



# National Child Safety Governance and Reporting Framework



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Their collaboration, candour and commitment to strengthening child safety across Australia's playgroup sector have shaped a model that is practical, proportionate and grounded in the realities of diverse communities and operating contexts.

We gratefully acknowledge the involvement of:

ACT Playgroups

Play Matters Australia

Playgroup NT

Playgroup SA

Playgroup Tasmania

Playgroup Victoria

## Glossary

<b>Partner organisations</b>	A collective term used to refer to all organisations funded or supported by Playgroup Australia including Members.
<b>Playgroup Australia (PA)</b>	Playgroup Australia is the national PEAK body for playgroups. PA is also responsible for funding, supporting and overseeing playgroup activity across Australia and providing child safety assurance to government.
<b>Child safety</b>	Protecting children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation, and creating environments where children's rights, wellbeing and participation are supported.
<b>National Principles</b>	The 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are nationally agreed principles that set expectations for creating and maintaining child safe organisations.
<b>Child Safety Action Plan</b>	An annual plan endorsed by a Partner Organisation's CEO that provides a structured self-assessment and forward planning tool, mapped to the 10 National Principles, and used to document current practice, progress to date, priority actions, next steps and risk ratings
<b>Child Safety Declaration</b>	An annual statement signed by a Partner Organisation's CEO and Chair confirming compliance with child safety obligations, accuracy of the Action Plan, risk management and commitment to continuous improvement.
<b>Moderate assurance</b>	The standard assurance approach under this document, requiring an annual Action Plan and Declaration supported by proportionate evidence.
<b>Full assurance</b>	An escalated level of assurance requested by Playgroup Australia where additional oversight is required, involving targeted or broader evidence requests based on identified risk and may include an external audit.
<b>Escalation</b>	The process used by Playgroup Australia to seek additional information or evidence where risks, gaps or concerns are identified.
<b>RAG rating</b>	A simple risk rating used in the Action Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Red</b> – significant gaps or high risk</li> <li>• <b>Amber</b> – partial implementation or emerging risk</li> <li>• <b>Green</b> – embedded and consistent practice</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual molestation insurance</b>	Insurance cover that responds to claims arising from allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct involving children.

## 1. Introduction

Playgroup Australia (PA) is deeply committed to ensuring that every child and family engaging in playgroups across the country experiences environments that are safe, inclusive and empowering. Child safety sits at the heart of PA's mission and values, and this commitment extends across all Service Delivery Organisations (SDPs), including State and Territory Organisations (STOs), and Member Organisations (collectively referred to as *Partner Organisations*). PA strives to model a strong, consistent and proactive approach to child safety that reflects community expectations and national best practice.

As part of PA's government funding arrangements, PA is required to provide annual assurance to the Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Health, Disability and Aging and other funding bodies on child safety governance, capability and compliance across its Partner Organisations. To meet this responsibility and support a strong national child safety culture, PA has worked with its Partner Organisations to develop a single national child safety governance and reporting framework that provides clear expectations, supports continuous improvement and reflects the diverse operating contexts across Australia.

This framework establishes:

- A unified national approach to child safety governance
- A moderate-assurance reporting model for all Partner Organisations
- A national Child Safety Action Plan and Declaration that can also support other funder requirements, reducing duplication
- A clear and consistent evidence base that is proportionate, practical and robust
- An annual reporting and assurance cycle aligned to PA's obligations to funding bodies
- A mechanism for continuous improvement, learning and capability building
- A model that respects state and territory contexts while maintaining national consistency

The framework has been co-designed through national consultation, surveys and workshops to ensure it is achievable, meaningful and supportive for organisations of all sizes and structures across the playgroup sector.

## 2. What Child Safety Means Across Playgroup Australia

Child safety within Playgroup Australia is defined in alignment with the [10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#), which set expectations for safe practice, governance, culture and engagement. Across the playgroup network, child safety means:

1. **Leadership, governance and culture**

Organisations embed a child-safe culture through governance, systems, decision-making and monitoring.

2. **Children's rights, agency and participation**

Children (to the extent possible in early years settings) are informed, welcomed and supported to participate in shaping safe environments.

