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VQ Child Safety Policy

Policy:	Child Safety Policy	
Approved by:	VQ Board Members	
Dates:	Board Endorsed Date:	29 July 2026
	Commencement Date:	29 July 2026
	Review Date:	14 October 2026
	Next Review Date:	14 October 2028

1. Introduction

Volleyball Queensland's (**VQ**) Child Safety Policy has been implemented to demonstrate the strong commitment of the VQ Board of Management, management, permanent, temporary and casual employees, work experience or industry placements, coaches, trainers, service providers, athletes, volunteers, members and affiliates to child safety and safeguarding procedures.

VQ is committed to promoting a safe and friendly environment for all children, by placing their safety and welfare first. VQ supports the rights of all children and will act immediately to ensure safe and friendly environments are maintained at all times. This includes obtaining the express, informed consent of parents and guardians, and respecting the right of parents, guardians and children to opt out of such consent at any time.

VQ acknowledges that it is the right of every child that attends a VQ or VQ endorsed event to feel safe and protected at all times. It is VQ's priority to create and maintain safe environments for all children to reflect this.

VQ is a child safe entity within the meaning of the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld) (**the Act**). VQ is required to implement and comply with the 10 Child Safe Standards and the Universal Principle under the Act. This policy gives effect to those obligations. The Queensland Family and Child Commission (**QFCC**) is the independent oversight body responsible for monitoring compliance with the Child Safe Standards and the Universal Principle.

VQ's obligations under the Child Safe Standards commenced on 1 April 2026. VQ's obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme commence on 1 July 2026.

Should a person wish to make any enquiries in relation to this policy, please contact VQ on (07) 3367 1991 or via email at admin@vq.org.au.

2. Scope

VQ requires anyone who has a reasonable suspicion or concern regarding the abuse or risk of abuse of a child within volleyball, whether by that child's parent/s or caregiver/s or others, to

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immediately report that concern to the police or relevant governing body (i.e. Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services (**DCSDS**)), and additionally to VQ where it relates to a VQ staff member.

It is the role of the police or relevant government body to investigate any report or notification and therefore VQ will not investigate any incident or concern beyond a report or notification to relevant parties (i.e. police, DCSDS). VQ however may need to take advice from the relevant authorities.

VQ encourages all children to participate in volleyball events and actively seeks the opinions, views, and suggestions of children and parents. VQ also encourages children and parents who are members or associated with VQ to have constructive input into the development of a safe and protective environment for all children.

VQ provides information and support to children about what to do in the event they feel unsafe or if they are subject to harassment or abuse. VQ will immediately respond to any concerns from children and/or parents regarding child abuse.

3. Policy

VQ's Child Safety Policy highlights the dedication of VQ to protect all children from abuse, harassment and mistreatment, by incorporating our values of inclusivity, equity, respect, pride and commitment.

By Australian law, a person is deemed a child if they are under the age of 18 years old. Under the *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld), 'harm' is defined to mean any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychosocial or emotional wellbeing, it being immaterial how the harm is caused. Child abuse is classified as any form of physical and/or emotional abuse that a child may experience, or be at risk of, by adults or other children.

Child abuse can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect or by sexual abuse or exploitation and may be caused by a single incident or can be a number of different incidents that take place over time. Child abuse can often vary in form and severity, however VQ will treat every variant of child abuse as very serious and is committed to promptly addressing any issue/s that arises.

3.1. Universal Principle: Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children

The *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld) requires VQ, in implementing the Child Safe Standards, to provide an environment that promotes and upholds the right to cultural safety of children who are Aboriginal peoples or Torres Strait Islander peoples (**the Universal Principle**). This is a mandatory legal obligation separate from and additional to the 10 Child Safe Standards.

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VQ recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children may face unique risks and vulnerabilities and that culturally safe environments are essential to their participation and wellbeing in sport. VQ is committed to:

- creating and maintaining environments that are safe, welcoming, and respectful for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families;
- providing all staff and volunteers with awareness of the cultural safety obligations under the Act; and
- cross-referencing and implementing the VQ Cultural Safety Policy, which provides further detail on VQ's practices for promoting cultural safety.

Where VQ becomes aware that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child has experienced, or is at risk of experiencing, harm in a culturally specific context, VQ will seek culturally appropriate support and guidance in its response.

3.2. Children's Rights and Participation

VQ is committed to ensuring that children are informed about their rights and are able to participate in decisions that affect them. Children have the right to:

- be safe and protected from harm at all VQ activities;
- be treated with dignity and respect;
- raise concerns or complaints and have those concerns taken seriously; and
- receive information in a format that is accessible and age appropriate.

