

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

*The Currajong School takes a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and is fully committed to ensuring that its strategies, policies, procedures, and practices meet all **Child Safe Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No. 870 (2015)***

### **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (OHS) COMMITMENT AND PRINCIPLES:**

The School Board and the Leadership Team of The Currajong School value all those in the school community and recognise that health and safety is integral to achieving positive educational and work performance outcomes.

The School is legally and morally committed to providing staff, students, visitors, volunteers and contractors with a healthy and safe working and learning environment.

The School will, as far as it is reasonably practicable, take action to improve and promote OHS to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses in the school environment.

### **POLICY OBJECTIVES**

The Currajong School is committed to:

- Consulting with staff, as far as it is reasonably practicable, on OHS matters that affect their workplace
- Reducing OHS risks through a documented process of hazard identification and implementation and review of controls
- Complying with all relevant legislation, procedures and guidelines relating to OHS
- Providing a clear statement of OHS responsibilities across the school
- Actively supporting the physical and psychological wellbeing of staff by providing access to OHS advice and services
- Monitoring, reporting and responding to OHS performance outcomes to drive continuous improvement
- Allocating adequate resources to maintain a safe, healthy and supportive workplace
- Providing OHS information and training to staff to enable them to perform their roles and responsibilities safely
- Recording and investigating incidents as appropriate and acting to prevent re-occurrence

The Currajong School has a legal duty of care toward its students and the establishment of effective processes in the area of OHS assists in meeting this duty of care.

## **LEGAL OBLIGATIONS**

*The Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (the Act)* is the cornerstone of legislative and administrative measures to improve occupational health and safety in Victoria.

The *OHS Act (2004)*, together with the *Dangerous Goods (Storage and Handling) Regulations (2017)* and the *OHS Regulations (2017)*, inform leadership of the key principles which apply in all Victorian schools and are summarised as follows:

- Staff, students and the general public must be given the highest level of protection against risks to health and safety as far as it is reasonably practicable
- The School Board of the school and school Leadership Team are responsible for eliminating or reducing the risks, as far as it is reasonably practicable
- The Leadership Team should be proactive in promoting health and safety in the workplace
- Policies and practices pertaining to identifying and managing risks should be well understood by leadership, staff and volunteers
- Staff are entitled, and should be encouraged, to be represented by an elected Health and Safety Representative (HSR), in relation to health and safety issues

The legislative basis for the Workers' Compensation Scheme is the *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (WIRCA) 2013*. This is a 'no fault' related compensation scheme which means that a staff member's entitlement to compensation is not a question of who was responsible for the injury, but is determined by whether the injury was employment related according to the provisions of the *WIRCA (2013)*. The key objective of the scheme is to ensure that the social and economic costs of workplace injuries and illnesses are minimised by:

- Improving the health and safety of people at work and the rehabilitation of injured employees
- Ensuring that injured employees receive appropriate entitlements as compensation for workplace injuries
- Ensuring that employers provide suitable employment for employees who have been injured at work and
- Ensuring that employers contribute equitably to the costs of the scheme through the payment of Workers' Compensation premiums

*Note: As of 1 July 2014, employers are no longer required to take out a WorkCover Insurance Policy. Instead, they will be required to register with WorkSafe Victoria to be covered by WorkCover insurance.*

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL BOARD AUTHORITY**

The School Board should ensure that policies and procedures are in place which target ongoing and measurable improvement of the OHS performance of the school. It should report the school's performance in this area in its Annual Report in order to promote awareness and to demonstrate to the school community its commitment to work with leadership and staff to maintain and improve the health and safety of the school environment in relation to OHS.

The School Board may give responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring OHS to a school leader - usually the school Principal – who is then responsible for managing OHS in the school within the requirements and guidelines set by the School Board.

