards, comply with this policy and associated procedures, participate in child safety training, collaborate with Child Safety, Wellbeing and Safety teams to promote safety.

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6.0 Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Child	A child is anyone under the age of 18.
Child Abuse	<p>Types of abuse include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical abuse – being hurt or injured • Sexual abuse – including Grooming (in person or online) • Emotional abuse – being constantly criticised, ignored, or made to feel worthless • Neglect – not being given proper food, care, supervision, or medical help • <i>Family violence</i> – seeing or hearing violence at home • Online abuse - threats, stalking, or sharing private images • Harmful sexual behaviour by another child (aged 10 or older) • Historical abuse – abuse that happened in the past <p>Warning signs can include self-harm, talking about suicide, risky behaviour (like drug use or unsafe sex), pregnancy at a young age.</p> <p>Child abuse can be noticed in different ways, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing something happen • A child or someone else telling you about it • Noticing signs that something is wrong <p>These signs of abuse might include sudden behaviour changes or poor health and wellbeing.</p>

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Word/Term	Definition
Child in Need of Protection	<p>Child in Need of Protection refers to a child who requires intervention and support because their safety, wellbeing, or development is at risk, and their parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to protect them. This situation may arise if the child has been left alone without proper care, has lost their parents or their parents are unable to look after them, or there is no suitable adult available to help. It also includes circumstances where the child has suffered or is likely to suffer physical, sexual, emotional, or mental harm, and the parents cannot or will not protect or assist them. Additionally, a child is considered in need of protection if their health or development is at serious risk due to a lack of proper care, supervision, or necessary medical attention from their parents or guardians.</p>
Child Safe Standards	<p>The Child Safe Standards require organisations involving children to have policies, procedures and practices to keep them safe. The Child Safe Standards help organisations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the safety of children. • Prevent child abuse. • Ensure effective processes are in place to respond to and report allegations of child abuse. • Encourage children to 'have a say,' especially on issues that are important to them or about decisions that affect their lives.
Social Services Registrar (SSR)	<p>The SSR is an independent statutory body that oversees and enforces compliance with the Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme.</p>
Duty of Care	<p>Duty of Care refers to the legislative duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people accessing any BKI service or related activity, visiting BKI sites including Bendigo TAFE and Kangan Institute campuses or otherwise coming to BKI attention as needing protective intervention.</p>

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Word/Term	Definition
Family Violence	<p>The <i>Family Violence Protection Act 2008</i> (Vic) defines family violence as behaviour towards a family member where the behaviour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is physically or sexually abusive • is emotionally or psychologically abusive • is economically abusive • is threatening or coercive or • in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person. <p>A child can be the victim to any of these behaviours directly or indirectly when a child hears or witnesses or otherwise exposed to the effects of family violence, including violence between adults and/or adolescents in the home. Coercive and controlling behaviours are common across all experiences of victim-survivors. These behaviours add up to a pattern of abuse and violence which build and maintain fear of escalation to physical and sexual violence.</p>
Mandatory Reporters	<p>The following are mandatory reporters in Victoria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered medical practitioners, nurses/ midwives • Registered teachers, and those granted permission to teach. • Early childhood teachers and workers • School principals or equivalent such as education managers/directors • School counsellors, youth wellbeing and welfare workers • Police officers • Out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster, kinship carers) • Youth justice workers • Registered psychologists • People in religious ministry.

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Word/Term	Definition
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations	<p>The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations help organisations create safe and supportive environments for children. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure child safety and wellbeing are a top priority. • Follow the recommendations from the Royal Commission. • Help organisations understand and improve how they protect children.
Protective Factors	<p>Protective factors are characteristics that help to lower any perceived risk these can be individual, help-seeking and problem-solving behaviours, having goals and hopes for the future, abstinence from alcohol and other drugs, friends, supportive partner, family, look after one's health. Family factors include strong bonds, family cohesion, parents' presence at key times, connection to culture and beliefs that are supportive, cope when in crises, or community factors like care for mental and physical health and substance use problems, availability of counselling or trusted adults, in the life of a youth, restricted access to risks. Opportunity to contribute and participate in school and/or the larger community.</p>
Reasonable belief	<p>A reasonable belief means that most people, in the same situation, would also think something might be wrong. This belief can be based on things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child says they have been hurt or abused. • A child talks about someone else being abused (they might be talking about themselves). • Someone who knows the child says the child has been abused. • A professional (like a teacher or nurse) notices something in the child's behaviour or development that raises concern. • There are signs that suggest the child might be at risk of harm or abuse.

