

HANDLING CHILD COMPLAINTS

Policy Declaration

Prahran Place will empower children to be vital and active members of our community and our organisation. We are committed to their safety and our legal and moral obligations to act in their best interest.

This policy is designed to ensure children associated with Prahran Place are informed about how they raise complaints, how their complaints are taken seriously, and how we respond promptly and thoroughly when they raise a complaint.

Policy Description

Application:

This policy applies to all people who conduct work for, or are connected to, Prahran Place in a paid or unpaid capacity, including staff, CoM Members, volunteers and Prahran Place users.

Background:

The Victorian Government Child Safe Standards (The Standards) are compulsory minimum standards for organisations which provide services for children (or are used by children) to help protect them from harm.

Objectives:

Children bring insight and innovation and are valued participants in Prahran Place activities and programs. Children are vital members of our community and have a fundamental right to be safe, happy, and empowered.

We will ensure:

- Prahran Place has an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Ethics and Conduct or Child Safe Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report;
- effective complaint handling processes are understood by children, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe;
- complaints are taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly;
- Prahran Place has policies and procedures in place to address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement; and
- reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

Related Policies and Procedures:

- Code of Ethics and Conduct Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct Policy
- Induction Policy
- Feedback Policy
- Incident Reporting and Response Policy
- Safe Workplace Policy
- Strategy, Business, and Risk Management Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Workplace Behaviour Policy
- Continuous Improvement Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Grievance Resolution Policy
- Disciplinary and Performance Management Policy

Related Documents:

- Feedback Form
- Incident Report Form
- Child Safe Standards – Implementation and Action Plan Tool
- Training Register
- Victorian Government Child Safe Standards

3.16.1 Handling Child Complaints Procedures

Sometimes, things happen you might not like. Everyone has the right to speak up about how you feel if something is affecting you. You also have the right to tell someone if you are feeling anxious, worried, afraid or if you do not feel safe. Even if you find the issue hurtful or embarrassing, we encourage you to talk to us, as we want to make sure you feel safe and happy.

We will take what you have to say seriously, and we want to help. When dealing with a child complaint, Prahran Place staff will at all times listen to you, reassure you, ask for more information, keep you informed and respect you.

How do I make a complaint?

By talking about it, or by writing it down, if that's easier. We will listen to you no matter how big or small you think the issue is.

You can speak to any Prahran Place staff member who you feel safe and comfortable with, including the PEO. We will listen to you and ask you to tell us about what happened, including the names of any people who were involved and/or might have seen what happened. The PRAHRAN PLACE staff member will take notes on what you talk about and any follow up action/discussion, keeping the notes in a confidential file.

If you write it down, you can place your complaint in the Prahran Place suggestion box in reception or you can hand it to any Prahran Place staff member. You can also email or message your complaint to a Prahran Place staff member.

Do I need to make a complaint by myself?

You can do it by yourself, with a friend, your parent(s) or another adult whom you trust and feel safe with. This person is sometimes called a support person.

Can I make an anonymous complaint?

Yes, you can make an anonymous complaint; however, it may make it harder to properly understand the situation or take appropriate action if we can't clarify some of the details with you. Prahran Place staff will try to discretely find other evidence to support the complaint, but if there is no other evidence to support your complaint, then the complaint will be dropped.

What will happen next?

We may also ask you what you would like to happen next. Sometimes, if we think the issue is serious (if we feel someone is not safe), we will have to decide about what needs to happen next, but it is important for you to let us know how we can help you.

If possible, the staff member will help you deal with it. If not, they will explain who it needs to go to and why. We will ask you what support you may need and how you would like us to keep you up to date on what is happening with your complaint.

Depending on the issue raised, the staff member might help you with some strategies to manage it yourself or with someone else's support. If the matter is more serious, Prahran Place may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may include speaking to others involved. We will tell you before we do this.

If you change your mind and do not wish to continue with your complaint, Prahran Place staff will discuss this with you and may still investigate the issue raised by your complaint depending on the seriousness and nature of the complaint.

Who else might be involved?

At all times Prahran Place staff will respect you and keep your complaint confidential. However, sometimes Prahran Place staff may be legally required to involve other people, including:

- the other people named in the complaint;
- your support people: friends, parents, carers, and guardians; and
- for more serious complaints, teachers, and police.

If a PRAHRAN PLACE staff member is worried about your wellbeing they may also discuss your complaint with the PEO, where your immediate safety will not be compromised, a referral to The Orange Door may be appropriate.

Timelines

If we receive your complaint in writing first, we will contact you within two working days to confirm we have it and talk about what's next. Depending on how complex your complaint is, we will try to resolve it within 10 working days of receiving your complaint. If it is going to be longer, we will tell you. At all times we will keep you informed of the progress of the investigation.

If you feel the investigation is not progressing fast enough or have concerns for your safety, you can contact the PEO or CoM Chair at any time to discuss your complaint.