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Australian Government



ABORIGINAL
HOSTELS LIMITED

DIRECT PERSONAL RESPONSE POLICY

I, Dermot Walsh, Aboriginal Hostels Limited General Manager Corporate, establish and approve this Policy.

This Policy commences on **4 September 2025**



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Version	Approval	Review due date	Details
1.0	Dermot Walsh, General Manager Corporate	10 December 2025	Initial release
2.0		December 2027	Scheduled review

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) acknowledges that child sexual abuse in any setting, including institutional settings such as hostels owned and operated by AHL, is wrong and should not have occurred.
- 1.2. AHL is committed to supporting the implementation of the National Redress Scheme (NRS) and providing redress to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse for which AHL is responsible. Under the NRS, a person who accepts an offer of redress that includes a Direct Personal Response (DPR) can request an apology, or another personal acknowledgement, from a senior executive of the institution responsible for the child sexual abuse they suffered.
- 1.3. AHL acknowledges that every survivor's experience of institutional child sexual abuse is unique and preferences about how a survivor wishes to receive their DPR, and what would make it meaningful for them, are also unique. AHL's approach to engaging with survivors of institutional child sexual abuse and providing a DPR will be trauma-informed and culturally safe. When arranging a DPR, AHL will work respectfully and collaboratively with the survivor and/or their support person to prioritise the survivor's safety, trust, choice, empowerment and control.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to outline Aboriginal Hostels Limited's (AHL) commitment to delivering safe and meaningful Direct Personal Responses to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse for which AHL is responsible.

3. POLICY OWNER

- 3.1. The General Manager Corporate is the owner of this policy.

4. POLICY SCOPE

- 4.1. This policy and related procedure apply to all employees, contractors, and consultants of AHL who have a role in organising, facilitating, or participating in, the provision of a DPR to a survivor of institutional child sexual abuse for which AHL is responsible (as determined by the NRS).

5. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

- 5.1. The NRS is established by the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018* (NRS Act). Pursuant to section 54(3) of the NRS Act, a participating institution must also consider the *Direct Personal Response Framework 2018* ('the DPR Framework') when providing a DPR. The DPR Framework is a legislative instrument that sets out guidelines for the provision of a DPR under the NRS.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 6.1. AHL Direct Personal Response Procedure.

7. DEFINITIONS

- 7.1. **Direct Personal Response:** an apology from AHL (as the responsible institution) for the harm the survivor experienced as a child. It can also include an assurance of what AHL has done to stop the abuse from happening to current and future generations. It may consist of one or more of the following:

- an apology or a statement of acknowledgement or regret
- an acknowledgement of the impact of the abuse on the survivor

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- an assurance as to the steps the institution has taken, or will take, to prevent abuse occurring again
 - an opportunity for the survivor to meet with a senior official of AHL.
- 7.2. **DPR Facilitator:** a neutral, trained professional who supports survivors in preparing for, and participating in, a Direct Personal Response with AHL and/or other institutions through the NRS.
- 7.3. **Responsible Institution/s:** the institution/s responsible for the abuser having contact with the survivor.
- 7.4. **Survivor:** a person who has experienced institutional child sexual abuse.

8. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

8.1. When engaging with survivors of institutional child sexual abuse for which AHL is responsible, AHL will:

- avoid further harm to a survivor
- engage respectfully and create a culturally safe environment, ensuring all discussions are held with the survivor's cultural identity at the forefront
- demonstrate that a survivor's testimony has been listened to or heeded
- not question a survivor's testimony
- consider each DPR request individually and ensure engagement is led by the survivor and/or their support person
- engage a professional DPR Facilitator to support each survivor, AHL representative/s, and the DPR process
- ensure a survivor's needs, expectations and preferences govern the way the DPR is arranged and delivered
- work with the survivor and/or their support person to identify an appropriate alternative that is acceptable to the survivor, if AHL is unable to deliver the DPR, or a part of it
- take all reasonable steps to support survivors with disability to access a meaningful DPR
- prioritise DPR responses for people who are terminally ill, in poor health or experiencing sensitive time constraints
- cover costs for the survivor to receive a meaningful DPR
- protect survivors' privacy and personal information in accordance with legislative obligations.

9. DPR PRINCIPLES

9.1. AHL supports the DPR model based on a restorative process as recommended by the Royal *Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* (the Royal Commission) and as outlined in the Australian Government's [National Redress Guide](#). Restorative processes acknowledge and prioritise the needs and interests of people who have been harmed by others. The underlying principles of restorative practice promote:

- wellbeing
- voice
- safety
- respect
- confidentiality
- accountability
- a survivor focus.

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- 9.2. The provision of a DPR by AHL (as the responsible institution) is one of three components of redress offered to a person under the NRS. The NRS Act requires responsible institutions to take reasonable steps to provide a DPR to a person who wishes to receive one and sets out the general principles guiding its provision.
- 9.3. Every action in AHL's DPR process is based on the core principle **Do no further harm**. A DPR should not be a negative experience or cause a survivor to re-live trauma. Prior to engagement in a DPR, the readiness of all participants to safely engage should be carefully considered. For a DPR to be survivor-focused, all actions must be done with them, rather than "for" or "to" them.
- 9.4. A DPR is also an opportunity for AHL (as the responsible institution) to demonstrate its accountability to a survivor. The standard form of a DPR is a facilitated meeting between a survivor and an AHL representative. In certain circumstances, a direct face-to-face meeting may not be practicable or not desirable. In these circumstances, an indirect, but nonetheless personal, response may be appropriate. This may involve a contact officer or DPR Facilitator meeting separately with the survivor and with AHL's representative, conveying necessary information between the parties, and then arranging for outcomes such as a formal letter of acknowledgment, accountability and apology.
- 9.5. Throughout the DPR process, all parties involved should be mindful that procedural justice requires AHL representatives, contact persons and DPR Facilitators to be respectful, transparent, and clear as they address concerns, ask and answer questions, and make the requisite arrangements for a DPR that can successfully deliver a sense of justice.