**Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy**

**Date Adopted:** 15/05/2025
**Next Review:** 15/05/2027

**Purpose**
The Ballarat Football Netball League (BFNL) is committed to promoting the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children and young people. This policy outlines our commitment to a child-safe and child-friendly environment and provides a framework for ensuring child safety and wellbeing in all our operations, competitions, and affiliated clubs.

**Scope**
This policy applies to all individuals involved in BFNL activities, including:

* Staff
* Volunteers
* Umpires
* Coaches
* Committee members
* Players
* Spectators

It also applies to all affiliated clubs and sanctioned events.

**Our Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing**
BFNL is committed to:

* Embedding child safety and wellbeing into our culture and practices.
* Empowering children and young people to have a voice.
* Creating environments that are inclusive, culturally safe, and child centred.
* Taking a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse or harm.
* Upholding the rights of all children, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disabilities, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

**Legal Framework and Standards**
This policy is aligned with:

* The **Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)** and the **11 Child Safe Standards** (as revised July 2022).
* The **Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)**.
* The **Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)** including failure to disclose, failure to protect, and grooming offences.
* Relevant policies and guidance from the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).

**Child Safety Principles**
BFNL supports the following principles:

* All children have the right to be safe, valued, and respected.
* Child safety is a shared responsibility across the organisation.
* Children’s voices should be heard and influence decisions that affect them.
* **Cultural safety** for Aboriginal children and children from diverse backgrounds is critical.

**Inclusion and Equity**
BFNL values diversity and is committed to the inclusion of all children. We:

* Recognise the unique needs of Aboriginal children and support cultural safety.
* Welcome children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
* Support the inclusion of children with disabilities and ensure reasonable adjustments.

**Code of Conduct**
All individuals engaging with BFNL must adhere to our **Child Safety Code of Conduct**, which clearly outlines:

* Acceptable and unacceptable behaviours when working with children.
* Requirements for maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
* Obligations to report concerns or breaches.

This Code must be signed by all staff, volunteers, umpires, and club officials and will be reviewed biennially.

**Recruitment and Screening**
BFNL ensures the suitability of adults working with children through:

* Mandatory **Working with Children Checks (WWCC)**.
* Identity verification and reference checks.
* Completion of **child safety training and induction**.
* Signing of the **Code of Conduct** and child safety declaration.

**Participation and Empowerment of Children**
Children and young people are encouraged to:

* Speak up about anything making them feel unsafe or uncomfortable
* Be involved in shaping BFNL activities and environments
* Know their rights and how to report concerns

**Risk Management**
BFNL proactively manages risks to children by:

* Conducting **regular risk assessments** for all venues, events, and activities.
* Implementing **preventative safety strategies**, including adequate supervision and safe transport arrangements.
* Documenting and reviewing all incidents or near-misses to inform continuous improvement.

**Reporting and Responding to Concerns**
All adults in BFNL must report any concerns, disclosures, or suspicions of child abuse or harm. We are committed to:

* Responding promptly, confidentially, and consistently.
* Reporting to authorities (DFFH or Victoria Police) as legally required.
* Supporting affected children and families.
* Maintaining detailed and factual records using our **Child Safety Incident Reporting Form**.

Concerns should be reported to:
**Child Safety Officer**
**Name:** Gemma Murphy
**Email:** gemma@bfnl.com.au
**Phone:** 0401 152 906

BFNL supports a culture of reporting without fear of retribution. Retaliation against reporters is strictly prohibited.

\* See appendix 1 for mandatory reporting procedures

**Roles and Responsibilities**

* **BFNL Board and Executive:** Provide governance and oversight of child safety strategies.
* **Child Safety Officer:** Leads implementation, receives concerns, supports training.
* **Staff and Volunteers:** Must comply with the policy, Code of Conduct, and reporting obligations.
* **Clubs:** Must adopt this policy or implement equivalent aligned policies, with evidence of action and training.

