

Water Polo Victoria



Water Polo
VICTORIA

Child Safeguarding Handbook

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Introduction

This Handbook aims to provide Water Polo Victoria clubs with the necessary information and resources to meet the incoming 11 Child Safe Standards. The Child Safe Standards have been active since July 1st, 2022; thus, a solid understanding of what your club needs to do to meet the new standards is necessary. It has been compiled to serve the purpose of a central reference point for any doubt over child safety matters and to assist with understanding their responsibilities, obligations, and duties in their role.

Background

The Child Safe Standards (the Standards) commenced in Victoria in January 2016. After five years, we have seen how the Standards improve safety for children and young people. Changes are being made to make our Standards even stronger. Organisations covered by the Standards must comply with new Standards implemented on 1st July 2022. The new Standards set out minimum requirements and outline the actions organisations must take to keep children and young people safe. The things organisations already do to keep children and young people safe will help them be compliant with the new Standards.

The Standards apply to all personnel in an organisation. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Board of Management / Committee Members
- All paid staff (CEO, Executive, Employees)
- All Volunteers (Coaches, officials, administrators, scorers etc.)
- All students on placement
- Any contractors the organisation engages

In response to the new standards, Water Polo Victoria and its affiliated clubs must ensure that the appropriate steps are being taken to meet compliance.

Changes to Child Safe Standards – effective July 2022

Although similar to Victoria's previous Child Safe Standards, a key summary of changes includes:

- Supporting greater national consistency reflecting the National Principles for a Child Safe Organisation,
- Greater involvement of families and communities in organisations' efforts to keep children and young people safe,
- A greater focus on the safety of Aboriginal children and young people,
- Managing the risk of child abuse in online environments,
- Greater clarity on the governance, systems, and processes to keep children and young people safe online.

Child safety is not an add-on or one-off exercise. It is a legal requirement that the organisations need to be compliant with as of 1 July 2022. Having policies and procedures in place is not enough - it's about creating a culture and environment within sport that is supportive and protective of children.

Mission Statement

Water Polo Victoria and its clubs are committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in our care. We seek to promote and protect the rights of all children in our care and prevent abuse from occurring by fostering a child safe culture. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our priority, and Water Polo Victoria and its clubs have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Water Polo Victoria and clubs that provide water polo to children and young people will present environments and experiences that always consider and put measures in place to ensure the safety of children.

The Eleven Standards for Child Safety

1. Culturally safe Aboriginal children and young people.
2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in committee leadership, governance, and culture.
3. Children and young people are safe, informed, and empowered.
4. Families and communities are informed and involved.
5. Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.
6. Robust recruitment and screening.
7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
8. Ongoing education and training
9. Safe physical and online environments.
10. Regular improvement.
11. Child Safety & wellbeing policies and procedures.

Defining Child Safety

When considering the issue of child abuse, most will automatically think of the extreme cases – sexual abuse or physical violence. While these are the worst cases, they are not the only actions counted under the term.

It is important to remember that child abuse can be present in other ways, such as bullying, inappropriate behaviour, or inappropriate communication. Negligence can also be counted as child abuse. For example, leaving one child alone after training while they wait for their parents or poorly maintained facilities, or equipment can lead to the injury of a child under your care. Do not limit your awareness of this issue to extreme cases. Remember to consider ALL forms of child abuse as you seek to make your club safer.

Club Checklist – Child Safety Standards

- Identify your clubs Child Safety Officer and ensure they have done the following:
 - Working With Children Check (WWCC) acquired
 - Complete online education modules, such as Play by the Rules - Child Protection and Safeguarding Online Course, and VicSport Child Safety eTrainu modules (see below for more information).
 - Adopt and communicate Water Polo Victoria’s Mission Statement in relation to child safety.
 - Adopt and communicate Water Polo Victoria’s Child Safety Policy.
 - Adopt and communicate Water Polo Victoria’s Code of Conduct.
 - Adopt Water Polo Victoria’s Minimum Standards for Recruitment and implement sound recruitment practices.
 - Promote and communicate Water Polo Victoria’s Incident Reporting Procedure.
 - Complete Club Safeguarding Self-Audit Toolkit.
 - Educate your club about their responsibilities, rights and risks, including:
 - Club officials
 - Coaches
 - Team Managers
 - Players
 - Parents
 - Conduct risk assessments regularly to identify potentially dangerous situations, address weaknesses before they are exploited, and form response plans for situations that may arise.
 - Review incident data to continually improve Child Safe practices.
 - Include Child Safety as an agenda item at all committee meetings.

