



AEPL Study Centres Family Handbook

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Welcome to AEPL Study Centres

We are delighted to welcome you and your child to AEPL Study Centres. Our goal is to create a safe, supportive, and enriching environment for all children. This handbook provides essential information about our child safety policies, as well as practical details such as registration processes, operating hours, and pick-up and drop-off protocols. It serves as a comprehensive guide to ensure your child's wellbeing and a smooth experience at our centres.

Contact Information

Study Centre	Contact Details
Eremeran Hills Study Centre Address: 1 Stevens St, Pennant Hills NSW 2120 Website: https://www.eremeran.org.au/	Phone: +61 2 9980 2258 Email: admin@eremeran.org.au Study Centre Manager: Hannah Doolan
Heathgrove Study Centre Address: 32 Havelock Road, Hawthorn East VIC 3123 Website: https://www.heathgrove.org.au/	Phone: +61 3 9882 2022 Email: info@heathgrove.org.au Study Centre Manager: Carmen Pavia
Lowana Study Centre Address: 11 Higgins St, Penrith NSW 2750 Website: https://www.lowana.org.au/	Phone: +61 2 4787 6091 Email: admin@lowana.org.au Study Centre Manager: Lourdes Muerza
Merindah Study Centre Address: 22 Cintra Rd, Bowen Hills QLD 4006 Website: https://www.merindah.org/	Phone: +61 7 3189 9199 Email: merindahstudycentre@gmail.com Study Centre Manager: Eugenia Lopez

AEPL Child Safety Officer (CSO)

Michelle Chavez (General Manager, AEPL)

Mobile: 0422 160 697

Email: m.chavez@aepl.org.au

Who We Are

Association for Educational Projects Limited (AEPL)

Association for Educational Projects Limited (**AEPL**) is a not-for-profit charitable organisation dedicated to promoting education and character development. AEPL pursues this mission through educational, recreation, social and volunteer programs. To support each individual's personal growth, AEPL offers an informal mentoring system that provides meaningful guidance and is built on supportive connections. This mentoring approach fosters self-awareness and personal goal-setting in a relaxed, safe environment.

To achieve its mission, AEPL operates **Study Centres** in various locations around Australia: **Eremeran Hills Study Centre** (Pennant Hills, NSW), **Lowana Study Centre** (Penrith, NSW), **Heathgrove Study Centre** (Melbourne, VIC), **Merindah Study Centre** (Brisbane, QLD). AEPL is guided by five key pillars: **education, recreation, mentoring, social outreach, and spiritual formation**. These pillars provide a holistic framework for personal development, fostering growth in knowledge, character, and community engagement.

Education

Our Study Centres offer space and opportunities for high school and university students to come for personal study or group work. The environment is conducive to developing solid study habits.

Academic tutoring is currently available at Heathgrove Study Centre only.

Recreation

Depending on the needs of the community that each Study Centre serves, our youth clubs may cater to girls from Year 3 through to Year 12. The recreational activities that are offered vary from arts, crafts, sports, excursions to recreational centres, the beach and many more.

The summer camp is a well-established tradition and is available to girls from Year 5 through to Year 8.

Mentoring

The girls that attend our activities are offered one on one mentoring to help them in their personal development. Through this mentoring system, each girl grows in self-knowledge and is guided to work on personal goals, with the aim of developing character and attaining the best version of themselves.

Social Outreach (“Service Projects”)

All AEPL Study Centres promote a practical approach to social outreach. The Study Centres refer to this work as “Service Projects”.

This starts in the local community, with students collaborating with other entities. The Study Centres may volunteer with groups such as the elderly, refugees, indigenous Australians, the underprivileged, etc.

Further afield, AEPL's Study Centres have over 30 years' experience in organising voluntary service projects to communities in Australia or abroad.

The aims of these projects are to provide welfare or developmental assistance to a community in need, to contribute to a local project or to learn about a different cultural heritage.

