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Introduction

- Bravehearts exists to protect children and young people from child sexual abuse and to support healing and justice for survivors.
- Central to this mission is the creation of environments where all children and young people, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and their families, are safe, feel safe, and have their voices heard.
- Cultural safety is fundamental to our safeguarding approach and shapes how we create environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and their families can thrive.
- Bravehearts acknowledges the enduring strength of culture, kin and Community as protective factors for children and young people.

DRAFT Policy while in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders & child safety advisory.

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- Cultural safety is not just a practice, it is a commitment to equity, respect, and inclusion.
- It requires Bravehearts to actively recognise and respond to the impacts of colonisation, systemic disadvantage, and intergenerational trauma. It also demands that Bravehearts listens deeply to the voices of children, families, and communities, and make sure that cultural identity is never a barrier to safety, participation, or wellbeing.

This policy outlines Bravehearts approach to cultural safety as a core component of our child safeguarding approach. It reflects our alignment with the Universal Principle and the Child Safe Standards and affirms our responsibility to uphold the rights of all children and young people to feel culturally safe, seen, respected, empowered and supported in their identity.

Through this policy, Bravehearts commits to embedding cultural safety in all facets of our service including our governance, leadership, service delivery and workforce practices.

Bravehearts is committed to fostering genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We support continuous learning to develop culturally capable staff who uphold the rights, dignity and safety of all children, young people, and families.

We recognise the diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across urban, rural, and remote areas, and understand that each community has unique cultural practices, languages, and connections to Country.

Guiding Principles

Bravehearts' approach to cultural safety is guided by the following principles:

1. **Child-Centred and Rights-Based:** All children and young people have the right to feel safe, be safe and have their voices heard, regardless of cultural background.
2. **Connection to Culture, Kin, and Country:** cultural identity, kinship and connection to Country are prioritised and recognised as protective factors that support wellbeing, healing, and safety.
3. **Self-Determination and Cultural Authority:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to lead and shape decisions that affect their children, families, and communities.
4. **Respect for Cultural Identity and Diversity:** Bravehearts values and respects the cultural identities of all children, families, and staff, and actively works to eliminate racism and discrimination. Bravehearts recognises that children and young people are only truly safe when they are culturally safe - seen, respected and supported in their identity.
5. **Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centred Practice:** Services are delivered with an understanding of the historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, and systemic disadvantage.
6. **Shared Responsibility and Accountability:** Cultural safety is everyone's responsibility. Bravehearts promotes a culture of reflection, learning and accountability across all levels of the organisation.
7. **Partnership and Co-Design:** Bravehearts works in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to co-design culturally safe programs, policies, and practices.
8. **Continuous Improvement:** Bravehearts is committed to ongoing learning, feedback, and evaluation to strengthen cultural safety and uphold the Child Safe Standards.

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Scope

This policy applies to all individuals engaged with Bravehearts personnel, including:

- Employees (full time, part time, casual)
- Volunteers and interns
- Contractors and consultants
- National Board members and Leadership Team
- Partner organisations and service providers
- Anyone acting on behalf of Bravehearts in the delivery of programs, services, or advocacy.

It covers all settings where Bravehearts operates, including face-to-face, online, outreach and community-based environments.

The policy is relevant to all interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, and communities, as well as interactions with staff and volunteers who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Cultural safety is a shared responsibility across all levels of the organisation. Every individual has a role in creating environments where cultural identity is respected, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially children and young people feel safe, supported, and valued.

It is expected that all Bravehearts' personnel demonstrate cultural humility and respect and participate in training, reflection and accountability that strengthens cultural capability across our organisation.

To support this, mandatory cultural safety and capability development will be provided to all Bravehearts' personnel. This includes induction training, ongoing professional development and access to clinical supervision or guidance where appropriate.

This policy complements Bravehearts broader child safeguarding approach and is to be read alongside the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct, Child Safeguarding and Wellbeing Policy, Reconciliation Action Plan, and the Child Safeguarding Organisation Continuous Improvement Plan.

Cultural Protocols

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country:

- Welcome to Country ceremonies will be arranged through local Traditional Owners for significant events.
- Acknowledgment of Country will be included at the beginning of meetings, events, and in key communications.
- Staff will be trained on the difference between Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country.