3. **Families and communities are engaged**

Parents, caregivers and communities are central partners in creating safe playgroup environments.

4. **Equity, inclusion and diversity**

Children of all backgrounds are welcomed, respected and protected, with attention to cultural safety, disability needs and diverse family contexts.

5. **People are suitable and supported**

Staff and volunteers are appropriately screened, trained and equipped.

6. **Complaints and concerns are child-focused**

Processes for raising concerns are accessible, child-friendly and responsive.

7. **Staff and volunteers are trained and capable**

People have ongoing training and support to identify, prevent and respond to risks.

8. **Physical and online environments are safe**

Risks are managed proactively across venues, activities and digital environments.

9. **Continuous review and improvement**

Child safety practice is regularly reviewed, evaluated and improved.

10. **Policies and procedures support the organisation's commitment to child safety**

Clear, accessible policies articulate expectations, roles and responsibilities.

### 3. The Assurance Model: Moderate Assurance

Following national deliberation, the playgroup network endorsed a Moderate Assurance Model, balancing rigour with practicality given many participants within playgroups are volunteers. This model ensures PA and its Partner Organisations can demonstrate strong governance to children and families while implementing child safety in a way that is achievable and proportionate.

Under this model, all Partner Organisations are required to complete three core components each year:

#### 1. Annual Child Safety Action Plan

- Completed using the national template
- Mapped directly to the 10 National Principles
- Includes implementation status, evidence, progress comments, future focus and RAG ratings measured against the organisation's risk framework
- Endorsed by CEO

#### 2. Annual Child Safety Statement of Compliance

- Endorsed by the CEO and Board
- Confirms accuracy of the Action Plan, assurance of compliance and commitment to improvement

#### 3. Sample evidence

- Provide the required sample evidence/documentation as requested by PA.

## 4. Annual Governance and Reporting Cycle

Timeframe	Activities	Timeframe	Responsible
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect on the year's child safety achievements and challenges</li> <li>Review progress against previous Action Plan</li> <li>Consider insights prepared for annual reports and AGMs</li> <li>Identify priorities and areas for improvement</li> </ul>		Partner Organisations
November to February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan child safety goals and priorities for the upcoming year</li> <li>Complete the <b>Annual Child Safety Action Plan</b></li> <li>Finalise and sign the <b>Annual Child Safety Statement of Compliance</b></li> <li>Compile Sample Evidence</li> </ul>		Partner Organisations
Early February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit the Action Plan, Declaration and sample evidence to PA</li> </ul>		Partner Organisations
Mid to late February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review all submitted Action Plans and Declarations</li> <li>Analyse alignment with National Principles</li> <li>Identify strengths, gaps, risks and capability needs</li> <li>Determine if escalation to Full Assurance is required</li> </ul>		Playgroup Australia
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit PA's national Child Safety Statement of Compliance and required reporting to funding bodies</li> </ul>		Playgroup Australia
April onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide annual reflections and feedback to Partner Organisations including national themes, strengths and areas for development</li> <li>Identify capability-building opportunities</li> <li>Plan training and support for the year ahead</li> </ul>		Playgroup Australia

## 5. Child Safety Action Plan and Declaration Requirements

As part of this Child Safety Governance and Reporting Framework, all Partner Organisations must complete three steps each year.

### A. Child Safety Action Plan (Appendix 1)

This Action Plan provides a consistent national mechanism for Partner Organisations to assess and demonstrate alignment with the 10 National Principles. It includes:

- Implementation status (in place, working towards, not started)
- Evidence and examples of practice
- Progress comments
- Next steps and priorities
- A RAG rating to identify strengths and development areas

The Action Plan captures both the previous year's achievements and future goals.

### B. Child Safety Statement of Compliance (Appendix 3)

Signed by the CEO and Board Chair, the Statement of Compliance confirms that:

- The Action Plan is accurate and complete
- Child safety obligations under the National Principles and state/territory legislation are understood and met
- Risks are actively monitored and managed
- Any incidents, concerns or gaps have been appropriately addressed or escalated
- The organisation is committed to continuous improvement
- Appropriate insurance coverage is maintained, including sexual molestation cover

### C. Sample evidence

As part of the moderate assurance model, Partner Organisations may be asked to provide sample evidence to support the information recorded in the Child Safety Action Plan and Statement of Compliance.

