

# CHILD SAFETY POLICY

## French Bilingual Association Inc.

French Bilingual Association Inc. is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our organisation is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

### **Purpose**

This policy has been written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the French Bilingual Association Inc. to child safety and establishing and maintaining a child-safe and child-friendly environment.

The purpose of this policy is

- To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within the French Bilingual Association Inc.
- To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
- To prevent child abuse within the French Bilingual Association Inc..
- To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
- To provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to actions that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
- To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
- To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

In addition to the Present Policy, French Bilingual Association Inc. has produced a Child safety Code of Conduct.

### **Legal framework**

This Policy reflects legislation and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

National Legislation

- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children "Protecting Children is Everyone's Business" 2009 – 2020 (Commonwealth of Australia)

State Legislation

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)

Working With Children Checks

- Working With Children Act 2005 (Vic.)

### **Scope**

This policy, from the date of endorsement, applies to all persons involved with the French Bilingual Association Inc. including:

- employees (permanent and casual)
- volunteers
- contractors
- sub-contractors
- work experience students
- indirect service providers

- any other individual involved in the French Bilingual Association Inc.

Note: In this policy, the term “employee” is intended to cover all persons occupying any position listed above.

### **Commitment to child safety**

The French Bilingual Association Inc. is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff, contractors and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child’s safety, which we follow rigorously. Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have appointed a Child Safety Person as a first point of contact to provide advice and support to employees, contractors, volunteers, children, young people, parents and caregivers regarding the safety and well-being of children and young people accessing our organisation. The Child Safety Person’s identity and contact details are listed on the French Bilingual Association Inc. website. The Child Safety Person is also responsible for monitoring our child safety policy.

### **Children’s rights to participation**

This policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our organisation.

We listen to and act upon any concerns that children, young people or their families raise with us.

We involve children and young people in decision-making as appropriate.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

### **Recruitment**

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children.

Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We employ a range of screening measures and apply best standards in the screening and recruitment of employees and volunteers.

All people engaged in child-related work, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

### **Support and supervision**

Support, training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone’s responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

We ensure that employees, contractors and volunteers who work with children have ongoing supervision and support so that their performance is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment.

Everyone covered by the scope of this policy is aware of, and must abide by, our code of conduct.

Strategies we have implemented include:

- All new employees or contractors receive a copy of our Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct
- A Child Safety Person has been appointed as a first point of contact for all child protection matters

## **Reporting obligations**

### Mandatory reporting

Any person (aged 18 or over) that forms a reasonable belief, that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16 years) by an adult, must make a report to the police as soon as practicable, unless exceptions apply (for example if the person fears for the safety of any person if they were to disclose the information to the police).

Any personnel who are mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers - registered to teach or who have permission to teach pursuant to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*, principals and police) must report to the Department of Health and Human Services if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

A person who fails to comply with these reporting obligations may be committing a criminal offence.

Committee members, employees, contractors or volunteers are encouraged to discuss these observations and concerns with the Child Safety Person, who can assist the person to make the report as required.

### Voluntary reporting

In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person (of any age) that forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or neglect), may disclose that information to the police or the Department of Health and Human Services. French Bilingual Association Inc. encourages all persons with concerns to raise this directly with the Child Safety Person.

