CHILD SAFETY & WELLBEING POLICY

Contents

Purpose

This policy demonstrates Althea Projects commitment to the protection and promotion of children's rights, and to ensuring their safety and wellbeing. We recognise child safety as a shared responsibility, and embed protective practices into our culture, programs, and decision making in ways that reflect children's needs, experiences, and perspectives. We strive to build a community where children's wellbeing is actively supported, and where they feel safe, respected, and valued, and where their voices are heard and acted upon.

This policy outlines our approach to preventing harm, responding to concerns, and promoting practices that uphold children's rights and support their physical, emotional, and social development and wellbeing. It guides our leaders, staff, and volunteers, in fostering a culture of child safety and accountability, in alignment with legal obligations and community expectations. It reflects our ethical obligations and reinforces our collective duty to act with integrity, uphold children's rights, and contribute to a culture of safety and inclusion.

Scope

This policy applies to all our staff, volunteers and our program environments and activities that involve or impact children, whether conducted onsite, offsite, online or in partnership with other organisations. This policy is relevant to all interactions with children including direct care, supervision, communication and decision making processes. It also extends to parents, carers and community members who engage with the organisation, ensuring a shared commitment to child safety and wellbeing.

The Child Safe Standards (CSS)

Althea Projects is required by law to implement and comply with the Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 Chapter 2, Part 1 Section 9 Child Safe Standards and Universal Principle (s11(2)). The Child Safe Standards aim to foster a culture where every child is safe and feels safe, supported, and empowered to learn, grow, and thrive free from harm. These Child Safe Standards are:

> **1. Leadership and Culture**: Child Safety and wellbeing is embedded in the organisational leadership, governance, and culture.

> **2. Children's Voices:** Children are informed about their rights, and participate in decisions that affect them, and are taken seriously.

> **3. Family and Community:** Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

> **4. Equity and Diversity:** Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.

5. People: People working with children are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

6. Complaints management: Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.

7. Knowledge and skills: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through ongoing education and training.

8. Physical and online environments: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children to be harmed.

9. Continuous improvement: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed.

10. Policy and procedures: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children.

The Universal Principle

The Universal Principle requires us to ensure our environments are culturally safe. The Universal Principle is to be applied and embedded into each of the Child Safe Standards.

In applying the Universal Principle, Althea Projects is committing to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and communities feel genuinely welcomed, protected, respected, included, and valued in every space we create.

The Child Safe Standards and Universal Principle together, are reflected in **Althea Projects Statement of Commitment to Children's Safety & Wellbeing** which is publicly displayed on our website and at our program sites.

Althea Projects Statement of Commitment to Children's Safety & Wellbeing

Althea Projects has **zero tolerance** of any child being harmed in any way. We are committed to creating environments where all children and young people feel **safe, respected, valued, and empowered and** have the opportunity to **thrive and reach their full potential.**

All Althea Projects representatives take responsibility to play their role in helping children and young people to be safe, and feel safe.

As an organisation guided by the **Queensland Child Safe Standards**, Althea Projects commits to:

1. **Prioritising children's safety and wellbeing** in every decision we make and every action we take.

2. **Listening to the voice of children** by taking children's views seriously and involving children in decisions that affect their life.

3. **Respecting the identity of children** by including their culture, language, beliefs, gender, and abilities in our practices. We are especially committed to creating culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

4. **Supporting children's right to grow and thrive** in a caring, nurturing environment where children are encouraged to dream big and reach their full potential.

5. **Being open, honest, and clear to children and their families** by using plain language and explaining what we are doing and why.

6. **Supporting children's sense of belonging and connection** by working closely with their families and community.

7. **Responding to children's concerns and complaints** in a way that is fair, respectful, and focused on their needs.

8. **Ensuring our team is safe and skilled** by everyone who works with children being trained, supported, and committed to keeping children safe.

9. **Embedding child safety in our leadership and culture by** our leaders and governance structures actively promoting child safety and wellbeing as a core organisational value.