The service projects are typically 2-3 weeks in duration and require volunteers to pay their own way. Fees vary, depending on the destination. Past service projects have been held in Dubbo (NSW), Hobart (TAS), New Zealand, India and the Philippines.

The Service Projects are organised and run by Study Centres of AEPL. In some cases, they are run in conjunction with Reledev, a not-for-profit NGO, accredited with Australian Aid.

Spiritual Formation

All AEPL Study Centres offer spiritual formation – a process of faith-based personal development, learning to live out one's values and beliefs in meaningful and practical ways. This is usually done through offerings such as talks, meditations (or guided prayer), recollections and retreats. This spiritual formation is entrusted to [Opus Dei](#), a personal prelature within the Catholic Church.

Statement of Commitment to being a Child Safe Organisation

AEPL is a Child Safe Organisation dedicated to providing a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where children can grow and develop free from harm. We are committed to:

- Promoting the rights of children and encouraging their participation in decisions affecting their lives.
- Establishing clear policies and procedures for child safety.
- Respecting the diverse needs of all children, including those from First Nations, CALD backgrounds, and children with disabilities.
- Engaging suitable staff and volunteers through rigorous recruitment and screening processes.
- Promoting a culture of openness and promptly addressing child safety concerns.

For more information on AEPL's commitment to child safety, please refer to the AEPL Child Safe Policy and the AEPL Child Safe Code of Conduct, available on our Study Centre websites. These documents outline our approach to safeguarding, detailing the standards and expectations we uphold to ensure a safe and supportive environment for all children in our programs.

Child Safe Roles and Responsibilities

Who	Responsibilities
Staff & Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with AEPL's Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct. • Complete child safe training during induction and annually or as required. • Maintain a valid working with children clearance as required by your state or territory. For example: NSW – WWCC, VIC – WWCC and Police Check, QLD – Blue Card • Identify and address child safety risks. • Report child safety concerns according to AEPL's procedures.
Officers (AEPL Board Members)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement AEPL's child safe framework. • Ensure compliance with child safety legislation. • Communicate AEPL's values and child safety approach.
Child Safety Officer (CSO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the embedding of child safe policies and practices. • Provide child safety information and training. • Manage child safety complaints and investigations. • Support children, parents, and staff in child safety matters.
Study Centre Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a duty of care towards all children. • Ensure compliance with child safety policies. • Verify WWCC clearances for staff and volunteers. • Manage and escalate child safety complaints as needed. • Support the Child Safety Officer (CSO).
Parents & Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and familiarise themselves with AEPL's child-safe policies and procedures. • Ensure their child is aware of child safety protocols and feels empowered to speak up about any concerns. • Communicate with staff regarding any concerns or observations about their child's well-being and safety. • Stay informed by reviewing all communications from AEPL. • Actively engage in child safety information sessions offered by AEPL. • Collaborate with AEPL to address any child safety issues.
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak up if they feel unsafe or have concerns. • Respect staff, volunteers, and peers.

Hours of Operation

Our Youth Club activities (including study sessions) take place after school during the week. While the specific hours may vary by Study Centre, most centres are open from 3:30PM to 6:00PM. Additionally, we offer Youth Club activities on Saturdays specifically for high school students. Please check with your local Study Centre for their exact schedule.

Enrolment Process

Enrolling your child in AEPL Study Centres is a straightforward process designed to ensure we have all the necessary information to provide a safe and supportive environment. Here's how you can get started:

1. **Access the Registration Form:** Visit the website of your local [AEPL Study Centre](#). Each Centre has a dedicated page where you can find the registration form.
2. **Fill Out the Form:** Complete the registration form with accurate and up-to-date information about your child. This includes personal details, emergency contact information, medical conditions, and any special requirements your child may have.
3. **Submit the Form:** Once you have filled out the form (google form), submit it online through the Study Centre's website.
4. **Start Attending:** Once the enrolment process is complete, your child can start attending the Youth Club activities and other programs at the Study Centre.

