

Child Safe Environments Policy

Purpose

Canberra Metro Operations (CMET) is committed to providing a child-safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all children and young people using our light rail services. This policy establishes guidelines and procedures to ensure the safety, rights, and well-being of children in alignment with ACT Child Safe Standards. CMET upholds these standards as an essential part of our culture, operations, and community interactions.

Scope

This policy applies to all CMET employees, contractors, and volunteers. Every individual working with or around children and young people must comply with these safety requirements, supporting a protective and responsive environment.

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this policy:

- **Child or Young Person:** Any individual under 18 years of age.
- **Harm:** As defined by Section 17 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, harm includes physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), and may result from sexual, physical, mental, or emotional abuse or neglect.
- **Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) Check:** A legal requirement for individuals working or volunteering with children in the ACT, involving a screening process to assess risks to child safety.

Policy Commitments

1.1.1 Commitment to Child Safety

CMET is dedicated to ensuring a safe and comfortable public transport experience for all children and young people, regardless of background, abilities, or identity. We hold a zero-tolerance stance against any form of harm, and all allegations or safety concerns are addressed with urgency and adherence to legal obligations.

1.1.2 Staff Recruitment and Training

- **Screening Requirements:** All CMET staff who may interact with children are required to have a valid WWVP card before starting work, renewed as per ACT requirements.
- **Training:** Comprehensive training on child safety, reporting obligations, and mandatory reporting requirements is provided at induction, with refresher courses scheduled every three years.

1.1.3 Code of Conduct

All CMET employees are responsible for promoting and protecting the safety and well-being of children and young people by:

- Following the CMET Child Safe Environments Policy and ensuring child protection in all interactions.
- Treating all individuals with respect and inclusivity, regardless of race, gender, disability, or cultural background.
- Listening to and respecting the views of children and young people and responding appropriately.
- Ensuring another adult is present or in sight during any one-on-one interaction with a child or young person.
- Responding promptly, fairly, and transparently to any complaints made by or on behalf of a child or young person.

CMET staff must not:

- Engage in rough or inappropriate physical interactions.
- Form personal relationships with children that may be perceived as favouritism.
- Perform personal care tasks that a child or young person can do for themselves.
- Discriminate based on age, gender, cultural background, religion, or disability.

1.1.4 Reporting and Responding to Harm or Risk of Harm

Mandated Notifiers: Employees who provide services to children or young people or hold supervisory roles are mandated notifiers and are legally required to report any suspicion of harm to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) at 13 14 78. Immediate risks should be reported to ACT Police at 000.

Internal Reporting: After reporting to authorities, employees must make an internal report to CMET management to ensure appropriate follow-up and record-keeping.

Support for Children: Following a report, and when possible, CMET will refer children, young people, and their families to relevant services and continue to provide support as necessary during the incident.

1.1.5 Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms

Children, young people, and their families are encouraged to provide feedback or raise concerns directly to CMET employees, or via the CMET website. All complaints and feedback are handled promptly, with clear communication provided to families and young people throughout the process.

Risk Management

CMET is committed to identifying, assessing, and minimizing potential risks to child safety across all services. This includes:

- **Physical Safety:** Regular risk assessments of equipment, facilities, and transport operations to ensure safety.
- **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Confidential records concerning children and young people will be securely stored, and sensitive information will only be disclosed with proper consent.
- **Supervision and Physical Contact:** Staff are required to maintain safe, visible supervision of children and young people at all times. Physical contact should only occur when necessary and in an appropriate, explained manner.

Identified risk	Actions to minimise
Organisational culture not focused on child safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implement a child-focused Code of Conduct that establishes clear behavioural expectations. ■ Foster a culture of child safety and inclusivity at all management levels. ■ Embed ACT Child Safe Standards in policies and procedures.
Unsuitable personnel interacting with children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct thorough recruitment processes, including WWVP checks, background checks, and reference checks for all staff in child-facing roles. ■ Ensure all employees maintain a valid WWVP check, renewed every five years.
Inadequate understanding of reporting obligations among staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide mandatory child safety training during onboarding and refresher sessions every three years. ■ Display reporting guidelines on noticeboards at all sites.
Unnecessary or inappropriate physical contact with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Limit physical contact to necessary interactions, with explanations provided to the child and their guardians when possible. ■ Prohibit unnecessary physical contact.
Transportation of children and young people by staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prohibit transportation of children or young people without prior approval and guardian consent. ■ Ensure any transport includes at least two adults and occurs in a registered, insured, and roadworthy vehicle.



Identified risk	Actions to minimise
Lack of adequate supervision for children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure children and young people separated from guardians are supervised in line of sight until reunited. ■ In cases where a child has boarded the wrong service, follow safety protocols to reunite them with guardians.
Taking and using images of children without consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Obtain written consent from both the child/young person and their guardian and/or school before taking or using images. ■ Clearly state the intended use of images and maintain anonymity when publicly displayed.
Physical environment risks (e.g., unsafe equipment or facilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct regular risk assessments of all equipment and facilities. ■ Maintain a risk register and ensure all equipment is in good working order
Inadequate privacy and confidentiality protections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Store all documents with sensitive information securely in locked storage or password-protected digital files. ■ Limit access to confidential information to essential personnel only.
Children and young people unable to report concerns safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide multiple reporting channels, including in-person, online, and anonymous feedback options. ■ Train staff to listen and respond to child and youth concerns respectfully and appropriately

Related Policies, Procedures, and Further Information.

Related policies and procedures that support our Child Safe Environments Policy:

- **Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT):** Governs the care, protection, and wellbeing of children and young people in the ACT. It outlines requirements for reporting child abuse and sets standards for protecting children within organisations.
- **Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 (ACT):** Mandates background checks (Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) registration) for individuals working with children or other vulnerable groups to ensure suitability and reduce risk.
- **Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT):** Protects the rights of all people, including children and young people, in the ACT. This Act emphasizes the importance of respecting children’s rights and wellbeing, aligning with principles of child safety and protection.
- **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations:** Developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission, these principles provide a framework for creating child-safe environments



across Australia. They have been adopted by all states and territories, including the ACT, to ensure a consistent approach to child safety within organisations.

- **Reportable Conduct Scheme (ACT):** Overseen by the ACT Ombudsman, this scheme requires organisations to report and investigate any allegations of misconduct or abuse involving children by employees, volunteers, or contractors. It promotes accountability and aims to improve child safety by ensuring incidents are reported and addressed.
- **Code of Conduct**
- **Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Policy**
- **Whistle-blower Policy and Procedure**

Policy Review

CMET will review this policy every five years or when legislative updates or operational changes necessitate it. Review triggers may include critical incidents, new risks to children or young people, or feedback indicating the need for policy adjustments.

Policy Owner: Head of Human Resources

Review Date: February 12, 2029

Digitally Signed By:

Rosalind McGuire

at: 17/01/2025 11:00:00 AM