

# Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy

March 2025



# Acknowledgement

PareUp acknowledges Australia's Aboriginal communities and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us.

We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.

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## Document Review

Document Version	Reviewer		Effective Date	Signature
	Name	Position		
1	Sherice Marks	Owner and CEO	15/03/2025	<i>Sherice Marks</i>

# 1 Purpose

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people, adults and staff involved with PareUp, and to comply with the Child Safe Standards under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.

# 2 Scope

This policy applies to all people connected with our company.

# 3 Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

PareUp is committed to creating a child-safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe:

- The welfare of children we work with is our priority.
- We have zero tolerance to child abuse and harm and will respond to all allegations, disclosures, incidents, and suspicions of abuse.
- We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe and have fun while learning.

# 4 Statement of Commitment to Staff Safety

PareUp is committed to creating a safe environment where staff are safe and feel safe:

- The welfare of our staff is our priority.
- We have zero tolerance to abuse and harm and will respond to all allegations, disclosures, incidents, and suspicions of abuse.
- We aim to create safe and friendly environment where all members of the PareUp team can feel proud to work and do the best work they can.

# 5 Definitions

## **Child/Children**

- a person who is under the age of 18 years.

## **Staff**

Anyone who undertakes work for PareUp, including executive management, contractors and consultants.

## **Student**

The PareUp clients we work with directly.

## **Executive Management**

The most senior level of PareUp management.

## **Child abuse**

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

## Harm

Damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a person, including child abuse, by adults or the conduct of children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising from a series of acts or events over a period of time.

## Concerns and complaints

A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children, parents or staff.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with PareUp.

Concerns or complaints may relate to one or more of the following:

- our services or dealings with individuals
- the dealings of groups or individuals with our staff
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, contractor, partner, client or another individual associated with PareUp
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person at a PareUp lesson, event or workshop
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity
- general concerns about the safety of a group or individual staff members.

## We

PareUp Pty Ltd

# 6 Implementation

## 6.1 Equity, Diversity, Safety and Cultural Safety

PareUp is committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all children, their families and our staff, regardless of disability, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, sex, intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation.

The core function of the business is supporting students with disabilities, who are neurodivergent, or come from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds, to engage in the educational system.

**Discrimination, bullying or abusive behaviour of any form will not be tolerated within PareUp and action will be taken when discrimination or exclusion is identified.**

Strategies to embed equity, diversity and cultural safety include:

- An Acknowledgement of Country at all formal meetings or events.
- Provide training for all staff on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety.
- Respect and value all cultures and understanding the importance culture to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff - *Code of Conduct*.
- Offer students and families the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs, through the *Take on Form* – so as to participate fully in our programs.
- Students and staff will be encouraged to express their culture, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and include their cultural heritage in all activities.

Discrimination does not include a decision by PareUp not to offer services or terminate services for any reason.

## 6.2 Student Participation and Empowerment

PareUp is focused on empowering children and young people by supporting them to advocate for their rights and needs. As a child-centred learning organisation, we ensure participation and empowerment through:

- Educating students how to raise concerns and advocate for themselves, highlighting the availability of support services and how to find these supports<sup>1</sup>.
- Our work is individually focused and we pride ourselves on engaging with our clients and their parents to understand their needs and goals.

## 6.3 Engagement and Communications

PareUp takes a zero-tolerance approach to any form of violence, aggression or bullying regardless of the form that it takes and who it is directed at.

We will not allow the abuse of our staff or clients by anyone, at anytime, anywhere, using any means.

- Staff will be trained to manage and defuse conflict.
- Our *Code of Conduct* which applies to both staff and clients clearly states that violence, aggression and bullying is unacceptable, including between students.
- We will act on any cases of violence, aggression or bullying.

## 6.4 Families, School and Community Involvement

PareUp considers parents, families, schools and communities as key partners in students' educational and developmental journeys. We work very closely with partners to ensure the success of our programs. The following communication and participation strategies are employed:

- Partners are engaged regularly to ensure appropriate progress and focus of work.
- We encourage partners and students to provide feedback through their time working with us.
- Partners have contact details for executive management to ensure any concerns can be reported.
- The PareUp *Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing policy*, including complaints processes, and *Code of Conduct* are available on the website and links are provided in the *Take on Form* which must be signed and returned before services are provided.

## 6.5 PareUp Staff

The recruitment, induction and supervision of staff is designed and intended to ensure student and staff safety and wellbeing.

### 6.5.1 Recruitment and Suitability

All staff who engage with children:

- Must be qualified for the work they undertake. This will ensure they understand the rights of children, are skilled at engaging with children and helping them participate in decision-making and can recognise and act on the signs of child abuse and harm.
- Must have a Working with Children Check (WWCC) or equivalent (i.e. Victorian Teaching Certification).
- Must provide references for their current and immediately previous employers.

All staff:

- who do not have a WWCC or equivalent must have a police clearance
- must sign the company *Code of Conduct* before commencement of work

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<sup>1</sup> Note sexual abuse prevention information will not be offered through PareUp work and activities due to the highly focused nature of the work and training.

- who drive are required to provide a valid driver's licence.

PareUp will:

- Have clear position descriptions and selection criteria for all roles that are recruited.
- Obtain references prior to commencement of employment.

### 6.5.2 Induction

The following training will be provided to staff:

- All company policies including the *Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and *Code of Conduct*.
- Mandatory Reporting (for staff engaged directly with children).
- *Complaint Handling Policy*.
- Information Management and Sharing - *Privacy Policy*.

### 6.5.3 Staff Development and Support

All staff engaging with children must regularly undertake training on:

- Mandatory Reporting

All staff regardless of engagement with children must regularly undertake training on:

- All company policies including the *Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and *Code of Conduct*.
- *Complaint Handling Policy*.
- Information Management and Sharing - *Privacy Policy*.