For more information or assistance with the enrolment process, please contact your local Study Centre directly.

Authorised Person for Child Collection

A volunteer or staff member will record your child's attendance at the program upon arrival. Children will only be released to a parent, guardian, or an individual listed on the registration form as an authorised individual to pick up your child/ren.

Pick-Up Guidelines

- If someone else will be collecting your child, you must provide written authorisation in advance.
- To update the list of authorised individuals, please email the relevant study centre with the names of all approved persons.
- Late pickups may incur additional supervision arrangements.

Communication procedures

Work Email and Telephone: Staff and volunteers will communicate with children and their parents through authorised AEPL channels, such as work email or telephone.

WhatsApp Group: Communication via WhatsApp groups is permitted under specific conditions:

- The group chat must be authorised by the Study Centre Manager.

- Parent/Guardian consent must be provided.
- A minimum of two AEPL staff/volunteers must be members of the group chat.

Providing Feedback

AEPL values open communication and encourages all parents, guardians, and participants to share their feedback to help us improve our Study Centres. If you or your child have any suggestions, concerns, or complaints, we encourage you to first speak with any of our friendly staff or volunteers or the Study Centre Manager, who are always happy to assist. Alternatively, you can raise them through one of the following channels:

- **Online Feedback Form:** Submit feedback or complaints via our secure online feedback form, available on the [Study Centres websites](#).
- **Suggestions Box:** Written feedback can also be placed in the Suggestions Box located at your Study Centre.

AEPL staff will also actively encourage children to use these options if they ever feel unsure about speaking up directly.

All feedback and complaints are reviewed confidentially, and AEPL is committed to addressing concerns promptly and constructively to ensure a safe and positive experience for all children and families.

Child Safe Complaints Process

AEPL takes child safety complaints seriously and responds promptly. Complaints may include concerns about child safety risks, breaches of AEPL's child safe policies, or disclosures of abuse. All complaints are managed in accordance with AEPL's Child Safe Complaints Handling Procedure, which outlines clear steps for reporting, responding, investigating, and resolving concerns.

If you have a child safety concern, please report it to the Child Safety Officer (CSO) or a Study Centre Manager. Reports can be made by children, parents, staff, or volunteers. AEPL ensures confidentiality, support for affected parties, and compliance with relevant legal obligations.

For further details on the reporting process and responsibilities, refer to AEPL's full Child Safe Complaints Handling Procedure which can be found on any of the Study Centre [websites](#). A summary of the procedure can be found [here](#).

Child Safety Officer (CSO) Contact Details

Name: Michelle Chavez

Email: m.chavez@aepl.org.au

Phone: 0422 160 697

Online Child Safety and Well being

To ensure your child's safety online, we recommend visiting the eSafety Commissioner's website for information, fact sheets, and guidance: [eSafety Commissioner](#).

Independent Child Advocacy Services and Helplines

For additional support, you can contact the following services:

- **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800
- **Parent Line:** 1300 30 1300
- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14
- **Youth Beyond Blue:** 1300 22 4636
- **Headspace:** 1800 650 890

