**MILC Child Safety and Wellbeing and Engagement Policy**

**Help for non-English speakers:**

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact MILC.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and members of our MILC community understand:

* our commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students;
* support available to students and families.

MILC is committed to providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment for all students. We understand that students reach their full potential only when they are happy, healthy and safe, and that a positive MILC culture, where student participation is encouraged and valued, helps to engage students and support them in their learning. MILC acknowledges that student wellbeing and student learning outcomes are closely linked.

The objective of this policy is to support MILC to create and maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive environment consistent with our values and philosophy.

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to all school activities, including excursions.

**POLICY**

**MILC Profile, Vision Mission and Values Statement**

**Profile**

Melbourne Intercultural Learning Centre (MILC) is a registered school boarding premises which provides services for overseas students and local international students to develop their language skills and successfully integrate into Australian education and Australian culture. We run a variety of programs for overseas students including High School Preparation (HSP) program taught by International House staff to prepare students for integration into Australian schools.

Our modern premises provide outstanding accommodation and facilities for all students. We offer a full boarding experience to students, including an excellent excursion program.

MILC staff are dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of all students. MILC has a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse and is committed to promoting child safety, children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse.

**Under Ministerial Order 1359 MILC has implemented child safety standards and to accommodate and take the needs of all children** (including but not limited to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable) into account when creating a child safe environment. All of our people, including contractors, are required to hold a current Working with Children Check or current VIT Registration.

**Our Vision**

To provide strong academic, linguistic and intellectual preparation for U18 students, while helping them to adjust to Australian society in a safe, secure and appropriate living and learning environment.

**Our Mission**

That education should take place in a fully inclusive environment with equal opportunities for all and that all students should learn to value cultural differences. Our school strives to be at the centre of the local community, with positive and effective links to the wider and global communities.

That students will develop valuable social skills, meet new friends and build relationships.

To provide a continuum of education, encouraging students to progress through the Australian education system, transitioning from MILC to a secondary school to higher education or vocational qualifications, or between providers.

**The Path**

Achieving our mission calls on the deep engagement and purposeful interaction of three key partners in our learning community: our students; our teachers and support staff; our families.

We will work together to build a sense of belonging and connection - among our students; among our staff; between our students and staff, our school and families, our school and the wider community; and, importantly, with our ever-changing global community. We will provide learning opportunities that connect learners with each other, ideas, people, beliefs and values. We will prepare young adults with the compassion, self-belief, knowledge, skills and desire to lead happy, productive lives and to make a positive difference wherever they may travel.

**OUR VALUES**

We have a commitment to:

**Care** - valuing self, each other and our environment, nurturing healthy relationships

**Respect** - embracing diversity and individual differences, respecting others’ contributions

**Empathy** - understanding and caring about another person’s feelings and taking action to help

**Excellence** - being aspirational, working to achieve one's best

**Responsibility** - fairness; self-management; accepting civic and self-responsibility

**CONNECTION TO OTHER POLICIES**

MILC acknowledges and appreciates the **strengths of Aboriginal culture** and understands its importance in the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students.

This commitment is reflected in:

* **MILC Child Safe Code of Conduct Policy**
* **MILC Indigenous Cultural Awareness and Safety**
* **MILC Student Code of Conduct**

MILC implements culturally inclusive practices in alignment with the **Victorian Child Safe Standards** and **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Guidelines**.

**CULTURAL SAFETY FOR ABORIGINAL CHILDREN**

To create a **culturally safe and inclusive** environment for Aboriginal children, MILC:

* **Recognises and values Aboriginal identity and cultural heritage** in school programs and community events.
* Implements **Aboriginal perspectives across curriculum** and engagement strategies.
* Maintains a **zero-tolerance approach to racism** and actively supports cultural safety initiatives.

**Recognize and Respond to Child Safety and Wellbeing Concerns**

When a staff becomes aware of or suspects that a child’s safety or wellbeing is at risk, it is critical to respond promptly and appropriately. This involves following clear procedures to ensure that the child is protected and that the situation is handled in line with legal and institutional requirements.

