

Child Safe Policy

 Commitment to Child Safety	All children who are a part of the Warrnambool Bowls Club have a right to feel and be safe. The Club aims to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and have fun and the Club's activities are always carried out in the best interests of the children. The welfare of children when in our care is our highest priority. The Club has a zero tolerance to child abuse and is committed to creating a culture of child safety in which children feel safe, respected, and empowered to speak up.
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CONTEXT

Participation in sport and physical activity is fundamental to the health and development of our children and youth and provides the foundation for a healthy lifestyle. Sport and physical activity is associated with a range of benefits throughout life including social interaction, increased attentiveness, confidence, health and overall wellbeing.

The Warrnambool Bowls Club (WBC) is committed to ensuring children and young people who participate in its activities have a safe and happy experience.

AIM

The WBC can provide children and young people with flexible, social opportunities while learning a new sport. Introducing young people to bowling engages them in community activities at a local level. Sporting activities allow children and young people to learn new skills in a flexible and fun environment and increase social connectedness and resilience.

The aim of providing opportunities for junior bowlers is to:

- Improve their ability
- Interact with other junior players and build connection to a club
- Experience higher levels of competition within their club, district, zone, state or country
- Receive coaching
- Enhance resilience

The aim of the Club's Child Safe Policy is to protect the safety of children in our care and prevent abuse from occurring, and in the event that allegations are raised in relation to child abuse, to ensure that the allegations are properly addressed. All complaints will be treated seriously and fully investigated and handled with maximum confidentiality and discretion.

PURPOSE

This policy also outlines the systems, processes and behaviours expected of all persons to ensure child safety and wellbeing is actively promoted, maintained and continuously improved.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all persons engaged with the Warrnambool Bowls Club, including:

- employees

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- volunteers
- committee members
- contractors
- parents/guardians
- participants and visitors

All persons must comply with this policy when interacting with children.

Governance and Oversight

The Warrnambool Bowls Club Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation and effectiveness of this Child Safe Policy.

The Committee will:

- ensure appropriate resources and support are in place to implement this policy
- monitor compliance with child safety requirements and relevant legislation
- review any child safety concerns, incidents or risks identified within the Club
- ensure this policy is reviewed and updated in accordance with legislative requirements and best practice

All persons involved in the Club share responsibility for child safety and must comply with this policy at all times.

Application of this Policy

Those involved in junior sport have a legal and moral obligation to protect the children under their care. Our commitment to Child Safety and our screening requirements is the law as it applies in Victoria which is included as part of the induction process for new staff or volunteers working with, or supporting, junior members of the Club including, but not limited to:

- Administrators
- Coaches
- Officials
- Participants
- Parents
- Spectators.

All of the people to which this policy applies have a role and responsibility in relation to child protection. They must all:

- understand the indicators and risks of child abuse
- appropriately act on any concerns raised by children
- understand and follow all applicable laws in relation to the protection of children and reporting or management of child safety concerns

All persons involved in any authorised WBC activities directly involving children will complete a “Working with Children Check (WWCC), for the purpose of the Victorian Children, Youth and Families Act 2005.

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The Club will require police checks and Working with Children Checks for all relevant positions in the recruitment and screening of staff and volunteers working directly with children and anyone else who the Board of Management feel requires a WWCC due to the nature of the work that they are undertaking for WBC. The Club will hold a copy of all WWCCs on file.

NOTE: *it is the responsibility of staff and volunteers to whom this policy applies to maintain a current WWCC.*

All persons to whom this policy applies will receive child safety information and this policy as part of their induction and will participate in ongoing education and awareness training as required.

WORKING WITH JUNIORS

- We listen to and act on any concerns children, or their parents, raise with us.
- The WBC will encourage children participating in the Club to express their views about their safety. We will listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We will actively encourage all children who use our club to 'have a say' about things that are important to them.
- In regards to bowls pennant selection of juniors, the Selection Committee will be informed of children requiring supervision and transportation where parents/guardians are unavailable. Rinks will be selected with the child's safety and participation in mind.
- In regards to bowls pennant, parents and children will have the opportunity to discuss and nominate a "caretaker" on pennant days where there is no parent/guardian supervision. The "caretaker" will be an adult who plays in the same rink, has a current WWCC who will be responsible for the safety of the child. The family and "caretaker" have a verbal agreement to this, supported by the Selection and Bowls Section Committees.
- Children are encouraged to raise any concerns about their safety with a trusted adult within the Club.

VALUING DIVERSITY

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families; and
- welcome children with a disability and their families and act to promote their participation.