AEPL Child Safe Policies and Procedures

Purpose	To ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults by providing clear steps for making a complaint.
Scope	Applies to anyone involved in AEPL activities, including staff, volunteers, contractors, and sub-contractors.
Key Definitions	<p>Child: Under 18 years.</p> <p>Vulnerable Adult: An adult unable to protect themselves due to various factors like age, illness, or disability.</p>
Steps for Making a Complaint	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the Issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine if the complaint involves a child or a vulnerable adult. Recognize the type of issue (e.g., abuse, neglect, inappropriate behaviour). 2. Report the Complaint <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact the Child Safety Officer (CSO) or Study Centre Manager immediately. If the child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, call the Police (000). 3. Provide Details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly describe the issue, including who is involved and what happened. Use the Safeguarding Incident Report Form to document the complaint. 4. Follow Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay in touch with the CSO or Study Centre Manager for updates on the complaint. Ensure you receive information about the next steps and any actions taken. 5. Seek Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access support services if needed, such as Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) or Lifeline (13 11 14). AEPL will provide support and protection throughout the process.
Additional Considerations	<p>Confidentiality: Your complaint will be handled confidentially and shared only as required by law.</p> <p>Record Keeping: AEPL will keep records of serious matters for 40 years and other documents for 7 years.</p> <p>Full Policy Details: For full details, please read the policy available on any of the Study Centres' websites.</p>

AEPL Child Safe Code of Conduct

AEPL has established a comprehensive Child Safe Code of Conduct to ensure that all staff and volunteers adhere to the highest standards of behaviour when interacting with children. The following information outlines the key points of the Code of Conduct, but we encourage you to refer to the full document for detailed information, which can be accessed on the website of your local Study Centre.

Purpose	The Code of Conduct outlines the standards and behavioural expectations for AEPL staff and volunteers when interacting with children.
Scope	It applies to all AEPL staff, volunteers, contractors, and subcontractors involved in delivering services to children, both in physical and online environments.
Reporting a Breach	Parents, staff, volunteers, and children are encouraged to report any concerns about child safety. Breaches of the Code of Conduct should be reported to the Child Safety Officer (CSO), an Officer, or the Study Centre Manager.
Child Safeguarding Responsibilities	<p>Compliance: Staff and volunteers must comply with AEPL's Child Safe Policy and report any concerns or breaches.</p> <p>Equal Treatment: Children should be treated with equal respect and consideration, without favouritism.</p> <p>Risk Avoidance: Staff and volunteers should avoid situations that could lead to misinterpretations or accusations of abuse.</p>
Professional Boundaries	<p>Appropriate Interactions: Staff and volunteers should maintain professional boundaries and avoid spending time alone with a child outside of AEPL programs.</p> <p>Prohibited Actions: They should not develop personal relationships with children, encourage secrecy, or provide children with alcohol, or drugs.</p>
Communication	<p>Authorized Channels: Communication with children and their parents should be through authorized AEPL channels. Personal social media contact is prohibited.</p> <p>Positive Language: Staff and volunteers should use clear, age-appropriate, and positive language.</p>
Supervision	<p>Minimum Supervision: At least two AEPL staff members/volunteers should be present during activities. Children should always be supervised, especially in shared spaces.</p> <p>Prohibited Actions: Staff and volunteers should not be alone with children in unsupervised areas or provide unauthorized transportation.</p>

Physical Contact	<p>Consent and Necessity: Physical contact should be minimal, necessary, and with the child's consent. Intrusive forms of discipline are prohibited.</p> <p>Prohibited Actions: Staff and volunteers should not touch children inappropriately or perform acts of a personal nature that the child can do independently.</p>
Use of Bathrooms/ Change Rooms	<p>Privacy Respect: Staff and volunteers must respect children's privacy and use adult-designated bathrooms, separate from children's facilities.</p> <p>Prohibited Actions: They should not enter bathrooms or changing areas allocated to children or use photographic devices in these areas.</p>
Overnight Stays	<p>Parental Consent: Parents must provide consent for overnight stays, and children should be informed about sleeping arrangements.</p> <p>Prohibited Actions: Staff and volunteers should not share rooms with children or leave them unsupervised with unauthorised persons.</p>
Use of Photographic and Video Devices	<p>Informed Consent: Parents' consent is required before taking or using photographs and videos of children.</p> <p>Prohibited Actions: Staff and volunteers should not take photos or videos for personal use or share them without consent.</p>
Breach of the Code of Conduct	<p>Disciplinary Action: Breaches of the Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action. AEPL will address breaches fairly and supportively.</p>