Information on all the above steps can be found throughout this handbook.

Club Safeguarding Self-Audit Toolkit

Water Polo Victoria has compiled a Child Safeguarding self-audit toolkit to help determine which areas of your club's child safeguarding practices need immediate attention and how to meet the minimum requirements. This toolkit is by no means a one-stop shop; Child Safeguarding is an ongoing and ever-changing commitment. Thus, you must aim to improve your practices continually.

How to use the toolkit?

This toolkit has been separated into two sections, each complementing the other.

Section 1: Self-audit tool.

The self-audit tool has several questions for your committee to answer. Each question can be answered with 'In Place', 'Partially in Place', or 'Not in Place.' You will then be able to complete the 'Action Required' text box depending on the answer to your question.

Section 2: Action Required

The action-required portion of the toolkit goes through several ideas your club can put into place to meet the minimum requirements of the relevant question. From these ideas, you can fill in the 'Action Required' text box area.

Note: This toolkit is NOT designed to be a one-stop shop. It is a necessary toolkit to understand where your club's Child Safeguarding practices are at, what needs to be improved and how to improve them at a minimum level; continual improvement on top of the recommendations found in this document is required.

Child Safety Officer (CSO)

This role is to give players, clubs and parents a known point of contact for matters regarding child safety and to give clubs a liaison for training and information regarding the issue. Essentially, having a CSO is intended to ensure that if an incident occurs, people know who to turn to and that the person they turn to understands what to do.

CSO responsibilities

To ensure your club is compliant with the new standards, you must:

- Ensure your club has adopted Water Polo Victoria's;
 - Child Safety Mission statement
 - Child Safety Policy
 - Child Safety Code of Conduct
 - Recruitment Policy
- Ensure your club has completed the Club Safeguarding Self-Audit Toolkit and has taken the appropriate steps to rectify any areas lacking performance.
- Ensure all members (players, parents, volunteers, coaches etc.) receive child safety information.
- Ensure all members (players, parents, volunteers, coaches etc.) receive ongoing child safety training and information when appropriate.

CSO Handover

If the CSO role is changing at your club, you must ensure the incoming CSO understands all aspects of Child Safeguarding. At a minimum, the incoming CSO must:

- Ensure they are aware of and understand the following:
 - Water Polo Victoria's Child Safety Mission Statement
 - Water Polo Victoria's Child Safety Policy
 - Water Polo Victoria's Child Safety Code of Conduct
 - Water Polo Victoria's Recruitment Policy
- Familiarise themselves with and understand the above documents and complaint handling processes.
- Complete education modules, such as Play by the Rules - Child Protection and Safeguarding Online Course, and VicSport Child Safety eTrainu modules (see below for more information).
- Understand Working with Children Check processes (see below).
- Read over this handbook and understand each section, including the Case Studies and how to respond if an incident arises.

Play By The Rules - Child Protection Course

As the CSO for your club, you must complete an online training module. This module is an educational resource from Sports Integrity Australia and Play by the Rules. It provides an excellent foundation of understanding for a child safety role. The module takes around 45 minutes to complete but can be completed in multiple sittings.

You can access the course via the link below:

[Play by the Rules - Child Protection and Safeguarding Online Course](#)

VicSport Child Safety etrainu Modules

To ensure all sports are equipped to implement the new Child Safe Standards, VicSport has put together a training module for each of the 11 standards.

Developed with support from Sport and Recreation Victoria and Lander & Rogers, the education program is powered by etrainu Learning Management System.

Featuring one module per Standard, users are able to delve into the content while working through practical, sport-based strategies and scenarios to help with their understanding. Breakdowns of compliance indicators, policies and procedures are also included while the modules feature the ability to save as you go, meaning you can work through the program at your own pace.

The free and interactive program is designed to guide sport administrators, volunteers, coaches and/or officials through the Standards.

You can access the education resources via the link below:

[VicSport etrainu Modules](#)

VicSport also provides a number of webinars which can assist CSO's get a broader understanding of the changes to the Child Safe Policies, you can access the webinars via the link below:

[Child Safe Sport — Vicsport](#)

Working With Children Checks

Personnel

The list of personnel requiring a WWC check includes:

- Coaches
- Assistant Coaches
- Team Managers
- Child Safety Officer
- President, Secretary, and club Committee Members

Applying for a check

When a member of your club is applying for a WWCC, they will either be able to complete the application entirely online, or they will need to complete the first part online followed by going into an Australian Post outlet. It is against the law for a person required to but has not obtained a Working with Children Check to engage in child-related work, including volunteering.

