

## Child Safe Environment Policy

### Policy Statement

Meerilinga believes it has a responsibility to all children in our contact and therefore advocates their right to care and protection. To support this right the relevant workers will follow the procedures as guided by the Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support when dealing with any allegations of child abuse, neglect or vulnerability of risk, to ensure the protection of all children. Relevant workers are deemed to be all persons engaged through employment or volunteering with Meerilinga. The nominated supervisor and staff members working directly with children are advised of the existence and application of the current child protection law and any obligations that they have under that law.

Our Service is committed to the safety, wellbeing and support of all children and young people. Management, Staff and volunteers will treat all children with the utmost respect and understanding.

Our Service believes that:

- Children are capable of the same range of emotions as adults.
- Children's emotions are real and need to be accepted by adults.
- A reaction given to a child from an adult in a child's early stages of emotional development can be positive or detrimental depending on the adult's behaviour.
- Children, who preserve, enhance and better understand their body's response to an emotion is more able to predict the outcome from a situation and evade them or ask for help.

All workers, volunteers and students working with children in a Meerilinga supervised program will supply a current Working with Children Clearance and maintain that clearance for their duration. Prior to commencement and on request, Regulation 84 states a working with children check is sufficient. If volunteers or students don't hold a working with children check then a national police clearance is needed and those persons will not provide care or education services directly with children. For workers Meerilinga will maintain records and request updates within the legislated period from original issue. For all other Meerilinga events where children are intended participants but not in direct care or supervision of Meerilinga a written declaration will be required from other persons not included in the above scope.

Meerilinga also believes it has a responsibility to its workers to defend their right to confidentiality, support and legal advice in relation to allegations of abuse against them until substantiated. In the instance of allegations and/or of substantiated claims the following documents and policies will provide guidance: Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, Confidentiality; Security and Safety; Wellness; Supervision; Grievances, Complaints and Appeals; Employment; Workplace Health and Safety. The Chief Executive Officer may determine that the person/s be suspended (with pay in the instance of a worker) until such allegation is substantiated or otherwise. If substantiated, the person/s will be terminated immediately.

**Policy Purpose**

Meerilinga is committed to the United Nations Rights of the Child, subsequent articles in relation to child protection, the Education and Care Services Act and their relevant regulations, the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 and their relevant regulations and the National Quality Standards, and reporting of child sexual abuse Act. This policy provides guidance to all Meerilinga workers about the organisations standards and guidelines in relation to child protection and the provision of access to children in our services. Further information can be located at <https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx>

This extends to a cyber safe culture which works in accordance with our Service philosophy, privacy and legislative requirements to ensure the cyber safety of enrolled children, educators and families.