SAFE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ONLINE COMMUNICATION

The Club is committed to ensuring children are safe in both physical and online environments.

- Staff and volunteers must not engage in private online communication with children.
- Any communication with children must, where possible, include a parent or guardian.
- Consent must be obtained from a parent or guardian prior to taking photographs or videos of children.
- Additional consent is required before publishing images on social media or other platforms.
- Personal information about children must be handled in accordance with privacy obligations.

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PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The Club will appoint at least one **Child Safety Officer** who is responsible for receiving and responding to child safety concerns and complaints.

The Child Safety Officer(s) will:

- respond to concerns raised by staff, volunteers, parents or children
- treat all reports confidentially and seriously
- ensure appropriate action is taken

All complaints, concerns, incidents and allegations relating to child safety will be documented and recorded by the Club in a confidential manner.

The Club will maintain a clear and consistent process for reviewing, investigating and resolving complaints, including documenting outcomes and any actions taken.

If a concern relates to a Child Safety Officer(s), the matter must be reported to the Club President or another appropriate committee member.

Recognising and reporting child abuse

A person may, in the course of participating in our sport or other club activities, or in carrying out activities on behalf of the club, form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

If a person is concerned about an immediate risk to a child's safety, the person must contact one of our Child Safety Officers as soon as practicable.

If a person receives information that leads them to form a reasonable belief that an offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16 years) by another person (of or over the age of 18 years), the person has a legal obligation to disclose that information to the Police as soon as it is practicable. Individuals who fail to comply with this obligation under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) may be subject to a penalty of 3 years imprisonment.

Reasonable grounds for belief

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- the child is in need of protection;
- the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical or sexual injury; and
- the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

To form a reasonable belief, you should consider and objectively assess all the relevant facts, such as the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there is any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

Any person that makes a report in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations (whether mandatory or discretionary) will be supported by the WBC and will not be penalised by WBC for making the report.

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If a person is uncertain as to whether they should make a report to an external authority in relation to the safety of a child, they may speak to the WBC president or contact **Child FIRST** on **1300 721 383** for confidential guidance and information. If in doubt, ask for assistance from one of our Child Safety Officers.

Risk Management

We recognise the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and use this to inform our policy, procedures and activity planning. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children. To reduce the risk of child abuse occurring, adults to whom this policy applies should avoid direct, unsupervised contact with children.

For example, this should be a consideration when:

- using change room facilities;
- physical contact when coaching or managing children.
- using accommodation or overnight stays;
- travel;
- in regards to bowls pennant selection of juniors, Selection Committee will be informed of children requiring supervision and transportation where parents/guardians are unavailable. Rinks will be selected with the child's safety and participation in mind.
- In regards to bowls pennant, parents and children will have the opportunity to discuss and nominate a "caretaker" on pennant days where there is no parent/guardian supervision. The "caretaker" will be the adult who plays in the same rink, has a current WWCC and responsible for the safety of the child. The family and "caretaker" have a verbal agreement to this, supported by the Selection and Bowls Section Committees.
- If no "caretaker" can be nominated, the parent/guardian must make arrangements for supervision.
- The child will travel with the "caretaker" and rink members where possible, and not alone.

Anyone found to be not complying with these strategies may be prohibited, by the WBC Board, from participating in club activities pending the outcome of an inquiry.

If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, the WBC will follow the reporting procedure outlined in Bowling Victoria documentation and take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount.

The Club will regularly review risks to child safety and implement strategies to minimise or remove those risks.

Child Safe Code of Conduct

All persons engaged with the Club must comply with the following standards of behaviour:

- treat children with respect and dignity
- listen to and respond to children's concerns
- maintain professional boundaries at all times
- act in the best interests of the child

All persons must not:

- engage in any behaviour that is abusive, harmful or inappropriate

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- be alone with a child unnecessarily
- develop inappropriate relationships with children
- communicate privately with children online outside approved channels
- ignore or fail to report suspected child abuse

POLICY BREACHES

It is a breach of this policy for any person to which this policy applies, to have been found to have done anything contrary to this policy. Any person who may breach this policy is subject to disciplinary processes as outlined in the Bowls Victoria Policy Manual.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, including removal from duties or termination of involvement with the Club.

PROCEDURES

CHILD SAFE AND CHILD FRIENDLY GUIDELINES TO PREVENT AND MANAGE RISKS OF CHILD ABUSE

Change Rooms

Adult officials, regardless of gender, should only enter change rooms if accompanied by another adult. Prior to entering change rooms, officials should notify the people in the change room of their intended entrance. For the avoidance of doubt this requirement does not apply to parents/legal guardians when in a room with their child.