10. **Maintaining clear systems and processes by** our policies and procedures clearly documenting how we keep children safe and guide our staff in upholding these standards.

11. **Creating safe physical and online environments** by designing and managing our spaces and digital platforms to promote safety and wellbeing and to minimise risk of harm.

12. **Continuously improving all that we do** by regularly reviewing how we are doing and look for ways to do better.

Child Safe Code of Conduct

Althea Projects staff and volunteers (paid and unpaid) at all levels must agree to and sign a Child Safe Code of Conduct (Code). This Code:

- Identifies and mitigates risks associated with the nature of services delivered through our organisational programs.
- Establishes clear expectations and behavioural standards for adult interactions with children.
- Supports child abuse prevention by promoting early identification of concerns and encouraging a strong reporting culture.
- Defines consequences of breaching the Code.

Cultural Safety

Althea Projects has a zero-tolerance approach to racism. Racism undermines cultural safety and harms children's sense of self, wellbeing, and trust. To ensure Althea Projects and its programs and services are culturally safe we:

- Are an active partner in reconciliation through our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which is integrated throughout all levels of the organisation led from the Board and CEO with a RAP working group of staff, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Employ a Cultural Advisor who provides invaluable support and cultural guidance.
- Ensure we have Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander representation on our Board.
- Ensure that our programs are culturally safe spaces where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families can feel welcomed, respected, and seen.
- Openly embrace culture through visible representation such as in art, language, and symbols at our programs.
- Ensure children's participation in cultural activities, community events, and ceremonies, for example SNAICC Child's Day, National Reconciliation Week.
- Sponsor and actively participate in significant community cultural events, for example NAIDOC week activities.
- Work within the Child Placement Principles regarding prevention, partnership, placement, participation, and connection in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- Embed anti-racism principles into all aspects of our recruitment, supervision, and direct service delivery practices.
- Provide our staff with cultural awareness and safety training.
- Seek opportunities to work in partnership with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to build relationships and increase our cultural understanding.
- Provide staff with a cultural safety framework in which to support and guide them in:
    - How to identify, challenge, and prevent racism and unconscious bias.
    - Calling out and addressing racism in our program environments, staffing practices, and organisational culture.
    - Providing safe pathways for reporting racism and cultural disrespect, with accountable follow-up.
    - Supporting children and families affected by racism with sensitivity and dignity.

CSS 1: Leadership and Culture

Every person at every level, from Board to Leaders, to staff and volunteers, holds responsibility for creating a child safe environment in the delivery of Althea Projects program services.

Roles and Responsibilities

Althea Projects Board and CEO are responsible for:

- Implementing the Child Safe Standards.
- Ensuring there is a Child Safe Code of Conduct in place that outlines expected standards of behaviour and consequences for breaching it.
- Ensuring effective child safety, wellbeing and safeguarding governance, policies, and procedures are in place.
- Ensuring recruitment selection, supervision and staff management practices are child safe.
- Regularly reviewing child safety, wellbeing and safeguarding policies and procedures ensuring they are current.
- Ensure child safety and wellbeing is a meeting agenda item for all meetings within the organisation.

The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:

- Leading the implementation of the Child Safe Standards and all related child safety, wellbeing and safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Championing and promoting a child safe culture across the organisation.
- Ensuring child safety and wellbeing induction and other related training is available and provided to staff.
- Reinforcing high standards of respectful behavior in the workplace.
- Promoting open discussions on child safety issues, including at Leadership meetings.
- Acting on breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and any other child safeguarding policies.

All Line Managers and Managers will:

- Promote awareness of the Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and other child safeguarding policies.
- Ensure their program procedures are compliant with the Child Safe Standards.
- Role model compliance with the Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and other child safeguarding policies.
- Promote open discussion on child safety issues, including at team level meetings.
- Supervise and monitor staff compliance with the Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and other child safeguarding policies.

