Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Policy statement/Principle

District 9815 is committed to creating and maintaining a positive, child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe. Where they are treated with respect, heard and their comments are actioned.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to children and young people with whom we engage.

Purpose

This Policy provides a precised **overview** of our approach to implementing the Victorian Child Safe Standards, which apply in all Rotary and Rotaract environments within our District.

We have developed a suite of comprehensive support documents, which are related to this Policy and which inform our community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and young people. These documents include Guidelines for Volunteer obligations, escalation of incidents,

Further detail is included in the similarly titled "District 9815 Child Safety and Wellbeing **Guidelines"**. It is important that these are referenced by those directly in the contact of young people and children so that they have a full understanding of roles and responsibilities. They guide our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people across all areas of our work and reinforce the Rotary Code of Conduct.

Definition

Child means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse includes:

a) any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence and/or grooming offences under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958
b) the infliction, on a child, of physical violence and/or serious emotional or psychological harm
c) the serious neglect of a child.

Child abuse (emotional) occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated, or frightened by threats. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, and persistent coldness from a person to the extent that the child suffers, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm to their physical or developmental health.

Child abuse (sexual) is when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve them in sexual activity. It can include a wide range of sexual activity. Sexual offences are governed by the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)

Child safety includes matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.

Duty of Care refers to the obligation of all staff working with students to take reasonable steps to protect them from reasonably foreseeable harm.

Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer.

Information sharing refers to the collection, use and disclosure of personal information either within an organisation or between organisations. Information sharing can occur in many ways including:

- one organisation disclosing information (the disclosing organisation) to another (the receiving organisation)
- multiple organisations combining information in a database and making it available to each other
- the reciprocal exchange of information between organisations.

Worker screening refers to the process of ensuring that only suitable people work with children. It involves gathering a range of information, including but not limited to a Working with Children clearance and qualifications relevant to the role being performed by staff and volunteers.

Responsibilities/Application of the Guidelines

Rotary Code of Conduct

The D9815 Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours, including between adults and children and young people. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in physical and online environments.

Children and young people are also made comfortable of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the District.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Specific roles

District Leadership Team

a) The District Leadership Team champions and promotes a child safe culture with the District by enacting policies which assist in creating a culture which is informed of its obligations and updating members on changes in a timely manner.
b) The Youth Services committee manages and reports the Child Safety Risk Register.

District Protection Officer

a) D9815 has an appointed District Protection Officer who is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained and that Policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards as outlined in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), Rotary Policies and Standards and Insurance requirements.
b) The District Protection Officer is the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents *within District organised* meetings, events and/or programs.

Club Protection Officers

All Rotary Clubs have a nominated Club Protection Officer whose responsibility is the child safety champion. Their roles can broadly be grouped under promoting child safety culture, providing support and guidance, monitoring, reviewing and reporting compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policies and Guidelines in their Club.

In many Clubs this role is filled by the Club's Youth Services Chair. It is their role to support the District Protection Officer by collecting and submitting Rotarian induction documentation. Any Clubs failing to submit this information will be considered non-compliant with the District's child safety policies and as so forbidden to undertake *any* activities with children and young people.

To implement child safety policies and practices as the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating responses to child safety incidents ***within their Club***.

Rotary and Rotaract members and volunteers

All Rotary and Rotaract members and volunteers are encouraged to participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the District and/or Rotary International and to follow child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures, including the Volunteer Policy.

Ongoing education and Policy review will ensure all Rotarians are aware of any updates or changes to Policy.

Areas of focus

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

D9815 identifies, assesses and manages risks to child safety and wellbeing in physical and online environments. These risks are managed through child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices.

District 9815's Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. The District governance and youth services committees meet at least annually, to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register. The risk register is submitted to the District leadership team through the District Protection Officer for consultation and formal approval.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

Rotary is committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe environment where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected. We have a zero-tolerance approach to racism, discrimination and bullying in Rotary, including in our youth programs, as outlined in our Code of Conduct.

Empowerment of children and young people

To support child safety and wellbeing, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages children and young people and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

We inform children and young people of their rights and give them the confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other children and young people, and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure children and young people in our programs know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time.

Engagement with communities

To support engagement, we are committed to providing the community with accessible information about our child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for the community to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

Diversity equity and inclusion

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our children and young people, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child and young person has unique skills, strengths, and experiences to draw on. The diversity, equity an inclusion page on the Rotary International website provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in our organisation.

Complaints and reporting processes

District 9815 fosters a culture that encourages members, volunteers, children and young people, families, and the community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct, or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

Anyone in our community can approach the Club or the District Protection Officer if they have any concerns about compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our Complaint Policy. The Complaints Policy can be found on the District 9815's website.

Privacy and information sharing

The District and Clubs collect, use, and disclose information about children and their families in accordance with privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how we collect, use, and disclose information refer to our privacy policy.

References/Resources

Rotary International's governance documents, including Rotary Code of Policies, Manual of Procedure and Rotary's constitutional documents.

Associated documents/Flowcharts

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Rotary Australia Youth Protection Handbook Aug 2025
- Code of Conduct
- Child Safety and Wellbeing **Guidelines**
- Volunteers Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting policies and procedures
- Complaints Policy

Rotary International promotes the following world-wide policies:

- Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Privacy policy

Laws which relate to this Policy (if any)

Commonwealth of Australia	Victoria
https://www.childsafe.org.au/ https://www.childsafety.gov.au/	Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) https://www.health.vic.gov.au/childsafestandards Worker Screening Act 2020

Document/Version control

Version Date	Author	Version No.	Nature of Change	Next revision date
22/7/24	Multiple input sought.	1	Combination of Policies from D9810 and D9820 in the amalgamation to D9815	22/7/25