



Keeping young people safe

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

How The Aletheia Project keeps children and young people safe,
in line with the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
and the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Every child and young person who takes part in The Aletheia Project has the right to be safe, to be heard and to be believed. This policy sets out how we keep children and young people safe from abuse and harm, in person and online, and what every member of our team must do if they are worried about a child's safety.

If a child is in immediate danger, call 000 first. For any other concern about a child's safety or wellbeing, tell Aletheia's Child Safety Lead and Child Safety Adviser the same day by emailing contact@thealetheiaproject.org with the subject line "Child safety". You can also contact Child Protection or Victoria Police directly at any time. You never need Aletheia's permission to report to the authorities.

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Our commitment

The Aletheia Project (**Aletheia, we, us**) is a youth-led not-for-profit initiative in Melbourne, Victoria, working with young people on health literacy, self-advocacy and youth voice. Many of the young people we work with, and many of our own volunteers and leaders, are under 18.

We are committed to the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children and young people. We have **zero tolerance for child abuse** and we take every concern seriously. We will always act in the best interests of the child.

- We recognise and respect the right of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people** to cultural safety, and the importance of their culture, identity and connection to Country and community.
- We are committed to the safety of **culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)** children and young people, **LGBTQIA+** children and young people, **children and young people with disability**, and those who are otherwise more likely to be unheard, and we respond to their diverse needs.
- We listen to children and young people, involve them in decisions that affect them, and take their views seriously.
- We expect every member of our team to know this policy, follow our code of conduct and speak up about any concern.

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Who and what this policy covers

This policy applies to Aletheia's work in Australia (Aletheia AU). It applies to:

- everyone who works or volunteers with Aletheia, including the Founder & Executive Director, members of the Youth Executive Council, team leads, volunteers, contractors and anyone acting on our behalf (together, **team members**);
- guest speakers, facilitators and partner organisations while they deliver activities with us;
- all of our activities and settings: workshops, roundtables, consultations, events, research, resources, meetings, our website, email, group chats, social media accounts and direct messages.

International Aletheia chapters must follow the child safety laws of their own country and, as a minimum, the principles in this policy.

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Key terms

Term	Meaning in this policy
Child or young person	Any person under 18 years of age. In our wider work, "young people" also includes people aged 18 to 25.
Child abuse	Includes sexual abuse (including grooming), physical abuse, serious emotional or psychological harm, neglect, and exposure to family violence.
Grooming	Communication or conduct with a child, or with a person who cares for a child, intended to make it easier to sexually abuse the child. Grooming can happen in person or online and is a criminal offence.
Harm	Any detrimental effect on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing, whether caused by an adult or another young person, and whether deliberate or not.
Disclosure	When a child or young person tells someone that they, or another child, have been abused, harmed or are at risk.
Child-related work	Work or volunteering that usually involves direct contact with children, in person or online, as defined in the <i>Worker Screening Act 2020</i> (Vic).
Child Safety Lead	The Founder & Executive Director, who leads child safety at Aletheia.
Child Safety Adviser	An adult (18 or over) with child safety knowledge, nominated by Aletheia to share responsibility for child safety, receive reports and make sure concerns are reported to the authorities (section 05).

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The laws and standards we follow

Aletheia follows the laws and standards below. Where a law applies to individuals rather than organisations, every team member must understand how it applies to them.

Law or standard	What it means for us
<i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> (Vic) and the 11 Child Safe Standards	Organisations that provide services or facilities to children must meet all 11 Standards, which are overseen by the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP). Section 06 shows how we meet each one.
<i>Worker Screening Act 2020</i> (Vic)	Team members aged 18 or over who do child-related work need a valid Working with Children Check (WWCC). Volunteers under 18 are exempt.
<i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (Vic): failure to disclose (s 327)	Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that another adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 in Victoria must report it to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse (for example, they know it has already been reported).
<i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (Vic): failure to protect (s 49O)	A person in authority in an organisation who knows of a substantial risk that an adult associated with the organisation will sexually abuse a child under 16, and who has the power to reduce or remove that risk, must not negligently fail to do so.
<i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (Vic): grooming (s 49M)	Grooming a child under 16, or their carer, for sexual abuse is a criminal offence, including online.
<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i> (Vic)	Anyone may report a concern about a child to Child Protection. Some professions are mandatory reporters. Team members who are mandatory reporters in their other roles must still meet those obligations.
<i>Online Safety Act 2021</i> (Cth)	Cyberbullying, image-based abuse and other serious online harm can be reported to the eSafety Commissioner.
<i>Privacy Act 1988</i> (Cth) and <i>Health Records Act 2001</i> (Vic)	We handle children's personal and health information in line with our Privacy Policy.
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations	Our approach is also consistent with the 10 National Principles, which align closely with the Victorian Standards.