Working with Cultural Content:

- Sacred or sensitive cultural content requires guidance from appropriate cultural advisors.
- Visual representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures must be respectful and developed in consultation with relevant communities.
- Use of cultural imagery, symbols, or stories requires prior approval from cultural advisors.

Family and Kinship Considerations:

- Recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of family may include extended kinship networks.

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- Understand that decision-making may involve multiple family and community members.
- Respect cultural protocols around gender-specific information sharing where relevant.

Role, Responsibilities and Practice Expectations

Creating and maintaining culturally safe environments is fundamental to our practice and service delivery.

All Bravehearts' personnel have a role in making sure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people feel safe, respected, and empowered to express their cultural identity.

National Board and Leadership Team

- Champion cultural safety as a strategic priority and model culturally safe leadership.
- Ensure governance structures reflect cultural inclusion and accountability.
- Monitor implementation of this policy and alignment with the Child Safe Standards and Universal Principle.
- Support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities.
- Allocate adequate resources for cultural safety initiatives and training.
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in governance where possible.

Managers and Team Leaders

- Embed cultural safety into team practices, supervision, and service delivery.
- Ensure staff complete mandatory cultural capability training within required timeframes.
- Facilitate access to cultural supervision or guidance where appropriate.
- Promote reflective practice and continuous improvement.
- Address cultural safety concerns promptly and appropriately.
- Model culturally safe behaviours and challenge culturally unsafe practices.
- Include cultural safety as a standard agenda item in team meetings and supervision.

All Staff, Volunteers and Contractors

- Uphold the principles of cultural safety in all interactions with children, families, and communities.
- Participate in cultural safety training and ongoing learning.
- Actively acknowledge and respect cultural identities.
- Communicate in culturally appropriate and inclusive ways.
- Challenge racism, discrimination, and culturally unsafe behaviours.
- Seek guidance when unsure about culturally appropriate practices.
- Create opportunities for children, young people, and families to express their cultural needs and make sure they are respected service delivery.

Cultural Advisors and Community Partners

- Provide cultural guidance and support to Bravehearts' teams.
- Contribute to co-design of programs, policies, and resources.
- Support culturally safe engagement with children, families, and communities.
- Provide feedback on organisational cultural safety practices.

Practice Expectations

All Bravehearts' personnel are expected to uphold the principles of cultural safety in their daily work. This includes:

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Respecting Cultural Identity

- Actively acknowledging and respecting the cultural identities of children, families, and colleagues in all interactions.

Engaging with Cultural Humility

- Practicing self-reflection, being open to learning and recognising the limits of one's own cultural perspective.

Using Culturally Appropriate Communication

- Communicating in ways that are respectful, inclusive, and responsive to cultural preferences and needs.

Challenging Unsafe and Unacceptable Practices

- Identifying and assessing racism, discrimination and culturally unsafe behaviours or environments.

Seeking Guidance

- Consulting with cultural advisors, Elders, or community representatives when unsure about culturally appropriate practices or decisions.

Empowering Children, Young People and Families

- Creating opportunities for children, young people, and families to express their cultural needs and preferences and making sure these are respected in service delivery.

Minimising Community Cultural Load

- Building and maintaining long-term trusted relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities that enables purposeful and respectful engagement and avoids duplication or tokenistic consultation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Bravehearts is committed to continuously improving its approach to cultural safety through regular monitoring, evaluation, and feedback. This ensures that cultural safety is not only embedded in policy but actively reflected in practice across all levels of the organisation.

Monitoring Activities

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Bravehearts will provide culturally safe avenues for children, young people, families, staff, and community partners to share feedback and raise concerns.
- **Staff Reflection and Supervision:** Cultural safety will be a standing item in team meetings, supervision sessions and reflective practice activities.
- **Service Reviews and Audits:** Regular reviews of programs, environments and practices will assess cultural safety indicators and identify areas for improvement.
- **Training Participation:** Completion rates and engagement with cultural capability training will be tracked and reported.

