

Speakers' Corner Child Safety Policy 2023

Policy Status

This policy was approved by Speakers Corner Australia's ('Speakers' Corner') Board on **7 January 2023**. The policy is to take effect immediately.

Liam Donohoe (Director of Speakers' Corner Australia) may be consulted for further information. Please direct all enquires to speakerscorneraustralia@gmail.com.

The Board of Directors will review this policy on **7 January 2024** or **from time to time as required**.

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to reflect Speakers' Corner commitment towards the safety and wellbeing of students who may be children and young people. The policy will be provided to all new staff and volunteers at Speakers' Corner to outline their obligations to act ethically towards children and their responsibilities in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children. The policy will also outline the procedures in place to deal with complaints relating to child safety.

2 Scope

2.1 Individuals to whom this policy applies

This policy applies to all individuals who complete work of any nature for Speakers' Corner in a paid or unpaid capacity. That includes, but is not limited to, Speakers' Corner's Board, its executive leadership, its employees, its volunteers and contractors.

2.2 Circumstances in which this policy applies

This policy applies to any activities related to the carrying out of Speakers' Corner's business that involve any interactions with children or young people. That includes, but is not limited to, the teaching of classes, provision of feedback, organisation of classes, and answering of questions using any of Speakers' Corner's online forums.

3 Child Safety Principles

Speakers' Corner recognises and commits to abiding by the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*. The following principles reflect that commitment.

SPEAKERS' CORNER AUSTRALIA PTY LTD

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3.1 Commitment to Safety and Wellbeing

- (a) Speakers' Corner and its executive leadership have publicly committed to child safety and wellbeing and the promotion of children's rights through a declaration made on Speakers' Corner's website.
- (b) All staff members at Speakers' Corner have signed and agreed to abide by the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- (c) All activities run by Speakers' Corner are subject to a risk assessment and risk management review.
- (d) Anyone working for Speakers' Corner in any capacity is to be made aware of any and all child safety reporting obligations.
- (e) Speakers' Corner actively seeks and implements feedback on child safety issues from its students and staff.

3.2 Student Participation

- (a) Students at Speakers' Corner should be made aware of their rights, safe environment and methods of seeking help when needed.
- (b) All staff members and volunteers are to be made aware of their obligation to inform students of their rights in relation to safe environments and methods of seeking help.
- (c) Speakers' Corner will actively seek feedback from its students by making them aware of channels through which their input may be provided.

3.3 Family and Community Participation

- (a) Speakers' Corner's executive leadership will actively seek input and feedback from families and community organisations as to how child safety procedures at Speakers' Corner may be improved.
- (b) Families are to be made aware of mechanisms through which feedback and complaints may be provided.
- (c) All activities run by Speakers' Corner involving children will be subject to the receipt of explicit parental consent.

3.4 Equity and Diversity

- (a) Speakers' Corner's students come from a range of diverse backgrounds. Speakers' Corner is committed to respecting and promoting diversity.
- (b) Staff at Speakers' Corner are to be briefed on cultural sensitivity and made aware of our zero-tolerance policy for discrimination of any kind.

- (c) Speakers' Corner will make all reasonable endeavours to make our classes accessible to students with disabilities. Staff are responsible for taking the classes of students with disabilities will work with students and parents to achieve a suitable outcome.

3.5 Staff Suitability and Support

- (a) All staff at Speakers' Corner must have a valid Working with Children Check. **Liam Thorne** will be responsible for collecting Working with Children Check numbers.
- (b) In hiring staff, where possible, preference will be given to candidates who have completed specialised training for working with children.
- (c) All staff employed at Speakers' Corner will be provided with information on how to handle complaints, as well as their obligations to report complaints to the **Department of Family and Community Services** or the **Office of the Children's Guardian** where applicable.
- (d) All Staff will be briefed on Speakers' Corner's expectations around appropriate communications and interactions with students.

3.6 Response to Complaints

- (a) Parents and students should be made aware of a complaints mechanism. Our website provides a link through which parents and students may make complaints. All complaints should be recorded, including complaints related to:
 - a. Disclosure of abuse.
 - b. Inappropriate behaviour around kids.
 - c. Suspicion of abuse or harm to a kid.
- (b) Pursuant to **Section 4** of this document, complaints may be made to **Liam Donohoe**, the Child Safety Representative at Speakers' Corner. The obligations of the Child Safety Representative are set out in **Section 4**.

3.7 Staff Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

- (a) Speakers' Corner will appoint a Staff Awareness Consultant, who will be responsible for ensuring that all staff employed by Speakers' Corner are adequately trained in child safety and understand children's rights as well as Speakers' Corners child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- (b) Pursuant to **Section 4** of this document, Liam Thorne is the Staff Awareness Consultant.

- (c) The Board of Speakers' Corner will annually review the standard of staff support being provided and will develop strategies for ensuring that staff or volunteers who disclose harm or risk to children and young people are supported.

3.8 Safe Physical and Online Environments

- (a) The Staff Awareness Consultant and Child Safety Representative will conduct a risk assessment and develop a risk management process for physical and online environments, which identify and respond to risks arising from adult to child interactions and child to child interactions.
- (b) Speakers' Corner will make every endeavour to ensure that children's rights to privacy, access to information and learning opportunities are not compromised.
- (c) Speakers' Corner staff will be reminded that the Code of Conduct applies to online environments.
- (d) Speakers' Corner will ensure that parents are advised of any online environments in which the organisation operates and provide parents with adequate information on how online activities may be supervised.
- (e) Before engaging in any online activity, users on Speakers' Corners website must be approved by the Child Safety Representative.

3.9 Regular Review

- (a) This policy will be reviewed and amended as required by the board of directors of Speakers' Corner once every **12 months**, or at more frequent intervals should the Child Safety Representative deem appropriate.
- (b) In reviewing child safety procedures, the Board will endeavour to ensure that adequate feedback is sought from parents and students

3.10 Documenting Policies and Procedures

- (a) Speakers' Corner will ensure that the relevant policies and procedures are provided to its staff, students and parents in an accessible manner.
- (b) Staff will be provided with a package of all child safety policy and procedure upon joining Speakers' Corner.
- (c) The Staff Awareness Consultant will seek feedback from members of staff to ensure that child safety and wellbeing policies are drafted in a manner that is easily understandable.

4 Responsibilities

4.1 Child Safety Representative

- (a) Speakers' Corner will appoint a Child Safety Representative.

- (b) The Child Safety Representative will:
- a. Listen to the person making the complaint and make a record of the complaint.
 - b. Make a report to the Department of Family and Community Services in the case of an allegation of child abuse.
 - c. Inform everyone involved in the complaint of the requirement to make this report.
 - d. The Child Safety Representative is also to inform complainants of their rights to complain to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) where applicable.
- (c) The current Child Safety Representative is **Liam Donohoe**.

4.2 Staff Awareness Consultant

- (a) Speakers' Corner will appoint a Staff Awareness Consultant.
- (b) The Staff Awareness Consultant will:
- a. Ensure that all staff are provided with adequate support and training in relation to child safety and well-being.
 - b. Ensure that all staff commit to the Speakers' Corners Child Safety Code of Conduct.
 - c. Provide the board of directors with periodic updates on any staff issues relating to child safety and wellbeing.
- (c) The current Staff Awareness Consultant is **Liam Thorne**.