- Encourage the reporting of breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and other child safeguarding policies.
- Report breaches of Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and any other child safeguarding policy.

All staff and volunteers at all levels will:

- Participate in any child safety and wellbeing induction and other child safe related training provided by Althea Projects.
- Develop an understanding of the Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and all other child safeguarding policies and their own individual responsibilities for child safe practices.
- Act in accordance with the Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and all other child safeguarding policies.
- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children in all decisions and actions.
- Create and maintain a child safe and inclusive culture and environment.
- Identify and raise all concerns regarding child safety and wellbeing concerns.
- Comply with suspected child abuse reporting requirements.
- Report breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and any other child safeguarding policy.

CSS 2: Children's Voices

We know that empowering children by informing them of their rights and involving them in decision making processes is fundamental to their safety and wellbeing. We aim to foster an environment where children can feel confident in expressing their views and concerns and provide input into decisions that affect them. To do this we:

- Inform children who access our services of their rights by providing age-appropriate information and resources though our intake and induction processes for example, welcome books.
- Engage in educational discussions and activities about rights, safe environments and protective behaviours and strategies.
- Provide resources for their parents and caregivers regarding child rights and how to assist their children in giving us feedback.
- Involve the children in planning of daily activities.
- Provide child friendly information about how to raise complaints, feedback, concerns, and suggestions.
- Create safe spaces and opportunities for children to provide their feedback.
- Provide child friendly methods and tools for children to use in giving us their feedback.
- Actively listening to their views.
- Taking their views seriously and using their feedback and views to influence our program, policies, and procedures through continuous improvement processes.
- Ensure children receive a response to their feedback.

CSS 3: Family and Community Involvement

We know that working in partnership with parents, families and caregivers contributes to a shared responsibility in the protection of children and in building child safe practices. We do this by:

- Building trusting relationships with our parents, families and caregivers.
- Being transparent about our services policies and procedures by providing program handbooks at intake/inductions that outline program information including rights, complaints and feedback.
- Actively seeking feedback from our parents, carers and families through our implemented feedback systems and methods.
- Discussing feedback across all levels in identifying continuous improvement actions.
- Providing feedback outcomes.

CSS 4: Equity and Diversity

We understand children come from diverse backgrounds, identities, and experiences. To ensure our staff can meet the different needs of children we:

- Promote a culture of inclusion through policies regarding accessibility, cultural safety, anti-discrimination, diversity, and inclusion.
- Provide culturally safe and trauma-informed environments.
- Provide training regarding diversity and inclusion including, cultural awareness, cultural safety, unconscious bias, disability awareness, and LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- Provide all child related service staff, direct and non-direct with Positive Behaviour Support and Trauma Informed Care training.
- Ensure expected standards of behaviour and conduct are known at staff induction through our:
  - Code of Conduct and Ethics policy
  - Client Diversity and Inclusion policy
  - Human Rights policy
  - Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Conduct ongoing reviews of our programs and services to ensure they are inclusive and accessible through:
  - Providing channels for individuals, children, and families to give feedback or raise concerns (e.g., online, in-person, anonymous).
  - Monitoring and evaluating client feedback for continuous improvement of service delivery.
  - Respond to any complaints related to discrimination or exclusion in line with complaint procedures and timeframes, as outlined in Althea Projects Complaints policy and Human Rights policy.
  - Adapt service models when required to meet the needs of underrepresented or marginalised groups relevant to funded service types.

