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**Policy Owner:** Avondale Heights Sporting Club



## Avondale Heights Football Club (AHFC)

# SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

## 1. Purpose

This Policy outlines AHFC's commitment to safeguarding children and young people and provides **clear, practical guidance** for preventing, identifying and responding to harm.

It is designed to:

- Educate all members on their responsibilities
  - Establish **clear behavioural expectations and boundaries**
  - Provide **structured reporting processes**
  - Ensure compliance with:
    - Victorian Child Safe Standards
    - AFL National Community Football Policy Handbook (Nov 2025)
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## 2. Policy Statement

Avondale Heights Football Club:

- Has **zero tolerance** for child abuse, harm, grooming or exploitation
- Will act **immediately and in the best interests of the child**
- Prioritises **child safety over performance, results or reputation**
- Embeds child safety into **leadership, governance and culture**
- Recognises that safeguarding is a **shared responsibility across the entire club community**

Children and young people have the right to:

- Feel safe
  - Be heard
  - Be respected
  - Participate free from harm
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## 3. Scope

This Policy applies to **all people involved in AHFC**, including:

- Players
- Coaches & officials
- Volunteers & contractors



- Committee members
- Parents, carers & spectators

It applies across:

- Training and matches
  - Events and travel
  - Online environments
  - Social media and communications
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## 4. Key Principles

- **Child-first decision making** — always act in best interest of the child
  - **Early reporting** — do not wait for certainty
  - **No investigation by club personnel** — report, don't prove
  - **Transparency and accountability** in all interactions
  - **Professional boundaries at all times**
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## 5. Definitions

### Child Abuse Includes:

- Physical, emotional, psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse or exploitation
- Grooming (including online grooming)
- Neglect
- Bullying or harassment
- Exposure to family violence

### Grooming

Grooming may include:

- Favouritism
  - Gift giving
  - Private messaging
  - Isolating a child from others
  - Building trust with parents before abuse
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## 6. Roles & Responsibilities

### All AHFC Personnel Must:

- Understand this Policy
- Maintain professional boundaries



- Report any concern immediately
  - Prioritise child safety in all decisions
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## **Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO)**

Responsible for:

- Receiving concerns and reports
  - Supporting reporters
  - Ensuring correct reporting pathways
  - Escalating to AFL / Police where required
  - Maintaining records
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## **Committee / Leadership**

Must:

- Promote a **child safe culture**
  - Ensure compliance with AFL and legislation
  - Monitor risks and policy effectiveness
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# **7. Safe Practices**

## ***7.1 Professional Boundaries***

AHFC personnel must not:

- Form relationships outside football context
  - Provide personal support (e.g. babysitting, financial help)
  - Show favouritism
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## **7.2 One-on-One Situations**

- Avoid wherever possible
  - If unavoidable → ensure visibility and transparency
  - No private meetings outside club activities
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## **7.3 Communication Rules**

- No private 1:1 messaging with children
- Always include:
  - Parent/carer OR



- Another club representative
  - Content must be:
    - Relevant
    - Professional
    - Non-personal
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## 7.4 Physical Contact

Only permitted when:

- Necessary (coaching, safety, first aid)
- Appropriate and explained
- Not causing discomfort

Never:

- Touch intimate areas
  - Engage in roughhousing, tickling or unnecessary contact
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## 7.5 Supervision

- Active, constant and aware supervision
  - Know where children are at all times
  - Ability to intervene immediately
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## 7.6 Transport

- Only for club-related purposes
  - Requires:
    - Parent consent
    - Club awareness
  - Avoid being alone with a child
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## 7.7 Change Rooms

- Supervise while respecting privacy
  - No adults changing/showering with children
  - No phones or recording devices
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## 7.8 Photography & Media

Must:

- Have parent consent



- Be sport-related
- Ensure appropriate presentation

Must not:

- Capture or share inappropriate images
  - Store images insecurely
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## 7.9 Alcohol, Drugs, Smoking & Vaping

Strictly prohibited:

- While supervising children
  - In any official child-related role
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## 8. Recruitment & Screening

AHFC will:

