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ABORIGINAL
HOSTELS LIMITED

DIRECT PERSONAL RESPONSE PROCEDURE

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

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CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.	PURPOSE.....	3
3.	RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS	3
4.	DEFINITIONS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	3
5.	INITIATING THE DPR PROCESS	3
6.	INFORMATION TO BE SHARED	4
7.	DPR PROCESS	4
8.	DPR FORMATS.....	4
9.	PROFESSIONAL FACILITATION OF A DPR.....	5
10.	PREPARATION AND READINESS OF SURVIVOR AND THEIR SUPPORT PERSON	6
11.	PREPARATION AND READINESS OF AHL'S REPRESENTATIVE.....	6
12.	VENUE AND LOCATION.....	7
13.	COSTS	7
14.	SUSPENDING OR DELAYING A DPR.....	7
15.	CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH DPR IS NOT REQUIRED.....	7
16.	POST-DPR DEBRIEFING.....	7

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Aligning to Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) Director Personal Response (DPR) Policy, AHL's approach to engaging with survivors of institutional child sexual abuse and providing a DPR will be trauma-informed and culturally safe. AHL will work respectfully and collaboratively with the survivor and/or their support person to prioritise their safety, trust, choice, empowerment and control when arranging a DPR.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1. This procedure outlines the application of AHL's Direct Personal Response Policy.

3. RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 [National Redress Guide](#)
3.2 [National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Direct Personal Response Framework 2018](#)
3.3 Aboriginal Hostels Limited's Direct Personal Response Policy.

4. DEFINITIONS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Survivor: a person who has experienced institutional child sexual abuse.

Support person(s): A person nominated by a survivor to support them through a DPR.

AHL's representative: the senior official participating in an agreed form of DPR with a survivor. A representative of an institution must only participate in a DPR where they have the appropriate authority to apologise on behalf of the institution. AHL's representatives include:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief People Officer
- General Manager, Corporate
- General Manager, Operations.

Contact person(s): Describes the staff member(s) within the AHL that survivors will speak to in relation to seeking and arranging their DPR. AHL's primary contact method is engagement@ahl.gov.au. AHL's relevant contact persons include:

- Director Communication and Reporting
- Assistant Director Corporate Reporting

DPR Facilitator: a neutral, independent third party who has the knowledge and skills to ensure the DPR process operates in accordance with best practice restorative justice and trauma-informed principles.

5. INITIATING THE DPR PROCESS

- 5.1. AHL will conduct DPRs in line with the Australian Government's [National Redress Guide](#). After accepting an offer of redress that includes a DPR, the survivor (or their support person/s) should contact AHL to initiate the DPR process. Survivors or support persons can reach AHL via email to engagement@ahl.gov.au or via phone 02 6212 2072.
- 5.2. Once contact is received, an AHL contact person will engage a DPR Facilitator to liaise with the survivor on:
- their preferred format for engaging in a DPR
 - what they wish to achieve through a DPR.

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5.3. The AHL contact person will work to ensure the survivor is comfortable with the DPR Facilitator and will manage administrative requirements for the DPR (for example making logistical arrangements).

6. INFORMATION TO BE SHARED

6.1. Relevant information (such as cultural background, preferences for the DPR) of the survivor held by AHL should be provided to the DPR Facilitator, as allowed under subsection 98(2) (b) of the Act. Access to this information assists the facilitator to undertake preparatory work for the DPR with both the survivor and AHL's representative.

6.2. AHL's contact person will advise survivors that this information exchange will occur as part of preparing for the DPR.

7. DPR PROCESS

7.1. As outlined in the National Redress Guide, the DPR process refers not only to the actual DPR meeting, but to the broader experience of engaging with all those involved in arranging, preparing for and participating in the DPR. This broader process involves:

- initial inquiries with the AHL's contact person
- provision of information on the purpose and process of engaging a DPR
- deliberations about whether to participate in a DPR
- the process of choosing the appropriate support person(s), institutional representative(s) and facilitator
- preparatory meetings
- the DPR meeting
- any subsequent follow-up, which includes debriefing with participants and ensuring that any agreed further actions are delivered.