VQ will make child-friendly information about this policy and how to raise a concern available to children at VQ events and on the VQ website. VQ will seek the views of children and young people in the periodic review of this policy.

3.3. Family and Community Engagement

VQ recognises that families and communities play a central role in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children. VQ is committed to:

- communicating this policy and VQ's child safety obligations to parents and guardians through the VQ website, and other appropriate channels or as requested;
- actively encouraging parents and guardians to provide feedback on VQ's child safety practices;
- informing parents and guardians of the reporting pathways available to them if they have a concern; and

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- engaging with the broader volleyball community on child safety matters as appropriate.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
Child	An individual under 18 years of age.
Child protection	Any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.
Parent	The child's mother, father or someone else, having or exercising parental responsibility for the child.
Caregiver	An individual who provides, in a non-contractual and unpaid capacity, ongoing care or assistance to another person who, because of disability, frailty, chronic illness or pain, requires assistance with everyday tasks.
Breach	Any action or inaction by VQ staff, children or parents/guardians who fail to comply with the VQ Child Safety Policy.
Mandatory reporter	Any person who is legally required to make a report to the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services or the police if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection. It includes teachers, principals, registered psychologists, nurses, doctors and midwives.
Affiliate	An association, club or other organisation that is an affiliated member of VQ.
Grooming	When an individual/s builds a relationship, trust and/or emotional connection with a child with the intent to manipulate, exploit and abuse the child.
Harm	Any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychosocial or emotional wellbeing, regardless of how the harm is caused. Under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld), harm also includes emotional or psychological harm and ill-treatment of a child.
Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld)	The primary legislation governing child safety obligations for VQ as a child safe entity. The Act establishes 10 Child Safe Standards, a Universal Principle for cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and a Reportable Conduct Scheme.
QFCC	The Queensland Family and Child Commission, the independent body responsible for overseeing compliance with the Child Safe Standards and the Universal Principle under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld).
Reportable Conduct	Conduct by a worker of a reporting entity that causes or risks causing harm to a child, as defined in the Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld). This includes sexual offences against a child, sexual misconduct with a child, ill-treatment of a child, significant neglect of a

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Term	Definition
	child, and conduct that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.
Head of Entity	For VQ, the Chief Executive Officer is the head of entity for the purposes of the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld) and bears primary responsibility for compliance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
Universal Principle	The requirement under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld) that VQ, in implementing the Child Safe Standards, provide an environment that promotes and upholds the right to cultural safety of children who are Aboriginal peoples or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

5. Behaviour Standards

The table below provides clear guidelines to assist and educate all VQ staff to understand and identify what VQ deems as appropriate and inappropriate behaviour when working with children.

Behaviour	Appropriate	Inappropriate
Language	Using encouraging and/or positive words and a positive tone of voice; open and honest communication.	Insults, criticisms or name calling; bullying, swearing or yelling; sexually suggestive comments and/or jokes.
Relationships	Being a positive influence; building relationships based on care and trust; empowering children to share in the decision-making process.	Favouritism or giving gifts; spending excessive amounts of time alone with children; bullying and/or harassment; grooming children.
Physical contact	Allowing for personal space; touching due to medical emergency or protecting from physical harm; non-threatening contact.	Violent or aggressive behaviour including hitting, kicking, slapping or pushing; kissing or touching of a sexual nature consistent with grooming.
Online and technology	Using official VQ communication channels; using internet/mobile phone for work-related purposes only; reporting concerns about online communications.	Sending personal messages to children outside official channels; sharing or requesting images of children; use of social media to contact children privately.
Other	Appropriate attire/clothing for role e.g. the VQ uniform; adherence to all VQ policies.	Using alcohol and/or other substances before or during work; inappropriate clothing; sending inappropriate emails, texts, photos etc.

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6. Procedures to Minimise Harm to Children

This section outlines procedures for ensuring that the harm to children is minimised in the following situations.

6.1. Physical Contact

Physical contact with children should only occur in the event of developing sport skills; preventing or responding to an injury in an emergency; preventing or responding to an injury as part of normal role; and/or meeting sport specific requirements.