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Word/Term	Definition
Reportable Conduct	<p>Reportable Conduct covers child abuse perpetrated by adults connected to BKI—such as workers or volunteers, students on placement in certain settings like early childcare. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual offences or inappropriate sexual behaviour • Physical violence toward or within view or hearing of children • Serious emotional, psychological harm, or neglect • Past abuse, including grooming <p>These rules may apply even if the behaviour happens outside of work or the person does not work directly with children.</p>
Young Person or Young People	<p>A young person is someone aged between 12 and 24 years old. Usually, child safety concerns involve people under 18, but sometimes older young people may still need support. This can happen if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are at risk of becoming homeless or ‘coaching surfing’ • Have experienced abuse in the past • Have been involved with Child Protection before • Used to live in out-of-home care • Involved in Juvenile Justice or at risk of involvement • Mental health, marginalised or other vulnerabilities <p>Even if they are over 18, we still pay attention to their situation—especially if it might affect other children who could be at risk now. In these cases, the child safety team might offer advice, support, or take action to help keep everyone safe.</p>

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Word/Term	Definition
Reportable Conduct Scheme	<p>Reportable Conduct Scheme ensures people who are not safe to work with children do not continue to work with children as overseen by the Commission for Children and Young People.</p> <p>Heads of organisations have Social Services Regulator vic.gov.au responsibilities for the workers, volunteers and contractors they employ directly, these responsibilities still apply. This from 1 July 2024 extends to more individuals in your workplace, whether they are employed directly or supplied by a provider or agency. The new types of employees covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> labour hire workers and volunteer workers secondees individual business owners who employ or engage staff directors of companies where the director performs work for the organisation students aged 18+ on placement in child-related work.

7.0 Supporting Policy Documents and Forms

Document Name
Bendigo TAFE and Kangan Institute Student Handbooks
Child Safe Standards Risk Assessments
Child Safety Procedure
Student Charter
Code Student Conduct Policy and Procedure
Drug and Alcohol Procedure
Emergency Response Procedures Manuals for each campus
Employee Code of Conduct Policy and Employee Disciplinary Procedure
Enrolment Policy and Procedure and Pre-Training Review Procedure
Excursion Policy
Family and Domestic Violence Policy and Procedure (staff and student)
Feedback Policy (Compliments and Complaints) and Feedback Procedure
First Aid Procedure

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Document Name
Four Critical Actions (Poster)
Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Human Rights Policy and Procedure
Improper Conduct Policy and Investigation Procedure
Incident and Non-Conformance Reporting and Investigation Procedure
Information Technology Usage Policies
Managing Employee Performance and Conduct Procedure
Non School Foundation and Senior Secondary Provider Policy and Procedure and Handbook
Prevention of Potentially Harmful Behaviours Policy
Privacy and Freedom of Information Policy
Records Management Policy
Recruitment Policy and Procedure
Reportable Conduct Investigations Procedure
Social Media Policy
Student Critical Incident Procedure
Student Practical Placement Procedures and Practical Placement Agreements (PPA)
Student Reasonable Adjustment Procedure
Student Accessibility Policy
Supplier Code of Conduct Policy
Working with Children Check Procedure
Youth Commitment Policy (Posters Kangan Institute and Bendigo TAFE)

8.0 Version Control and Change History

Ver.	Issue Date	Document Custodian	Description of Change	Approval Authority
1.0	07/11/2016	Executive Director Learner Experience	New policy	CEO
2.0	2019	Chief Academic Officer	Updated	Board of Studies
2.1	28/08/2019	Chief Executive Officer	Updating as per VRQA registration requirements	Board of Studies
2.2	06/02/2020	Chief Executive Officer	Updating to include appropriate and	Board of Studies

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			inappropriate behaviours around children as well as requirement for all BKI employees to hold WWCC	
2.3	20/08/2021	Chief Experience and Growth Officer	Updating legislation, related policies, definitions, children of students or workers, escalation framework, coinciding executive restructure	CEGO
2.4	02/11/2022	Chief Experience and Growth Officer	12-month Review.	Head of Governance Risk and Compliance
3.0	10/10/2024	Chief Operating Officer	Legislative updates RCS, revision Child Safety statement of Commitment, working group. and guidance provided as to how to access the policy.	Head of Governance Risk and Compliance
3.1	02/05/2025	Child Safety Officer	Minor edits to the Child Safety Policy to broaden our statement (6.5) re: involving families and communities and linking it to the feedback policy. This will achieve compliance with Child Safety Standard 4.1.	Head of Governance, Risk and Compliance
4.0	28/05/2026	Manager, Safer Community	Enhance compliance CSS11: student and family friendly language (CSS 3, 4, 7). Add information sharing (CSS2). Retire Youth Version of policy add	Head of Student Services and Success

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			interactive posters, historical abuse, include vulnerable young people (CSS3). Role and team change Safer Communities (new team).	
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9.0 Document Owner and Approval Body

Document Custodian	Approval Authority	Approval Date	Next Scheduled Review Date
Manager, Safer Community	Head of Student Services and Success	28/05/2026	28/05/2028

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