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| <b>Document Name:</b>   | Tobacco, E-Cigarettes, Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy |
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| <b>Approver:</b>        | CEO   |
| <b>Custodian:</b>       | Executive Director, Client Services                   |

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## 1. Purpose

This policy outlines Meli Kindergarten's commitment to fostering a safe, healthy, and supportive environment for all children, families, staff, and visitors. It aims to:

- Protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of children by ensuring environments are free from tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, and other drugs.
- Promote a culture of health and wellbeing across the service community, including staff, children, and families.
- Support positive educational and developmental outcomes by reducing exposure to harmful substances and modelling healthy behaviours.
- Provide access to information and support for quitting smoking, vaping, alcohol, and other drug use, and promote the benefits of abstaining or engaging in low-risk behaviours.
- Uphold legal and ethical responsibilities under relevant legislation.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals involved in the operations, delivery, and participation in Meli Kindergartens' early childhood education and care services. This includes:

- All management, staff and educators.
- Students, volunteers, and contractors.
- Families engaging in programs, services, events, or activities conducted by Meli Kindergartens, both onsite and during offsite excursions or community-based activities.

This policy is applicable across all environments and activities associated with Meli Kindergartens, ensuring consistent standards for health, safety, and wellbeing in accordance with the National Quality and relevant legislation.

## 3. Background

The use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, and other drugs can significantly impair a person's ability to make sound judgments and provide safe, nurturing care for young children. These substances pose serious risks to children's health, safety, and wellbeing.

Exposure to second-hand smoke and third-hand smoke is particularly harmful to babies and young children, whose developing respiratory systems and brains are highly sensitive to toxins. Second-hand smoke increases the risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI), respiratory illness, and developmental delays. Third-hand smoke, which lingers on clothing, surfaces, and dust, continues to expose children to harmful chemicals long after smoking has ceased.

Alcohol and other drug use can compromise a person's ability to engage meaningfully with children and uphold their duty of care. In the workplace, substance use becomes an occupational health and safety concern, affecting coordination, concentration, and decision-making placing children, staff, and the individual at risk.

Prevention is key. Meli Kindergartens recognises that the most effective way to protect children is by creating environments that are safe, supportive, and free from harmful substances. Early childhood settings play a vital role in building resilience and fostering social and emotional development, helping children to make healthy choices and avoid risky behaviours later in life.

#### 4. Definitions

**Alcohol** – refer to a depressant substance that slows down activity in the central nervous system, affecting coordination, judgment, and behaviour.

**Drug** – refers to any substance—legal or illegal—that alters the way the body and/or mind functions. This includes prescription medications, illicit drugs, and recreational substances.

**E-cigarette product** – refers to any electronic device designed to produce an aerosol for inhalation, including associated liquids or cartridges used to generate the aerosol.

**Illicit drugs** – refers to substances that are illegal to possess, use, manufacture, or distribute under Australian law. This includes drugs such as cannabis (where not legally prescribed), methamphetamines, heroin, cocaine, and ecstasy.

**Prescription medication** - refers to medication that is legally dispensed only with written authorisation from a qualified health professional. Examples include blood pressure medication, cancer treatments, and strong pain relief medications.

**Risk management plan** – refers to a documented strategy developed to identify, assess, and mitigate risks associated with substance use or exposure, particularly where cultural practices or individual needs may conflict with legal or policy requirements.

**Second-hand smoke** – refers to ambient smoke resulting from active smoking, including exhaled mainstream smoke and sidestream smoke. Exposure is also referred to as passive or involuntary smoking.

**Smoke-Free Zone** – refers to areas where smoking is legally prohibited, including enclosed workplaces and designated public spaces where exposure to second-hand smoke may occur.

**Support services** – refers to external or internal programs, professionals, or resources that provide assistance with quitting or managing tobacco, vaping, alcohol, or other drug use. Examples include Quitline, general practitioners, alcohol and other drug (AOD) counselling, and employee assistance programs (EAPs).

**Third-hand smoke** – refers to residual chemicals from tobacco smoke that settle on clothing, surfaces, and dust. These substances can re-emit into the air or react with other compounds to form new toxins.

**Tobacco product** – refers to any device or substance containing organic matter that is heated or burned to produce smoke or aerosol for inhalation.

**Tobacco, alcohol and other drugs** – refers collectively to substances that may pose health and safety risks in early childhood settings, including tobacco products (such as cigarettes and e-cigarettes), alcoholic beverages, and legal or illegal drugs that alter physical or mental functioning.

**Under the influence** – refers to a person who is affected by drugs or alcohol. This may interfere with the person's sound judgement, see them behave unacceptably, or impair their mental and physical ability to perform their duties safely.

**Vaping** – refers to the act of inhaling aerosol produced by an e-cigarette or similar device. These devices heat a liquid (commonly referred to as "juice") to create the aerosol.