All physical contact by VQ staff should fulfil the following criteria:

- Physical contact should be appropriate for the development of a sport skill.
- Children should be congratulated or comforted in public, not in an isolated setting.
- VQ staff should not initiate physical contact with children, except in accordance with this policy, and should be aware of their proximity to children at all times.
- VQ staff are to follow the procedures outlined in this policy in demonstrating techniques related to specific activities. VQ staff must act diligently in their duties at all times, including undertaking activities and demonstrating techniques to children.
- Where possible, and subject to the nature of the activity and environmental conditions, it is preferable for VQ staff to work with children in a group setting, rather than in a one-on-one setting.

6.2. Demonstrating Technique and/or Developing Skills

VQ staff are to demonstrate techniques and/or develop skills relating to a particular activity only in full view of other persons and never in private. The following guidelines are to be followed:

- Prior to touching a child or young person: VQ staff are to give a verbal explanation of how, where, when and why so that the child and other persons can hear.
- Ask the child or young person for permission: After the verbal explanation, VQ staff are to ask the child if touching for the purpose of carrying out the activity is acceptable. If permission is granted, the demonstration is to continue.

6.3. Being Alone with Children

VQ staff should not be alone with children and should have at least one other person present (preferably an adult), apart from exceptional circumstances, such as a life-threatening situation where first aid is required to be administered.

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If a child or young person approaches a VQ staff member and wishes to talk privately about a matter, the VQ staff member should endeavour to immediately address the situation in an open area and in the sight of other adults (e.g. coaches, officials, parents/guardians).

Ideally, the VQ staff member should advise another VQ staff member or parent and ask them to stay within sight while discussing the matter with the child. If the child becomes emotional, the VQ staff member should seek support from the nearby adult to address the child's concerns.

6.4. Collection Arrangements

VQ staff should contact parents/guardians to notify of collection procedures and must comply with the following procedures:

- Notify children and their parents/guardians of the times of practices and games, when the parent can expect to collect the child and that it is not the responsibility of a VQ staff member to transport children home if parents/guardians are delayed.
- It is desirable that the parent/guardian of the second to last child/young person take the last child home or wait with a VQ staff member and the child until the last child has been collected.
- Ensure that VQ staff have access to a phone so they can attempt to contact the child's parent/guardian in the event that a child has not been collected in a timely manner.

Parents/guardians of children are required to provide annual written consent to collection arrangements.

6.5. Transport of Children

VQ staff, coaches and volunteers must not transport children in any vehicle to or from training, competitions or any other VQ activity. This prohibition applies in all circumstances, including where a parent or guardian has provided written consent.

Parents and guardians are responsible for arranging transport for their child to and from all VQ activities. Where a parent or guardian is unable to attend, they must arrange for another adult known to them to provide transport on their behalf.

A breach of this clause will be treated as a serious matter under the VQ Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action.

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6.5.1. Exception: Representative Team Travel for National Championships

An exception to clause 6.5 applies only where VQ arranges supervised team travel for representative athletes participating in National Championships. In these circumstances:

- VQ may arrange minibus hire at the competition or activity location to transport the team between accommodation, venues and official team activities.
- As a minimum, VQ will maintain an overall supervision ratio of one (1) authorised adult to five (5) children across the travelling group, informed by Volleyball Australia guidance.
- At least one (1) authorised adult must be present in every vehicle transporting children. Under no circumstances may an adult travel alone in a vehicle with a single child.
- Where any travelling athlete is aged 13 or under, the athlete must be accompanied on the trip by a parent or authorised guardian.
- All authorised adults must hold a valid Blue Card and be appointed by VQ as team officials for the trip. Authorised adults may include coaches, team managers and other appointed officials and are not limited to VQ employees.
- Parents and guardians must be provided with full details of the travel arrangements in advance, including the names and roles of the supervising adults, the vehicle arrangements and the anticipated travel schedule.
- Explicit written parental consent must be obtained before the athlete participates in any team travel arrangement.
- Where an athlete is under 18 years of age, all tournament correspondence, including accommodation and rooming allocations and travel details, must be directed to the athlete's parent or guardian for review and approval.

Where the event or activity is sanctioned by Volleyball Australia, the Volleyball Australia Travel Policy also applies to the travel, and the higher of the applicable supervision requirements prevails. Any other proposed team travel requires the prior written approval of the CEO and will be subject to the same requirements as set out in this clause. This exception does not extend to local training, competitions or any other VQ activity, where the general prohibition in clause 6.5 continues to apply.