8. DPR FORMATS

8.1. As outlined in the National Redress Guide, a DPR may occur through one or more of the following formats:

- a facilitated meeting between a survivor and AHL's representative, where the survivor can speak to their experience to the extent they wish
- written engagement between a survivor and AHL's representative, where this is preferred by the survivor
- group healing, such as multiple survivors of the same institution meeting with AHL's representative.

8.2. In-person, telephone and virtual DPR: As outlined in the National Redress Guide, AHL will conduct a DPR in the standard DPR format involving a facilitated meeting managed by a DPR Facilitator between the survivor, their designated support person(s), and AHL's representative. Whether in-person, via phone, or virtually, a DPR meeting will separately move through four stages:

1. The survivor speaks to their experience and its impacts both at the time and now (to the extent they wish).
2. AHL's representative provides a response.
3. A discussion between parties that enables a shared understanding of the abuse, its impacts and the future (lessons to be learned).

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4. All parties discuss any further actions that might support healing and achieving a sense of justice.
- 8.3. **WRITTEN DPR:** A survivor may choose to receive a DPR in writing as either their sole preferred method of receiving a DPR or in addition to a DPR provided in-person, via phone or through a video call. Where a survivor chooses to receive a DPR in writing, a DPR Facilitator will be engaged to work with the survivor on their preferences and expectations.
- 8.4. AHL's representative, as guided by the DPR Facilitator, will provide a sincere, personal written response that acknowledges the survivor's experience and meets their expectations of the DPR. Generic templates and responses must not be used.
- 8.5. Letters must be physically (wet) signed by AHL's representative. Letters should be sent via registered post to ensure the DPR Facilitator can monitor delivery. Between 2-4 days after the letter has been received, the DPR Facilitator will contact the survivor to check in.

9. PROFESSIONAL FACILITATION OF A DPR

- 9.1. While the Act and Framework do not stipulate that AHL must use a facilitator to prepare for and convene DPRs, AHL supports the engagement of professional facilitation to help ensure a DPR is conducted in alignment with best practice and to achieve ideal outcomes and safe engagement. Most importantly, professional facilitation aims to prioritise cultural safety. The role of a professional DPR Facilitator is to maximise the safety and effectiveness of a DPR process. This involves:
 - exchanging information during preparation for the DPR and before the participants meet face-to-face
 - working with the survivor to understand culturally significant information and protocols
 - working with the survivor and support person(s) to ensure that the survivor is well prepared to speak about their experience as effectively as possible and to the extent they wish
 - working with the AHL's representative to ensure that they hear, acknowledge and respond to the survivor's account as effectively as possible
 - taking responsibility for ensuring all the elements necessary for an effective apology are produced through the DPR
 - managing the dynamics and inherent power imbalances present in the DPR interaction, to enable effective and meaningful outcomes for participants.
- 9.2. The DPR Facilitator works with participants to ensure that:
 - the circumstances of the abuse as told by the survivor have been formally acknowledged
 - AHL (as the responsible institution) clearly and transparently takes responsibility for failures in their duty of care
 - the survivor can give a narrative account of their experience and impacts, to the extent they wish and are able to do so in a way that is safe for them
 - AHL's representative expresses regret genuinely and believably
 - those involved consider any actions needed during or following the DPR.
- 9.3. Professional facilitation is especially helpful in those cases where:
 - the survivor faces difficulties, for example they have significant mental health issues and/or limited social and/or professional support, acknowledging these are often the result of trauma
 - the DPR is attended by more than one survivor

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- the DPR is attended by more than one AHL representative, or
 - the DPR is attended more than one support person.
- 9.4. Generally, the more complex a DPR meeting, the more an experienced, professional facilitator can help ensure that the meeting is prepared, conducted and followed up safely and effectively. Professional facilitation enhances the wellbeing of survivors and works to support AHL's representative in their role. By working with all parties to ensure their readiness and adequate preparation for the DPR, a DPR Facilitator enables the conditions for meaningful and equal interpersonal engagement in the DPR.
- 9.5. Where possible, AHL will prioritise engaging First Nations facilitators, and will aim to meet the survivor's preferences on the gender of facilitator. At the very least, facilitators will be selected based on having a high level of cultural capability.

