

## **Statement of Commitment to Child Safety**

Breakthru is committed to child safety. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.

We have legal and ethical/moral obligations to contact authorities with concerns about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Breakthru is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. Breakthru acknowledges that abuse can come in different forms included but not limited to financial, medical, psychological and the witnessing of abuse towards others.

Breakthru is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and reporting abuse to relevant State bodies.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to provide a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

**If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.**

### **Working with children and young people**

This commitment and its application is intended to empower children who are vital and active clients at Breakthru. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

### **Breakthru staff and volunteers**

This commitment guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

### **Training and supervision**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at Breakthru understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Breakthru's culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents, carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train

our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to:

- Develop their skills to protect children from abuse.
- Promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand Breakthru's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through the appropriate channels, including the relevant State child protection bodies and Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

## **Recruitment**

Breakthru takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Breakthru understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a current Working with Children Check (Victoria), Working with Children Check (NSW), Blue Card (QLD) and provide evidence of this Check. Please see the following websites for further information on the different checks:

[Working with Children \(Victoria\)](#)

[Working with Children \(NSW\)](#)

[Blue Card \(QLD\)](#)

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we recruit the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (with the exception of the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision-making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

## **Fair procedures for personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We ensure that we utilise fair justice principles in dealing with any concerns raised about our staff. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting system, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

## **Privacy**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have

safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it. Please refer to Breakthru Privacy Policy for further details.

### Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police. **Breakthru's position** is that all staff and volunteers will be held to the same accountability regardless of location.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any staff who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties as per the relevant legislation. **Breakthru takes our commitment further with the approach that all our staff and volunteers are mandatory reporters** (regardless of their legal status) as far as reporting child safety or child abuse concerns.

### Risk management

Organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child or young person via social media or similar).

### Regular review

This commitment will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with disability.

### Allegations, concerns and complaints

Breakthru takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose earlier in this Commitment).

For more information, please contact Breakthru on 1800 767 212.

This Statement of Commitment to Child Safety was last updated 17 October 2023