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6.6. Accommodation Arrangements for Athletes Under 18

Where VQ arranges accommodation for athletes under 18 years of age attending interstate National Championships or other sanctioned representative events:

- The athlete must be paired with the next youngest athlete in the team who is of similar age and developmental stage.
- All accommodation arrangements must be approved in writing by the athlete's parent or guardian prior to travel.
- Room allocations must be communicated to parents in advance of the event.
- Gender-appropriate accommodation pairings must be maintained in accordance with the athlete's preference and parental wishes.

VQ recognises that athletes under 18 years of age may be selected to represent Queensland at National Championships. VQ is committed to ensuring appropriate duty of care, supervision, and communication with parents and guardians in all circumstances where minors participate in representative programs.

6.7. Clothing Standard

All children are required to wear appropriate clothing when attending VQ events, training sessions or recovery sessions (i.e. team uniforms and/or appropriate training gear). Any child who does not comply with the relevant clothing standards is not permitted to participate in the required activity.

6.8. Injuries and Illness

Only VQ staff who are qualified in administering first aid or treating sports injuries should attempt to treat an injury. VQ staff should avoid treating injuries out of sight of others. Other considerations include the comfort level and dignity of the child; if necessary, seek medical attention as soon as possible; and VQ staff must always report injuries and any treatment to parents, as well as document the incident in the VQ Incident Report via the Incident Reporting process within the VQ Work Health and Safety Policy.

6.9. Smoking, Alcohol and the Use of Illegal Drugs

Smoking (including vaping) and the consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs is prohibited on any VQ premises. Refer to the Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy further information.

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6.10. Photographing Children

VQ obtains express consent for the photographing or recording of children, and the subsequent use of those photographs and recordings, through the consent options on the VQ membership registration page.

At the point of registration, parents and guardians are presented with a separate consent option in respect of the capture and use of their child's image, likeness and performance for marketing, promotional and related purposes. The consent option is pre-selected (ticked) by default, and parents and guardians may opt out by unticking that option prior to completing the registration.

Where consent has been provided, VQ may use such photographs, video recordings, and the child's name, image, likeness and performance for promotional, educational, reporting or other related purposes, in any form of media. Where consent has not been provided, or has subsequently been withdrawn, no image of the child will be captured or used by VQ for those purposes.

Parents and guardians may withdraw consent at any time, including by unticking the relevant consent option upon membership renewal, or by contacting by email admin@vq.org.au. Withdrawal of consent applies prospectively from the date the request is received and processed and will not apply to material already published or distributed before that date.

All photographs and recordings of children at VQ activities must be taken only by authorised persons, in open settings and in the presence of other adults and must comply with the further requirements set out in the VQ Social Media Policy and the behaviour standards in section 5 of this policy. A record of each member's consent selections is retained by VQ through its membership management system in accordance with VQ's Privacy Policy.

6.11. Use of Technology and Social Media

VQ staff must follow the guidelines set out in the VQ Social Media Policy.

When on VQ premises or representing VQ at an event, VQ staff and children must only use technology, including mobile phones and social media in accordance with their code of conduct.

VQ recognises that online environments carry specific risks for children, including online grooming, cyberbullying, and unsolicited contact. To manage these risks, VQ requires that:

- all communications between VQ staff and children occur through official VQ channels only, and not through personal social media accounts, messaging applications or personal email;
- VQ staff must not accept private friend or follower requests from children participating in VQ activities;

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- any online communication about VQ matters involving children should include parents/guardians where the child is under 18; and
- concerns about online conduct involving children must be reported immediately to the CEO.

Any VQ staff member or child who brings VQ into disrepute through the use of technology or social media may be subject to disciplinary action.

7. Managing Suspicions and/or Disclosures of Child Abuse or Harm

7.1. Process

This section provides an overview of the process for managing suspicions and/or disclosures of child abuse or harm. This process is summarised in the Process for Responding to a Disclosure of Harm to a Child (Appendix B), which VQ staff should regularly refer to.

7.2. Four Categories of Child Abuse or Harm

1. Physical abuse: occurs when a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering non-accidental physical trauma or injury. Physical abuse can include, but not be limited to hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, biting or poisoning.

2. Sexual abuse: occurs when an adult, stronger child or adolescent uses their power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity. Sexual abuse can include, but not be limited to kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner, exposing a sexual body part to a child, having sexual relations with a child under 16 years of age, talking in a sexually explicit way that is not age or developmentally appropriate, making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child, sending obscene mobile text messages or emails to a child, fondling a child in a sexual manner, oral sex, rape or forcing a child to watch a sexual act.

