

Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Kath Dickson Community Toy Library is committed to:

- promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its service, and to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment for all children and young people who engage with it, so that they can be safe, happy and empowered
- complying with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and state child safety standards to help protect children and young people from harm, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background
- a zero tolerance for child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently to the relevant authorities
- ensuring all staff, contractors, volunteers, associates, and members of our community working at, or visiting, the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library are responsible for the care and protection of the children using our services and reporting information about suspected child abuse or safety concerns
- the cultural safety of children, and pay particular attention to the safety and cultural safety of the following groups of children, in recognition of their increased vulnerability, and diverse and unique identities and experiences:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
 - children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - children living with a disability
 - children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans
 - children who are intersex, non-binary or gender diverse
 - children in and out of home care and the youth justice system

All staff, volunteers, parents and visitors are responsible for promoting a culture of safety and wellbeing at the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library, to minimise the risk of child abuse or harm to children whilst promoting children's sense of security and belonging.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

CHILD SAFE POLICY

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all persons who work at, or visit, the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure that all persons working at, or visiting, the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library are aware of the organisation's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- outline the responsibilities that various parties have for identifying possible occasions for child abuse
- provide guidance as to action that should be taken where child abuse is suspected
- provide assurance that all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated

TOY LIBRARY OPERATIONS

Children should never be left in the care of toy library staff or volunteers. Parents/guardians must always supervise their children at the toy library, so that at least two adults will be present when there are children in the toy library;

All child safety gates shall remain closed when not being entered or exited through by adults;

The Kath Dickson Community Toy Library ensures that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach, including internal and external safety measures, through its annually reviewed policies and procedures.

APPROACH TO CHILD SAFETY

In continuing to implement and promote a child-safe system of work, the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library will, and continues to:

- develop an environment in which children feel listened to and valued, and in which their concerns are acted upon, including encouraging and allowing children to participate in decisions important to them;
- consult with staff, contractors and volunteers and other appropriate parties, including families and children;
- assess and manage the risk of abuse to children who interact with our organisation;
- take a proactive approach to child safety, including fostering a culture of openness that encourages all staff, volunteers, parents and visitors to report any concerns of child safety and supports them in this process;

- report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authority, whether or not the law requires reporting
- ensure children know the options available to them if they are concerned or feeling unsafe, and foster an environment where children are safe to raise such concerns;
- recruit staff and volunteers who are suitable to work with children and provide high quality training, supervision and professional development to staff and volunteers as appropriate;
- have policies, procedures and supports in place to reflect these commitments, and review these regularly.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff, volunteers, parents and visitors share responsibility for the safety of children visiting the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library and must:

- familiarise themselves with relevant laws, and the Kath Dickson policies and procedures, in relation to child safety, 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 or the state child protection service);
- report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library coordinator, or to a responsible person in the Kath Dickson Family Centre organisation; and
- provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

RECRUITMENT OF PAID STAFF

Kath Dickson Community Toy Library's recruitment approach, including referee checks and preemployment screening, emphasises child safety and wellbeing in line with the Statement of Commitment to promoting child safety. This process aims to:

- promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- identify the safest and most suitable people who share the Kath Dickson values and commitment to protecting children; and
- prevent a person from working at the toy library if they pose a risk to children.

To achieve this aim:

- all staff and volunteers are required to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening process before commencing their engagement;
- all staff and volunteers must have a current Working with Children/Blue Card (P or V); and
- once engaged, staff must review and acknowledge their understanding of the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct, through appropriate induction and ongoing training, in relation to their child safety responsibilities.

REPORTING

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the relevant government department or police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter. Kath Dickson Community Toy Library takes the legal responsibility of reporting abuse seriously, noting that:

- reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility, and that all adults who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 must report that information to the police;
- those in authority, including mandatory reporters such as teachers and doctors, and all staff, volunteers, families and visitors at the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library, must comply with their reporting duties and, if fail to do so, are at risk of committing an offence when negligent in reporting a situation where there is a substantial risk of child sexual abuse.

All families, staff and volunteers will be informed as to how to report an incident if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if inappropriate behaviour is noticed.

All families, staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if there is a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

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

- the child is in need of protection; or
- the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical or sexual injury or abuse; or
- 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 it is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would form 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 (the child may be talking about themselves);
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused but is unwilling or unlikely to report it;
- signs of abuse, including behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim, lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- suspicious behaviour is observed.

PRIVACY

All records relating to a reported incident are securely stored, as per the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library's *Confidentiality and Privacy Policy*. All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, including staff, volunteers, parents and/or children, unless there is a risk to a person's safety.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, updates are provided to children and families on progress and any actions the organisation has taken.

DEFINITIONS

- *Child* means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.
- *Child protection* means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.
- *Child abuse* means:
 - a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded; or
 - sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child; or
 - physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child; or
 - any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child or significant neglect of a child.
- *Child sexual assault* is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his, her or their 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.
- *Volunteers* are people volunteering at the toy library who may, or may not be, members of the Kath Dickson Community Toy Library.
- *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.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- The law of the Commonwealth or of the relevant state or territory
- The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Kath Dickson Community Toy Library Code of Conduct and Statement of Commitment

POLICY REVIEW

This *Child Safe and Statement of Commitment* Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Any necessary updates or revisions will be made in consultation with the toy library's stakeholders.