- Require **valid WWCC for all child-related roles**
- Conduct:
  - Reference checks
  - Suitability screening
- Enforce:
  - 👉 **No WWCC = No role with children**

Personnel must:

- Read and acknowledge all policies
  - Complete safeguarding training
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## 9. Training & Education

AHFC will ensure access to:

- AFL Safeguarding Training
- Play by the Rules
- eSafety Commissioner

Focus areas:

- Recognising harm
  - Responding to disclosures
  - Online safety risks
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## 10. Risk Management

AHFC will maintain a **Child Safety Risk Register** covering:

- Physical environments
- Online environments
- Behavioural risks (e.g. 1:1 contact, messaging)

Risks will be:

- Reviewed regularly
  - Updated based on incidents
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## 11. Complaints & Reporting

*All concerns must be:*

- Taken seriously
  - Reported immediately
  - Handled confidentially
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### Reporting Process

**Step 1 — Immediate danger → CALL 000**

**Step 2 — Report to Child Safeguarding Officer**

**Step 3 — Complete Incident Report Form**

**Step 4 — Escalation**

- Police
  - Child Protection
  - AFL / League
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### Important Principles

- You do not need proof
  - You must not investigate
  - You must report even if unsure
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## 12. Legal Reporting Obligations

Under Victorian law:



- Failure to report sexual abuse = criminal offence
  - Mandatory reporters must report where required
  - Reports must be made **as soon as practicable**
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## 13. Disciplinary Action

Breaches may result in:

- Suspension
  - Removal from role
  - AFL referral
  - Police referral
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## 14. Record Keeping & Information Sharing

AHFC will:

- Maintain a **confidential incident register**
- Record:
  - Reports
  - Actions
  - Outcomes
- Share information where required to protect a child

Records will be used to:

- Improve safety systems
  - Identify patterns and risks
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## 15. Continuous Improvement

AHFC will:

- Review annually
  - Seek feedback from:
    - Children
    - Families
    - Volunteers
  - Update in line with AFL requirements
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## 16. Key Principle

👉 **Child safety is everyone's responsibility — and inaction is a risk.**



## Appendix 1 – Victorian Child Safe Standards

Victorian Child Safe Standards	
1	Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
4	Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
11	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

## Appendix 2 – Related Legislation & Club Policies

Relevant laws:

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)*
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* – including sections on failure to disclose and failure to protect
- *Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)*



- *Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)*

Related Club documents (not limited to):

- Constitution
- Privacy Policy
- Member Protection Policy
- Child Safe Codes of Conduct
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Photography and Social Media Policies

## **Appendix 3 – Child Safety Education Resources**

- AFL Safeguarding Children: <https://play.afl/safeguarding>
- Play by the Rules: [www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)
- eSafety Commissioner: [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)

## **Appendix 4 – Taken from AFL National Community Football Policy Handbook, Appendix 6 Child Safe Practices**

### **1. Professional boundaries**

(a) When working with Children and Young People, a Person in a Position of Authority must establish and maintain professional boundaries (both in-person and online) to ensure that the nature of the relationship between the Person and a Child or Young Person does not move from a professional one to a personal one and/or become harmful to, or exploitative of, the Child or Young Person and/or their family.

(b) Unless they are also an Approved Person, a Person in a Position of Authority when working with Children and Young People, must not:

(i) provide any form of support to a child or their family unrelated to the scope of their role (e.g., financial assistance, babysitting, provide accommodation);

(ii) use a personal phone, camera, or video camera to take images or video footage of Children and Young People unless prior written authorisation from the Relevant Body is provided;

(iii) exhibit any type of favouritism towards a Child or Young Person;

(iv) transport Children and Young People other than in accordance with Clause 9 of the Child and Young Person Safe Practices in Appendix 6;



- (v) give gifts/presents to Children and Young People other than the provision of official awards;
  - (vi) have one on one contact with a Child or Young Person outside of an Activity (includes direct contact such as in-person as well as indirect, such as by phone, or online); or
  - (vii) attend any private social function at the request of a Child or Young Person or their family.
- (c) If a Person becomes aware of a situation in which a Child or Young Person requires assistance that is beyond the scope of that Person's role, they must undertake, at the earliest opportunity, any or all of the following as is considered applicable to the situation:
- (i) refer the matter to an appropriate support agency;
  - (ii) refer the Child or Young Person to an appropriate support agency;
  - (iii) contact the Child or Young Person's parent or guardian;
  - (iv) seek advice from a Relevant Body.

