Big Issue In Australia Limited
Child Safe Policy

1. Purpose of Policy

This document sets out The Big Issue’s commitment to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people with whom we have contact are safe and feel safe and are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

This policy sets out the requirements that The Big Issue staff, contractors, volunteers and authorised persons must follow in providing a child safe and child friendly environment.

2. Who does this policy apply to

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, temporary staff, contractors and private consultants of The Big Issue (Workers). However, the terms of this policy do not form part of any Worker’s contract of employment or contract for services.

3. Who is Responsible for Child Safety

All Workers are responsible for contributing to achieving a child safe environment, not just those whose day to day activities interact with children. They are responsible for:

- complying with this policy, and related processes referred to in this policy
- adhering to operating guidelines and workplace policy
- reporting child safety concerns, as per the reporting procedures. All suspected or alleged child abuse must be reported to the appropriate authorities, as per the reporting procedures.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff and volunteers whom they directly supervise or manage have read this policy and carry out their duties in accordance with this policy and related documents.

4. Compliance

All people to whom this policy applies must always adhere to this policy.

Non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of employment or contractual obligations, misconduct, harassment, discrimination or some other contravention of the law.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action and, in serious cases, termination of the person’s employment or engagement.
5. Statement of commitment to safety

The Big Issue is committed to being a child safe and child friendly organisation that recognises, respects and promotes children's rights.

We recognise our responsibilities in keeping children safe from abuse from those associated with this organisation and will ensure that the safety of children is always our priority.

We take a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. We value diversity and will not tolerate discriminatory practices.

In recognition of the increased vulnerabilities of particular groups of children, we pay attention to:

- the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- the safety of children with a disability
- the safety of children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex
- the safety of children in out of home care and youth justice.

In becoming a child safe organisation we will:

- foster an environment in which children are listened to, their views valued, and their concerns acted upon
- actively encourage children to have a say about things that are important to them, including contributing to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities
- proactively assess and manage the risk of abuse to children who come into contact with our services
- welcome concerns being raised about the safety of children with whom we have contact
- listen to and act decisively on any child safety concerns or allegations of abuse that are made
- have specific policies, procedures and supports in place to enable us to meet these obligations.

6. Principles for creating and maintaining a child safe organisation

The Big Issue is committed to developing and implementing a child safe system. In developing and implementing the system we will:

- consult with staff and other appropriate parties, including children
- develop a system that reflects the risks of child abuse within this organisation
- take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
- value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
- foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
- recognise, respect and foster children's rights
• respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
• provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards and in the presence of children
• engage people who are suitable to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
• ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues
• report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
• share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
• value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers.

7. Reporting Process

How you might become aware of the actual or likely occurrence of abuse

• a child might tell you
• someone else might report that a child has told them or that they strongly believe a child has been or is being abused
• a child might show some signs of physical injury for which there appears to be no satisfactory explanation
• a child’s behaviour may indicate that it is likely that she/he is being abused
• something in the behaviour of another member of staff or young person, or the way a member of staff relates to a child, alerts you or makes you feel uncomfortable in some way
• you might observe one child abusing another

Responding to signs or suspicions of abuse

• Call 000 if a child is in immediate danger
• At any time, a member of staff may be approached by a child or other adult alleging or disclosing abuse or may see signs which leads them to suspect abuse.
• Any sign or suspicion of abuse should be recorded by the staff member using the form in the Appendix. This should be done immediately abuse is suspected.
• It should then be reported immediately to any executive who in conjunction with the staff member will make further records and notes about the issue and refer the matter to the appropriate authorities within 24 hours.

Responding to a child disclosing abuse

• Call 000 if a child is in immediate danger
• At any time a member of staff may be approached by a child or other adult alleging or disclosing abuse.
• Staff members likely to be in regular contact with children will have had training in listening, accepting, reassuring, explaining and reacting immediately. (See Appendix)

• The details of any allegation of abuse should be recorded by the staff member using the form in the Appendix. This should be done immediately abuse is alleged.

• It should then be reported immediately to an executive who in conjunction with the staff member will make further records and notes about the issue and refer the matter to the appropriate authorities within 24 hours.

8. Related Policies
   The Big Issue Operating Guidelines
   The Big Issue Respect in the Workplace Policy
Appendix

Responding to a child making an allegation of abuse

Stay calm

Be non-judgemental

Listen carefully to what is said without interrupting

Find an appropriate opportunity to explain that the information will need to be shared with others

Do not promise to keep secrets.

Make it clear that you are taking them seriously.

Allow the child to continue at his/her pace.

Record only what the child has said. Many cases fall down where it is possible to infer that leading questions were asked even at these early stages.

Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.

Reassure them that you are going to do everything that you can to help. Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.

Recording in writing, using the appropriate form, what was said using the child’s own words as soon as possible note date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated.

Things to avoid

X Do not quiz for more information

X Do not speculate or make assumptions

X Do not voice negative judgments about the situation or abuser

X Do not make promises that you cannot keep

X Do not promise that ‘everything will be alright’

X Do not offer to keep it confidential

Remember:

It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the first person who encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. This is a task for professional child protection agencies following referral to them of concern about a child.
Definitions

Child:
In this policy, the term child refers to children and young people up to the age of 18.

Child safety concern:
A child safety concern is any concern relating to the physical, emotional or cultural safety of a child with whom the Worker has contact, either directly or indirectly. It includes, but is not limited to, allegations or suspicions of child abuse.

A child safety concern may include for example:
- exposure to a child of inappropriate content within the work environment
- inappropriate or special relationships developing between an adult and a child (that may indicate grooming behaviour)
- inadequate staff-child supervision
- feelings of discomfort about interactions between an adult and a child
- concerns about a physical environment that poses a risk for children (including health and hygiene)
- concerns about a child being denied their right to culture and identity or other discriminating practice

Child abuse:
- sexual abuse and grooming
- physical abuse or violence
- serious emotional and psychological abuse
- serious neglect.

All suspected or alleged child abuse must be reported to the appropriate authorities (as per the reporting procedure).

Children's rights:
Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, include the right to:
- be treated fairly
- have a say about decisions affecting them
- live and grow up healthy
- have people who do what is best for them
- know who they are and where they come from
- believe what they want to believe
- privacy
- find out information and express themselves
- be safe no matter where they are
- be cared for and have a home
- education play and cultural activities
- help and protection if they need it.
Reporting Abuse Form

Name of Child:

Age/DOB:

Parent/Carer’s Name:

Home Address:

Special Information:

Are you reporting your own concerns or passing on those of someone else?  
Give details:

Brief description of what has prompted the concerns: include dates, times etc of any specific incidents:

Any physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs?

Have you spoken to the child? If so what was said?

Have you spoken to the parents/carers? If so what was said?

Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? If so give details.

Have you consulted anyone else? Give details.

Your Name and Position:

Signature:

Date: