FV-09 | Child Safe Policy & Procedures

Approved November 2026 | Version 1

Fishcare protects children through safe people, clear boundaries, accessible complaints and safe activities. This policy is supported by four separate documents: FV-09a Complaints and Reporting, FV-09b Code of Conduct, FV-09c Public Commitment and Reporting, and FV-09d Reportable Allegation Case Record. All participants under 18 remain accompanied by a responsible adult, including at FishAbility. Adult FishAbility participants may attend independently, with support agreed where needed.

Scope and commitment

This policy applies to Committee members, employees, volunteers, contractors and others representing Fishcare, across activities, travel and online contact arising from their role. A child is anyone under 18. We have zero tolerance for abuse, grooming, exploitation, racism, discrimination and retaliation. Children's safety, wellbeing, rights and best interests guide decisions.

Culture and participation

Create culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Support identity, culture, kinship and connection to Country; seek respectful local advice and act on racism with appropriate consequences. Do not ask a child to prove identity or educate the team. Brief staff and volunteers on cultural safety and record practical improvements.

Welcome children with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse or refugee backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ children, children unable to live at home and others facing vulnerability. Ask about communication and access needs, make reasonable adjustments and avoid assumptions. Explain rights, boundaries and complaint options in ways children understand. Seek children's views and assent, respect refusal of touch, photography or participation and offer safe alternatives.

Inform families and group organisers about supervision, consent, reporting and safe behaviour. Invite children, families and communities to help shape and review activities and policies through accessible feedback, including translation or communication support where needed. Family consent is not a prerequisite for a child to complain or for a required external report.

Responsibilities and continuity

Role	Responsibility
Committee	Resource safeguards; appoint competent lead, alternatives and screening backup; oversee risks, training and improvements.

Role	Responsibility
EO	Coordinate safeguarding, scheme administration, screening, restricted records and reporting. Statutory-head duties remain with the lawful head. The EO does not handle concerns about themselves.
President then Vice President	Provide independent escalation for conflicts or unavailability. Arrange an unconflicted competent response if neither can act.
Facilitators	Check readiness before delivery; brief the team and accompanying adults; act on safety concerns and escalate promptly.
All representatives	Follow the code, maintain boundaries, report concerns promptly and meet individual legal duties.

Recruitment and WWC procedure

The EO assesses and records whether each role is child-related work. Contact includes physical, face-to-face, oral, written and electronic contact. Supervision by teachers, parents or other adults does not itself remove screening obligations. Incidental contact and adult-only roles require a role-based assessment, rather than an automatic rule for everyone.

Before engagement and child related duties

- Use child-safe role descriptions, identity checks and proportionate interviews for employees and child-related volunteers. Obtain at least two references for employees. Assess volunteer suitability using screening proportionate to the role. Record suitability decisions and any conditions.
- Verify current eligibility using the official WWC status checker, or verify and document a lawful exemption. Keep dated evidence, not just a card image. Assess cross-jurisdiction exclusions and current eligibility under the official guidance.
- Confirm clearance type: employee clearance may cover volunteering; volunteer clearance does not authorise paid child-related work. Under Fishcare's stricter rule, a pending application alone is insufficient for child-related duties.
- Assess exemptions individually, including under-18 workers, parents volunteering in their child's activity, relevant close relatives, registered teachers and eligible police roles. A parent accompanying a participant is not automatically a Fishcare volunteer. Verify VIT status for a teacher relying on exemption; retain evidence and review conditions.

WWC Connect administration

For engagements from 19 October 2026, connect non-exempt child-related workers within seven days and volunteers within 21 days. Engagement begins on the earlier of starting child-related work or agreeing a written or verbal arrangement. Notify cessation within the applicable period and update required worker and organisational details on time. For a newly discovered change, apply current guidance on notification from awareness. Verify first; connection does not itself verify suitability.

Generally exempt workers do not require connection, except registered teachers undertaking child-related work outside their teaching role in a school or early childhood service. Confirm category-specific guidance. Existing workers are strongly encouraged to be connected; do not invent a retrospective deadline. Obtain consent for optional connection of non-child-related roles. For ongoing or ad hoc volunteers, confirm annually whether they wish to continue and remain connected.

Monitor and retain evidence

Maintain worker name, address, email, phone, clearance or exemption evidence, verification date and checker, engagement and cessation dates, and changes to details. Retain the required WWC records for at least seven years after engagement ends. Store them securely with restricted access. This is not a disposal period for child abuse allegations or other records subject to longer retention, legal holds or investigation.

Check eligibility and training readiness before volunteering; maintain expiry alerts and act immediately on adverse notifications. Workers promptly notify relevant changes and renew in time. Remove a person from child-related duties if they become ineligible, are suspended, barred or excluded, or their clearance expires under Fishcare's rule; assess risk and take required action. A renewal receipt does not override Fishcare's clearance rule.

Induction and learning

Before participant duties, complete Fishcare's combined child safety and WWC module, acknowledge the code, learn reporting routes and complete role-specific safety induction and supervised practice. Record completion and competence; refresh at least annually and after relevant changes. The refreshed module uses six questions, supported retries and one code acknowledgement; the proposed learning standard is all six correct, with EO approval of completion. State WWC training separately applies to new applications, renewals and volunteer-to-employee conversions from 19 October 2026. Fishcare's module does not replace that training.