Sample evidence is intended to demonstrate alignment with the 10 National Principles, not to require the submission of full organisational records. Evidence requests will be proportionate and will not include confidential or sensitive information such as individual personnel records, personal data or case files.

Examples of sample evidence may include:

- Child safety policies and procedures
- Codes of conduct or behaviour expectations
- Risk assessment templates or summaries
- Training frameworks or high-level training summaries
- Complaints and incident management procedures
- Governance or oversight documentation (e.g. agenda items, reporting pathways)
- Communication or engagement materials for families and communities

Together, these documents form the minimum reporting requirements under the moderate assurance model.

## 6. Escalation to Full Assurance

While the national model operates on a Moderate Assurance basis, Playgroup Australia may require Full Assurance where additional oversight is needed to ensure child safety, compliance or contractual obligations are met. Full Assurance is intended to be proportionate and risk based. In most cases, this will involve targeted requests for additional evidence related to specific areas of concern.

Where concerns are identified across multiple or all of the 10 National Principles, Playgroup Australia may request a broader evidence submission to gain confidence in the organisation's overall child safety governance and practice. Any evidence requested will be proportionate, time-limited and managed in line with privacy, confidentiality and data protection requirements. Wherever possible, information will be provided in a de-identified or aggregated form or sighted rather than retained.

### Escalation may be triggered where:

- Significant gaps are identified in a Partner Organisations Child Safety Action Plan
- There is repeated non-compliance with moderate assurance requirements
- Incident trends or risk indicators heighten child safety concerns
- Playgroup Australia reasonably requires additional evidence to provide assurance to funding bodies

### Purpose of escalation

Escalation is not punitive. It ensures that:

- Risks to children and families are identified and addressed early
- Oversight is proportionate to risk
- Organisations receive tailored support where needed
- Playgroup Australia can meet its governance and contractual responsibilities

### The escalation process

1. Playgroup Australia identifies a potential need for escalation following review.

2. Playgroup Australia meets with the Partner Organisations to discuss concerns and clarify requirements.
3. A Full Assurance request is issued in writing, outlining the evidence required, timeframes and the rationale for escalation.
4. Playgroup Australia reviews the evidence provided and determines next steps.
5. Playgroup Australia provides feedback, support and any required actions as appropriate.

This process is designed to be fair, transparent and supportive, ensuring all organisations can demonstrate their commitment to child safety.

## 7. Continuous Improvement

Playgroup Australia will review and refine this framework to ensure it remains current, practical and aligned with child safety expectations. This includes monitoring changes in funding body requirements, Federal legislation, sector needs, emerging risks and feedback from Partner Organisations. Through this process, PA will update templates, strengthen guidance and identify capability-building priorities so the framework continues to evolve and support safe, inclusive and high-quality playgroup environments within the network.

## Appendix 1: Child Safety Action Plan

### Annual Child Safety Action Plan

Organisation:	Reporting year:
Completed by:	Date:

National Principle	Implementation Status (In place / Working towards / Not started)	Evidence / Examples of Practice	Reflection on the past year	Future focus	Risk Rating
1. Leadership, governance and culture					
2. Children's rights and participation					
3. Families and communities are informed and involved					
4. Equity, inclusion and diversity					
5. People are suitable and supported					
6. Child-focused complaints and concerns processes					
7. Training and capability of staff and volunteers					
8. Physical and online environments are safe					
9. Review and continuous improvement					
10. Policies and procedures					

Endorsed by CEO:	Date:
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## Appendix 2: Instruction Guide - How to Complete the Child Safety Action Plan

This guide is designed to support Partner Organisations to complete the Action Plan accurately, consistently and meaningfully each year.