## **2. Harmful behaviour and language**

- (a) Behaviour, language and tone of voice used by a Person in the presence of Children and Young People must:
- (i) be respectful, provide clear direction, encourage or affirm them; and Return to Table of Contents 138
  - (ii) not be harmful to Children and Young People.
- (b) A Person must not use language or behaviour towards or in the presence of Children and Young People that is:
- (i) inappropriate, abusive, derogatory, offensive, insulting, belittling or intended to humiliate;
  - (ii) culturally inappropriate, discriminatory or vilifying;
  - (iii) threatening or unreasonably or unnecessarily frightening; or
  - (iv) profane or of a sexual nature.
- (c) A Person must not:
- (i) make inappropriate and/or intimate physical contact with a Child and Young Person which is sexual in nature or causes them to feel uncomfortable, or feel pain or distress;
  - (ii) engage in any form of sexual behaviour with or in the presence of Children or Young People;
  - (iii) engage in behaviour toward or in the presence of Children or Young People that would appear to a reasonable observer to have a sexual connotation; or
  - (iv) make sexual comments to a Child and Young Person or engaging in open discussions of a sexual or adult nature with (either on person or online), or in the presence a Child or Young Person; or
  - (v) use a computer, mobile phone, video camera, camera or Social Media to exploit or harass a Child or Young Person, or access child exploitation material.
- (d) A Person in a Position of Authority, must not:
- (i) do things of a personal nature for a Child or Young Person that the Child or Young Person can do themselves;
  - (ii) force a Child or Young Person to train or compete when ill or injured;
  - (iii) employ training methods including physical punishment or overtraining which may cause harm to a Child or Young Person;



(iv) engage in conduct (either in-person or online) that places excessive or unnecessary emphasis on appearance, weight requirements or muscularity of a Child or Young Person, including practices such as:

(A) encouraging or enforcing excessive dieting or restrictive eating;

(B) excessive weigh-ins or focus on weight goals, body composition testing that is a sport requirement that carries punishment for the outcome (for example repeated bouts of exercises as punishment for weight gain); Or Return to Table of Contents 139

(C) unsafe practices that could put health at risk to reach weight or appearance requirements without adequate medical support (for example dehydration or restrictive eating).

### **3. Physical contact with Children and Young People**

(a) Any physical contact with a Child or Young Person must be necessary and appropriate to the delivery of an Activity and based on the needs of the Child or Young Person (including adjustments based on any additional needs due to impairment or disability) such as:

(i) assisting with the use of equipment or technique assistance or correction;

(ii) treatment by a health practitioner; or

(iii) administering first aid or strapping as necessary.

(b) A Person must not have contact with Children and Young People participating in Activities that:

(i) involves touching of genitals, buttocks, or the breast area other than as part of delivering necessary medical or allied health services to those specific areas of the body;

(ii) is intended to cause pain or distress to a Child or Young Person (e.g., corporal punishment);

(iii) is improper or unnecessary physical contact not reasonably related to the relevant Activity (e.g. tickling or roughhousing);

(iv) is unnecessary, including assisting a Child or Young Person do something that they are able to do for themselves; or

(v) is initiated against the wishes of the Child or Young Person, except if such contact may be necessary to prevent serious physical harm to the Child or Young Person or to others, in which case:

(A) physical restraint must be a last resort;

(B) the level of force used must be appropriate to the specific circumstances, and aimed solely at restraining the Child and Young Person to prevent serious physical harm to them or others;

and

(C) the incident must be reported to Relevant Body as soon as possible.

(c) A Person must report to the Relevant Body any physical contact initiated by a Child and Young Person that is sexualised and/or inappropriate as soon as possible to enable the situation to be managed in the interests of the safety of the Child and Young Person, Relevant Persons, and any other participants.

