

June 2020

Dear Valued Partners and Stakeholders

As you know, Ardoch has always been committed to providing a child safe environment in which our programs operate. You will be aware from earlier correspondence, that Ardoch, in the pursuit of continuous improvement, recently engaged Child Wise to undertake an external review of Ardoch's approach to child safety. The purpose of this review was for us to better understand the extent to which our policies and practices align with the ten National Child Safety Principles and identify potential areas for improvement. I want to now take the opportunity to update you on the status of this work.

First, a thank you

On behalf of Ardoch, I would first like to thank all of you who participated in the review, whether through the completion of a survey and/or attendance at a focus group. Feedback from stakeholders was a vital part of the review process, and we are very grateful for your time commitment and your openness.

Review outcomes

I am pleased to let you know that the review has been completed and a comprehensive report provided to the Ardoch board and management, which included a detailed set of recommendations for consideration as part of an organisational improvement plan.

Overall, the report found that

“Ardoch have demonstrated a strong commitment to child safety through the commencement of this review process with Child Wise, providing honest, clear and transparent engagement from a range of stakeholders. The commitment exhibited by leadership to reaching best practice standards has been evident throughout the process. The positive feedback from partner organisations and volunteers as to the organisation's services and support reflected the value and effectiveness of Ardoch's programs.

While there are clear improvements to be made, Ardoch have a sound child safety foundation in place on which those improvements can be built.” (Executive Summary, Child Safety Review Report - Child Wise, April 2020)

The report makes 60 recommendations across four key areas which together encapsulate all 10 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations:

- Leadership, governance and culture, including:
 - Clarify some policies and procedures
 - Identify key leadership, staff and volunteer roles and responsibilities.
- Stakeholder engagement, including:
 - Develop a plan for increasing participation and engagement with children and young people in program development and child safety processes
 - Consider the needs, and engagement required, with families, schools and community partners with respect to child safety processes

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- Safe and supported staff and volunteers, including:
 - Further refining volunteer recruitment and screening
 - Enhance support systems for staff and volunteers.

- Identifying, responding to and reporting risks, concerns and incidents, including:
 - Strengthen training content across the forms of child abuse, including grooming and sexually harmful behaviour
 - Develop a clear child safety complaints policy and process that can be utilised by a range of stakeholders, including children and young people

Ardoch is pleased that, while there are important areas in which our practices can be further strengthened, we have a solid foundation of commitment and practice on which to build. We feel that we can readily respond to these with the energy and enthusiasm of our staff team, and further engagement with key stakeholders.

Next steps

Collectively, the recommendations form the basis of a Child Safety Improvement Plan that will be a key organisational focus for Ardoch for the remainder of 2020.

A project team has been formed, under my sponsorship, which will be working to prioritise the different actions and engaging with stakeholders as required. Progress against the Improvement Plan will be reported regularly to the Ardoch board. We agree that it is important that we dedicate staff time and relevant resources to implementing the Improvement Plan recommended by Child Wise, in order for our programs to have maximum impact we need to ensure that we place child safety and wellbeing at the centre of what we do and the decisions we make.

Our goal is to have implemented, or substantially progressed, the majority of recommendations by the end of the year so that we are well placed to seek formal accreditation by Child Wise, through their independent assessment panels, as a Child Safe Organisation. Though not mandated by any third party, we believe that successful accreditation sends a positive and powerful message to the beneficiaries of our programs, children and young people, as well as our other stakeholders that Ardoch is committed to promoting child safety and wellbeing as a priority, and external accreditation is validation of this.

Whilst we acknowledge that not all recommendations will be straightforward or quick to implement, we agree that the recommendations provided by Child Wise are both desirable and necessary, and as an organisation we are committed to ensuring a child safe environment for all children with whom we work and interact.

If you have any questions about the review, or Ardoch's approach to child safety generally, I encourage you to contact me directly via email at kylee.bates@ardoch.org.au or on 0448 888 423.

Kind regards



Kylee Bates
Chief Executive Officer