### A. Overview

The Action Plan is your organisation's annual self-assessment and improvement plan against the [10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#). It reflects:

- Your current level of implementation
- Evidence of practice
- Progress made in the past year
- Priorities and next steps for the upcoming year

It forms part of your annual submission to Playgroup Australia and will also support reporting to other funders where required.

### B. Step-by-Step Instructions

#### Step 1: Review each National Principle

Read each [Principle](#) and consider the systems, behaviours, practices and documentation your organisation currently has in place.

#### Step 2: Choose your Implementation Status

Select one of:

- **In place** – this area is consistently implemented and embedded
- **Working towards** – progress is underway but not yet consistent
- **Not started** – very limited or no progress to date

Choose honestly and realistically.

### **Step 3: Add Evidence / Examples of Practice**

In this column, list the documents, processes or examples that demonstrate your alignment with the Principle. Some examples include:

- Policies and procedures
- Code of conduct
- Staff/volunteer training records
- WWCC/WWVP verification
- Risk assessments
- Incident or complaints summaries
- Family engagement activities
- Cultural safety actions
- Safety checks of venues or digital environments
- Governance documents (e.g., board minutes, risk register updates)

Evidence is not expected to be exhaustive. Playgroup Australia will request specific, proportionate evidence as part of the annual submission, such as a Child Safety Policy. Organisations should ensure that the evidence referenced in this section can be made available if requested as part of a Full Assurance process.

### **Step 4: Write Progress Comments**

Briefly describe what has happened in the past year, such as:

- Improvements made
- Challenges encountered
- New initiatives introduced
- Trends or insights

Keep this factual and reflective.

### **Step 5: Identify Future Focus for the Upcoming Year**

Outline the key improvement actions you plan to take next year. For example:

- Update a policy

- Strengthen volunteer induction
- Introduce a complaints flowchart for families
- Conduct a physical environment safety walk
- Implement cultural safety training

These next steps help PA understand your priorities and support capability building.

### **Step 6: Apply a Risk Rating**

Use your organisation's risk framework to provide a risk rating for each Principle:

- **Red:** Significant gaps requiring attention
- **Amber:** Partial or emerging implementation
- **Green:** Embedded, strong and consistent practice

### **C. Tips for Completing the Action Plan**

- Be honest and realistic — this is a legal requirement under the funding body contracts
- Keep evidence proportionate — quality over quantity
- Use simple, plain language
- Focus on continuous improvement, not perfection
- Consult your team, volunteers or Board to ensure accuracy
- Review previous years' Action Plans to track progress
- Use the same document each year so PA can see year-on-year change

### **D. Submitting Your Action Plan**

Submit your completed Action Plan by early February each year with your Child Safety Statement of Compliance and supporting evidence as requested by PA.

Playgroup Australia will review your submission and may provide feedback and/or identify capability-building opportunities for the year ahead where practicable.

## Appendix 3: Child Safety Annual Declaration

*(Partner Organisations to Playgroup Australia)*

<b>Organisation name:</b>	
<b>Reporting year:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

### Declaration

On behalf of the above organisation, we declare that:

- The Child Safety Action Plan submitted to Playgroup Australia is accurate, complete and reflects our organisation's current child safety governance and practice, aligned to the 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- Our organisation understands and meets its child safety obligations under the National Principles, relevant state and territory legislation, and applicable government funding requirements.
- Child safety risks are actively identified, monitored and managed, including through governance oversight, policies, procedures and regular review.
- Any child safety incidents, concerns or identified gaps during the reporting period have been appropriately addressed, managed and escalated, and reported in line with legislative and government funding requirements, including notification to relevant authorities and Playgroup Australia where required.
- Our organisation holds appropriate insurance coverage, including sexual molestation insurance, consistent with our activities, risk profile and contractual obligations.
- Our organisation is committed to continuous improvement in child safety and will implement the actions outlined in the Child Safety Action Plan over the coming year.
- We understand that Playgroup Australia may request additional information or escalation to Full Assurance where required, and we commit to cooperating fully with this process.

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### Authorisation

This declaration is made in accordance with the Playgroup Australia National Child Safety Governance and Reporting Framework.

**Chief Executive Officer**

Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

**Chair**

Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	