Evaluation Measures

- **Child and Family Voice:** Bravehearts will seek input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, on their experiences of cultural safety.
- **Staff Confidence and Capability:** Evaluation tools will measure staff understanding, confidence and application of culturally safe practices.
- **Partnership Outcomes:** The quality and depth of community partnerships, particularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, will be reviewed to ensure genuine engagement and co-design.
- **Organisational Culture:** Staff surveys measuring perceptions of organisational commitment to cultural safety and inclusive workplace culture.

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Reporting and Accountability

- Findings from monitoring and evaluation activities will be reported to the Leadership Team and National Board as part of Bravehearts' broader child safeguarding and quality improvement frameworks.
- Outcomes will inform updates to this policy, staff training and organisational strategy.

Related Documents

- Child Safeguarding and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- Child Safeguarding Organisation Continuous Improvement Plan
- Community Engagement Guidelines
- Complaints and Feedback Policy
- Cultural Safety Framework
- Induction and Onboarding Policy
- Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- Strategic Plan

Authorisation

Alison Geale
CEO
September 2025

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if required, in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and child safety advisory.

This policy reflects Bravehearts' commitment to creating culturally safe environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people can thrive. It is a living document that will continue to evolve through community partnership and organisational learning.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	The first peoples of Australia, encompassing distinct cultural groups with continuing connections to Country, culture, and community. This includes people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both.
Bravehearts' National Board	The Directors and relevant officers of the organisation.

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Term	Definition
Bravehearts' Personnel	Any member of the Bravehearts' National Board, staff, students, volunteers, or contractors.
Child/Young Person	A child is any person who has not yet reached the age of eighteen(18).
Child Safe Standards	National or state/territory frameworks that establish minimum standards for creating child-safe organisations and protecting children from harm.
Child Safeguarding	The responsibility and actions taken by organisations to protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation through prevention, early identification, response, and support.
Child Safeguarding Risk Management Plan	A structured approach to identifying, assessing and mitigating risks that may compromise the safety, wellbeing and rights of children and young people in an organisation's programs, services or environments. It ensures proactive measures are in place to prevent harm and respond effectively to concerns.
Client	Bravehearts provides services to people across the lifespan who have been affected, may have been affected, or have been identified to be at risk of being affected by child sexual abuse and exploitation. This includes children and adolescents who have experienced or are at risk of child sexual assault and exploitation, adult survivors, non-offending family members and support persons, and young people (aged 10-17, up to twenty-five (25) with approval) who have or are at risk of exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours.
Cultural Advisor/Cultural Consultant	A person with recognised cultural authority and knowledge who provides guidance on culturally safe and appropriate practices, particularly in relation to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.
Cultural Load	The additional emotional, cognitive and relational burden carried by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples due to systemic racism, cultural obligations and the need to navigate dominant systems while maintaining cultural identity.
Cultural Safety	An environment that is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children and families; where there is no abuse, challenge or denial of their cultural identity and experience.
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)	Communities with diverse cultural backgrounds and languages other than English.
Disclosure	When a child or young person tells someone (verbally, in writing, through behaviour or play) that they have been harmed, are being harmed, or are at risk of harm. This includes partial disclosures where a child shares some but not all information about their experiences.
Harm	Any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance, or a series or combination of acts, omissions, or circumstances.
Equity	The fair treatment of all people, recognising that some individuals and groups may need different supports to achieve equal outcomes. Equity acknowledges and addresses systemic disadvantage and discrimination.
Mandatory Reporting	The legal requirement to report suspected child abuse and neglect to relevant authorities within specified timeframes.

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Term	Definition
Stakeholder	Any individual, group, or organisation that can affect or is affected by Bravehearts' activities, decisions, or outcomes.
Trauma-Informed Practice	An approach that recognises and responds to the impact of trauma on children, emphasising physical, psychological and emotional safety while promoting healing and recovery.
Universal Principle	The principle that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families achieve safety, wellbeing and connection to family, community, culture, and Country.
Working with Children Check	Background screening processes required in various states and territories for people working with children. These checks assess whether a person poses an unacceptable risk of harm to children and young people and are required before commencing child-related work. All Bravehearts staff, students, volunteers and board members must have this check prior to commencing work at Bravehearts.

Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
LMS	Learning Management System
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan

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