**Key Steps in Responding to Child Safety Concerns:**

* Stay Calm and Focused: Keep calm when faced with a disclosure or concern. Take time to ensure that you’re responding in a way that is appropriate and measured.
* Listen and Offer Support: If a child discloses harm or abuse, listen attentively without judgment. Ensure the child feels safe, believed, and supported.
* Ensure Confidentiality: Reassure the child that their disclosure will be taken seriously, but be clear that some information must be shared with authorities for their protection. Do not promise confidentiality if this would prevent necessary reporting to the authorities.
* Report the Concern Immediately: Follow the MILC Child Safety Mandatory Reporting Policy to ensure that the concern is reported to the relevant authorities (e.g., child protection services, police, or school leadership).
* Record the Disclosure: Document the concern or disclosure accurately and promptly. Include what was said, by whom, when, and in what context. Ensure records are stored securely in accordance with MILC’s Recordkeeping Policy.

1. **Considerations When Responding to a Concern:**

* Listen Actively: Give the child your full attention and let them speak at their own pace. Refrain from leading the conversation or asking suggestive questions.
* Be Empathetic: Acknowledge the child’s feelings and the courage it took to disclose the harm.
* Follow Legal Requirements: Ensure you are familiar with the mandatory reporting obligations and the steps required by your jurisdiction to respond to disclosures of harm or abuse.

1. **Support Colleagues Who Disclose Harm**

It’s essential that MILC staff who experience or witness harm, whether personally or in their professional capacity, receive the necessary support and care. Supporting colleagues effectively promotes a healthy and safe working environment and encourages openness around safeguarding practices.

Key Steps in Supporting Colleagues Who Disclose Harm:

* Provide a Safe and Supportive Environment: When a colleague discloses harm, ensure that they feel safe, valued, and heard. Show understanding and let them know that their disclosure is taken seriously.
* Respect Privacy and Confidentiality: Maintain confidentiality to the extent possible, but clarify that some information may need to be shared with relevant parties (e.g., HR, management, child protection services) if it involves child safety or workplace harm.
* Listen Without Judgment: Create a non-judgmental space where the colleague can express their concerns openly. Avoid making assumptions or offering immediate solutions without first understanding the situation.
* Empathize with Their Feelings: Recognize that the experience of disclosing harm can be emotional and difficult for the colleague. Offer comfort and reassurance as they navigate this process.
* Encourage Professional Support: Depending on the nature of the harm disclosed, it may be helpful to suggest support through MILC’s wellbeing programs or external resources, such as counselling, legal advice

1. **Follow Procedures and Reporting Mechanisms**

MILC has established clear policies and procedures for reporting both child safety and staff wellbeing concerns. It is essential that all staff are familiar with these processes to ensure a timely and effective response.

Actions for Staff When Responding to Concerns or Disclosures:

* Document and Report: Document the concern or disclosure immediately, following MILC’s Child Safety Reporting Procedure or the Staff and Parents Complaints and Grievances Policy, and report it to the designated staff.
* Ensure the Right People are Notified: If the concern involves a colleague’s personal experience of harm, inform the appropriate authorities within MILC. If it involves a child, ensure that child protection authorities are contacted.
* Follow Up: Ensure there is follow-up after the disclosure to check on the wellbeing of the child or colleague, and confirm that appropriate steps are being taken.

MILC has a broad socio-economic demographic and widely diverse cultural setting.

MILC responds to needs of new and emerging communities, changing demands and demographics.

1. **Wellbeing and Engagement strategies**

MILC has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, an inclusive and safe environment, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school. We acknowledge that some students may need extra educational support at school, and that the needs of students will change over time as they grow and learn.

The whole of school strategies of MILC to promote positive behaviour and inclusion are as follows:

* high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and guardians;
* prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing;
* creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers;
* all students to participate and feel valued.

1. **School leadership team**

Our school leadership team being the governing authority (comprising the Director: Roger Shen and Managing Director: Michael Xiang) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with **Ministerial Order 1359.**

The Director and Managing Director will:

* ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
* model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
* enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered
* reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
* promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings and staff meetings
* **facilitate regular professional learning for staff post induction to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse**
* **facilitate regular professional learning for staff post induction to ensure that equity is upheld, and diverse needs are respected in policy in practice**
* create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities
* **review the child safe policies, practices and procedures annually, or immediately after a reportable incident**
* **ensure complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and** **systemic failures and inform continuous improvement.**
* **report on the outcomes of relevant reviews to staff, the school community, families and students.**

1. **Pedagogy and Engagement**

English language teaching, via accredited providers, is based on Communicative Language Teaching methodology. The central principles that surround this approach to language teaching are based around students being very active and engaged in the classroom. Lessons are ‘student-centred’ which allows them to participate fully and discover English with their teacher facilitating this process. In order to be successful, students must be motivated through encouragement, and by engaging our students we achieve very positive learning outcomes.

