

Healesville Environment Watch Inc.

Code of Conduct 2023 Working with Children

Central to the success of HEWI are good people who demonstrate a high standard of professional conduct, which is evident in our dealings with both organisations and people.

The essence of this code is to capture:

1. Having appropriate child safe policies in place
2. Ensuring that respect is a central part of all activities
3. Establishing procedures through which sexual harassment and bullying issues are firstly minimized, and secondly, dealt with appropriately if required.

1. Child safety policies:

Healesville Environment Watch members strive to be Child Safe, with a commitment to children's best interests and no tolerance for child abuse. All children who participate in our activities have a right to feel and to be safe. We encourage children to express their views and we listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them.

Physical or sexual abuse of a child is a crime and will be reported to police, including grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 years.

All adults who form a reasonable belief that such a sexual offence has occurred have an obligation to report it to police.

This Code covers the 11 Child Safe Standards which came into force on 1 July 2022 <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/#TOC-2>.

HEWI recognises that there are key risks to Child Safety being:

- Physical or Sexual abuse
- Grooming (abuse of trust usually occurs where there is an ongoing relationship of trust)
- Inappropriate child-to-child or adult-to-child physical or verbal contact
- Circulation of sexually explicit material.

Managing these risks:

In order that these risks are managed effectively, our group needs to:

- a. Consider child safety risks in events and activities and planning
- b. Actively work to mitigate any risks
- c. Ensure we have people appropriately qualified to work with children as applicable
- d. Model appropriate behaviour towards children
- e. Listen directly to children and respond to them appropriately, and
- f. Report any complaints, concerns or disclosures.

2. Sexual harassment, bullying and respect

All employees and volunteers are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. HEWI has a commitment to provide a healthy and safe working environment free from workplace bullying and sexual harassment.

To effectively manage these risks, all HEWI members will need to:

- a. Be aware of potential situations where such behaviour can occur in planning events /activities
- b. Actively plan to avoid such potential situations
- c. Provide a clear pathway for a matter to be raised within the organisation, and
- d. Ensure processes maintain confidential and protect people's identity.

This policy is designed to aid all HEWI members to conduct safe activities by recognizing risks across a range of areas and working actively to mitigate these in their planning. A copy of this document has been forwarded to all current volunteers and a printed copy will be available at each activity for referral with other safety standards and injury report forms.

Tips and tools for creating a child safe event

The following are a range of tips and tools for us to consider in our planning and conduct of events. It is important that the matters raised are all considered.

1. Be upfront about child safety to deter inappropriate behaviour (mention it in activity briefings)
2. Listen if children report feeling uncomfortable
3. Make sure children and adults know who to go to if they have concerns
4. If families bring children to activities, immediately advise the parent or carer that they must directly supervise the child at all times
5. Ensure all unaccompanied children work in groups of three or more with either two or more adults or with children of a similar age
6. Ensure that no child is alone with only one other person at any time other than their parent or designated carer
7. Include an Under 16 checkbox on your activity participation sheet
8. Design activities so there are clear sightlines and limit access to any hidden places that could conceal inappropriate conduct.

Online activities

No member or volunteer will engage with a child via the Internet or other electronic means. Should information be requested from a child for a school project, or enquiry about an environmental issue, we will engage with the child only when a parent or carer is present, or through the parent or carer.

A child can only be present at any online forum if a parent or carer is present and visible at all times.