3. Emotional abuse: occurs when a child's social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual development is impaired or threatened. Emotional abuse can include, but not be limited to rejection, hostility, teasing/bullying, yelling, criticism, exposure of a child to domestic or family violence.

4. Neglect: occurs when a child's basic necessities of life are not met and their health and development are affected. Basic necessities can include, but not be limited to food, housing, health care, adequate clothing, personal hygiene, hygienic living conditions, timely provision of medical treatment or adequate supervision.

VQ services a large number of junior members and volunteers and as such is committed to not only building an organisation that consistently supports children but also one that provides a safe and protective environment.

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7.3. Reasonable Grounds to Suspect Harm

VQ staff will have reasonable grounds to suspect harm if:

- A child informs VQ staff that he/she has been harmed.
- A child informs VQ staff that he/she knows another child who has been harmed.
- Someone who knows a child informs VQ staff that the child has been abused.
- Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been harmed or is likely to be harmed.
- VQ staff are concerned at significant changes in the behaviour of a child, or the presence of new unexplained and/or suspicious injuries.
- VQ staff witness the harm occurring. If this is the case, VQ staff should intervene immediately and call the police on 000 (provided it is safe to do so).

7.4. Examples of a Disclosure of Harm

A disclosure of harm may sound like: 'I think I saw...'; 'Somebody told me that...'; 'I just think you should know...'; 'I'm not sure what you can do but...'

7.5. Responding to a Suspicion and/or Disclosure of Harm

All incidents or disclosures of harm or suspicions of harm are to be taken seriously and actioned immediately, regardless of whom perpetrated the harm. VQ staff should:

- Not react in a shocked or critical way or with disbelief to a disclosure.
- Identify a private place to talk to ensure confidentiality (preferably in sight of another adult and not in a closed office) and to make the child or young person making the disclosure more comfortable and less concerned.
- Not give an assurance to the child that the information provided will be kept secret. VQ staff are encouraged to advise the child that they have done the right thing in making the disclosure, but the disclosure must be reported so that someone can help keep them safe.
- Not attempt to conduct their own investigation or mediate an outcome between the parties.
- Only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter. VQ staff should avoid asking probing questions as this could cause distress, confusion and interfere with any later enquiries.
- Act on the basis that the information the person is providing is accurate.
- Ensure the child or young person in question is safe.

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- Maintain the safety of other children.

7.6. Documenting a Disclosure or Suspicion of Harm

VQ staff must immediately document a disclosure/suspicion of harm, using the incident report form. In the event that the record is not readily available, the VQ staff member must record the date and time the record was made; the name, age and address of the child; time, date and location of incident; the complainant (if not the child); who was present; reason for suspecting abuse or harm; exactly what the person disclosing said; the questions asked by the VQ staff member; any comments the VQ staff member made; and the actions taken following disclosure, including arrangements for the immediate protection of the child.

7.7. Reporting a Disclosure or Suspicion of Harm

VQ supports and encourages a person to report any form of child abuse to the police if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, or they are concerned about the safety, health or wellbeing of a child.

Any person(s) who reports child abuse in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations (whether mandatory or discretionary) will be fully supported by VQ and will not be penalised or victimised for making the report.

If any person(s) is uncertain as to whether they should report child abuse to an external authority in regard to child safety, he or she is advised to speak to the VQ CEO. If in doubt, please ask for assistance.

If an allegation is made against a VQ staff member, VQ will take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount. An initial step will involve the withdrawal of the accused person(s) from active duty (e.g. standing down, reassignment to a role without direct contact with children, working under closer supervision during an investigation, working from home, or any other measures deemed appropriate depending on the seriousness of the allegation).

VQ will investigate allegations of inappropriate conduct against a child in accordance with procedural fairness and will handle the allegations in a confidential manner.

VQ will cooperate with the directions of the police regarding any investigation conducted by these authorities. VQ will keep a register of any allegations regarding inappropriate conduct.

7.8. Reporting Actual Harm

In the event a VQ staff member observes actual harm towards a child, the VQ staff member must intervene immediately, provided it is safe to do so, and as soon as possible inform the police. If it is unsafe to intervene, immediately call the police for assistance on 000. As soon as possible, the VQ staff member must notify their supervisor or manager who will alert the VQ CEO.

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7.9. Actions Following a Disclosure or Suspicion of Harm

In accordance with the *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld), a person who reports suspected child abuse is protected from civil or criminal legal actions and is not considered to have broken any code of conduct or ethics.

Details of the person who made the report are to be kept completely confidential and will not be made available to the family of the child or young person, or the person against whom the allegation has been made.

