

## Commonwealth Child Safe Framework Annual Statement of Compliance 2021

### Youth Law Australia

#### **Youth Law Australia's commitment to children's safety**

Youth Law Australia (YLA) is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Australia. YLA has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and works to improve access to rights and justice for children Australia-wide.

In demonstration of our commitment to children's safety, YLA:

- Adopts and is implementing the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations;
- Complies with the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework;
- Will continue to develop policies and procedures to maintain and improve compliance with the Framework and the National Principles.

#### **YLA's interaction with children**

YLA is an accredited, national Community Legal Centre (CLC) dedicated to empowering children and young people with free and confidential legal advice and resources. YLA's service provision is enabled through use of technology and, as such, interactions with children predominantly occur online and over the phone. These interactions involve client intakes and the subsequent provision of legal advice, information, referrals, and assistance.

YLA is also involved in Community Legal Education programs that include community outreach and interaction with students and students' legal groups.

#### **Compliance with the Framework and measures to improve compliance**

YLA has complied with the four requirements of the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework and is working to improve current mechanisms to ensure children's safety. Details of compliance are as follows:

##### **Requirement 1 – Child safety risk assessment**

YLA's child safety risk assessment indicated that YLA has a high level of contact with children and as such carries a moderate to high risk of harm. All staff and volunteers are identified as having contact with children to varying degrees.

YLA has policies and procedures in place to mitigate the risk of harm to children in online and place-based contexts. Risk mitigation strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Recruitment and screening processes**

Staff and volunteers are required to have a current Working with Children Check before they can begin working with YLA. Prospective staff engage in a screening process and any references provided are verified.

- **Ensuring a safe online environment**

YLA's Code of Conduct for Working with Children provides guidelines to staff about how to interact with children safely and appropriately. It also ensures that staff are respectful of the child's culture and are inclusive of all children. This extends to cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as individuals who disclose disability or those who have experienced psychological, emotional, or sexual abuse.

This year, YLA staff participated in trauma-informed training, cultural awareness training and mental health first aid courses with an aim to improve the safety of vulnerable clients who contact us. YLA has several other policies regarding expected conduct, privacy, confidentiality, and children's safety that aim to ensure all children and staff are safe in their communications.

**Requirement 2 – Establish and maintain a system of training and compliance to make staff aware of and compliant with the Framework and relevant legislation**

YLA is compliant with relevant state and territory legislation relating to working with children and the mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse.

Upon commencement, staff and volunteers participate in an induction day and are trained about child safety policies and procedures that are in place. All staff understand their obligations to child safety and to upholding a child-safe culture in the workplace.

YLA will continue to provide child-safety training to staff and ensure they are aware of the Framework and maintain compliance with relevant policies, procedures, and legislation.

**Requirement 3 – Compliance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations**

YLA largely aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and is currently working towards improving our implementation of them.

For example, to better reflect the National Principles and in recognition of the risks involved with online communication with children, YLA aims to implement a dedicated online safety policy to inform staff and volunteers of their specific obligations to child safety in online interactions.

YLA has also developed a Charter of Commitment and is reviewing current policies and adapting them to better reflect the National Principles.

**Requirement 4 – Publish an annual statement of compliance**

YLA has published this statement of compliance on our website.

Youth Law Australia's commitment to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and access to rights and justice of Australia's children is absolute. YLA has zero-tolerance for child abuse, exploitation, or neglect.

Authorised by Matthew Keeley, Director

28 October 2021