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEADERSHIP**

- To proactively and regularly consult with the staff elected Health and Safety Representative (HSR) and with staff to identify and address OHS issues
- To work with the OHS nominee appointed by the Principal
- To ensure that risks in the school including manual handling, chemicals and equipment are identified and controlled
- To purchase safe equipment that does not involve hazards and risks
- To keep school buildings (including renovations and alterations) and grounds safe
- To ensure the welfare of staff, students and the wider school community by providing information, training, instruction and supervision in relation to OHS
- To maintain a register of injuries and incidents which occur in the workplace and analyse these to identify any patterns of incidents which may exist

The matters on which the Leadership Team must consult with the HSR are:

- identifying and assessing hazards or risks to health and safety in the workplace
- making decisions to control risks to health and safety in the workplace
- changes proposed to be implemented that may affect the health and safety of staff
- policies and procedures proposed to be introduced
- making decisions about facilities for the welfare of staff

The Principal will act as the Return to Work Coordinator and ensure that RTW procedures are developed, documented and publicised. This includes an individual plan for injured staff members enabling them to return to work as soon as possible and a risk management plan to prevent a recurrence of their injury (*see Workplace*

*Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 and the Accident Compensation Act 1985.)*

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

The *OHS Act (2004)* requires employees:

- To take reasonable care for their own health and safety, as well as the health and safety of other people who may be affected by their work e.g. students and colleagues
- To actively contribute to identifying, reporting and reducing OHS hazards and risks
- To co-operate with their employer's efforts to comply with its legal duties. This includes cooperating with the employer's system for reporting OHS incidents and hazards, following school policies and procedures, and participating in OHS consultation and training

Staff should elect a Health and Safety Representative at the commencement of each school year who will be provided with training and practical support to fulfil his/her role effectively. The HSR should be consulted on any changes in the school which may impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of staff, visitors, volunteers and contractors. See [hsr\\_support@worksafe.vic.gov.au](mailto:hsr_support@worksafe.vic.gov.au)

Note: HSRs are elected by staff to represent them in relation to their health and safety and are not nominated by the Leadership Team. As such, **an HSR does not have responsibility for managing OHS in a school**. They are entitled to paid time off work to attend approved WorkSafe training courses if required and approved by the Principal. The HSR works with the Principal and OHS nominee.

Under the *OHS Act (2004)*, HSRs have powers to:

- Inspect any part of the school after giving reasonable notice or immediately if there is an incident or immediate risk
- Accompany a WorkSafe inspector during a workplace inspection
- Attend interviews on OHS matters between an inspector and a staff member if the staff member agrees
- After consulting with the school leader who is responsible for OHS, issue a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN) to require that an OHS contravention be fixed
- Be given the support required to carry out their role e.g. consult with staff, time release, seek the assistance of another person
- Require the establishment of a health and safety committee

## **ADDRESSING KEY HAZARDS AND RISKS**

### Step 1: Hazard identification

Hazards which may exist in the school environment may be identified by:

- Carrying out regular hazard inspections or 'walk around' audits then recording the results and the proposed risk control measures to be implemented on a data base
- Reviewing incident reports, WorkSafe claims, sick leave records, first aid registers, injury registers etc.
- Consultation and feedback from staff and students
- Reviewing data from staff and families 'hazard surveys'

Potential hazards may include the following:

- i. Biological: hygiene, food handling, blood/body fluids, infection control including immunisation, disposal of needles/syringes, head lice infestation
- ii. Chemicals: hazardous chemicals, cleaning products, gardening/weed control products, drugs/medications
- iii. Critical incidents: lockdowns, evacuations, fires/explosions, threats, disruptions
- iv. Energy systems: electricity (mains, solar), LPG gas, gas in pressurised containers, frayed/damaged leads, cords/wires/cables on floor, faulty electrical plugs/sockets
- v. Environment: sun exposure, animals/insects, water (creeks, rivers, beaches), storms/violent weather, excessive noise, extreme temperatures, dangerous/falling branches/trees
- vi. Built environment: buildings/fixtures, driveways/paths, workshops, play/sporting equipment, asbestos, treated timber, trip hazards on stairs/steps, wet or uneven surfaces, security breaches/break-ins
- vii. Vehicles: hazards in relation to vans/cars/trailers/drivers/traffic/parking
- viii. Machinery/Plant/Equipment: fixed/portable machinery, kilns, hand tools, garden tools, knives/sharp objects, boiling water units, unattended cooking/heating equipment, dust generated by sanding/grinding/sawing
- ix. Manual handling tasks: repetitive work, heavy lifting, working at heights, restricted space, displays at height in classrooms
- x. Work related stress: interpersonal conflict, problematic organisational culture, bullying/harassment, lack of clarity around roles/procedures, challenging behaviours of students/parents/colleagues, restraint of students, higher risk adventure activities/excursions