10. PREPARATION AND READINESS OF SURVIVOR AND THEIR SUPPORT PERSON

- 10.1. Before the DPR can proceed, the DPR Facilitator must ascertain the readiness of the survivor and each support person to proceed with the DPR. The DPR Facilitator must work sensitively to address any unrealistic expectations the survivor may hold in relation to the DPR, to ensure the survivor's interests and motivations for participating align with what the process may realistically achieve for them. This may take several conversations and should be viewed as part of the process of determining a survivor's understanding and readiness.
- 10.2. The DPR Facilitator will address any concerns or special needs in relation to the process, including any requests for further action the survivor may be considering. The DPR Facilitator will outline how the meeting will run. Together, the DPR Facilitator and the survivor will determine how the survivor can tell their experience most effectively to achieve the outcome they are seeking. Typically, the preparatory meeting occurs around a week before the DPR. This process of consultation empowers the survivor to make informed decisions about the DPR.
- 10.3. The DPR cannot be conducted until the survivor and support person have clearly indicated that they are ready to engage in the DPR and the DPR Facilitator agrees.

11. PREPARATION AND READINESS OF AHL'S REPRESENTATIVE

- 11.1. Prior to the DPR, the Director Communication and Reporting will provide AHL's representative with a written briefing setting out relevant background information. AHL's representative will be advised if a survivor has requested that information about them and their experience of abuse be withheld in advance of the DPR.
- 11.2. AHL's representative will also meet with the DPR Facilitator to prepare for the DPR and ensure that the representative is ready and comfortable to proceed before the DPR can take place.
- 11.3. The DPR Facilitator will hold a preparatory meeting with AHL's representative approximately one week before the DPR. The DPR Facilitator will provide some background context and information on the current circumstances of the survivor, such as their motivations and expectations for participating in the DPR, and whether they may request further action.
- 11.4. The DPR Facilitator will explain how the process is expected to unfold and responds to any questions or concerns AHL's representative may have, to ensure they feel ready and equipped to respond to the survivor. The DPR Facilitator will also coach AHL's representative to assist them to engage safely and effectively with a survivor in the DPR.
- 11.5. There may be occasions where AHL's representative is subsequently determined not to be a suitable participant. It is the role of the DPR Facilitator to raise any concerns about this with AHL's representative and for AHL to nominate an alternative representative.

12. VENUE AND LOCATION

12.1. The survivor will be asked about their preferred location for the DPR. AHL will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the survivor's wishes, providing that it is appropriate, accessible, and safe for all parties.

13. COSTS

13.1. AHL will cover all costs associated with providing the DPR.

14. SUSPENDING OR DELAYING A DPR

14.1. A survivor's participation in the DPR process is voluntary and they may suspend or delay the DPR process at any time. If this occurs, AHL will work with the survivor to reschedule or engage further with the survivor in accordance with the survivor's wishes.

14.2. If a person (other than the survivor) involved in the DPR reasonably believes that continuing in the process would jeopardise the health or safety of the survivor, or AHL's representative, they can delay or suspend the process. If this occurs, AHL may offer to resume the process or seek to provide an alternative method of DPR if it believes it can do so without jeopardising the health or safety of either the survivor or AHL's representative.

15. CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH DPR IS NOT REQUIRED

15.1. A DPR is not required in circumstances where:

- reasonable attempts have been made to arrange a DPR with a survivor and the survivor has not responded
- the survivor has already received a DPR
- the survivor advises that they wish to withdraw from the DPR process.

15.2. If at any time a survivor who has previously indicated at any stage of the process that they do not wish to receive a DPR, changes their mind, AHL will take all necessary steps to ensure that that person is able to receive a DPR.

16. POST-DPR DEBRIEFING

16.1. AHL employees involved in a DPR are required to participate in appropriate post-DPR debriefing and follow-up processes with the DPR Facilitator to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants in the DPR process.