



Australian Government



ABORIGINAL  
HOSTELS LIMITED

# PROTECTING CHILDREN IN OUR CARE

AHL CHILD PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

A guide for parents, students and community members

Aboriginal Hostels Limited

[ahl.gov.au](http://ahl.gov.au)



## **Publication information**

Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) recognises the unique contribution of Aboriginal 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 those of Torres Strait Islander descent.

### **Aboriginal Hostels Limited**

Level 1 Capital Centre 2–6 Shea Street Phillip ACT 2606

PO Box 30 Woden ACT 2606

**Website:** [ahl.gov.au](http://ahl.gov.au)

**Phone:** 02 6212 2001

**Email:** [protectingchildren@ahl.gov.au](mailto:protectingchildren@ahl.gov.au)

AHL acknowledges the leadership and guidance of Dr Sue Gordon AM, who as Chairperson was instrumental in establishing AHL's Child Protection Framework.

This original document was written and prepared by Protective Behaviours WA Incorporated, March 2017. ABN: 43 089 871 522

It was updated in May 2020 by the WA Child Protection Society with input and guidance from the National Office for Child Safety. ABN: 83 115 580 64

It was updated in May 2024.



## **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 subjected to or are at risk of abuse.

Child protection and the prevention of child abuse is a shared government and community responsibility. 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. It 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.

**Dave Chalmers AO, CSC**

Chief Executive Officer

**Anthony Ashby**

Chairperson

## 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 (AHL) staff and volunteers are responsible for the care and protection of the children who are living away from home in one of AHL's 7 secondary education hostels.

Children staying in AHL's multipurpose or medical hostels (and therefore accompanied by family members) are protected by a companion Creating a Child-Safe Hostel Framework.

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 of supporting children who reside in its hostels with their personal and social development, and fully supports the involvement of parents, carers, and other agencies to enhance child protection knowledge and skills.

Recognising that there is no foolproof system for the complete safety or prevention of all forms of abuse, this framework is informed by the Ten Child Safe Standards, as set out by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in July 2016. In 2019 all Australian Governments agreed to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. 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 reduce the long-term impacts of abuse on children and young people.

These 10 standards 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 STANDARDS FOR CREATING A CHILD SAFE SECONDARY EDUCATION HOSTEL**

### **1. Leadership governance and culture**

The AHL Board is committed to best practice in child protection. This includes adherence to the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework. 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. 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 have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their child, when and where possible.

### **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, which is supported within AHL's hostels. It is important that respect be afforded to children who identify as LGBTIQ. It is also 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 to child protection across all levels. 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 has a child focused and child friendly feedback system. 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 the children in their care safe. AHL trains all staff and volunteers how to identify and respond to all forms of abuse and neglect.

## **8. Minimising risk**

Child safety is an essential part of AHL's 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 which are not working as well as they should or could. AHL staff are encouraged to provide feedback about improvements and or modifications that could improve 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 our principles and values and the high standard of professionalism to which we strive.
- All children and our staff have responsibilities to 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.
- It is our responsibility to be aware of professional boundaries, and whether a staff member is misusing their position of power.

## **AHL'S CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

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

- create a safe environment where children are valued and their rights are respected
- provide the highest standard of pastoral care to the students entrusted to our care in our education hostels
- maintain a quality and professional relationship with co-workers and volunteers, to provide a positive environment to promote children's social, emotional, educational and physical development
- 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
- do not engage in behaviour that may bring staff members' own reputation or that of AHL into disrepute
- do not engage in conduct which is dishonest or causes actual or perceived personal gain, 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 are 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
- do not treat any person less favourably than another on any grounds, and act fairly and impartially in all dealings with 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. It allows for continual improvement to service delivery, and ensures staff are able to hear and respond to the concerns of students. This helps AHL to improve the safety of the children in our care.

Students can raise a comment, complaint, concern or provide general feedback by contacting AHL's confidential student feedback service at [studentfeedback@ahl.gov.au](mailto:studentfeedback@ahl.gov.au).

## 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. This includes how and when to report abuse or welfare concerns to police and 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 the 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](mailto:protectingchildren@ahl.gov.au).

If you have a concern about general child protection issues, AHL encourages you to contact the appropriate child protection authority in your state or territory. A full listing of state and territory child protection authorities and contacts is provided on the following page.

**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.

### Report to child protection agencies

Protecting children is everybody's business. If you suspect a child or young person is at risk of harm, abuse or neglect you can contact your relevant state or territory child protection agency.

#### Australian Capital Territory

- Phone: [1300 556 729](tel:1300556729)
- How to make a report: <https://www.act.gov.au/community/child-protection-and-youth-justice>

#### New South Wales

- Phone: [13 21 11](tel:132111)
- How to make a report: <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/protecting-our-kids/reporting-a-child-at-risk.html>

#### Northern Territory

- Phone: [1800 700 250](tel:1800700250)
- How to make a report: [nt.gov.au/law/crime/report-child-abuse](http://nt.gov.au/law/crime/report-child-abuse)

#### Queensland

- Phone: [Regional Intake Services](#), after hours: [1800 177 135](tel:1800177135)
- How to make a report: <https://www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/our-work/child-safety/protecting-children>

#### South Australia

- Phone: [13 14 78](tel:131478)
- How to make a report: [childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse](http://childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse)

#### Tasmania

- Phone: [1800 000 123](tel:1800000123)
- How to make a report: [strongfamiliesafekids.tas.gov.au/](http://strongfamiliesafekids.tas.gov.au/)

#### Victoria

- Phone: [services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts](http://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts), after hours: [13 12 78](tel:131278)
- How to make a report: [services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts](http://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts)

#### Western Australia

- Phone: [1800 273 889](tel:1800273889)
- How to make a report: [wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities/child-protection](http://wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities/child-protection)

## SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Kids Helpline

[kidshelpline.com.au](https://kidshelpline.com.au)

Phone: [1800 551 800](tel:1800551800)

Lifeline

[lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au)

Phone: [13 11 14](tel:131114)

MensLine

[mensline.org.au](https://mensline.org.au)

Phone: [1300 789 978](tel:1300789978)

1800RESPECT

[1800respect.org.au](https://1800respect.org.au)

Phone: [1800 737 732](tel:1800737732)

13YARN

[13yarn.org.au](https://13yarn.org.au)

Phone: [13 92 76](tel:139276)

