



# Code of Conduct

November 2020 Version 1.0



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## ***Landcare Victoria Inc. - Code of Conduct***

### **Preamble**

Central to the success of Landcare are good people who demonstrate a high standard of professional conduct, which is evident in their dealings with both organisations and people. This code of conduct is written to help support both LVI at the State level as well as regional networks and local groups to be effective and skilled at managing the range of issues referred to in the code. Landcare aims to be a mutually supportive environment where members, volunteers and staff are respected, valued and enjoy working within Landcare.

LVI requires by its Rules that all member groups have a documented code of conduct which covers child safety, bullying, sexual harassment and respect. This document is designed to be endorsed by member groups as their own code of conduct. The most recent copy of the code will be available on the LVI website and the Victorian Landcare Gateway.

The essence of this code is to capture:

1. Set general principles of behaviour and ensuring that respect is a central part of landcare activity.
2. Having appropriate child safe policies in place,
3. Establishing procedures through which sexual harassment and bullying issues are firstly minimized and secondly dealt with appropriately if required

Breaches the code of conduct must be addressed by the Member Group, who should advise the person breaching the code to cease such actions. Where the code of conduct is breached in a serious or repeated manner this should trigger disciplinary action, including, if appropriate suspension of membership. Complaints regarding code of conduct breaches must be handled in a timely, responsive and sensitive manner.

If a Member group fails to address breaches of the code of conduct then this may be grounds for disciplinary action including suspension or expulsion of the Member Group from Landcare Victoria Inc.

### **1. GENERAL CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

LVI Members, volunteers and staff, including those of an affiliated Member Group, must meet the following requirements in regard to their conduct during any activity held or sanctioned by LVI, including by an affiliated Member Group and in any role they hold within LVI or a Member Group:

- (a) Respect the rights, dignity and worth of others, and value their ideas and opinions;
- (b) Be fair, considerate and honest in all dealings with others;
- (c) Conduct themselves in line with Landcare Victoria Inc. values;
- (d) Maintain a duty of care to others involved in LVI or the Member Group's programs (where a duty of care applies)
- (e) Be professional in, and accept responsibility for, their actions ;
- (f) Comply with LVI and affiliated Member Group guidelines , including this Policy, regarding appropriate conduct
- (g) Show concern and caution towards others who may be sick or injured ;
- (h) Operate within the Rules of the landcare movement which govern LVI and the Member Groups.

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- (i) Report any unlawful, threatening or violent behaviour to the appropriate authorities

LVI Members, volunteers and staff, including those of an affiliated Member Group must not:

- j) Engage in any unlawful, threatening or violent behaviour
- k) Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade any person;
- l) Engage in any form of harassment of others; and
- m) Unlawfully discriminate against any person;
- n) Use their involvement with LVI, or a Member Group to promote their own beliefs, behaviours or practices where these are inconsistent with those of LVI, or a Member Group.
- o) Do anything that brings the landcare movement or Landcare Victoria Inc. into disrepute

## **2. Child safety policies**

### **Context to the Code**

Landcare Victoria Inc. (LVI) and its member organisations strive to be Child Safe, with no tolerance for child abuse and a commitment to children's best interests. All children who participate in our activities have a right to feel and to be safe. We encourage children to express their views and we listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them.

Physical or sexual abuse of a child is a crime and will be reported to police, including grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 years. All adults who form a reasonable belief that such a sexual offence has occurred have an obligation to report it to police.

This Code complies with the Child Safe Standards. LVI recognises that there are key risks to Child Safety being:

- Physical or Sexual abuse
- Grooming (abuse of trust usually occurs where there is an ongoing relationship of trust)
- Inappropriate child-to-child or adult-to-child physical or verbal contact
- Circulation of sexually explicit material

### **Managing these risks**

In order that these risks are managed effectively, all groups / networks need to:

- a. Consider child safety risks in their event / activity planning,
- b. Actively work to mitigate any risks,
- c. Ensure they have people appropriately qualified to work with children as applicable,
- d. Model appropriate behaviour towards children,
- e. Listen directly to children and respond to them appropriately, and
- f. Report any complaints, concerns or disclosures through LVI.