To apply for a check fully online, you will need two ID documents:

- You must have one of the following documents:
 - Australian passport (current or expired less than three years)
 - Current foreign passport (with linked visa)
 - Australian birth certificate
 - ImmiCard
- You must have one of the following documents:
 - Current Australian driver's licence
 - Medicare card (only if you don't have a driver's licence)
 - Applicants will also need a phone less than five years old (or be able to borrow one).

More information on applying for a WWCC fully online can be found here:

<https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply-1>

Suppose an applicant is not able to apply for a check entirely online. In that case, they must complete part of the application online and finalise it at an Australia Post outlet as per below.

<https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply-2>

It is important to note that if the applicant is a paid staff member of your organisation, they must get an employee check, not a volunteer check. If this is the case, they must also pay a small fee to complete the application process.

Expiration and Non-Compliance

There are three main reasons a person may be exempt from requiring a Working With Children Check where they would otherwise usually have to obtain one.

- VIT registered teachers, and Victoria Police, or Australian Federal Police officers, are not required to hold a WWCC unless suspended or dismissed (or VIT registration is cancelled). The individual must notify their club within seven days. If this occurs, they must also cease any duties that would require a WWCC until they obtain one or their suspension is lifted.
- The third exemption is for volunteers under the age of 18 themselves.

WWC Exclusion

If a person applies for a Working With Children Check, they will either pass all background checks and receive their card, or the checks may find something that prevents them from being issued a WWCC. In such cases, they are issued a WWC Exclusion. If this occurs, the process below should be followed (you, the Secretary or whoever oversees such notices). Note that this process is different from our Reporting Procedure because a WWC Exclusion does not necessarily mean any offence.

If your worker receives a WWC Exclusion, you should receive a letter from the Department of Justice and Regulation. By law, the individual receiving the WWC Exclusion must also tell you in writing within seven days of the date they are given the Exclusion.

Important things to remember if your club receives a WWC Exclusion letter from the Department of Justice and Regulation:

- The letter you receive is confidential and should only be read by yourself and not be shared with others. Sharing personal information with others is an offence against the Department of Justice and Regulation.
- Ensure the letter is filed or stored in a secure area where no one else can gain access.
- It is not your responsibility to question or assume the person's guilt. There are several reasons this notice may be triggered.
- The ruling given when checking status in step 1 below is non-negotiable and is not our decision or yours – do not answer questions as to why they must stop beyond stating that it is due to the WWC Exclusion that has been received.
- If you are unsure what to do, contact the WPV CSO or the Department of Justice for assistance.

Step 1: Check the status of the application

- Go to the WWC site to check the status of the WWCC of the person in question. Once you enter the required details (card number and surname, both of which will be on the letter), the system will tell you whether the person must be removed from work in the meantime.
- Follow the provided link to do a WWC Status Check:
https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwccu/checkstatus.doj#_ga=2.55564392.213808757.1649894615-283591560.1649894615
- If you are not confident or have questions, call the Department of Justice at this point BEFORE contacting anyone else.
- If the information you receive from the Department's site tells you that the person in question cannot work with children, you must ensure this person does not work with children at your club. Please follow the steps below if the Department's website informs you the person in question cannot work with children.

Step 2: Contact the club Child Safety Officer at the WPV.

- You must contact the CSO of WPV to ensure they are aware of the WWC Exclusion. You must not divulge any information to other staff members besides the CSO.
- Currently, WPV CSO is Simon Devine (info@vicwaterpolo.com.au)
- Inform the CSO if the individual is required to stand down from duties or be reassigned.
- Inform them that you will contact the individual to inform them of the situation.

Step 3: Contact the individual to notify them

- Do not issue a "Please Explain" or similar – you are required to notify, not investigate.
- Do not make accusations or inferences about the individual – there can be a range of reasons that may trigger this notice.
- Direct them to contact the Department of Justice regarding the issue.

- Do not give extra information to the individual – anything beyond “we have received this notice, and you are unable to continue your duties at this time” is not your place to say.

Step 4: Follow up with the club to ensure the individual has ceased work if required

- Confirm that the individual will not be present prior to the next training/game.
- At the club level, you must ensure all required personnel get their WWC prior to working, take ownership of their RevSport account linked to the club, and upload their check (and other relevant qualifications for their role) to RevSport as soon as possible. This is in the best interests of clubs, personnel, players and WPV as it allows a proper level of accountability.

