



Australian Government

Aboriginal Hostels Limited

Protecting Children in our Care
AHL Child Protection Framework

*A Guide for Parents, Students
and Community Members*

July 2017



Aboriginal Hostels Limited recognises the unique contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's culture and heritage to Australian society. For the purposes of this handbook, the term 'Aboriginal' encompasses Australia's diverse language groups and also recognises people of Torres Strait Islander descent.

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Policy Statement

Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) places fundamental importance on the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people staying at its accommodation facilities.

AHL recognises that children form one of the most vulnerable groups in society and acknowledges that contact and working with children is a critical responsibility and that, at all times, children have the right to be safe and protected. As well as having a duty of care to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent harm to children and young people, AHL and its employees have obligations under child protection and other relevant legislation.

All staff have an important role to play in the identification and reporting of child abuse and the provision of support and assistance to children who have been subject to or at risk of abuse.

Child protection and the prevention of child abuse is a shared government and community responsibility and AHL recognises that the best interests of children will be met by collaborating with and engaging the expertise of relevant agencies, stakeholders and service providers.

AHL is committed to providing an environment in which children and young people feel safe and are protected from any form of abuse, violence, injury, neglect or exploitation. Children and young people staying with AHL have the right to expect that every effort will be made to protect them from harm during their stay or while participating in AHL-sponsored activities.

AHL's Child Protection Framework aims to create child safe environments where children are respected, protected, empowered and active in their own protection, and where staff are skilled, confident and competent and well supported in meeting their protection responsibilities.

The Framework demonstrates AHL's commitment and intent to create safe environments and applies to all staff, volunteers and minors in our care in our facilities.

This Framework has been developed to provide a practical guide to prevent child abuse in AHL facilities. It aims to create an open and aware environment where concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child can be raised and managed in a fair and just manner, which protects the rights of all.

Dr. Susan Gordon AM
Chair



AHL Child Protection Framework

The Aboriginal Hostels Limited Child Protection Framework is child focused and informed by a fundamental belief that all children have the right to physical and psychological safety at all times. All Aboriginal Hostel Limited staff and volunteers are responsible for the care and protection of the children who are living away from home in one of AHL's nine secondary education hostels.

Aboriginal Hostels recognises that it is caring for children with increased vulnerability to abuse and neglect and is committed to their safety and protection. It also recognises the importance in supporting children who reside in its hostels with their personal and social development, and supports fully parent/carer/other agency involvement to enhance child protection knowledge and skills.

Recognising that there is no fool-proof system for the complete safety or prevention of all forms of abuse, this framework is informed by the Ten Elements of a Child Safe Institution as set out by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in July 2016. These elements incorporate public health interventions to prevent the abuse of children, minimise the risk of abuse by heightening the likelihood that abuse will be detected, and to reduce the long-term impacts of abuse on children and young people.

The Ten Elements are underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was ratified by Australia in 1990. Consistent with Article 3 of the Convention, all institutions that directly engage with or provide services to children should act with the best interests of the child as a primary consideration.



Ten Elements to Creating a Child Safe Secondary Hostel

1. Leadership Governance and Culture

The AHL Board is committed to best practice in child protection. AHL's Board continues to oversee the organisation's approach to safeguarding against the risk of child abuse and to ensure that staff respond effectively if abuse is suspected or disclosed. The Board also ensures AHL follows child safe recruiting processes and staff training on an ongoing basis.

2. Children's Participation

Practices focused on empowerment and participation of children and organisational structures and systems which encourage children to be listened to are key aspects of building capacity for child safe organisations, and demonstrate commitment to creating a child-friendly organisational culture. Feedback from children is encouraged and children staying in AHL's hostels have opportunities to raise concerns and have their concerns dealt with appropriately.

3. Informed Families and Communities

Parents and families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of children residing in AHL's hostels, and as such when and where possible have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their child.

4. Equity and Diversity

Article 30 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child sets out the rights of children to use the language and customs of their families, as such this is supported within AHL's hostels. It is important that children with a disability be provided special care as necessary.

5. Recruitment and Screening

Child safe and friendly organisations take all necessary steps to identify the most suitable people to work with children and discourage unsuitable people from applying or being appointed. AHL ensures that its recruitment of staff and volunteers emphasises child safety and the organisation's commitment across all levels to child protection. This includes statutory screening and vetting of staff and volunteers, including the requirement to hold a Working With Children Card, Blue Card or Ochre Card where applicable.



6. Child Focused Complaint Management

It is important for children to express their concerns if and when they feel their personal safety has been or is being threatened or compromised in any way. The majority of children who experience abuse do not disclose due to the fear associated with doing so. AHL makes available a child focused and child friendly feedback system, and it is understood by all staff and volunteers that any complaints made by children will be taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

7. Staff Training

Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to keep children safe in their care and AHL has ensured that training in identifying and responding to all forms of abuse and neglect is provided.

8. Minimise Risk

AHL is committed to ensuring that child safety is part of its overall risk management approach. Minimising the risk to children in itself is child protection. Management and staff monitor risks so that strategies can be put in place to minimise and prevent the occurrence of abuse.