PareUp will

- Provide or identify regular professional development relevant to staff for their roles and responsibilities.
- Support staff appropriately through professional and personal issues.
- Prepare risk assessment and mitigations which will be communicated to staff with appropriate training, as required.

### 6.5.4 Supervision and Performance Management

PareUp is committed to creating a positive and fulfilling working environment where all staff can do their best work possible.

PareUp will supervise and support staff to ensure appropriate performance management. This will include but is not limited to:

- Observation of lessons or sessions (where appropriate).
- Checking validity of WWCC or other registrations based on expiry dates.
- Feedback, professional development advice and performance management, if required.
- Immediate suspension if any risk/issue is reported or suspected.
- Suspension of clients who threaten or pose any risk to staff physical or emotional wellbeing.

## 6.6 Responsibilities

All management, staff and contractors of PareUp are responsible for child safety and wellbeing as well as creating a safe working environment for their colleagues.

The following roles have specific responsibilities regarding child and staff safety and wellbeing:

### 6.6.1 Executive Management

- Work to create a positive culture around safety and reporting so that people feel safe, comfortable and able to raise concerns.
- Review and implement
  - *Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy*
  - *Code of Conduct*
  - *Risk Assessment and Management Plan*
  - *Privacy Policy*
- Ensure that appropriate safety training for staff is identified and completed.
- Ensure all employees are required to have a WWCC or appropriate professional registration.
- Ensure staff induction and training includes this policy and other relevant information.
- Undertake appropriate supervision of all staff.

### 6.6.2 CEO

- Review, sign-off and ensure appropriate implementation of:
  - *Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy*
  - *Code of Conduct*
  - *Risk Assessment and Management Plan*
  - *Privacy Policy*

### 6.6.3 Staff and Contractors

- Act in accordance with the *Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and all other relevant policy.
- Comply with the *Code of Conduct*.

### 6.6.4 Parents and Carers

- Encouraged to engage with the organisation and report any concerns about child or staff safety.
- Required to sign the *Take on Form* - confirms acceptance of policy and conditions.

## 6.7 Complaints process

- All reports of threats or risks, particularly child abuse and child safety concerns, will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child.
- All complaints and concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly; child safety matters will be treated as a matter of urgency.
- PareUp has a *Complaint Handling Policy* that includes information for partners and students. A link to this is included in the *Take on Form*.
- Child and staff safety will be prioritised in responding to any complaint.
- The Mandatory Reporting procedures will be followed, including reporting all potentially criminal conduct to the police.
- Under PareUp policies, the following actions may be taken against staff, clients, or partners to ensure child and staff safety and wellbeing:
  - being stood down / suspended during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
  - having their duties altered so they do not engage with children through PareUp
  - not allowing unsupervised contact with children through PareUp
  - removing access to the PareUp IT system and facilities
  - blocking or rerouting of communications systems such as email or phone.
- Complaints can be emailed to [admin@pareup.net](mailto:admin@pareup.net) or reported directly to the CEO.
- **If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child or staff member, call 000 immediately.**

- PareUp is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child and staff related complaints or safety concerns.
  - All safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded.
  - Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation.
  - Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.
  - Records will be kept of the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints, including findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.
  - Records will be retained in accordance with statute and PareUp policy.
  - PareUp may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children or staff, where it is appropriate and complies with the PareUp policy.
  - Information about complaints will be kept confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to:
    - respond properly to the complaint
    - ensure child or staff safety
    - comply with the law.

## 6.8 Risk Management

PareUp recognises the importance of identification and management of risks, particularly of child harm and abuse, in the physical and online environments it is responsible for.

In this regard we will:

- Conduct regular risk assessments and have a *Risk Assessment and Management Plan* .
- Communicate risk mitigation measures to staff, partners and clients as necessary.

## 6.9 Review

PareUp will review all child and staff safety practices and policies:

- at least every two years
- in response to a safety incident or 'near miss'.

Reviews will:

- be undertaken by the Executive Management
- be reported to the people involved
- inform our approach to continuous improvement of safety practices.

## 7 Annexures

### 7.1 Supporting Documents

*7.1.1 Code of Conduct*

*7.1.2 Risk Assessment and Management Plan*

*7.1.3 Complaint Handling Policy*

*7.1.4 Privacy Policy*

*7.1.5 Take on Form*

## 7.2 PareUp Policy Response to Victorian Child Safe Standard

Victorian Child Safe Standard	PareUp Response
<b>1: Cultural safety for Aboriginal children</b> Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 6.1</li> </ul>
<b>2: A Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing</b> <i>Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 3</li> </ul>
<b>3: Taking Child Participation and Empowerment Seriously</b> Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 6.2</li> </ul>
<b>4: Involving families and communities</b> Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 6.4</li> </ul>
<b>5: Respecting equity and diversity</b> Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 3, 6.1, 6.2,</li> </ul>
<b>6: Ensuring that staff are suitable and supported</b> People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 6.5</li> </ul>
<b>7: Child-focused complaint systems</b> <i>Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 6.6</li> <li><i>Complaint Handling Policy</i></li> </ul>
<b>8: Staff knowledge, skills and awareness</b> Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 6.5, 6.6</li> </ul>
<b>9: Safe physical and online environment</b> Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 6.5, 6.8</li> <li><i>Risk Assessment and Management Plan</i></li> </ul>
<b>10: Review of child safe policies and practices</b> Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 6.6, 6.9</li> </ul>
<b>11: Documenting policies and procedures</b> Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See PareUp <i>Child and Staff Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i> section: 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.8, 6.9, 7.1</li> </ul>

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