CSS 5: Our People

We ensure our staff are suitable for working with children by:

- Recruiting staff whose values, competencies, capabilities, and behaviours align with the Child Safeguarding Capability Framework (developed by *Peak Care and Social Advantage Advisory)*.
- Merit-based selection processes including minimal qualification requirements, panel interview, reference checks.
- Suitability and screening checks which include one or both of the following:
    - Working with Children Blue Card Check and/or
    - Child Safety & Personal History screening
- Robust onboarding and induction training inclusive of:
    - Child Protection legislation including the Child Safe Standards, the Statement of Standards, and mandatory reporting requirements
    - Child rights
    - Child safe policies
    - Risk mitigation and management and child safeguarding service delivery practices including how to identify harm, respond to disclosures and how to report of child abuse.
- All child-related service staff undertake Therapeutic Crisis Intervention training while Direct Care staff also undertake:
    - First aid training
    - Safe food handling
    - Medication administration, and
    - Car seat installation training

Our staff are further supported through our workplace support policies regarding:

- Supervision (PASE Framework)
- Annual Review & Feedback for ongoing professional development identification
- Employee Assistance Program

In relation to our Fostering Program and the Kinship and Foster Carers we ensure their ongoing suitability to provide safe care through the following processes:

- Ongoing suitability screening checks
- Undergoing initial and subsequent suitability assessments
- Monitoring home visits
- Carer support group meetings
- On-call afterhours support
- Placement agreement meetings
- Day to day support

The guidelines which we assess foster and kinship carers, as well as how we deliver our residential type services and then monitor the safety and wellbeing of the children placed in foster and kinship care and our residential services care, is under section 122 the Statement of Standards of the Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld). This section ensures a child's physical, emotional, cultural, and developmental needs are met, while also protecting their dignity and rights. In summary, these are:

- **Respect for Dignity and Rights:** Children's dignity and rights are to be upheld at all times.
- **Physical Care**: Meeting basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter.
- **Emotional Care:** Providing a nurturing environment that fosters positive self-regard and a sense of being cared for.
- **Cultural and Ethnic Needs**: Ensuring that a child's cultural and ethnic background is respected and supported.
- **Material Needs:** Addressing needs related to schooling, recreation, and overall living.
- **Education and Development:** Providing opportunities for education, training, or employment relevant to the child's age and abilities.
- **Guidance and Behaviour Management:** Offering positive guidance to help children manage inappropriate behaviour.
- **Healthcare:** Ensuring access to necessary dental, medical, and therapeutic services.
- **Individualised Needs:** Recognising and addressing the specific needs of each child, including those with disabilities.

The *Child Protection Act (1999)* explicitly prohibits the use of any corporal punishment or any other form of punishment that humiliates, frightens, or threatens a child, as these can cause emotional harm.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle applies, emphasising the importance of family, community, and cultural connection.

If the standards are not met, standard of care response procedures will be initiated.

CSS 6: Child Focused Complaints

We ensure all complaints received prioritise the safety, wellbeing, and voice of the child by:

- Ensuring children know they have a right to complain or voice their concerns.
- Providing children and their families with information about how to voice their complaints and concerns; both internal and external options.
- Taking a trauma informed approach in assisting children to feel safe in expressing their concerns.
- Aiding children in how to make their complaints.
- Ensuring children are provided with a response to their concerns.

- Being adaptable to the individual needs of children and their diverse needs.
- Ensuring our staff understand our complaints process.
- Requiring all staff to treat suspicions of harm or disclosures of harm seriously and report those concerns as outlined in our Identifying and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse policy regardless of who is suspected of having caused harm.
- Encouraging staff to report breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Investigate any reported breach of our Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and any other child safeguarding policy.
- Registering all complaints and incidents.
- Reviewing all complaints for identification of continuous improvement actions and implementation of those actions.

CSS 7: Knowledge and Skills

We ensure our staff keep their knowledge and skills up to date through training, refreshers, and undergoing annual review processes regarding identification of ongoing professional development related to:

- Child safety, wellbeing, risk mitigation and safeguarding
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Attachment and Trauma
- Trauma Informed Care
- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention
- Diversity, cultural awareness and cultural safety
- Record keeping, confidentiality and information sharing, and
- Other program / role specific training.

