PlayConnect+

autism queensland

Commitment to Child Disability-Inclusive Safeguarding

We are committed to safe, inclusive, and empowering PlayConnect+ playgroups and have zero tolerance for any form of harm or abuse including physical, sexual, psychological and neglect. All children — particularly children with disability — are protected, respected, and able to fully participate.

We place children's rights at the centre of everything we do, actively elevating their right to safety, voice, and participation above competing priorities in our decision-making. This commitment is even more critical for children with disability, who often face greater barriers to safety, inclusion, and being heard.

Ours is an integrated approach. The safeguards, adaptations, and practices we build with children with disability in mind are woven into how we support every child, family, and staff member — not run as a separate or parallel stream. Strengthening safety and inclusion for those most at risk of exclusion strengthens it for everyone. We are committed to addressing these barriers through proactive, child-centred, disability-inclusive safeguarding practices.

Our commitment includes:

- Prioritising the **safety, rights, and wellbeing** of children in all programs, decisions, and service delivery.
- Listening to children, and supporting them to **express their views, preferences, and experiences** in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them.
- Creating **environments that are physically, socially, and emotionally safe** — where every child feels welcomed, included, and able to participate in ways that suit their needs and strengths.
- Recognising and responding to the additional risks of harm children with disability may face, and training staff and volunteers to **identify, prevent, and act on safeguarding concerns.**

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- Ensuring people working and volunteering with children are suitable and supported to **reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice**. Each organisation abides by their respective state or territory's child safety legislation and standards in addition to those prescribed by the Commonwealth.
- Promoting **inclusive practice across all PlayConnect+ playgroups**, adapting activities, environments, and communication to support participation and reduce exclusion.
- **Partnering with families and carers**, valuing their expertise and lived experience, and working together to support children's safety and wellbeing.
- Building a **culture of respect, dignity, and belonging**, where diversity is valued and discrimination, stigma, or exclusion is not acceptable and actively challenged.

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed. Guided by *Early Childhood Australia's Statement on Young Children and Digital Technologies*, we are committed to

- Obtaining informed family consent before capturing a child's image.
- Using secure and access-controlled channels for any sharing or storage of information and/or images.
- Never publishing identifying images and/or information without explicit permission — with particular care where a child's disability may increase their vulnerability to identification, exclusion, or exploitation online.

Implementation of the *National Child Safe Principles* is regularly reviewed and improved. We are committed to continuous learning and improvement, guided by the lived experience of children, including those with disability and their families, alongside evidence, research, and best practice.

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture. We recognise it as a leadership responsibility. Our Steering Committee members bring it into meetings and program design — prioritising safeguarding and the elevation of children's rights as an ongoing culture shift.

This is our shared commitment to supporting our PlayConnect+ children and their families. *Every child has the right to feel safe, heard, and included. We are committed to making that a reality — in every playgroup, every day.*

Autism Queensland is the lead agency for the PlayConnect+ consortium which comprises state and territory playgroup organisations and the autism peak bodies of SA, WA and NSW.

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