**Communication and Awareness**
This policy is available publicly on the BFNL website and at all affiliated clubs. It is communicated during inductions, training, and events. Staff and volunteers receive ongoing education about child safety and reporting obligations.

**Review**
This policy will be reviewed:

* Every two years, or earlier if needed.
* Following any significant child safety incident.
* In response to changes in legislation or best practices

**Date Adopted:** 15/05/2025
**Next Review:** 15/05/2027

**Appendix 1 – Mandatory Reporting Procedures**

**Ballarat Football Netball League**

**Mandatory Reporting Procedures**

**Purpose**
The purpose of this document is to outline the mandatory reporting obligations and procedures for responding to concerns about child abuse or neglect within the Ballarat Football Netball League (BFNL). It ensures that all relevant individuals understand their legal and ethical responsibilities to protect children from harm.

**1. Who Must Report?**

Under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)*, the following are **mandatory reporters**:

* Teachers, including early childhood educators
* Registered medical practitioners and nurses
* Police officers
* School principals
* Youth justice and welfare workers
* Psychologists and counsellors

In the BFNL context, all staff, volunteers, coaches, umpires, and committee members are expected to report any concerns relating to child abuse, regardless of whether they are legally defined as mandatory reporters. This reinforces a culture of safety and shared responsibility.

**2. What Must Be Reported?**

A report must be made when you believe on **reasonable grounds** that:

* A child is being or has been physically abused, sexually abused, emotionally abused, neglected, or exposed to family violence; and
* The child’s parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to protect the child from that harm.

**Examples of abuse** include:

* Unexplained bruises or injuries
* Sexualised behaviours inappropriate for the child’s age
* Fear of going home or fear of certain adults
* Sudden changes in behaviour or withdrawal

**3. Making a Report**

When a concern is identified, the following steps must be followed:

**Step 1: Immediate Response**

* Ensure the child is safe. If the child is in **immediate danger**, call **000 (Police)**.
* Provide appropriate support to the child in a calm and reassuring manner.

**Step 2: Consult Internally (Where Safe and Appropriate)**

* Notify the **BFNL Child Safety Officer** or your club’s designated child safety contact.
* Discuss your concerns and the grounds for your belief.

**Step 3: Make a Report to Authorities**

Mandatory reporters must report suspected abuse to:

* Child Protection – Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
Central Intake: 1300 664 977 (Business hours)
* After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service: 13 12 78 (5pm–9am weekdays, 24hrs on weekends/public holidays)
* Victoria Police – 000 (if immediate risk) or local station

**Step 4: Record and Document**

Maintain a clear, factual documentation including:

* The disclosure or incident
* Your observations and actions
* The details of any reports made and outcomes (who you spoke to, date, time, advice received)

Use BFNL's **Child Safety Incident Reporting Form** if available.

**4. Ongoing Obligations**

* Support the child and their family, where appropriate and safe.
* Maintain confidentiality—do not discuss the matter with anyone not directly involved.
* Follow up to ensure the concern has been acted on if you are unsure.

**5. Protection for Reporters**
Under Victorian law:

* Anyone who makes a report in good faith is protected from liability.
* Your identity as a reporter is kept confidential (with limited exceptions).
* It is illegal to victimise or retaliate against someone who reports a child safety concern.

**6. Failure to Report**

* Failure to disclose known child sexual abuse to police is a criminal offence in Victoria.
* Failure to protect a child from the risk of sexual abuse within an organisation is also a criminal offence for those in positions of authority.

**7. Contact Information**

**BFNL Child Safety Officer:**
**Name:** Gemma Murphy
**Email:** gemma@bfnl.com.au
**Phone:** 0401 152 906

**External Contacts:**

* **Child Protection** (DFFH): 1300 664 977
* **After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service:** 13 12 78
* **Victoria Police:** 000

**8. Review and Training**

* All BFNL personnel will receive training in mandatory reporting and child safety obligations.
* These procedures will be reviewed every 2 years or after any serious incident or legislative update.