

Little Rockets Children's Clinic

## **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy**

**Effective date:** 21st November 2023.

### **1. Commitment to child safety**

1.1. All children who attend, or are supported by the team at Little Rockets Children's Clinic have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe and have fun while participating in their therapy activities.

### **2. Purpose**

2.1. This Policy outlines how Little Rockets Children's Clinic prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

### **3. Scope**

3.1. This policy applies to all team members, volunteers, children and other individuals involved in our organisation. This policy applies to all activities – therapy, group interventions, community programs and community events – conducted by Little Rockets Children's Clinic.

### **4. Definitions**

4.1. *Child abuse* means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child

4.2. *Harm* is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

4.3. *Child/Children* means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

4.4. *Concerns and complaints*

4.4.1. A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

4.4.2. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to Little Rockets Children's Clinic related to one or more of the following:

- our services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a team member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Little Rockets Children's Clinic
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person attending a Little Rockets Children's Clinic therapy session, group program, community program or community event
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity

## **5. Role of the Director**

5.1. The Director of Little Rockets Children's Clinic has the role of making sure Little Rockets Children's Clinic prioritises children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

5.2. The Director will champion and model a child safe culture at Little Rockets Children's Clinic. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Director will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

5.3. Everyone at Little Rockets Children's Clinic has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Director will make sure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

5.4. The Director will conduct an annual review of how effectively Little Rockets Children's Clinic is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Little Rockets Children's Clinic will be sought as part of this review.

## **6. Children's empowerment and participation**

6.1. Little Rockets Children's Clinic is a child-centred organisation. We actively seek to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning, delivery of services and management of facilities.

6.2. We want children to develop new friends through Little Rockets Children's Clinic and encourage children to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children, or between children and adults and take action if this occurs.

6.3. We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights including the right to be safe at Little Rockets Children's Clinic. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

6.4. Little Rockets Children's Clinic values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families. Little Rockets Children's Clinic supports children's participation in the following ways:

- Setting goals for therapy with the child as appropriate
- Regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe
- Consultation and collaboration on the location, activities and focus of the therapy sessions

- Consultation with children about team changes or environmental changes
- Suggestion box for children to have their say. This will be emptied and reviewed termly by the Little Rockets Children's Clinic team

## **7. Families and communities**

7.1. Little Rockets Children's Clinic recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

7.2. Little Rockets Children's Clinic provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:

- publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct on our website
- including information about our child safety approach, our operations and Director in the Service Agreement and in the termly newsletter
- including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures, in our newsletter.

## **8. Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families**

8.1. Little Rockets Children's Clinic is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country present in the clinic
- consulting with families to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices in the Little Rockets Children's Clinic clinic and programs
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture in their therapeutic activities
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture in their therapy, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- providing training for staff and volunteers on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at Little Rockets Children's Clinic, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture

## **9. Valuing diversity**

9.1. We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- welcome and support participation of all children who are enrolled for our specific services, including children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- we do not attempt to support children outside our scope of practice and clearly communicate to them and their families where they can find a relevant service that will meet their needs

- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our children, their interests and cultures

## **10. Code of Conduct**

10.1. Little Rockets Children's Clinic has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. All team members, volunteers and the Director must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.

10.2. All third-party contractors are also expected to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and where they are engaging with children will have to sign an agreement to comply with the code, prior to delivering any services.

## **11. Recruiting staff and volunteers**

11.1 Little Rockets Children's Clinic puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for team members and volunteers as outlined in the recruitment and screening policy. We only recruit team members and volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children.

11.2. We require a Working with Children Check, Police Checks and referee checks for all team members and volunteers who have a role with children or have access to children's personal information. We require team members to have appropriate qualifications for their roles and check to make sure these qualifications are valid.

## **12. Supporting staff and volunteers**

12.1. Little Rockets Children's Clinic is committed to ensuring that all leaders, team members and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. Little Rockets Children's Clinic assists its leaders, team members and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decisions and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

12.2. All Little Rockets Children's Clinic team members are required to complete child safety training. Training will be recorded in the Child Safety Training Action Plan.

12.3. Team members will receive supervision to support their engagement with children and for compliance with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

12.4. Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed in line with our Code of Conduct, complaint handling policy and disciplinary policy.

## **13. Complaints and reporting**

13.1. All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

13.2. Little Rockets Children's Clinic has a Grievance Policy that includes information for team members and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. An easy-to-understand complaints information sheet will be provided for children, families and the community to know about the complaint process and the support available to those making a complaint and those involved in the complaint process.

13.3. If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then team members at Little Rockets Children's Clinic must report it in accordance with the complaint handling policy. Little Rockets Children's Clinic team members are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police. Under the complaint handling and disciplinary policies, staff and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
- having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at Little Rockets Children's Clinic
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at Little Rockets Children's Clinic
- removing their access to the Little Rockets Children's Clinic IT system and facilities.

13.4. Complaints can be emailed to [admin@littlerocketschildrensclinic.au](mailto:admin@littlerocketschildrensclinic.au) or you can speak with the Child Safety Officer.

13.5. *If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.*

#### **14. Child Safety Officer**

14.1. The Director of Little Rockets Children's Clinic is the appointed Child Safety Officer responsible for responding to any child safety related complaints or concerns.

14.2. A photo and name of the Child Safety Officer are displayed on our noticeboard and in our newsletters.

14.3. If a person does not feel comfortable making a report to our Child Safety Officer, they may report their concern to their treating therapist.

#### **15. Record keeping**

15.1. Little Rockets Children's Clinic is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.

15.2. All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system.

15.3. Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

15.4. We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

15.5. Records will be stored securely and kept by Little Rockets Children's Clinic for at least 20 years.

## **16. Information sharing**

16.1. Little Rockets Children's Clinic may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. Little Rockets Children's Clinic will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety. More information is available in our complaint handling policy.

## **17. Risk management**

17.1. We recognise the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated by Little Rockets Children's Clinic.

17.2. We conduct regular environmental risk assessments and have a risk management plan to address the risk of child abuse and harm at Little Rockets Children's Clinic. The risk management plan will be developed in consultation with our team members, parent representatives and children. We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at Little Rockets Children's Clinic. The Director is responsible for approving the risk management plan.

## **18. Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct**

18.1. Little Rockets Children's Clinic will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies (see list below). Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement or other corrective action. More information can be found in our disciplinary policy.

## **19. Review**

19.1. Little Rockets Children's Clinic will review all child safe practices and policies at least every two years. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'. Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and also inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices. Reviews are overseen by the Director and will be informed by consultation with children, families and team members.

## **20. Supporting documents – Little Rockets Children's Clinic child safety and wellbeing system**

20.1. The following policies and procedures work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all of our operations:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing policy
- Code of Conduct
- Grievance policy
- Performance Counseling policy
- Risk Management plan
- Child Safe Training plan

## 21. Supporting legislation

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* (including Child Safe Standards)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* (including reporting to Child Protection)
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- *Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)