Reportable Conduct Scheme. If Aletheia becomes an organisation required to take part in the Reportable Conduct Scheme under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, we will comply with it in full, including notifying the CCYP within the required timeframes.

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Roles and responsibilities

Aletheia is youth-led, and some of our leaders are under 18. Young leaders bring insight and energy to our work, but child safety must never rest on a child alone. That is why an **adult Child Safety Adviser** shares responsibility for child safety, receives every report alongside the Child Safety Lead, and makes sure concerns reach the authorities.

Who	Responsibilities
Founder & Executive Director (Child Safety Lead)	Leads a child-safe culture; makes sure this policy is followed, resourced and reviewed; receives reports with the Child Safety Adviser; makes sure team members are screened, inducted and trained; approves activities involving children.
Child Safety Adviser (adult)	Receives every child safety report; makes sure reports to Police, Child Protection or other authorities are made promptly; advises on risk and responses; supports the Child Safety Lead; oversees records of concerns. If the Child Safety Lead is unavailable or is the subject of a concern, the Adviser leads the response.
Youth Executive Council	Models child-safe behaviour; makes sure activities in their area follow this policy; completes a risk check for each in-person activity; raises concerns immediately.
Team leads	Make sure their team knows this policy and code of conduct; supervise new volunteers; pass on any concern the same day.
All team members	Follow this policy and the code of conduct; complete child safety induction and training; report every concern the same day; hold a WWCC where required.
Auspice organisations and partners	Are informed of this policy; any concern involving a shared activity is also raised with the relevant partner in line with its own procedures.

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How we meet the 11 Child Safe Standards

Standard	What Aletheia does
1. Culturally safe for Aboriginal children and young people	We acknowledge Traditional Owners, make sure resources and activities respect Aboriginal culture and identity, call out racism, and connect young people with culturally safe services such as 13YARN.
2. Embedded in leadership, governance and culture	This policy is approved by the Founder & Executive Director, published on our website, and child safety is a standing item at Youth Executive Council meetings.

Standard	What Aletheia does
3. Children are empowered, participate and are taken seriously	Young people co-design our work. We tell them about their rights, how to raise a concern, and that they will be believed. A child-friendly summary of this policy is shared at our activities.
4. Families and communities are informed and involved	This policy is public. Parents and guardians consent to under-18 volunteers joining, are told about in-person activities, and can raise concerns with us at any time.
5. Equity and diverse needs respected	We adapt activities and communication for CALD, LGBTQIA+ and disabled young people, use inclusive language, and respond to individual needs.
6. Suitable and supported people	Screening, WWCC checks, references for roles with direct contact, a signed Volunteer Agreement, induction and supervision (section 07).
7. Child-focused complaints processes	Simple, safe ways for young people and families to raise concerns, with clear timeframes and no retaliation (section 13).
8. Education and training	Child safety induction for every team member, refresher training each year, and briefings before activities with children.
9. Safe physical and online environments	Risk checks for events, supervision rules, and online safety rules for social media, DMs and video meetings (sections 09 and 10).
10. Regular review and improvement	We review this policy every year and after any significant incident, and we act on what young people and families tell us.
11. Documented policies and procedures	This policy, our Volunteer Handbook, Volunteer Agreement and Privacy Policy together document how we keep children safe.

