



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Child Protection Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct

Introduction

The Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at VATE is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring at VATE events and programs.
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
3. 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.
4. To provide guidance to staff, presenters, volunteers and contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
5. To provide a clear statement to staff, presenters, volunteers and contractors forbidding any such abuse.
6. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

Policy

VATE is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its events and programs.

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.

VATE has zero tolerance for child abuse. Child protection is a shared responsibility between all VATE employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the VATE community.

VATE supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. VATE is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.



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Child Protection Procedures

Responsibilities

The Council of VATE has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The Council is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Safety Code of Conduct are in place.

The Council of VATE is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse.
- Ensuring that all staff, presenters, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct.
- Ensuring that all adults within the VATE community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures.
- Ensuring that all staff, presenters, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Providing support for staff, presenters, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All staff must ensure that they:

- Promote child safety at all times.
- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate or minimise any risk to the extent possible.
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.
- Ensure that all presenters, contractors and volunteers have VIT registration or Working with Children Check who present and work with children on behalf of VATE.

All staff, presenters, volunteers and contractors share the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, and VATE's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements.
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and/or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters.
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation).
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.



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Definitions

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds (see below) that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) the child is in need of protection,
- (b) the child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury," or
- (c) the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if: a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused; a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves); someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused; professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.



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Child Safety Code of Conduct for Staff, Presenters, Volunteers and Contractors working with children

Staff, presenters, volunteers and contractors at VATE are required to abide by this Code.

Council will:

1. Be responsible for the overall welfare and wellbeing of staff and volunteers.
2. Be accountable for managing and maintaining a duty of care towards staff and volunteers.

All people involved in events, programs or activities involving children on behalf of VATE will:

1. Work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organization.
2. Be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area.
3. Maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities.
4. Establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work.
5. Be fair, considerate and honest with others.
6. Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions.
7. Act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people.
8. Be professional in their actions.
9. Maintain strict impartiality.
10. Comply with specific organisational guidelines on physical contact with children.
11. Respect the privacy of children, their families and teachers/carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.
12. Maintain a child-safe environment for children and young people.
13. Operate within the policies and guidelines of VATE.
14. Contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse, phone 000.

No person shall:

1. Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people.
2. Unlawfully discriminate against any child.
3. Engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them.
4. Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves.
5. Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time.
6. Develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs.
7. Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention.
8. Arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the organisation's programs and activities.
9. Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians.
10. Work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.



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11. Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children.
12. Use inappropriate language in the presence of children.
13. Do anything in contravention of the organisation's policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct.

What happens if you breach this Code of Conduct

If you breach this Code of Conduct you will face disciplinary action, including and up to termination of employment or cessation of engagement with the organisation.

Approved by VATE Council	April 2021	Scheduled review date	April 2022
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