## Step 2: Risk assessment

Risk is the likelihood of injury or illness arising from exposure to a hazard and includes any situation which seriously endangers or threatens the health or safety of a person.

Consideration must be given to the following when determining what is reasonably practical in relation to ensuring health and safety:

- The type of hazard and degree of harm that would result if the risk eventuated
- The likelihood of the risk eventuating
- The frequency and duration of the exposure to the risk and who it may affect
- Skills, experience and age of those exposed to the risk
- What is known about ways of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk
- The cost of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk

If there are issues which cannot be dealt with effectively at school level, expert advice (including that of an OHS specialist), should be sought.

## Step 3: Risk control

This involves decisions, in consultation with staff, on what needs to be done to eliminate or minimise the risks to health and safety e.g.

- Design or reorganise to eliminate hazards from the workplace when new materials, equipment and work systems are planned/implemented
- Remove or substitute hazards with safer materials, equipment or substances
- Test and tag all electrical items every 12 months
- Fire equipment regularly checked, exits unblocked, emergency plans in place
- Store heavy and/or regularly used equipment on suitable trolleys
- Store medications, chemicals and cleaning supplies in locked cupboards
- Keep flammable liquids in original containers in locked shed
- Install stove guards and other safety measures in kitchens accessed by students
- Restrict access to boiling water and control hot water temperatures to 50 degrees C
- Enclose or isolate hazards through the use of barriers, guards, ventilation etc.
- Adopt safe work practices e.g. job rotation, ergonomic/adjustable furniture
- Use personal protective equipment/clothing and provide training in its use e.g. earplugs, gloves, safety goggles
- Eliminate tripping hazards e.g. secure mats to floor with rug grips
- Secure free-standing bookcases and storage shelves/racks to wall
- Display emergency evacuation plans as well as OHS posters e.g. 'Report that Hazard'
- Incident and hazard report forms readily available and training records up to date

- First aid kit adequately stocked and accessible
- Ensure role clarity and regular performance review so that all staff know what is expected of them.
- Implement issue resolution (grievance) processes for staff and parents/carers

For a comprehensive table in relation to controlling the risk of injury in schools see: WorkSafe 'OHS in School's (June 2017) [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au)

#### Step 4: Review

Regular reviews of control measures and risk assessments should be conducted to ensure that implementation is appropriate and effective and that data are still valid. This can be achieved through safety audits, regular workplace inspections, consultation with staff and review of incident investigations. Risk management should be integral in all workplace activities that may give rise to safety issues.

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

*Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004)*

[www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/laws-and-regulations/occupational-health-and-safety](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/laws-and-regulations/occupational-health-and-safety)

*Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (2017)* [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au) ›

*Laws & Regulations* › *Occupational Health & Safety*

*Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (WIRCA) 2013*

<http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/laws-and-regulations/accident-compensation>

*OHS Health and Safety Representatives* [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/hsr/about-hsr](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/hsr/about-hsr)

*Everything WorkSafe* [www.workplace-safety.com.au/diy-templates.html](http://www.workplace-safety.com.au/diy-templates.html)

#### **EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed as per our three-year review cycle or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

Approval date:	Approved by:	Next review:
October 2021	School Board	October 2024



The Currajong School acknowledges the traditional owners of this country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to the Elders past, present and emerging.