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Recruiting, screening and supporting safe people

- **Working with Children Check.** Team members aged 18 or over who do child-related work must hold a valid Victorian WWCC before starting those tasks. We record the card number and expiry, verify it online, and check it again at least once a year. Team members must tell us straight away if their WWCC status changes.
- **Recruitment.** Role descriptions state our commitment to child safety. Applications and interviews for roles with direct contact with children include questions about child safety and appropriate behaviour. For those roles we seek at least one reference.
- **Agreement and induction.** Every volunteer signs the Volunteer Agreement and completes induction on this policy, the code of conduct and how to report concerns before working with children.
- **Under-18 team members.** A parent or guardian consents to their involvement. Young volunteers are supervised, are never placed in charge of other children on their own, and are protected by this policy in the same way as the young people we work with.

- **Guest speakers, facilitators and partners** are briefed on this policy and never left alone with children.
- **Supervision and support.** Team leads check in with their volunteers regularly. Anyone affected by a disclosure or incident is offered a debrief and support.

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Code of conduct with children and young people

All team members must:

- treat every child and young person with respect, whatever their background, identity or ability;
- listen to and believe children and young people who raise concerns;
- keep all contact with young participants within Aletheia channels: official accounts, group chats, group meetings and events;
- work in view of others and, wherever possible, have at least two team members present at any activity with children;
- get consent before taking or sharing photos, video, stories or quotes, including parent or guardian consent for under-18s;
- respect personal boundaries, privacy and cultural and religious needs;
- report any concern, breach or suspicion the same day.

Team members must never:

- contact a young participant privately through personal accounts, phone numbers or apps, or add them on personal social media;
- arrange to meet a young participant alone or outside Aletheia activities, or transport a child alone;
- have unsupervised one-to-one contact with a child, in person or online;
- give gifts, money or favours to individual young people, or show favouritism;
- use language, jokes, images or content that is sexual, violent, discriminatory, humiliating or inappropriate;
- engage in any sexual behaviour or relationship with a child or young person under 18, or any behaviour that could be grooming;
- ask a child or young person to keep a secret;
- supply, use or be affected by alcohol, vapes or drugs at any Aletheia activity;
- ignore or dismiss a concern, or try to investigate a concern themselves.

A breach of the code of conduct may lead to removal from child-related duties, ending the person's involvement with Aletheia, and a report to the relevant authorities.

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Online safety

- Our social media accounts are run by approved team members only, and messages are handled in line with this policy.
- Direct messages from young people are answered only through Aletheia's official accounts. Any message showing a young person may be at risk is passed to the Child Safety Lead and Adviser straight away, and crisis supports are shared.
- Online meetings with under-18 participants are run as group sessions with at least two team members, using Aletheia-approved links. Private one-to-one video calls with a child are not permitted.
- Meetings are not recorded without the consent of everyone present, and of parents or guardians where required.
- We never share a child's personal details, location, school or images online without written consent, and we use first names or anonymity where requested.
- Online abuse, cyberbullying or image-based abuse is reported to the eSafety Commissioner and, where a crime may have occurred, to police.

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Safe physical environments and events

- A simple risk check is completed before every in-person activity involving children, covering the venue, supervision, toilets and exits, first aid, emergency contacts and any specific needs of participants.
- At least two team members, including at least one adult with a valid WWCC, are present at in-person activities with under-18 participants.
- Parent or guardian consent is obtained for under-18 participants where the activity requires it, including for photography.
- Venues are checked for safe spaces, and children are never taken to private or unsupervised areas.
- Anything that goes wrong at an event is recorded and reviewed afterwards.

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Recognising abuse and harm

Children rarely tell someone straight away, and abuse is often hidden. Team members should be alert to changes in a young person's behaviour, mood or appearance, signs of fear or distress, unexplained injuries, and adults or older young people who seek unusual attention, secrecy, gifts or private contact with a child. A single sign is not proof of abuse, but any concern must be reported. You do not need to be certain to report.