If the person who is alleged to have harmed a child is a VQ staff member, their duties must be reviewed. If they continue to interact/work with children, ensure that they are appropriately supervised at all times. The VQ CEO will seek legal advice as to the extent to which that person can carry out duties in the organisation.

7.10. Child-Focused Complaints Pathway

VQ is committed to ensuring that its complaints processes are accessible to children and that children can raise concerns safely and without fear of reprisal. In addition to the general complaint's pathway available to all persons, VQ provides the following child-specific arrangements:

- Children may raise a concern with any trusted adult connected with VQ, including a coach, event official, or VQ staff member. That person is responsible for escalating the concern to the CEO in accordance with this policy.
- Children will not be required to raise a concern directly with the person about whom they are complaining.
- VQ will acknowledge receipt of a child's concern within two business days and will communicate the outcome to the child and their parent or guardian in an age-appropriate manner.
- Children and their parents/guardians may also contact the QFCC directly to raise a concern about VQ's compliance with the Child Safe Standards.
- VQ will make information about how to raise a concern available to children through the VQ website, event materials, and at VQ competitions and camps.

All complaints involving children will be managed in accordance with the VQ Complaints Handling Procedure and, where required, the Reportable Conduct Scheme provisions.

7.11. Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Reportable Conduct Scheme under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld) commences for VQ on 1 July 2026. From that date, VQ has obligations to investigate and report certain conduct by its workers that causes or risks causing harm to children.

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Information regarding the VQ Reportable Conduct Scheme is available on the VQ SharePoint site.

What is Reportable Conduct?

Reportable conduct includes the following conduct by a VQ worker:

- a sexual offence against a child;
- sexual misconduct with a child;
- ill-treatment of a child (conduct that is unreasonable and seriously inappropriate, improper, inhumane or cruel);
- significant neglect of a child;
- conduct that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child; and
- any other conduct prescribed by regulation as reportable conduct.

A worker includes employees, volunteers, contractors, trainees, and persons undertaking work experience for VQ.

7.12. Obligations of the Head of Entity

The CEO, as head of entity for the purposes of the Act, is responsible for:

- receiving and assessing allegations of reportable conduct involving VQ workers;
- conducting or overseeing an investigation of any reportable conduct allegation within the timeframes specified by the QFCC;
- notifying the QFCC of a reportable conduct allegation in accordance with the Act and QFCC guidelines;
- ensuring that any worker who is the subject of a reportable conduct allegation is managed in accordance with this policy, including by standing them down from duties involving contact with children where appropriate;
- reporting the outcome of any investigation to the QFCC; and
- maintaining a register of all reportable conduct allegations and their outcomes.

7.13. Protections for Reporters

A person who makes a report of reportable conduct in good faith will not be penalised or victimised for making the report. VQ prohibits any form of retaliation against a person who raises a reportable conduct concern.

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7.14. Interaction with other Processes

Where a reportable conduct allegation also involves potential criminal conduct, VQ will cooperate with Queensland Police and will not conduct an internal investigation in a manner that may prejudice any criminal investigation or prosecution. VQ will also comply with any directions of the QFCC in relation to the conduct of investigations.

8. Roles and Responsibilities of Personnel Protecting Children

The VQ Board of Management has primary accountability for VQ's compliance with its child safety obligations and with the Child Safe Standards under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld). The Board receives regular reporting from the CEO on child safety matters and child safety is a standing item on the Board agenda.

Personnel involved in protecting children include the VQ Board, management, permanent, temporary and casual employees, work experience or industry placements, coaches, trainers, service providers, athletes, volunteers, members and affiliates. These people have responsibilities regarding the protection of children and are expected to fulfil the following:

- Understand the rights of children, as appropriate to their role.
- Respect the cultural and religious practices of families who access VQ services, programs or events.
- Understand and appropriately respond to the needs of children with developmental delays or disabilities.
- Appropriately act on any concerns raised by children.
- Understand the definitions, indicators and impact of child abuse.
- Know and follow regulations in relation to the care of children.
- Co-operate with police and/or other formal investigations to the best of their ability.
- Not harm or exploit children who access VQ services.
- Complete mandatory child safety training at induction and on an agreed refresher training schedule thereafter.
- Report any concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing to the CEO in accordance with this policy.

9. Guidelines to Prevent and Manage Child Abuse

9.1. Change Rooms/Toilets

VQ staff, regardless of gender, should only enter change rooms if accompanied by a supervisor who is responsible for having the athletes appropriately dressed for the scheduled

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activity in a timely manner. However, if this is not possible, VQ staff are required to supervise the children and appropriate protocols should be followed.