### **4. Positive guidance & discipline**

(a) When working with Children and Young People, a Person must use strategies that are fair, respectful, and appropriate to the developmental stage of each Child and Young Person to ensure:

(i) the acceptable standards and limits of behaviour are communicated;



- (ii) an effective and positive environment; and
- (iii) the safety and/or wellbeing of Children and Young People.

(b) Children and Young People must be provided with clear directions and given an opportunity to redirect their behaviour in a positive manner.

(c) A Person must not take disciplinary action toward a Child or Young Person that involves physical punishment or any form of treatment (including verbal conduct) that could reasonably be considered as degrading, cruel, frightening or humiliating.

## **5. Supervision**

(a) Relevant Bodies must ensure that Children and Young People participating in Activities are adequately supervised.

(b) Supervision must be constant, active, and diligent, prioritising the safety and wellbeing of Children and Young People, and where possible a Person must be able to observe each Child and Young Person.

(c) Where direct supervision is not possible, a Person must know the location of each Child and Young Person and ensure that they can respond to individual needs and immediately intervene if necessary.

## **6. Use of electronic or online communications**

(a) Unless they are also an Approved Person (in respect to the relevant Child and Young Person), a Person in a Position of Authority must not communicate directly (one to one) with a Child and Young Person either electronically or online (including phone calls) without the inclusion of an Adult representative from the Controlling Body or Club, as applicable, and/or the Child and Young Person's parent or guardian.

(b) When communicating with Children and Young People, a Person in a Position of Authority must ensure content is:

- (i) directly associated with an Activity;
- (ii) concise with personal or social content limited only to convey the message in a polite and friendly manner;
- (iii) devoid of any sexualised or offensive language; and
- (iv) not promoting unauthorised social activity or contact.

## **7. Photographs or video of Children and Young People**

(a) An Approved Person may photograph or film their Child and Young Person when participating in our sport.

(b) A Person must not take or publish inappropriate photos or footage of a Child or Young Person.

(c) When arranging official photography/videography of Children and Young People involved in an Activity, a Person or Controlling Body, as applicable, must:

- (i) obtain prior written consent from the Child and Young Person's parent or guardian;

*[Guidance note: Where appropriate and possible, consent should also be sought from the Child and Young Person. Written approval could include electronic messaging formats such as email or SMS];*

(ii) give due consideration to Children and Young People who are protected by a court order;

- (iii) appoint a photographer/videographer who holds a current WWCC;

- (iv) ensure the photographer/videographer is supervised at all times;



- (v) ensure the context is directly related to participation in our sport;
  - (vi) ensure the Child and Young Person is appropriately dressed and posed; and
  - (vii) not distribute images or videos (including as an attachment to an email) to anyone outside the Relevant Organisation without parent/carer knowledge and approval.
- (d) A Person or Controlling Body, as applicable, must store images (digital or hard copy) in a manner that prevents unauthorised access by others and must be destroyed or deleted as soon as they are no longer required.
- (e) A Person or Controlling Body, as applicable, must not publish images or footage of a Child and Young Person or identify the Child and Young Person pictured, whether online or in print, without written consent from the Child and Young Person's parent or guardian. Where appropriate and possible, consent should also be sought from the Child and Young Person.
- (f) A Controlling Body must ensure any person officially engaged to take photographs of an Activity (such as an employee or event photographer) complies with the requirements of this Clause.

### **8. Drop off and pick up of Children and Young People**

A Person, when working with Children and Young People, must:

- (a) communicate to parents / guardians the expected drop off and pick up requirements for Children and young People participating in an Activity;
- (b) have an accessible register of parent and carer emergency contact numbers and an operational phone; and
- (c) ensure that if a parent or carer is late, they make reasonable attempts to contact them. It is not the responsibility of the Person in a Position of Authority to transport Children and Young People home if their parent or carer is late for pick up.