Supervision and safe delivery

Children and accompanying adults

Every participant under 18 must be accompanied throughout by a parent, guardian or responsible adult. At school or organised group activities, teachers, caregivers or authorised group adults remain present and retain agreed supervision and care responsibilities. Apply this rule to FishAbility as well as ordinary clinics. Confirm the accompanying arrangement at booking and arrival; do not accept an unaccompanied child into the activity.

Fishcare remains responsible for safe instruction, equipment, activity management and its representatives. Before delivery, agree who supervises each group, assists with toilets or personal care, handles emergencies and manages arrival and departure. Accompanying adults do not automatically count as assigned Fishcare volunteers. If an adult leaves, stop the child's participation, maintain safe observable supervision, contact the responsible adult and escalate; do not leave the child alone or send them away unsafely.

FishAbility adults

Participants aged 18 or over may attend independently. Do not assume incapacity or require a caregiver solely because of disability. Ask the participant what adjustments or assistance they need and respect their choices. Where safe participation needs assistance beyond Fishcare's agreed role, arrange appropriate support with the participant and, with consent or lawful authority, their caregiver or provider. Do not undertake unplanned intimate care. In an immediate emergency take the least intrusive safe action and record it.

Risk assessment and partners

Complete and record a child safety and general activity risk assessment before each program or site and after material changes. Cover water, weather, casting, hooks, knives, isolation, toilets, changing, missing children, transport, photographs, communication, partner conduct and access needs. Record hazards, controls, remaining risk, accountable person and review date. Seek children's and families' feedback. Do not proceed with unresolved high safeguarding risk; anyone may stop an unsafe activity.

Retain the existing organisational maximum of five participants per assigned Fishcare volunteer for ordinary clinics, with extra support where risks or needs require. No lone participant delivery. This is Fishcare's existing rule, not a statutory universal ratio. Reconcile it with the Hazard Management Policy and Activity Risk Assessment before adoption; any change needs a separate documented decision.

Use visible spaces and avoid isolated one-to-one contact. Do not provide unapproved private transport. If a child is missing, stop, secure the remaining group and activate the emergency plan; contact Police promptly where warranted

without a fixed waiting period. Agree partner supervision, screening, consent, privacy, complaints and scheme escalation in writing. A school's or provider's policy does not remove Fishcare's own duties.

Online contact and images

Use approved organisational accounts and monitored channels, including responsible adults in child communications. No personal social media contact, secret groups, disappearing messages or private child messaging. Check platform age rules and privacy; do not require children to join social media. Obtain separate image consent and child assent, avoid names with images or risky location information, and store images securely. No unapproved personal-device storage or public image-download folders. Training pages may be public only without confidential data; non-indexing is not access control. Restrict quiz records, screening details, personal information and safeguarding files.

Review and document control

The EO coordinates a review at least annually and sooner after a significant incident, complaint, legal change or material change to activities. The Committee approves substantive amendments and oversees implementation and outstanding actions quarterly. Seek input from children, families, staff, volunteers and relevant communities, analyse concerns and incidents, and communicate appropriate de-identified improvements. Record evidence, owners and due dates in the single Child Safety Implementation and Evidence Register.

Maintain controlled versions of FV-09 and FV-09a to FV-09d. Record approval, effective and review dates, provide accessible current copies and archive superseded versions. Update contacts promptly and brief affected people on changes. The induction module, code acknowledgement, restricted WWC register, activity risk assessments and complaints records provide implementation evidence; they do not replace this policy.

Supporting documents

FV-09a Child Safe Complaints and Reporting: response, escalation, external duties and reportable conduct procedure.

FV-09b Child Safe Code of Conduct: behaviour and one recorded acknowledgement.

FV-09c Child Safe Public Commitment and Reporting: accessible public information and contact routes.

FV-09d Reportable Allegation Case Record: restricted management record for allegations.

Child Safety Implementation and Evidence Register: internal action tracking, readiness checks and Committee oversight.

Sources and adoption notes

The legal frameworks operate independently: Child Safe Standards; Worker Screening Act 2020 and WWC administration; Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 Part 5A; and applicable criminal and Child Protection reporting duties. Check current regulator advice when services or arrangements change.

Child Safe Standards and compliance indicators
https://www.vic.gov.au/complying-child-safe-standards

Who the Standards apply to
https://www.vic.gov.au/who-child-safe-standards-apply

WWC Connect including deadlines exemptions and records
https://www.vic.gov.au/working-children-connect

Mandatory state WWC training
https://www.vic.gov.au/mandatory-child-safety-training-working-children-clearance-holders

WWC exemptions
https://www.vic.gov.au/exemptions-from-WWC-Check

Head responsibilities and reporting
https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sheet-3-responsibilities-head-organisation

Scheme duties and entity wide coverage
https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sheet-1-about-reportable-conduct-scheme

Scheme reporting and investigation
https://www.vic.gov.au/information-sheet-7-reporting-social-services-regulator

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act current version 048
https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/child-wellbeing-and-safety-act-2005/048

Child Protection reporting
https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection

Failure to protect
https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/criminal-offences-improve-responses-child-sex-abuse