Responding to a Report

If a child comes to confide in you regarding an incident, it is vital you handle the situation appropriately. Make sure you:

- DO:
 - Remain calm. While hearing of an incident will likely invoke strong emotional reactions, getting angry or distressed will make this harder for the child.
 - Listen carefully to what they tell you
 - Reassure the child you believe them
 - Reassure the child it was not their fault
 - Reassure them they did the right thing by speaking up
 - Let them know you will report this so that the abuse can stop
 - Record the incident in the child’s own words as soon as possible after the disclosure
 - Report the incident
 - Ensure disclosure is appropriately and accurately recorded and stored.
- DO NOT:
 - Make promises you can’t keep, such as that you will not tell anyone
 - Push the child for details – your job is to listen, not investigate
 - Ask leading questions – instead, use phrases like “Then what happened?”
 - Discuss what you have been told with others who are not directly involved with helping the child
 - Leave the child alone in a distressed state – if they are comfortable in your care, stay with them

Remember that there are both mandatory and voluntary reporting obligations for child abuse incidents. Below is a basic guide to these obligations – these should be reviewed should any incident arise to ensure your legal obligations are met.

Legislation	Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)	Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)	
Reporting Obligation	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Who is obligated?	Any person 18 years or older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered medical practitioners, nurses, midwives; • Teachers and principals; • Police 	Any person
When must a report be made?	A mandated reporter must make a report if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child by another person of or over the age of 18 years. (NB: exceptions may apply)	A mandated reporter must make a report if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection from physical injury or sexual abuse; • The parents cannot or will not protect the child; AND • The belief is formed in the course of practising their position of employment 	A voluntary reporter may make a report if the person has a significant concern for a child's wellbeing.
Who counts as a child in this ruling?	A person under 16 years	A person under 17 years	A person under 17 years
Who must the report be made to?	Police	Department of Health and Human Services	DHHS or Police

You also need to remember that the person about whom a report is made still holds certain rights in the ensuing process, including the rights to privacy, not be defamed, not be discriminated against, and not be dismissed unfairly or without proper inquiry into the matter. They must be allowed to share their side of the story. An allegation of child abuse, whether true or false, will have a sincere and lasting impact on a person and their standing in the eyes of others. An unfounded allegation handled poorly can ruin the reputation and career of an innocent person. As such, handle the situation discreetly and fairly.

Transportation and Accommodation

It is vital that children and young people are safe when being transported to and from venues. Children and young people also have a right to be safe when in overnight accommodation, such as a Interstate tournaments. To reduce risk, Water Polo Australia has developed guidelines and forms to access in order to help with these measures.

[Water Polo Australia By-Laws, Policies and Procedures](#)

The above link includes a set of safeguarding related templates, forms and resources for clubs.

Specifically, you will be able to find the following documents:

- Travel Safety Policy
- Child Transportation Permission Slip

These forms and guidance documents should be considered when a child or young person is being transported or attending overnight accommodation.

Ongoing Education and Training

A key area of the new Standards is the requirement of organisations to provide ongoing training and education to their volunteers, officials, and staff members. Although this may seem a daunting task, it can be a relatively straightforward process.

Firstly, clubs should ensure Child Safety and Wellbeing is on the agenda at every committee meeting.

Some weeks, you may have nothing to discuss regarding Child Safety. However, it is vital for the topic to remain on the agenda for clubs to continually improve their processes.

Secondly, clubs will always be able to deliver ongoing information to club members. Ways this can be done include:

- By utilising third party government services.
 - An example of this can be achieved through the eSafety Commissioner. eSafety offers online safety presentations for sporting organisations and clubs interacting with young people. Their online safety experts provide training for administrators, coaches and managers. The training is delivered face to face and is free of charge.

Case Studies

Texting Players

A Club discovered that a coach was sending players from his youth Girls team texts asking them to the movies. The behaviour was only uncovered because one of the players asked their parents if it was ok to go to the movies with the coach.

A club must clearly communicate what is, and what is not, appropriate between adults and minors at the club, particularly when the adult is in a position of trust and power such as a coach.

Grooming

Grooming refers to actions to befriend and influence a child (and in some cases, members of the child's family) with the intentional of achieving a criminal objective. Grooming can occur in person or online (e.g., via Facebook, Twitter or texting) and is designed to help the perpetrator establish an emotional connection in order to lower the child's inhibitions.

Ensuring your Club's members, employees and volunteers understand the warning signs of grooming will make it more likely that the Club will be able to detect and respond to potential child abuse. In Victoria, grooming a child for unlawful sexual activity is a sexual offence and must be reported to the police.

John is a 30yo team manager of the U14 girls' team, and sometimes acts as coach. He has a young son in the clubs U9 team.