Club rooms, offices and other accommodation

No official should be alone in a room with a junior without the presence of another adult. The doors should always be open. Should it be necessary for an official to be alone in the room with a junior, the Team Manager or other responsible official must be informed. For the avoidance of doubt this requirement does not apply to parents/legal guardians when in a room with their child.

Travel - General

No junior member is to travel unaccompanied in a vehicle with any team member. All team members have a 'duty of care' for juniors and they must meet that duty and avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with persons less than 18 years of age wherever possible. For the avoidance of doubt this requirement does not apply to parents/legal guardians when in a vehicle with their child.

- Selection Committee will be informed of children requiring supervision and transportation where parents/guardians are unavailable.
- Rinks will be selected with the child's safety and participation in mind.
- Parents and children will have the opportunity to discuss and nominate a "caretaker" on pennant days where there is no parent/guardian supervision.
- The "caretaker" will be the adult who plays in the same rink, has a current WWCC and responsible for the safety of the child.
- The family and "caretaker" have a verbal agreement to this, supported by the Selection and Bowls Section Committees.

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- If no “caretaker” can be nominated, the parent/guardian must make arrangements for supervision.
- The child will travel with the “caretaker” and rink members where possible, and not alone.
- Where practicable, at least two adults should be present when transporting children.

Coach Assistance

All coaches must have a WWCC if working directly with children. They must ensure that all physical contact with juniors which occurs when coaching is appropriate for the situation and necessary for the junior’s safety.

It is strongly recommended that:

- coaches ensure that there are other adults present whenever coaching
- coaches take care to explain the procedure to the child prior to beginning any physical contact
- coaches obtain consent from the junior prior to beginning any physical contact

DEFINITIONS	• Child means a person involved in the activities of the Warrnambool Bowls Club who is under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child. • Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm. • Child abuse can take a broad range of forms including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse and neglect. People to whom this policy applies need to be aware that child abuse can occur whenever there is actual or potential harm to a child. • Sexual offence means a criminal offence involving sexual activity or actions of indecency or any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual activity or matters beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. It includes child grooming, which includes actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child (or the child’s carer, family or supervisor) to lower the child’s inhibitions and prepare them for engagement in a sexual offence. • Voluntary Reporting means any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from any form of child abuse, may disclose that information to the Police or DHHS.
Victoria’s Child Safe Standards	Victorian law requires organisations that work with children to meet the Victorian Child Safe Standards as of 1 January 2023. The eleven standards are: 1. Organisations establish a culturally environment in which the diverse and unique identifies and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued. 2. Child Safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture. 3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

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	4. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing. 5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice. 6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.' 7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused. 8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training. 9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed. 10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved. 11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.
RELATED DOCUMENTS & LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS	Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic) Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) Bowls Victoria Policy Manual
Approved By:	
Date for Review:	1/06/2028

This policy will be reviewed at least every two (2) years, or earlier if there are changes to legislation, Child Safe Standards, or organisational practices.

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Appendix A – Our Child Safe Policy (for Junior Players)

At Warrnambool Bowls Club, we want you to feel safe, happy and included every time you come to the club.

Bowls is about having fun, learning new skills, and being part of a team — and your safety always comes first.

Your rights

- You have the right to feel **safe at all times**
 - You have the right to be **treated with respect**
 - You have the right to **have a say and be listened to**
 - You can **speak up if something doesn't feel right**
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What the Club will do

- We will make sure bowls is **fun, safe and fair**
 - We will **listen to you** if you are worried or upset
 - We will take all concerns **seriously**
 - We will make sure there is always a **safe adult around to help you**
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What is not okay

At our club, it is not okay for anyone to:

- Bully, tease or pick on you
 - Leave you feeling uncomfortable, scared or left out
 - Ask you to do things that feel unsafe
 - Be alone with you when it isn't appropriate
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Staying safe at the Club

- You should always be with your team, your “caretaker”, or another group
- If you need help, look for a **coach, committee member, or another trusted adult**
- If you are travelling to games, you should always go with your team or an approved adult

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If something feels wrong

If anything makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe:

- Tell a **parent, coach, or trusted adult**
 - Talk to your **team captain or caretaker**
 - Speak to a **Child Safety Officer** at the club
 - Keep telling someone until you get help
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Remember

- It is **always okay** to speak up
- You will **never get in trouble** for asking for help
- The adults at the club are there to **keep you safe**