

Sustainable Macleod -- Child Safe Policy

Sustainable Macleod Inc. (Sustainable Macleod) aims to build a resilient local community, encouraging residents to shop locally, produce and share their own food, use environmentally-friendly transport and undertake other activities to promote sustainability.

One aspect essential to a resilient community is safety and wellbeing for everyone -- including children.

It is necessary we have a Child Safe Policy ('Policy') because the Sustainable Macleod Community Garden ('Garden') is situated at Macleod College. Children are sometimes present at the Garden and other locations during Sustainable Macleod events, so it is important we are proactive in ensuring their safety.

Background

The Victorian Government introduced the Child Safe Standards, which are compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services that are used by children and young people to help protect them from harm. Updated Victorian Child Safe Standards were issued by the Commission for Children and Young People and came into force on 1 July 2022. Further information about the Standards can be found on the Commission's website: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

1. make clear that Sustainable Macleod will not tolerate child abuse
2. promote safety for all children (as far as possible) at the Garden and all Sustainable Macleod events held elsewhere
3. clarify that Sustainable Macleod and its members will report and assist with any investigation of suspected child abuse
4. make it clear that the prevention of child abuse is everyone's responsibility
5. work towards an organisational culture of child safety
6. provide guidance to members as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation
7. provide assurance that all cases of suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

Statement of Commitment

Sustainable Macleod recognises our legal and moral obligations to keep children safe and is committed to their wellbeing.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Sustainable Macleod is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone Triple Zero (000).

Code of Conduct

All members must:

- hold a 'Working with Children Check' if attending the Garden
- behave in a way that makes children and young people feel safe and respected
- interact with children in an open and transparent way, such as only in view of other adults
- not initiate any contact with a child that may be viewed as inappropriate
- listen to any concerns raised by a child, and take them seriously
- immediately report all child safety concern to the Sustainable Macleod President
- take all reasonable steps to keep children safe.

All members must respect the privacy of children and young people and their families and only disclose information to people on a need-to-know basis.

All members must act in the best interests of the child or young person.

Legislative responsibilities

Sustainable Macleod takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

Failure to disclose: All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to Victoria Police.

Mandatory reporting: Any members who are mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teacher, principals and police officers) must comply with their mandatory reporting duties.

Failure to protect: People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Reportable conduct: As the head of our organisation, the President of Sustainable Macleod must be made aware of any allegations of physical and sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, significant emotional or psychological harm or significant neglect by any member towards a child. The President is also legally required to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of the allegation. In the case that the allegations concern the President, the other committee members must be notified immediately.

Duty of care: If a child is abused by an individual associated with our organisation, our organisation is presumed to have breached its duty of care unless it can prove that it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse in question

Our Child Safe Code of Conduct

Child Safe Standard 1 – Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

Our commitment: All children will be treated with respect.

Child Safe Standard 2 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

Our commitment: Sustainable Macleod committee members and members are made aware of this Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct.

Child Safe Standard 3 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

Our commitment: Sustainable Macleod recognise the rights of children and will listen to them and take their views seriously.

Child Safe Standard 4 – Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

Our commitment: Sustainable Macleod informs members of this Code of Conduct and welcomes feedback.

Child Safe Standard 5 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

Our commitment: All children are treated equally.

Child Safe Standard 6 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

Our commitment: All members attending the Garden have current Working with Children Checks.

Child Safe Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

Our commitment: Sustainable Macleod will respond in the best interests of the child and will deal confidentially with child safety complaints.

Child Safe Standard 8 – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

Our commitment: All members are directed to the resources available at <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/child-safe-standards>

Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

Our commitment: This Code of Conduct is posted on the organisation's website, on the noticeboard at the Garden and on our Facebook page.

Child Safe Standard 10 – *Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.*

Our commitment: The Policy and Code of Conduct will be reviewed if an incidence arises and revised if needed.

Child Safe Standard 11 – *Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.*

Our commitment: A record is kept that this Policy and Code of Conduct has been read and agreed to by committee members and garden supervisors.

Definitions

Child: Anyone aged under 18 years.

Child abuse: All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Cultural safety: An environment that recognises, respects and nurtures someone's cultural identity.

Reasonable belief: A belief based on facts that would lead a reasonable person to think that reportable conduct *may* have occurred. It is more than suspicion and there must be some objective basis for the belief. However, it does not require certainty. For example, a person is likely to have a reasonable belief if they:

- observed the conduct themselves
- heard from a child that the conduct occurred
- received information from another source (including another person who witnessed the reportable conduct or misconduct).

This policy was approved by the Sustainable Macleod Inc. Committee in May 2023.