## 5. Policy

Meli Kindergartens is committed to maintaining environments that prioritise the health, safety, and wellbeing of children, families, staff, and the broader community. To uphold this commitment, Meli Kindergartens will:

- Ensure that all environments are smoke-free, vape-free, illicit drug-free, and alcohol-free, in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.
- Promote responsible alcohol consumption at events where alcohol may be present, ensuring compliance with the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 and other relevant legislation.
- Encourage educators and staff to engage in opportunistic learning moments with children to support age-appropriate discussions about health and wellbeing.
- Provide accessible information and resources to educators, staff, and families about the health risks associated with smoking, vaping, alcohol, and other drug use.
- Support individuals who wish to quit smoking, vaping, drinking, or using other drugs, by facilitating access to appropriate support services and maintaining confidentiality.
- Foster a culture of prevention and resilience, recognising the importance of early intervention and education in reducing future engagement in risky behaviours.

## 6. Delegations and Responsibilities

The **CEO** is responsible for:

- Ensuring Meli Kindergartens maintains organisational compliance with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, and all relevant legislation relating to tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, and other drugs.
- Approving the Tobacco, E-Cigarettes, Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy and ensuring it aligns with Meli Kindergartens' strategic objectives and child safety commitments.
- Promoting a culture of health, safety, accountability, and continuous improvement in relation to substance-free environments.

The **Executive Director – Services** is responsible for:

- Providing operational leadership to ensure the policy is implemented consistently across all Meli Kindergartens services.
- Overseeing the development, implementation, and review of procedures, risk assessments, and staff training related to tobacco, vaping, alcohol, and other drug use.
- Monitoring compliance through internal audits, incident reporting, and service-level reviews.

**Program Directors and Managers** are responsible for:

- Implementing and monitoring substance-free practices in daily operations.
- Ensuring environments are free of tobacco, e-cigarettes, drugs and alcohol and are displaying appropriate signage.
- Ensuring staff and volunteers have appropriate knowledge and training in relation to the health risks and legal obligations associated with tobacco, vaping, alcohol, and other drugs.
- Maintaining records of risk assessments and incidents related to substance use.
- Communicating with families about policy expectations, including cultural considerations and individual needs.
- Developing and implementing risk management plans where family beliefs or practices conflict with evidence-based guidelines or legal requirements.

**Early Childhood Teachers, Educators and All Other Staff** are responsible for:

- Following the Tobacco, E-Cigarettes, Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy at all times, including supervision and safety procedures.
- Ensuring environments are free from tobacco, vaping, alcohol, and other drugs while children are present.
- Reporting any instances of suspected alcohol or drug use at the service to the manager.
- Not attending work under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, including prescription medication that impairs capacity to care for children.

- Supporting children through age-appropriate discussions about health and wellbeing.
- Completing induction and ongoing training related to this policy and associated health and safety practices.

**Parents/Guardians** are responsible for:

- Complying with the Tobacco, E-Cigarettes, Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy while attending Meli Kindergartens services or events.
- Informing staff of any relevant cultural practices or medical considerations related to substance use.
- Refraining from smoking in vehicles with children under the age of 18.
- Supporting consistent health and wellbeing practices between home and the service.

**Contractors, Volunteers** and **Students** are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy and following staff instructions when attending Meli Kindergartens premises or events.
- Completing basic induction or training as required.
- Not attending the service under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- Reporting any risks or incidents related to substance use to a staff member immediately.

## 7. Policy Application

To ensure the values and objectives of this policy are achieved, Meli Kindergartens will:

- Seek regular feedback from educators, staff, families, and other stakeholders on the clarity, relevance, and effectiveness of the Tobacco, E-Cigarettes, Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy.
- Monitor implementation and compliance, including the handling of incidents, complaints, and concerns related to substance use or exposure.
- Investigate any health and safety risks associated with tobacco, vaping, alcohol, or other drug use, and take appropriate corrective action to protect children and staff.
- Review and update the policy to reflect changes in legislation, sector guidance, research, and best practice in early childhood health and safety.
- Undertake scheduled policy reviews as part of the service's continuous improvement cycle, or earlier if required due to emerging risks or incidents.
- Notify all affected stakeholders of any significant changes to this policy or its procedures at least 14 days in advance, unless a shorter timeframe is necessary to manage risk.
- Feedback can be submitted via [policy@meli.org.au](mailto:policy@meli.org.au). Feedback will be reviewed as part of the policy's scheduled review cycle or earlier if required.

## 8. Legislation, Acts, Standards

This policy is informed by the following legislation, regulations, and standards:

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard
- Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics (2016)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007 (Vic)
- Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 (Vic)
- Tobacco Act 1987 (Vic)

These references ensure that the Tobacco, E-Cigarettes, Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy at Meli Kindergartens is legally compliant, ethically sound, and aligned with national and state expectations for children's health and safety.

## 9. Related Documents

### Sources

- [Alcohol and Drug Foundation](#)
- [Better Health Channel – Drugs](#)
- [Cancer Council Victoria](#)
- [Department of Education and Training – Drugs Education](#)
- [Health Vic](#)
- [National Drug Strategy](#)
- [Quit Victoria](#)
- [Raising Children Network](#)
- [Tobacco in Australia](#)
- [WorkSafe Victoria – Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy Guide](#)

## Related Policies

- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Staffing Policy

## 10. Document History

| Version | Approved By | Approval Date | Effective Date | Sections Modified | Updated By       |
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| 1.00    | CEO         | 10/12/2025    | 10/12/2025     | New policy        | Cassandra Gallop |