Sarah is a player in the U14 girls' team. She is new to the club and John is keen to ensure she fits in. He picks her up and drops her home, and often goes inside with her to talk to her parents, and occasionally stay for dinner. Over time, John starts dropping in after work and on non-game or training days. He offers to babysit Sarah when the parents are away, and he also starts bringing presents over for Sarah and her parents. John and Sarah become friends on Facebook and other social media sites and spend a lot of time together.

Sarah's parents think John is harmless enough at first, but over time they start to wonder why an adult man would spend so much time at their house.

This may be an example of grooming. John's actions go beyond his role as team manager or coach. He has delved into trying to develop a personal friendship with a minor and her family and established an emotional connection. Although each act may be harmless, it is the cumulative effect of these acts overtime that raises concern. Sarah's parents should discuss their concerns with the club's Child Safety Officer. There is no need to wait until something physical actually occurs.

The club should also have a policy and Code of Conduct in place that establish the proper boundaries between players and officials.

Reports

Bill is an Junior men's coach. One afternoon a player tells Bill that he cannot train, as his dad beat him with a belt, and it hurts to run. Bill reports this information to the Child Safety Officer within the club and also makes a report to the Department of Health and Human Services because he had a significant concern about the players wellbeing.

The police contact the parents of the player to discuss the report. They are furious with Bill for making a report without their knowledge. The Club is embarrassed and concerned that the parents will withdraw their children from the Club and stop providing large donations to the club. The committee wants to discipline Bill for the report.

So, who is right?

Bill had a right to report his concerns, and his actions in making the report are legally protected. The club cannot discipline Bill for his actions. The club should work cooperatively with Bill in following up on this report, as well as cooperating with police or DHHS inquiries into the matter. It will also help if the club has policies and documented procedures to follow in advance on a situation like this occurring, so that there is no confusion.

Resistance to Child Safety Measures

Tim has been a coach of the current Youth Boys team at his club since they began U12's. They are a successful team and always do well. Before the new season starts, the club secretary asks Tim to sign the Code of Conduct and Child Safety Policy, and attend a child safety training session, or he won't be able to continue as coach.

Tim is offended. He has never had a single complaint against him, and he is shocked that he is being forced to sign these documents. He believes that this is a ploy to move him on from his role.

What next?

The club should clearly communicate to all officials that the new documents a club-wide requirement and not a reflection of the esteem in which any individual person is held. Explain that this is not an attack on Tim's integrity and explain to him the new Child Safety laws and why the club is responding in this way. Ultimately, if Tim is not willing to accept the new Child Safe culture of the club, the club may well be within its rights to cease using him as coach.

Resources

The following is a list of organisations that provide useful information regarding Child Safety; Under each description you will find a link that will take you to the relevant website.

VicSport

- VicSport have a number of resources for child safety in sport. These include information sheets, templates and guides, presentations, posters and videos.
- www.vicsport.com.au/child-safe-standards

eSafety Commissioner

- The eSafety Commissioner works with sports clubs to ensure they can provide children and young people with a safe online environment that is free of abuse. They offer a range of resources to help improve online safety practices. They also offer free face to face training administrators, coaches and managers.
- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

Commission for Children and Young People

- The commission for Children and Young People promotes improvement in policies and practices that affect the safety and wellbeing of Victorian Children and young people. They have an abundance of information regarding what the changes to the Child Safe Standards along with various guides.
- www.cryp.vic.gov.au

Play by the Rules

- Play by the Rules is an interactive education and information website on discrimination, harassment and child protection in sport. Play by the Rules contains various resources and short courses including the Child Protection and Safeguarding Course.
- <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/>

Office of the Children's Guardian

- The Office of the Children's Guardian is a NSW Government run organisation. The Child Safe Sport eLearning module takes you through various steps to allow your club to demonstrate best practice in a number of areas.
- <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/>

Sport Integrity Australia

- Hosting the Play by the Rules online training modules on the Sport Integrity Australia e-learning hub creates a single destination for all sporting codes and administration staff to access educational materials and training in one convenient location.
- SIA also provide additional resources for athletes and coaches on other integrity matters
- <https://elearning.sportintegrity.gov.au/login/index.php>

Contact list

Water Polo Victoria

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Vicsport

(03) 9698 8100

www.vicsport.com.au/child-safe-standards

The Commission for Children and Young People

(03) 8601 5281

Email: childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au

www.ccyp.vic.gov.au

The Department of Health

Phone: 1300 650 172

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/>

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/contact-us>

Victoria Police - Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT)

Contact the appropriate local office:

<https://www.police.vic.gov.au/sexual-offence>