9. Continuous Improvement

It is important to make changes and improve mechanisms that are not working as well as they should or could. AHL staff are encouraged to provide feedback when and where improvements and or modifications could provide better safety outcomes for children.

10. Policies and Procedures

The AHL Board has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse in AHL facilities. The Board has implemented a comprehensive child protection framework to ensure that all staff and volunteers understand and implement its policies and procedures at the operational level.



Code of Behaviour

AHL staff are tasked with creating an environment where children are valued, encouraged and affirmed, have their rights respected and are treated as individuals, eliminating any threatening, violent or degrading behaviour.

Staff operate under a Code of Behaviour to ensure they act professionally at all times in their relationships with students and families - acknowledging their unique position of trust, care, authority and influence.

Our Responsibilities

- ❖ Our first responsibility is to children and their parents. In meeting their needs, everything we do must be of the highest standard and quality.
- ❖ Our Code of Behaviour reinforces the principles and values that we work under and the high standard of professionalism to which we strive.
- ❖ All children and staff act fairly in the pursuit of self-fulfilment and high standards.
- ❖ Co-operation between children, staff and parents is important in working together to achieve their objectives.
- ❖ Professional boundaries are breached when a staff member misuses their position of power.

AHL's Code of Behaviour is designed to ensure we:

- Create an environment where children are valued, encouraged and affirmed, have their rights respected and are treated as individuals, eliminating any threatening, violent or degrading behaviour.
- Provide the highest standard of pastoral care to students entrusted to our care in our education hostels.
- Maintain a quality and professional relationship with co-workers and volunteers to support and provide a positive environment to promote childrens' social, emotional, educational and physical development.

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- Act with honesty and integrity while observing the principles governing our position of trust and complying with all relevant legislation and AHL policies and procedures.
 - Not engage in behaviour that may bring staff members' own reputation or that of AHL into disrepute.
 - Not engage in conduct which is dishonest and that causes actual or potential benefit or detriment to any person or entity.
 - Contribute to a workplace that is free of harassment, bullying or discrimination against children, co-workers and volunteers.
 - Respect and be sensitive to the need for confidentiality and the individual's right to privacy by not discussing or giving out any information, except where required as part of our official duty and/or legislation.
 - Consider everyone as an individual, respect their dignity and recognise their merit.
 - Not treat any person less favourably than another on any grounds and act fairly and impartially in all dealings students and their families.
 - Work together to fulfil the aims and objectives of AHL so as to provide the highest standard of service to the children entrusted to our care.

Feedback

Valuing children and listening to their feedback is important to AHL as it allows opportunity for continual improvement to service delivery and ensures staff are able to hear and respond to the concerns of students. As a result AHL is providing improved mechanisms for keeping children safe in their care.

If a child needs to or would like to raise a comment, complaint, concern or provide general feedback they can discuss the issue either directly with senior hostel staff, or make contact through the dedicated student feedback service in AHL's National Office. This is a confidential service and contact details are available at their hostel.



Supporting students affected by abuse

AHL's education staff have been trained to take steps to support children affected by child abuse and/or neglect – including on how and when to initiate reporting of abuse or welfare concerns to relevant child protection authorities.

Depending on the nature and circumstances of a report being made, AHL staff may be bound by strict protocols regarding how and when information can be shared, including with family members. AHL staff are guided by advice from Police and/or relevant child protection authorities in informing family members at the time a report is made.

If you have a concern

Children, parents and community members such as school staff are encouraged to discuss any questions directly with senior staff in AHL's secondary education hostels or through protectingchildren@ahl.gov.au

If as a parent or community member you have a concern about a child protection issue – AHL encourages you to contact the appropriate child protection authority in your state or territory.

[Click Here](#) or see over for a full listing of state and territory child protection authorities and contacts.

If you have an immediate concern that a child may be in danger, you must call '000' to report your concern.

STATE AND TERRITORY CHILD PROTECTION AGENCIES

If you believe a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation call 000.

How do I report a child protection matter?

If you wish to report a child protection matter, directly contact the agency responsible for child protection in your state or territory:

New South Wales

Department of Family & Community Services

Tel. 132 111

www.community.nsw.gov.au/preventing-child-abuse-and-neglect/reporting-suspected-abuse-or-neglect

Victoria

Department of Health and Human Services

Tel. 131 278 (after hours emergency)

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/crisis-and-emergency/reporting-child-abuse

Queensland

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Tel. (07) 3235 9999 or 1800 177 135 (after hours and weekends)

www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/protecting-children/reporting-child-abuse

Western Australia

Department for Child Protection and Family Support

Tel. 1800 622 258

a/h: (08) 9223 1111 or 1800 199 008

www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/contactUs/Pages/ContactUs.aspx

South Australia

Department for Child Protection

Tel. 131 478

www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse

Tasmania

Department of Health and Human Services

Tel. 1300 737 639

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/children/child_protection_services

Australian Capital Territory

Community Services Directorate

Tel. 1300 556 729

www.form.act.gov.au/smartforms/csd/child-concern-report/

Northern Territory

Territory Families

Tel. 1800 700 250

<https://nt.gov.au/law/crime/report-child-abuse>