These protocols include waiting in close proximity to the entrance of the change room/toilet for the children (e.g. in the corridor outside) but not actually entering the facility, unless there is a valid reason to do so, such as an emergency situation. In this situation, it is preferable for a VQ staff member of the same gender to supervise children, although it is acknowledged that this is not always possible.

Prior to entering change rooms/toilets, VQ staff should, where possible, notify their supervisor of their intended entrance, and must loudly and clearly announce to the occupants in the room before entering to ensure privacy and respect for all. Photos must not be taken in change rooms/toilets.

9.2. Hotel Rooms and Other Accommodation

No VQ staff member should be alone in the hotel room of a child without the presence of another adult. The doors should always be open. VQ staff must always obtain separate sleeping accommodation from children (i.e. separate rooms). In the event that a VQ staff member is required to respond to an emergency raised by a child on an overnight trip, the VQ staff member should, where possible, attend with another adult. No VQ staff member is to take photos in hotel rooms and other sleeping accommodation.

9.3. Travel

All team members over 18 years of age retain an overriding responsibility for the welfare of all athletes they accompany during team travel activities. They have a duty of care for athletes and they must meet that duty and avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with persons less than 18 years of age wherever possible.

9.4. Billeting

Where possible, two children or young persons should be billeted together. VQ staff must take into consideration gender and put males with males and females with females. VQ staff must ensure the billeting family have Blue Cards or another State or Territory valid working with children check. The accommodation for billeting children must have suitable facilities.

9.5. Sexual Relationships While on Tour

During all team travel activities, employees or volunteers must not, under any circumstances, engage in conduct of a sexual nature with a child. Improper conduct of a sexual nature by an official towards a child includes any form of child sexual abuse as well as inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature; obscene language of a sexual nature; suggestive remarks

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or action; jokes of a sexual nature; obscene gestures; unwarranted and inappropriate touching; sexual exhibitionism; use of any device to show/watch offensive material.

9.6. Coach Assistance

All coaches must ensure that all physical contact with children, which occurs when coaching, is appropriate for the situation and necessary for the child's safety. Coaches should 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; and coaches obtain consent from the child prior to beginning any physical contact.

9.7. Engaging New Personnel

The minimum standard for background checks of VQ staff is the law as it applies in Queensland. VQ undertakes a rigorous recruitment and screening process for all staff and volunteers which aims to: promote and protect the safety of all children who participate in the activities of VQ; identify and recruit the safest and most suitable candidates who share VQ's values and commitment to protect children; and prevent a person from working at VQ if they pose an unacceptable risk to children.

VQ requires all staff to pass the recruitment and screening process prior to commencing their engagement. VQ requires all affiliated club personnel including owners, committee members, volunteers, coaches and referees, and anyone else who has contact with children to possess a valid working with children check.

10. Breach of Policy

This section outlines the steps to be taken following a breach of the policy in order to address the breach in a fair and supportive manner. A breach is any action or inaction by VQ staff, children or parents/guardians who fail to comply with the VQ Child Safety Policy.

10.1. Process to Manage a Breach

Breaches will be managed in a fair, unbiased and supportive manner. All people concerned will be advised of the process; all people concerned will be able to provide their version of events; the details of the breach, including the versions of all parties and the outcomes will be recorded; and matters discussed in relation to the breach will be kept confidential, and an appropriate outcome will be decided.

10.2. Suitable Managerial Responses

Where a VQ staff member is alleged to have committed harm to a child, their roles and duties must be reviewed by the VQ CEO. Depending on the nature of the alleged breach, managerial responses may include providing additional training; providing closer supervision;

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referring the complaint or allegation to the VQ Complaints Handling Procedure; or appointing an independent investigator.

Any findings of unacceptable conduct resulting from an investigation either internal or by an external law enforcement agency will be considered in accordance with VQ's Complaints Handling Procedure and Code of Conduct. This may result in further disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

Where the conduct constitutes reportable conduct within the meaning of the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld), the CEO will comply with the Reportable Conduct Scheme obligations set out in this policy and as documented on the VQ SharePoint site.

11. VQ Blue Card Requirements

All VQ staff (including volunteers and trainees) must hold a valid Working with Children Blue Card. Blue Cards are issued by Blue Card Services, Public Safety Business Agency and the Queensland Government. Failure to obtain a valid Blue Card will lead to the review of an employee's current employment status and duties.

