Early
Childhood
Management
Services

6.0
Office of the CEO

Governance and Leadership Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the governance and leadership principles for ECMS to ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement across all levels of the organisation. It supports compliance with Quality Area 7 of the National Quality Standard (NQS), ACNC Governance Standards, Child Safe Standards, and best practice principles outlined by the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD).

Scope

This policy applies to:

- The Approved Provider, persons with management or control, Centre Director, Nominated Supervisor, and persons in day-to-day charge.
- Early Childhood teachers, educators, staff, contractors, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others enrolled and participating in ECMS programs and services, including during offsite excursions and activities.
- All ECMS-operated Early Learning Centres and Kindergarten programs.

Policy Principles

ECMS is committed to an anti-bias approach in early childhood. ECMS operates within a framework of social justice and equity - this means we celebrate family and cultural diversity and aim to be supportive, responsive, and inclusive of all children. Effective governance and leadership are the foundation of ECMS's success. ECMS governance and leadership principles apply to all ECMS staff:

- Uphold our charitable purpose and community obligations
- Promote ethical, effective, and inclusive leadership
- Ensure decision-making aligns with organisational values, strategic priorities, and legal obligations
- Ensure that there is effective governance, systems and processes that keep children safe and supports a child-safe culture
- Drive continuous quality improvement in service delivery

- Promote positive workplace culture and safe working practises

Governance Framework Alignment

This policy is guided by:

- **National Quality Standard – Quality Area 7:**
    - 7.1.1 Service philosophy and purpose
    - 7.1.2 Management systems
    - 7.2.1 Continuous improvement
    - 7.2.3 Development of professionals
- **Corporations Act, 2001**
- **ACNC Governance Standards:**
    - Purposes and not-for-profit nature
    - Accountability to members
    - Duties of responsible persons
- **Victorian Child Safe Standards** (especially Standard 1)
- **AICD Not-for-Profit Governance Principles**
- **ECMS Constitution**

Governance Practices

Governance Calendar: The Board maintains an annual calendar of governance activities, including:

- Strategic reviews and planning sessions
- Governance policy and compliance reviews
- Annual audited financial statements and reporting approval
- CEO performance and remuneration review
- Board evaluation and renewal

Delegations Framework

The Board delegates decision-making authority through a structured Delegations of Authority document reviewed biennially.

Board Composition and Renewal

Directors are appointed under a transparent and merit-based process according to the Constitution and to maintain skills and experience aligned to ECMS's strategic direction. A board skills matrix is maintained and reviewed annually.

Induction and Education

All new Directors undergo structured induction. Ongoing governance education is supported through AICD or equivalent programs.

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Child Safe Governance

The ECMS Board plays a critical role in upholding the organisation's commitment to child safety. As part of its governance responsibilities, the Board exercises oversights of systems that prevent, identify and respond to serious incidents and reportable conduct involving children.

While the executive is responsible for operational management and investigation, the Board is accountable for:

- Receiving timely and appropriate reporting on critical incidents, including emerging risks or patterns that may impact child safety.
- Ensuring that the organisation meets its obligations under the Child Safe Standards with policies, culture and leadership that promote child safety at all levels.

Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if required by legislative or organisational change. The Director, Risk and Compliance is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness and currency of this policy.

Roles & Responsibilities

Board of Directors	The ECMS Board is the governing body responsible for:
	- Defining the purpose, values and strategic direction, and governance policy frameworks
	- Ensuring compliance with legal and fiduciary obligations
	- Monitoring performance, solvency, and risk
	- Approving budgets, annual plans, and material decisions reserved to the Board and those delegated to the CEO
	- Overseeing CEO performance and succession
	- Promoting a culture of ethical governance and continuous improvement
	- Supporting the implementation of Child Safe Standard 1
	Key non-delegable responsibilities include:
	- Strategic planning and monitoring
	- Financial oversight and approval of reports
	- Risk and compliance governance

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	• Board performance evaluation, board skills and experience and succession • Regulatory, ethical, and social responsibility
CEO	The CEO is responsible for: • Setting and role modelling the culture • Executing the strategic plan and board-approved initiatives, risk management plan and assurance plan. • Leading an effective executive team and sustainable organisational structure • Embedding child safety, continuous improvement, and compliance in operations • Ensuring transparent reporting to the Board and regulators • Delegating authority and policy parameters • Managing stakeholder relations and communications. • Governance culture, setting the tone for strong governance. • External accountability, representing ECMS to regulators, funders and key stakeholders.
Executive Team	• Strategic oversight • Policy endorsement and accountability • Risk leadership • Compliance monitoring • Critical Incident Management • Cultural stewardship
Operational/Pedagogical Leaders	• Quality practice • Policy implementation • Local risk identification • Incident management • Workforce accountability and culture • Site level compliance • Escalation and communication
Support Services	• Workforce accountability and culture • System integrity – designing and maintaining systems, tools and processes that enable compliance, data integrity, financial controls and operational efficiency. • Owning, maintaining or supporting key policies and procedures. • Identifying risks within their function • Ensuring function specific compliance with legal and regulatory obligations. • Providing accurate and timely data, analysis and reporting to support decision making and assurance functions.

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| | • Partnering with service leaders and executive to resolve issues, respond to audits and embed sound governance practices |
| | • Reviewing systems and processes to identify waste, reduce risk and improve. |

Related Legislation, Regulations and Resources

- Corporations Act 2001
- ACNC Governance Standards
- Child Safe Standards – Standard 1
- National Quality Framework – Quality Area 7 – Governance
- ACNC Governance Standards
- AID Not-for-Profit Governance Principles

Related Policies and Procedures

- Board Charter
- Delegations of Authority
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics
- ECMS Constitution
- ECMS Policy Governance Framework
- ECMS Risk Management Policy and Framework

Document Version History			
Version	**Reason for Amendment**	**Approved by**	**Approval date**
6.0	Policy reviewed and approved	ECMS Executive	August 2025

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