CSS 8: Safe Physical and Online Environments

We ensure our child-related service environments, both physically and online, actively promote and safeguard children's physical, social, spiritual, emotional, and cultural wellbeing. We do this through:

- Ensuring our spaces are child friendly and reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander signage, artwork and language representation.
- Undertaking routine inspections of our physical spaces to identify and mitigate risks.
- Annual review of our Child Safe Youth Risk Management Strategy.
- Cyber security safety systems in place to protect children's information and records.
- Using only child safe online educational applications that are monitored while under use by children.
- Established child safe staff practice guidelines.
- Staff supervision and training.

- Established systems to respond to incidents if they occur.
- IT Usage and Social Media policies.

CSS 9: Continuous Improvement

We have established quality assurance and continuous improvement systems that we continue to adapt and develop. Our current systems include:

- Annual RAP Plan reviews by the RAP Working Group.
- Internal Audit schedules across all program areas with assigned accountability for completion.
- 3 yearly HSQF self-assessment and recertification including maintenance assessments in between.
- Periodic Program Reviews (internal and external including engagement of Peak bodies to undertake reviews).
- Engagement of external First Nations people to develop and deliver cultural awareness and safety training and co design related policies and frameworks when required.
- Organisational and program/service-based feedback systems to gather feedback from staff, children, families and stakeholders.
- Feedback and Complaints registers.
- Incident review processes.
- Documents register that records all organisational and program policies and procedures including version control and review due date details.
- Feedback, complaints and continuous improvement agenda items at all level team meetings where feedback and complaints are analysed and action planning occurs.
- A Continuous Improvement Action Plan Register.

All audits, review processes, feedback and complaints contribute towards a culture of accountability and our commitment to continually improving the services we deliver in ensuring we remain focused on child safety and wellbeing.

CSS 10: Policy and Procedures

Althea Projects policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular schedule either annually, bi-annually, or 3 yearly, which depends on the nature and requirements of each policy. In addition to their scheduled review, policies may be updated on a more frequent basis when circumstances warrant it, such as:

- A change in legislation has occurred.
- A complaint has identified improvement actions.
- Feedback or a suggestion received has led to actionable improvements.
- An incident has occurred resulting in a review and change in policy, procedure or process.

- For compliance with standards such as the Child Safe Standards or the Human Services Quality Framework.

Consequences of Breaching this Policy

Breaches of this policy by anyone will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of duties or employment.

Policy Feedback

You can contribute to this policy by way of feedback at any time through any of the following methods:

- By using the electronic feedback form on our website at https://www.altheaprojects.org.au/contact-us/#feedback. You can remain anonymous using this form if this is your preference.
- By contacting the individual program directly. You can request to speak to the Program Manager.
    - Wee Care 4772 4499
    - Althea House 4772 4499
    - Althea Foster and Kinship Program 4779 3332
    - Althea's Community Hub 4772 2339
    - Althea Projects Corporate Office on 4779 3332

Should you wish to make a formal complaint regarding the administration of this policy please contact the CEO through the Corporate office, or through the electronic feedback and complaints form on the website or by emailing ceo@altheaprojects.org.au.

Relevant Qld Legislation

- Child Protection Act 1999
- Child Protection Regulations 2023
- Child Safe Organisations Act 2024
- Working with Children (Risk Management & Screening) Act 2000
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020
- Human Rights Act 2019
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Related Standards & Guidelines

- Guidelines for Implementing the Universal Principle and Child Safe Standards in Queensland, Queensland Family & Child Commission.
- Child Safeguarding Capability Framework (Social Advantage Advisory and Peak Care).

Althea Projects Additional Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

- Child Safe Risk Management Strategy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Cultural Safety Policy
- Statement of Standards Policy
- Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse Policy
- Human Rights Policy
- Client Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Positive Behaviour Support Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Charter (Our Promise to You)

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis or earlier in response to an incident, legislative amendment, complaint or feedback from children, families, staff, or stakeholders involved in our programs.

Review History

Version	Date	Changes made
V1.0	30/09/2025	New policy