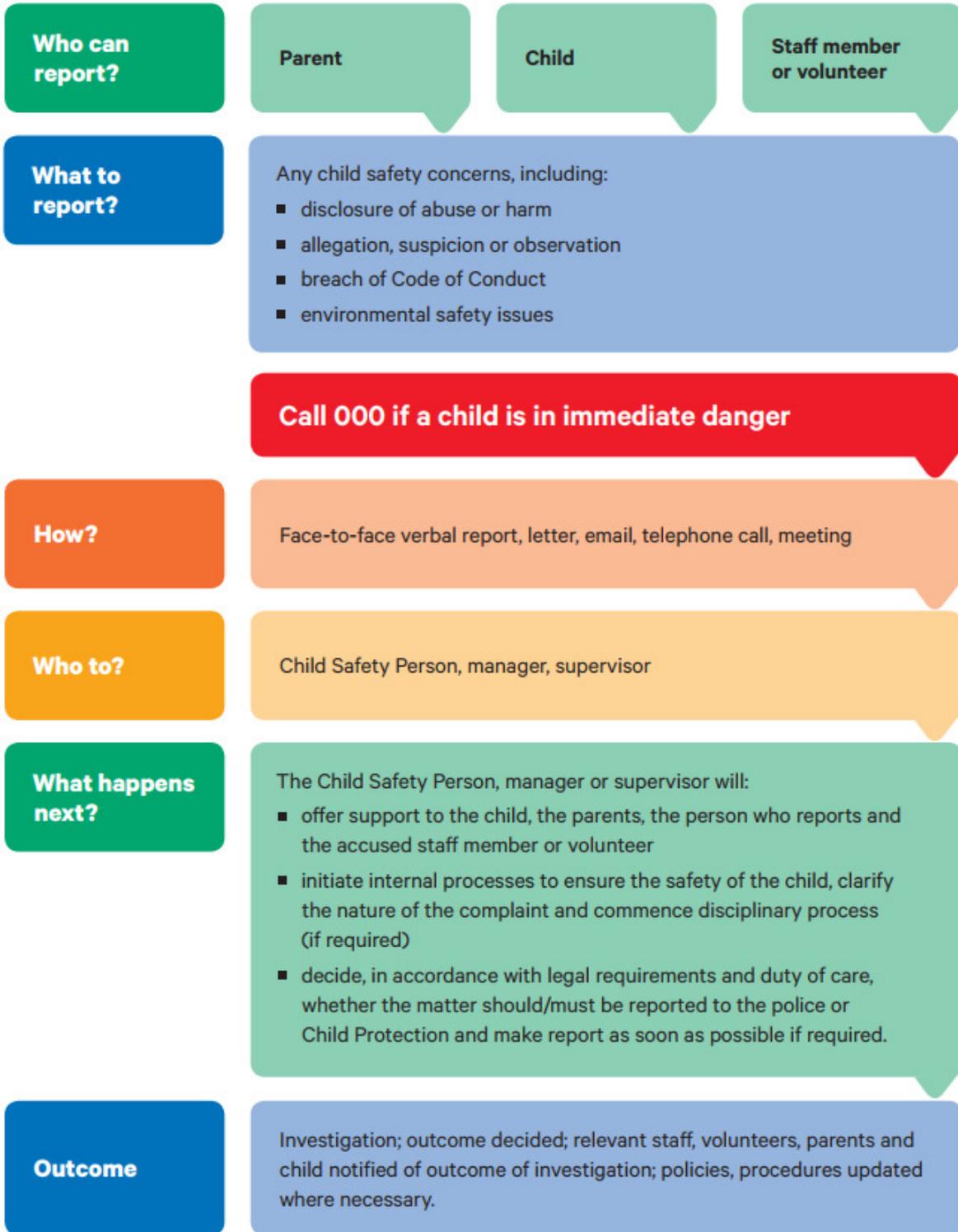
Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it

French Bilingual Association Inc. encourages reporting where you hold a concern about the safety of a minor.

Although reporting of abuse of any nature between two or more minors (including bullying) is not legally mandatory, French Bilingual Association Inc. strongly encourage all persons with concerns to contact the Child Safety Person if they become aware of or strongly suspect such behaviour.

The complaint process for voluntary reporting is outlined below:



### Allegations and complaint process

Where an allegation of misconduct is made against a person in the organisation in relation to a child, we will prioritise support to the child. We will seek appropriate support for the person implicated to protect the safety of the child as the paramount consideration.

**Fair procedures for personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, and based on evidence.

**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.

*This Policy was endorsed by the FBA Committee on 13 February 2018*

*To be reviewed annually and as required*