Should we, in the future, engage any other third party providers, or should our third party provider change, we will advise the VRQA and update compliance details as per our relevant and related policies and procedures.

On all of our English programs, students will be working on improving their language knowledge. This involves working on vocabulary, grammar and functional language, broadening passive and active ability with the English language system. In combination with this, students will also improve skills in language – speaking, listening, reading and writing. As a result, our English programs will be comprehensive, enabling students to better function in an English speaking environment.

1. **Identifying students in need of support**

MILC is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. Boarding staff and teachers play a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing.

MILC will utilise the following information and tools to identify students in need of extra emotional, social or educational support:

* personal, health and learning information gathered upon enrolment and while the student is enrolled; medical forms submitted upon enrolment (including management plan);
* attendance records / data;
* academic performance;
* observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, self-care, social connectedness and motivation; and
* engagement with families.

**TRAINING FOR STAFF & GOVERNING BODY**

**MILC provides ongoing training at least annually to all staff and members of the governing body on how to build a culturally safe environment**, especially for Aboriginal children, including:

* Cultural Competency Workshops (covering Aboriginal history, identity, and perspectives).
* Trauma-Informed Practice Training (understanding intergenerational trauma and its effects on Aboriginal students).
* Child Safe Standards Training (ensuring staff understand Aboriginal child safety requirements).tiatives are included in MILC newsletters and staff briefings.
* MILC’s governing authority reviews compliance with cultural safety policies during biannual policy audits.

**GOVERNANCE & IMPLEMENTATION**

MILC has established **clear governance arrangements** to ensure the effective implementation of child safety policies at all levels of the organisation. The MILC **Governing Authority** is responsible for overseeing child safety compliance, with **structured roles and responsibilities** across leadership, staff, and the broader school community.

**GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE for CHILD SAFETY IMPLIMENTATION**

1. **MILC Governing Authority**
   * Provides **strategic oversight** and ensures compliance with **Child Safe Standards**.
   * Reviews and approves child safety policies **every two years**.
   * Ensures child safety remains a **standing agenda item** at all governance meetings.
2. **All MILC staff**
   * Includes the **Head of Boarding**, **Caretakers, Building Manager and all other staff**.
   * Responsible for **policy implementation and incident response**.
   * Conducts **regular risk assessments** to ensure child safety measures are upheld.
   * Reports directly to the **Governing Authority** on child safety matters.

**STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

All members of our MILC community have a right to experience a safe and supportive environment. We expect that all students, staff, parents and guardians treat each other with respect and dignity.

Students have the right to:

* participate fully in their education;
* feel safe, secure and happy at school;
* learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, violence, racism, discrimination or intimidation;
* express their ideas, feelings and concerns.

Students have the responsibility to:

* participate fully in their educational Language program;
* display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and members of the MILC community; and
* respect the right of others to learn.

For more details, please refer to MILC Student Code of Conduct.

Students who may have a complaint or concern about something that has happened at school are encouraged to speak to their parents or carers and approach a trusted teacher or a member of MILC management. For further information about raising a complaint or concern, please refer to MILC Student Complaints Policy.

**RECORDKEEPING, PRIVACY, AND INFORMATION SHARING OBLIGATIONS**

1. **Recordkeeping Obligations**

MILC maintains detailed and confidential records of all complaints, concerns, and incidents relating to **student safety, wellbeing, and engagement**.

* **Records must be factual, clear, and comprehensive**, detailing:
* The nature of the concern or complaint.
* Actions taken, including risk assessments and protective measures.
* Correspondence and discussions with relevant parties.
* Outcomes and follow-up actions.
* **All records related to child safety concerns must be retained for at least 7 years**, or longer if required by law.
* Records are securely stored and **accessible only to authorised personnel**.

1. **Privacy and Confidentiality Obligations**

MILC respects the privacy rights of students, families, and staff and manages all complaints and concerns in accordance with the MILC privacy policy and Victorian privacy laws.

* Information is collected, stored, and shared only when necessary to protect a child’s safety or wellbeing.
* Personal information is protected from unauthorised access, use, or disclosure.
* Students and parents have the right to request access to their personal information, subject to legal restrictions.

1. **Information Sharing Obligations**

Under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS), MILC may share information with relevant authorities to promote child safety.

