

HWLLEN's Commitment to Child Safety

Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network (HWLLEN) adopts and complies with the 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards (introduced in July 2022) and embeds child safety and wellbeing into organisational leadership, governance, culture, systems and practices.

HWLLEN ensures child safety is embedded throughout the recruitment, engagement, reporting, and response processes and maintains continuous improvement activities in accordance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and HWLLEN Child Safety Policy.

All employees, volunteers, mentors, contractors and Board members are required to promote child safety, report concerns and act in the best interests of children and young people at all times.

HWLLEN is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful environment for all children and young people who participate in our programs and activities.

We believe that every child has the right to feel safe, valued and heard. The safety and wellbeing of children is our highest priority, and we have zero tolerance for child abuse or harm of any kind.

HWLLEN is committed to:

- promoting and protecting the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people
- creating culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- supporting the participation and inclusion of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disability, and children who identify as LGBTQIA+
- ensuring staff, volunteers and partners understand and uphold their responsibilities to protect children
- responding to concerns, complaints and allegations in a prompt, fair and child focused manner
- continuously reviewing our practices to strengthen child safety across all programs and activities.

All HWLLEN staff, volunteers and contractors are required to comply with our Child Safety Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct and Child Safe processes.

HWLLEN Cultural Safety Commitment Statement

1. Our Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children & Young People

HWLLEN acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Hume - the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People, Gunung-Willam-Balluk Clan - and Whittlesea - Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People - of the Kulin Nations.

We respect the spiritual and cultural connections of First Nations people to country, water, and community and recognise these connections as being vital to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people.

We are committed to establishing and maintaining an environment where the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are deeply respected, valued, and celebrated. We actively support and encourage the right of every First Nations child and young person to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights freely without fear of judgment.

2. Zero Tolerance for Racism

We declare a strict **zero-tolerance stance against racism and discrimination** in any form. We are dedicated to ensuring that:

- Any structural, behavioural, or casual racism within our organisation is swiftly identified. **[Identification]**
- All forms of racial prejudice or microaggressions are directly confronted and challenged. **[Confrontation]**
- Immediate, appropriate administrative and disciplinary actions are taken against anyone who perpetuates racism. **[Consequences]**
- Clear, safe, and child-focused reporting pathways are provided for children and families to voice concerns regarding safety and discrimination. **[Reporting]**

3. Inclusion of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities

We value the rich diversity of all children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We commit to creating inclusive programs where multi-faith and multicultural identities are welcomed, family traditions are respected, and language barriers are proactively minimised so that every child feels a secure sense of belonging.

4. Key Actions to Embed Cultural Safety

HWLLEN commits to:

- **Providing cultural training** to equip all employees and volunteers with ongoing cultural awareness to gain an understanding of the intersection of cultural safety and overall child safety.
- **Elevating voices** by encouraging and supporting children and young people to express their culture and feel safe to be involved in decisions that affect them.
- **Providing culturally safe environments** by working with our local communities to strengthen participation from Aboriginal children and their families and CALD community.
- **Review practice** by conducting annual reflective assessments of our inclusion practices using evidence-based frameworks to continually improve our workplace culture.

HWLLEN Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy Statement

1. Our Commitment

HWLLEN has **zero tolerance for racism, discrimination, and bigotry** in any form. We are committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where every child and young person is respected, valued, and empowered. Discrimination or racist behaviour directly compromises a child's safety, well-being, and willingness to speak up. We recognize that upholding equity is fundamental to preventing child abuse and harm.

2. Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children

In accordance with Child Safe Standard 1, our organisation proactively supports the cultural safety of First Nations children by ensuring that:

- Children are actively encouraged and supported to express their culture, languages, and unique identities. **[Cultural Rights]**
- We actively facilitate the inclusion and participation of First Nations children, their families, and their communities in our decision-making processes. **[Participation]**
- All staff, volunteers, and leaders are equipped to understand, respect, and appreciate the historic strengths and importance of Aboriginal culture. **[Acknowledge Strengths]**
- Any incident of racism towards First Nations children will be immediately identified, confronted, reported, and managed with serious consequences. **[Confronting Racism]**

3. Promoting Equity and Celebrating Diversity

In accordance with Child Safe Standard 5, we adapt our practices to meet the diverse backgrounds, characteristics, and experiences of all children. We stand firmly against any unfair treatment, criticism, or exclusion targeting a child or their family based on:

- **Race, ethnicity, or cultural background**
- **Language and nationality**
- **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity**
- **Gender identity, expression, or sexual orientation (LGBTIQA+)**
- **Physical, intellectual, or sensory disabilities**
- **Religious or spiritual beliefs**
- **Living arrangements** (such as out-of-home, kinship, or foster care)

4. Prohibited Behaviours

All board members, staff, volunteers / mentors, contractors, and stakeholders are forbidden from engaging in or condoning:

- **Racist language**, offensive jokes, racial slurs, or exclusionary behaviour.
- **Prejudiced actions** or discriminatory language in the presence of or directed at children.
- **Implicit bias** in policies, procedures, or delivery of services that restricts equal access.
- **Harassment or intimidation** targeting a child's protected personal attributes.

5. Reporting and Accountability

- **Immediate Reporting:** Any child, parent, staff member, or volunteer who witnesses or experiences discrimination or racism is encouraged to report it immediately to our designated **Child Safety Officer**.
- **Child-Focused Response:** All child safety related matters will be handled via our *Child-focused Reporting process (Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy & Procedure)*, prioritising the child's emotional safety and wellbeing.
- **Consequences:** Proven breaches of this policy by staff or volunteers will result in disciplinary procedures, up to and including termination of employment or contract, and reporting to relevant authorities where required.

Related policies and documents

- HWLLEN Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy & Procedures
- HWLLEN Child Safety & Wellbeing Code of Conduct
- HWLLEN Child Safety Report Form
- HWLLEN Safeguarding Reporting Procedure
- HWLLEN Risk Management Policy & Procedure
- HWLLEN Complaints Management Policy & Procedure
- Child Safe Recruitment Procedure

If you have concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child involved in an HWLLEN program, please contact us at hwllen@hwllen.com.au