

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

PURPOSE

New Horizons Tasmania (NHT) acknowledges that children and young people are a part of NHT as participants, family members, visitors and through NHT's activities including special events, community engagement and partnership activities. All children and young people in the NHT community, regardless of their gender, culture, religious beliefs, age, ability, sexual orientation, family or social background, have equal rights to safety, participation, wellbeing, empowerment and protection from abuse.

This policy outlines NHT's commitment to the wellbeing and safety of children and young people connected to the NHT community in person and online, and our responsibility to build child safety awareness throughout our organisation.

SCOPE

This policy:

- Applies to all NHT workers, which includes employees, volunteers, contractors, consultants, Board members and visitors.
- Applies across all physical environments and activities conducted by NHT.
- Should be read together with other NHT policies, procedures, and codes.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

NHT has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse and will embed and enact processes to respond to incidents. We are committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children, including First Nations children, children with disabilities, from cultural and language diverse backgrounds and children that are gender diverse.

NHT endeavours to create environments where children can feel, and be, safe and welcomed, and where their participation is valued.

NHT demonstrates this commitment by:

- Providing a copy of this Policy to all new and existing NHT workers who are required to act in accordance with it.
- Equipping NHT workers with appropriate induction and training on children's rights, child safety and wellbeing.
- Requiring that NHT workers and volunteers report any child harm or abuse concerns.
- Promptly investigating any complaints under this Policy thoroughly.
- Requiring that all NHT workers have a valid Working with Vulnerable persons check.
- Where reasonably possible, NHT will involve children when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them.
- Proactively managing the risk of harm to children.
- Making this Policy freely available and accessible to the public on the NHT website.
- Reviewing this Policy, and associated procedures and processes are reviewed every two years, for effectiveness and utility in creating a child safe environment.

DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

Child means a person below the age of 18 years, as defined by *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997* (TAS)

Young Person means a person who is 12 years old or older but under 18 years of age.

Contact with a child means physical contact, face-to-face contact, written communication, oral communication, or electronic communication. Contact does not include providing information to children on our website or through other means where there is no exchange of information or communication with a child.

Child harm or abuse means any behaviour or treatment that results in the actual or potential harm of a child. It includes all forms of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or exploitation, neglect or harm.

NHT worker includes employees, volunteers and Board members.

Reportable Conduct Scheme is about ensuring reportable conduct is investigated properly in a child centred way, which is via oversight by the Office Independent Regulator.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Safeguarding children is a shared responsibility within NHT. It is the responsibility of all NHT workers to create and maintain a child safe culture. Specific responsibilities for each role are outlined below.

NHT Board Responsibilities

- The Board is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained.
- Ensures that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented to support this.

Executive Responsibilities (includes Chief Executive Officer and Executive Officer)

- Ensure all NHT workers are aware of the relevant laws and organisational policies and procedures.
- Provide support for NHT workers in undertaking their child safety responsibilities.
- Receive and investigate complaints under this Policy.
- Keep the Board advised as necessary.
- Risk management of all new programs and systems that involve or may have an impact on children.
- Regularly review the visitor register to assess if consultants and contractors have a valid Working with Vulnerable Persons card.

NHT Workers Responsibilities

- To understand and ensure compliance with this Policy.
- To promote the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Undertake Child Safety and Wellbeing training.
- Report any child harm or abuse concerns.
- Maintain visitor register

STAFF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND AWARENESS

All NHT workers will undertake an induction process that will focus on child safety and wellbeing. The program will include a focus on:

- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- The Child Safety Code of Conduct
- The Child Safety and Wellbeing Complaints Management Policy, and
- Any other child safety and well-being information that NHT considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

CHILD PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

NHT values the contribution of children and young people and will seek opportunities for them to build their skills, confidence and take part in decision making. NHT recognises that empowering children and young people increases their confidence, so they may feel this Policy may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time, with their input.

Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version.

NHT will provide the opportunity for children and young people to help organise events, join advisory committees, help produce information guides and resources and be involved in the development of programs.

INVOLVING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

NHT recognises families are diverse and all are welcome at NHT. Families can access NHT policies, procedures and codes of conduct, by contacting NHT. Families have an opportunity to take part in decisions made by NHT that impact the safety and wellbeing of their child. Families and carers are provided with information about NHT when a child or young person in their care becomes a member of NHT.

SAFE PHYSICAL AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS

NHT's risk management system is used to record and monitor actions that will prevent or reduce identified risks of child abuse and harm. Risk assessments must be completed by a NHT worker and be deemed as acceptable for all new programs and systems that involve or impact children before they are implemented.

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

As a child safe organisation, NHT celebrates the rich diversity of our members, families, volunteers and community. NHT promotes respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

NHT recognises that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

NHT pays particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our safety strategies and supports the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Children and young people with disabilities
- Children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- International students
- Children and young people who identify a LGBTIQ+

REPORTING

NHT workers must report any child harm or abuse concerns to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or the Executive Officer (EO).

Members of the public are also encouraged to report any child harm or abuse concerns involving NHT and/or the NHT workers, to the CEO, EO, Board member or trusted NHT staff member, via the following methods:

- An email to ceo@newhorizonstas.org.au or info@newhorizonstas.org.au
- By phone – 6326 3344
- Via the Child Safety & Wellbeing Complaints Management Policy
- Making an appointment to discuss in person

Once an issue has been raised NHT will:

- Investigate the matter thoroughly, seeking assistance where appropriate
- Provide support and assistance to people affected by a complaint, including children families and NHT workers
- Report the matter to the NHT Board
- If applicable, conduct an investigation in accordance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme (see the [Office of Independent Regulator](#) website)
- Make recommendations on actions/improvements required

Reportable conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme is broader than suspected criminal behaviour alone, and includes:

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

NHT workers must maintain confidentiality and cooperate fully with any investigation.

NHT will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety.

REPORTING – SEXUAL OFFENCES

Under the *Criminal Code Act 1924* a person is guilty of a crime if that person has information that leads the person to form a reasonable belief that an abuse offence has been committed against another person who was a child at the time of the alleged offence and fails without reasonable excuse to disclose that information to a police officer as soon as practicable.

A person has a reasonable excuse if:

- they fear that disclosing the information would endanger the safety of any person (other than the person reasonably believed to have committed, or to have been involved in, the child abuse offence); or
- reporting the information would disclose information in respect which there is a lawful claim or right of privilege; or
- the person believes on reasonable grounds that
 - another person has already reported the information to a proper authority; or
 - a proper authority already has the information; or

- the information is generally available to members of the public.

Factors contributing to reasonable belief may include:

- The child tells you they have been sexually abused.
- The child tells you they know someone who has been sexually abused (which may be a way of talking about themselves)
- Someone who knows the child tells you the child has been sexually abused.
- You observe signs of sexual abuse in the child.
- You are a qualified professional who observes the child's behaviour or development, which leads you to believe the child has been sexually abused.

NON – COMPLIANCE

Depending on the circumstances, non-compliance with the Policy may constitute a breach of employment or contractual obligations. Those who fail to comply with this Policy may face disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or volunteer status.

Approved by/date: Board – 23/07/24

Next Review Date: 23/07/26

Last Review Date: August 2022