

Berry Street is a Child Safe Organisation. We believe all children and young people have an inherent right to grow up healthy, happy and safe.

Berry Street is committed to providing a service that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children; where there is no challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need.

Many children, young people and families we support, have experienced difficult and challenging life situations. Our programs help service users to process and manage trauma, heal, repair relationships, and to strengthen their identity.

As an organisation dedicated to child safety and empowerment, we recognise, respect and promote children's rights within Berry Street and the broader community. We acknowledge that children have a right to have their voice heard, valued, respected and influential into decision making processes. We prioritise and welcome their feedback.

We work alongside children and young people from all backgrounds and experiences across a range of our programs, particularly out of home care. This includes:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Children who have a disability
- Children who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community

Berry Street is committed to understanding the unique experience and needs of all children we support. We want children to feel welcome at our service and like they belong.

To keep children safe, there is a zero tolerance for any form of child abuse or maltreatment within our organisation. In addition, there is zero tolerance for not reporting suspected abuse or maltreatment internally and externally.

To prevent abuse, Berry Street identifies risks children may face in different settings. This includes risks in the environment and risk of exploitation online. Additionally, we ensure all staff hold a current Working with Children Check under legislation and undergo ongoing education relating to child safety and wellbeing. We are committed to removing and reducing all risks to children we work with.

## **Victorian Child Safe Standards and National Principles for a Child Safe Organisations**

Berry Street is committed to the actioning the Victorian Child Standards and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. We fulfil this commitment by:

- Establishing a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued

- Ensuring that child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
- Empowering children and young people about their rights, to participate in decisions affecting them and ensures they are taken seriously.
- Ensuring families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Ensuring equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.
- Ensuring that the people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Maintaining processes for complaints and concerns which are child focused.
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Ensuring that physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Regularly reviewing and improving the implementation of Child Safe Standards and National Child Safe Principles.
- Ensuring policies and procedures are in place which document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

### **We have a past**

As a past and current care provider, Berry Street has learnt lessons from practices that were neither child safe nor child friendly. This includes being complicit in past policies that forcibly removed Aboriginal children from their countries, cultures and communities. Children today, known as the Stolen Generations.

Through the courage of people prepared to tell their stories, we now know that our past practice was not always consistent with the principles of Berry Street or its founding agencies (Sutherland Homes and Lisa Lodge). To heal, we will be honest and transparent about our mistakes. We promise to remain committed to listening and responding if harm or abuse has occurred.

If you would like more information about Berry Street's child safe commitment or would like to raise a concern, you can email [childsafety@berrystreet.org.au](mailto:childsafety@berrystreet.org.au).