LVI Members must not:

- g. Engage in any activity with a child that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them ;
- h. Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves

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- i. Be alone with a child unnecessarily and for more than the shortest possible time
- j. Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature or use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- k. Show favouritism to children through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention

See attachment 1.1, tips and tools for creating a child safe event.

### **3. Sexual harassment, bullying and respect**

#### **Context to the Code**

All employees and volunteers in Landcare are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. LVI has a commitment to provide a healthy and safe working environment free from workplace bullying and sexual harassment at all levels of Landcare in Victoria.

Under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 organisations covered by the law – including volunteer based organisations – have a positive duty to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation.

#### **Managing these risks**

In order for landcare groups / networks to effectively manage these risks effectively, they will need to:

- a. Be aware of potential situations where such behaviour can occur in planning events / activities,
- b. Actively plan to manage such potential situations
- c. Provide a clear pathway for a matter to be raised within the organization, and
- d. Ensure processes maintain confidentiality and protect people's identity.

See attachment 1.1, risks to be managed in reducing the risk of sexual harassment, bullying or respect.

#### **Conclusion**

This policy is designed to aid all organisations in Landcare to conduct safe activities by recognizing risks across a range of areas and working actively to mitigate these in there planning.

LVI is able to provide support to groups as applicable in relation to this Code of Conduct.



## **ATTACHMENT 1.1 TO LVI CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **Tips and tools for creating a child safe event**

The following are a range of tips and tools for groups to consider in their planning and conduct of events. It is important that the matters raised are all considered in the planning and conduct of an event.

1. Be upfront about child safety to deter inappropriate behaviour (mention it in activity briefings, put it on your website etc)
2. **Listen** if children report feeling uncomfortable
3. Make sure children and adults know who to go to if they have concerns (for big events have signs that are at a variety of eye levels, and ensure organizing staff are clearly distinguishable)
4. If families bring children to activities, immediately advise the parent or carer that they must directly supervise the child at all times
5. Ensure all unaccompanied children work in groups of three or more with either two or more adults or with children of a similar age
6. Ensure that no child is alone with only one other person at any time
7. Include an Under 18 checkbox on your activity participation sheet
8. Design activities so there are clear sightlines and obstruct any hidden places that could conceal inappropriate conduct

### **Risks to be managed in reducing the risk of sexual harassment, bullying and respect**

The following are identified risks and potential solutions that can be adopted to deal with these matters:

1. The workplace / organization is not alert to the risk of such issues. Potential actions. Overt emphasis on these issues in policies, reporting (ie: part of OHS reports) and discussion at committee of management. Written part of employment agreements with staff. Regular training / refreshers in these matters with both staff and volunteers.
2. The organization has no policy framework to deal with an issue. Potential actions. Adopt and follow this Code. Have appointed person(s) who are clearly identified as those to whom issues are reported. Maintain effective records of events, meetings and activities. Seek support of LVI as applicable.
3. The organization does not understand the nature of such matters. Potential actions. Ensure group understands that behaviour which is offensive, intimidating, humiliating or that degrades, ridicules or insults or otherwise causes a detriment to the health and safety of a staff member or volunteer is incorporated in planning and training.
4. The workplace is conducive to such behaviour. A challenge is that a significant portion of Landcare work is done by single employees, dealing with individual people, sometimes on a frequent basis over a short space of time. Potential actions. Good procedures and support for staff in this environment. Clear communication with members / volunteers regarding their responsibilities. Care by key individuals to observe behaviour of people in group settings for indications of potential issues.
5. The workplace and social environment are closely linked. Landcare Group members are also neighbours, CFA volunteers and have children at school together. Potential actions.

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Ensure these other groups (as you can) are also discussing these issues as a matter of course. Be alert to the behaviour of individuals in other settings as these may provide an indication of potential issues.

6. A person's privacy is breached during the process. In contrast with normal committee business, such matters must be kept confidential in order to protect all parties. Potential actions. Have clear people who can have such a matter reported to. Seek help as soon as practical when an issue arises from LVI.
7. The group does not have the skills, resources or separation of interests to deal with the issue raised. Potential actions. Group seeks support to work the issue through. This may involve LVI, an independent person (either locally or externally), depending on the situation. Be prepared to act in a timely manner, in order to minimize further risk, as well as to try and resolve the matter.

**Approved LVI CoM: 6/2/2019**