* When can information be shared?
  + If it is necessary to reduce or prevent a risk of harm to a child.
  + With authorised organisations, such as Child Protection, Victoria Police, and schools.
* Who can request information?
  + Child Protection services.
  + Victoria Police (for criminal investigations).
  + Other schools or agencies with legal authorisation.
* Who approves information sharing?
  + The Managing Director (Michael Xiang) or Director (Roger Shen) must approve the release of information unless required immediately by law enforcement or child protection authorities.

1. **Responding to Complaints and Concerns – Recordkeeping and Reporting**

* **All complaints and concerns related to child safety must be documented** in the **MILC Incident Register**.
* **Serious child safety concerns** must be reported to **Victoria Police (000) or Child Protection (1300 664 977)**.
* **Internal follow-up actions** must be documented, including support provided to students and families.
* Complaints are handled in accordance with the **MILC Student Complaints Policy**, ensuring a **fair, transparent, and timely resolution**.

**Identifying Child Safety and Wellbeing Risks in the School Boarding Environment**

* **Recognising Indicators of Harm**: Staff will learn to recognise the signs of potential harm in children and students, including physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
* **Risk Assessment**: Training will focus on how to assess risks in various environments within the school (e.g., classrooms, dormitories, playgrounds, online platforms).
* **Specific Vulnerabilities**: Understanding of how different groups of children (e.g., children with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ students, students from diverse cultural backgrounds) may face heightened risks and how to identify these specific vulnerabilities.
* **Common Risks**: Guidance on identifying risks related to bullying, cyberbullying, peer-to-peer harm, and inappropriate staff behaviour.

**Mitigating Risks While Upholding Rights**

* **Balancing Safety with Privacy**: Ensuring that student safety measures do not violate their privacy rights. For example, maintaining the confidentiality of personal information unless required for safety or legal reasons.
* **Rights to Social Connections**: Ensuring that measures taken to protect students from harm do not isolate them or undermine their social connections. Training will include strategies for maintaining students' opportunities to form healthy relationships while addressing safety concerns.
* **Educational Opportunities**: Identifying ways to mitigate risks that do not limit a student’s ability to fully participate in educational activities. This includes accommodating students' individual needs while maintaining a safe environment.
* **Data Privacy and Information Sharing**: How to manage sensitive information about students (e.g., medical conditions, family situations, previous abuse) and share it in a way that supports child safety without breaching privacy laws or the child’s right to confidentiality.

**Managing Procurement and Contractors**

**Procurement Process with Child Safety Considerations:**

**A. Risk Assessment and Screening of Third Parties:**

* **Supplier Evaluation**: During the procurement process, MILC will evaluate potential third-party providers based on their adherence to child safety standards. This includes reviewing their policies on child protection, staff training, and history of compliance with relevant child safety regulations.
* **Child Safety Questionnaire**: Third-party providers must complete a detailed questionnaire that asks about their child safety practices, including background checks, staff training, and emergency response protocols. This ensures that all potential risks are identified early.
* **Site Inspections and Audits**: MILC will conduct on-site inspections and audits (when necessary) of the facilities or services provided by third parties to ensure that they meet the school’s safety requirements for children.

**B. Contractual Obligations for Child Safety:**

* **Child Safety Clauses**: All contracts with third-party service providers will include clauses requiring compliance with MILC’s Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct, and any other child safety protocols.
* **Ongoing Compliance Monitoring**: The contracts will also include provisions for regular monitoring and audits to ensure that third parties continue to meet MILC’s child safety standards throughout the duration of their engagement.
* **Termination Clause**: Contracts will include a options for the immediate termination of the agreement if the third-party provider fails to comply with child safety requirements.

**C. Training and Awareness for Third-Party Providers:**

* **Child Safety Induction**: All third-party staff who interact with children or have access to MILC facilities will be required to undergo child safety Induction that aligns with MILC’s Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and practices.
* **Ongoing Training**: Third-party service providers will be required to engage in regular child safety training sessions, including updates on MILC’s child safety policies, reporting obligations, and specific risks associated with their services.

**COMMUNICATION**

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

* Available publicly on our school’s website**:**

[**MILC Child Safety Wellbeing and Engagement Policy**](https://www.mymilc.com/_files/ugd/1763c3_8c5e902d2e424e3d9ac398036cb93f5f.docx?dn=MILC%20Child%20Safety%20Wellbeing%20and%20Engagement%20Policy.docx)

* Included in staff induction processes; and
* Included as annual reference in a newsletter.