Responding to disclosures and concerns

If a child tells you something worrying, or you see or suspect abuse or harm:

- **1. Make sure the child is safe.** If anyone is in immediate danger, call **000**.
- **2. Listen calmly and believe them.** Let them speak in their own words. Don't push for details or ask leading questions.
- **3. Reassure them.** Thank them for telling you and tell them it is not their fault.
- **4. Don't promise to keep it secret.** Explain that you need to tell people who can help keep them safe.
- **5. Don't investigate or confront anyone,** including the person the concern is about.
- **6. Write it down** as soon as you can: what was said or seen, in the child's words, with the date, time and who was present.
- **7. Report it the same day** to the Child Safety Lead and Child Safety Adviser. If the concern is about one of them, report to the other, or directly to the authorities.
- **8. Keep it confidential.** Only share information with people who need it to keep the child safe.

The Child Safety Lead and Adviser will make sure the right report is made to the authorities as quickly as possible. Any team member can also report directly. Adults must personally meet their legal obligation to report a sexual offence against a child under 16 to police (section 04).

Situation	Who to contact
Anyone is in immediate danger	000 (Police, Ambulance, Fire)
You believe a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused or harmed by a family member or carer	Child Protection (Department of Families, Fairness and Housing). After hours: 13 12 78 . Business-hours intake lines are listed at services.dffh.vic.gov.au
You believe an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16	Victoria Police: 000 in an emergency, otherwise your local police station or 131 444
You are worried about a child's or family's wellbeing, but it is not abuse	The Orange Door (orangedoor.vic.gov.au)
Online abuse, cyberbullying or image-based abuse	eSafety Commissioner (esafety.gov.au)
A concern about how an organisation is keeping children safe	Commission for Children and Young People: 1300 78 29 78

If the concern is about a team member, they will be stood down from all child-related duties while the matter is dealt with, and we will follow advice from police and other authorities before telling the person involved. Support will be offered to the child, their family and anyone else affected.

Support services: Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 (ages 5 to 25, any time) · Lifeline 13 11 14 · 13YARN 13 92 76 (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis support) · QLife 1800 184 527 (LGBTQIA+ peer

support).

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Complaints and concerns about Aletheia

Children, young people, families, team members and members of the public can raise a concern or complaint about child safety at Aletheia by:

- telling any Aletheia team member, in person or online;
- emailing **contact@thealetheiaproject.org** with the subject line "Child safety" (you can remain anonymous);
- contacting the Commission for Children and Young People directly on 1300 78 29 78.

We will acknowledge every child safety complaint within two business days, keep it as confidential as possible, tell the person who raised it what will happen next, and act on it. No one will be treated unfairly for raising a concern in good faith. We explain our process in plain, age-appropriate language, and a young person can bring a trusted adult with them.

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Records and privacy

Child safety concerns, reports and actions are recorded accurately and promptly and stored securely, with access limited to the Child Safety Lead and Child Safety Adviser. In line with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, records relating to child sexual abuse are kept for at least 45 years. We share information only where the law allows or requires it, including with police and Child Protection, and otherwise in line with our Privacy Policy.

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Training and awareness

- Every team member completes child safety induction covering this policy, the code of conduct, recognising abuse, responding to disclosures and reporting obligations.
- Refresher training is completed every year, and the Child Safety Lead and Adviser keep up to date with guidance from the Commission for Children and Young People.
- Before activities with children, the team is briefed on supervision, risks and who to report to.

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Involving children, young people and families

We share a child-friendly summary of this policy with young people who take part in our activities, so they know their rights, what behaviour to expect from us and how to speak up. We ask young people and families for feedback on how safe and welcome they feel, and we use it to improve.

For young people. You have the right to feel safe with Aletheia. Our team should always treat you with respect and should never ask you to keep secrets, contact you privately or make you feel uncomfortable. If anything worries you, tell any team member you trust, email contact@thealetheiaproject.org, or call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 any time. You will be listened to and believed.

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Review of this policy

This policy is approved by the Founder & Executive Director. It is reviewed at least every year, and after any significant child safety incident, with input from young people, families and team members. The current version is always available on our website, and team members are told about any changes.

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The Aletheia Project · thealetheiaproject.org · contact@thealetheiaproject.org · [@aletheia.au](https://www.instagram.com/aletheia.au)