11.1. Records of Employee Blue Cards

VQ staff without valid Blue Cards must not access VQ facilities, nor work with children. The CEO or their delegate processes the criminal history checks and Blue Card applications for all new VQ employees. The CEO or their delegate maintains a confidential register containing the personal details and: (i) when the person applied and/or the date of issue of the positive notice and Blue Card; (ii) the expiry date of the Blue Card; and (iii) the renewal date (this will be set at least 30 business days before expiry).

The CEO or their delegate also maintains a written record of whether a negative notice has been issued; any change in status to a Blue Card; and any changes of personal information of an employee.

Within 60 business days of the renewal date for an employee's Blue Card, the CEO or their delegate notifies the employee that they need to apply for a Blue Card before that date.

11.2. Notifying Blue Card Services

Where a staff member holding a Blue Card advises VQ that there has been a change in their police information, the CEO is to be informed and will advise Blue Card Services immediately through submitting a change in police information notification form. VQ must not allow the VQ staff member to work with children until the form has been submitted and any revised status of the employee's Blue Card is known.

Where a VQ staff member is no longer employed by VQ, the CEO will submit a 'no longer with organisation' form to Blue Card Services.

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11.3. Training

VQ recognises that training in child protection related matters enhances skills and knowledge of all staff and therefore minimises the risk of harm to children.

VQ requires all new staff and volunteers who work with children to complete mandatory child safety induction training before commencing any role involving contact with children. All existing VQ staff receive annual training in the following areas:

- Identifying, assessing and minimising risks, including the different types of harm that may occur.
- The VQ Child Safety Policy.
- Compulsory training as required by industry standards or legislation.
- Handling a disclosure or suspicion of harm, including reporting guidelines.
- The Reportable Conduct Scheme obligations and how to recognise and report reportable conduct.
- The Universal Principle and cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Training records will be maintained by the CEO or their delegate. Training completion will be recorded and reported to the Board of Management annually.

12. Policy Promotion

This policy will be made available to all members via registration and on the VQ website. This policy will be communicated to all staff, Board, and committee members via Board and staff meetings. References to this policy will be included in documentation provided to all team officials that represent VQ.

Where practicable to do so, VQ will make every effort to provide child-friendly information about this policy available at VQ events and competitions and will ensure that children know how to access this information and how to raise a concern.

13. Support for Employees and Volunteers

VQ always seeks to attract and retain the best employees and volunteers for all roles and positions. VQ provides support, training and supervision to ensure that people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. Our employees and volunteers who have regular contact or direct relationships with children are regularly provided with support and training to continually improve the security of the environment for children's safety and promote child safe practices.

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14. Review Process

This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier following: a critical incident involving a child; a legislative change; a QFCC direction or recommendation; or significant changes to VQ's operations or programs. VQ encourages all staff, children and parents/guardians to be involved in a review of the policy.

Each review will expressly assess VQ's compliance with each of the 10 Child Safe Standards and the Universal Principle under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld). The outcomes of each review will be reported to the Board of Management.

The review is to consider any issues VQ has identified with the policy, such as whether policies and procedures were followed; whether any incidents relating to children and risk management issues occurred; issues with the actual process used to manage any incidents; the effectiveness of VQ's policies and procedures in preventing or minimising harm to children; and issues with the content and frequency of training in relation to the policy.

In addition to the regular review of the policy, recommendations for changes to the policy may be submitted to the Board for consideration at any time. If changes are accepted, VQ staff, children or parents/guardians will be advised of any changes to policies and procedures via the VQ webpage, email and other appropriate communication channels, and training will be provided to VQ staff if necessary.

15. Reference Documents

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld)
- *Criminal Code Act 1899* (Qld)
- *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld)
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (Qld)
- *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld)

The following policies and procedures are related to this Child Safety Policy and should also be read in conjunction with this policy:

- VQ Constitution
- VA Member Protection Policy and VA Travel Policy
- VQ Code of Conduct
- VQ Social Media Policy

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- VQ Complaints Handling Procedure
- VQ Incident Management Procedure
- VQ Cultural Safety Policy
- VQ Whistleblower Policy
- VQ Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy

The following QFCC resources support implementation of this policy:

- QFCC Child Safe Standards Guidelines: www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/childsafe
- QFCC Child Safe Standards Self-Assessment Tool

Queensland Child Protection Guide: www.communities.qld.gov.au

Blue Card Services: www.bluecard.qld.gov.au