### **9. Transporting Children and Young People**

- (a) Children and Young People must only be transported in circumstances that are directly related to an Activity.
- (b) A Person in a Position of Authority:
  - (i) other than in an emergency, or unless they are an Approved Person, must not transport Children and Young People without prior written approval from their parent or guardian;
  - (ii) must obtain approval from the Relevant Body to transport any Children and Young People;
  - (iii) must drive responsibly, not be impaired by alcohol or any other mind-altering substances, have an unrestricted drivers' licence and to the extent practicable, not be alone in the car with a Child and Young Person;
  - (iv) must only transport Children and Young People in a roadworthy vehicle where the manufacturer stated capacity is adhered to and seatbelts and child restraints are fitted as required.

### **10. Overnight stays and sleeping arrangements**

- (a) Overnight stays involving Children and Young People must be approved and managed by the Relevant Body, other than stays with an Approved Person.



(b) Written parent or guardian consent (includes electronic messaging formats such as email or SMS) must be obtained prior to the overnight stay. Where appropriate and possible, consent should also be sought from the Child and Young Person.

(c) Practices and behaviour by Persons involved during an overnight stay must be consistent with the practices and behaviour expected during delivery of any Activity at all other times.

(d) Standards of conduct that must be observed by Persons involved during an overnight stay include:

(i) Children and Young People must be provided with privacy when bathing, toileting, and dressing;

(ii) appropriate dress standards must be observed when Children and Young People are present – such as no exposure to nudity;

(iii) Children and Young People must not be exposed to pornographic material, for example, through movies, television, the internet, or magazines;

(iv) Children and Young People must not be left under the supervision of unauthorised persons such as accommodation staff, or peers;

(v) sleeping arrangements must not compromise the safety of Children and Young People, including:

(A) an Adult must not sleep alone in the same room as Children and Young People unless they are the parent or have parental responsibility for those Children and Young People; and

(B) Children and Young People must not share a bed with an Adult or another Child and Young Person. Return to Table of Contents 143

(vi) Children and Young People must have the right to contact their parents, or an Approved Person, if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or distressed during the stay.

(vii) Parents/guardians must be permitted to contact their Child and Young Person if required.

## **11. Change room arrangements**

(a) Children and Young People must be supervised in any change room that is in official use by a Controlling Body or Club (as applicable), whilst ensuring their right to privacy.

(b) A Person in a Position of Authority must:

(i) not shower or change at the same time as supervising groups of Children and Young People;

(ii) not be alone with a Child and Young Person in a change room; and

(iii) ensure adequate supervision in public change rooms when they are used, providing the level of supervision required for preventing abuse by members of the public, Adult users, or general misbehaviour, while also respecting a Child and Young Person's privacy.

(c) A Person must not use any camera or other recording device in a change room where that space is being used for changing clothes, showering, toileting, medical or personal care.

(d) For the purposes of this section, recording device means any device capable of capturing images (still or moving), including but not limited to mobile phones, smartwatches, cameras, tablets, computers, and camera glasses.

## **12. Alcohol, drugs and medicine**

A Person in a Position of Authority must not:



- (a) use, possess or be under the influence of an illicit drug in the presence of a Child and Young Person;
- (b) use or be under the influence of alcohol while supervising a Child and Young Person during an Activity;
- (c) be impaired by any other legal drug such as prescription or over-the-counter drugs while in the presence of a Child and Young Person or Children and Young People;
- (d) supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to any Child and Young Person or Children and Young People; or
- (e) supply or administer medicines, except for:
  - (i) where the Person reasonably believes that the medicine is necessary for lifesaving medical treatment;
  - (ii) when permitted by law; or Return to Table of Contents 144
  - (iii) with the consent of the parent, guardian, or carer of the Child and Young Person and under a valid prescription for that Child and Young Person and at the prescribed dosage.

### **13. Parent/Guardian involvement**

Persons, Controlling Bodies and Clubs, as applicable, must:

- (a) ensure that a parent/guardian is involved in any significant decision, including the signing of any documentation in relation to their Child's involvement in an Activity;
- (b) not prevent parents/guardians from accessing their Child and Young Person when required; and
- (c) make parents/guardians aware of the standard of behaviour required when watching their Child and Young Person during an Activity and that any inappropriate conduct may result in remedial actions under the Policy Handbook.