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ABORIGINAL
HOSTELS LIMITED

CHILD PROTECTION (MANDATORY REPORTING) POLICY

I, Shane Hamilton, Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) Chief Executive Officer (CEO), establish and approve this Policy.

This Policy commences on **11 December 2025**.



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Version	Approval	Review due date	Details
1.0	Shane Hamilton, Chief Executive Officer	11 December 2025	Initial release
2.0		11 December 2026	Scheduled review

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PURPOSE

AHL's Child Protection (Mandatory Reporting) Policy forms part of AHL's Child Safeguarding Framework developed to mitigate the risks to the health, safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. It articulates our commitment to protecting children and young people from harm, abuse and neglect and outlines the mandatory reporting obligations of AHL People in accordance with the relevant state and territory laws. It aims to ensure AHL People understand their legal responsibilities and are supported in fulfilling them.

POLICY OWNER

The Chief Executive Officer is the owner of this Policy

POLICY SCOPE

The policy applies to all AHL services and activities which involve, result in or relate to contact with children and young people, whether on and off AHL grounds.

This policy applies to all AHL People. AHL People means anyone who is employed by, or works at AHL including employees (ongoing, non-ongoing and casual), volunteers, senior leaders, Board Directors, external providers/contractors and others acting on behalf of AHL or working within AHL physical and online environments.

DELEGATIONS

Unless specified by law*, Hostel Managers, Assistant Hostel Managers, Roving Hostel Managers, Heads of Boarding, Deputy Heads of Boarding, Operations Managers, Directors and Assistant Directors of Frontline are responsible for any decisions regarding Mandatory Reporting on behalf of AHL.

*In the Northern Territory, **all adults**, regardless of occupation, are mandated to report.

POLICY STATEMENT

AHL has a duty of care and responsibility for the health, safety, welfare and wellbeing of the children and young people at all our hostels and in contact with our organisation. Protecting children and young people from abuse, neglect and harm, is our first and most important priority.

AHL has zero tolerance for child abuse. All AHL People are required to act in the best interests of the child or young person and report any concerns relating to abuse, neglect or exploitation in accordance with relevant laws and internal procedures.

Children and young people have the right to expect protection and support from all AHL People. Child safeguarding and the prevention of abuse is a shared government and community responsibility, and we recognise that the best interests of children and young people will be met by collaborating with and engaging the expertise of relevant agencies, stakeholders and service providers.

We recognise that for First Nations children and young people, safety and wellbeing are deeply connected to culture, identity, community and Country.

AHL is committed to creating culturally safe, healing-informed environments where children and young people feel strong in who they are, supported in their growth, and respected in their rights.

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This policy reflects our alignment with Closing the Gap Priority Reforms, including working in genuine partnership with First Nations people, valuing community-led approaches, and strengthening culturally capable, responsive systems of care across our hostels and services.

AHL People are encouraged and supported to express any concerns, whether mandated to or not. At no time will management prevent an AHL Person making a report of suspected abuse or neglect in accordance with requirements.

The role of the policy delegate is to support and assist AHL People, and to facilitate the process of reporting and to ensure that AHL is meeting its legal and ethical obligations. AHL People must always act in good faith to protect the health, safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people.

DEFINITIONS

See ['Glossary'](#) for common terms and definitions used within this policy.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The policy applies to all AHL People employed in our hostel services and those AHL People who engage in services or activities which involve, result in or relate to contact with children and young people.

AHL leadership must ensure that AHL People:

- are made aware of all organisational policies, procedures, legal requirements and related documents/frameworks that informs practice
- understand and can fulfil their legal and organisational requirements and responsibilities
- model culturally safe and inclusive behaviour in all aspects of leadership, communication and decision-making
- prioritise the cultural capability development of their staff and embed cultural safety expectations in performance planning and supervision

All AHL People must ensure that they:

- are familiar with, and abide by, all legal obligations and organisational policy and procedural requirements
- seek assistance from their supervisor and/or leadership team members if unsure of how to fulfill their obligations and requirements
- engage in additional professional development as required (as approved by their manager/supervisor) to fulfill their duties
- demonstrate respect for cultural protocols, practices and perspectives in daily interactions and decision-making
- actively support the creation of culturally safe environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people feel seen, respected and connected.

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND RESOURCES

- AHL Child and Young Person Safeguarding Policy
- AHL Child and Young Person Safeguarding Behavioural Standards
- AHL Child Safeguarding Handbook

INTRODUCTION

Every child and young person has the right to feel safe, happy, empowered and participate in decisions/processes that affect them. AHL have zero tolerance to child abuse, neglect or exploitation. We expect all AHL People to take any action necessary to enable children and young people to feel and be

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safe, and to safeguard them from any form of sexual, physical and emotional or psychological abuse, as well as exposure to violence, injury, neglect or exploitation.

Mandatory reporting forms part of AHL's obligations and responsibilities in protecting children. AHL People must take reasonable steps to comply with reporting requirements under relevant state and territory legislation and regulatory frameworks.

In Australia, state and territory governments are responsible for receiving reports of suspected child abuse and neglect from members of the public, practitioners and service providers. Anyone who suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of being abused and/or neglected, should report it to the reporting authority in their state or territory.

DEFINING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse and neglect refers to any behaviour or treatment by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that results in the likelihood of and/or actual physical or emotional harm to a child or young person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (for example neglect) and commission (for example abuse). Child abuse and neglect can be face to face or online.

Child abuse and neglect is commonly divided into five subtypes:

- **Physical abuse:** Deliberate actions that cause or threaten to cause harm to a child.
- **Emotional or psychological abuse:** Repeated rejection, criticism, threats or emotional manipulation that causes psychological harm.
- **Neglect:** Failure to meet a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, supervision, medical care and education, to the extent that the child's health, safety or development is at risk.
- **Sexual abuse or exploitation:** Any sexual activity involving a child, including grooming, inappropriate touching, exposure to pornography and penetrative acts. Perpetrators often misuse power, trust or authority to exploit children.
- **Exposure to family violence:** A child who hears, witnesses or is otherwise exposed to family violence (including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial abuse), is considered to be experiencing abuse.

AHL REPORTING APPROACH AND OBLIGATIONS

All AHL People share a responsibility to protect children and young people from harm. While legal requirements vary across states and territories, AHL adopts a consistent national approach to ensure timely and appropriate responses to concerns.

WHEN TO REPORT

You must report to the Hostel Manager (or above) if you reasonably suspect that a child or young person has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of harm.

You do not need to be certain, prove the harm, or investigate. Your role is to recognise the signs and report your concerns. The Hostel Manager (or above) will then notify the relevant authorities and report to protectingchildren@ahl.gov.au of National Operations.

WHO MUST REPORT

Depending on the jurisdiction, mandatory reporting laws apply to specific roles (e.g., teachers, nurses, police, childcare workers). And in the Northern Territory, all adults, regardless of occupation, are mandated to report. Unless where specified by law, **AHL requires all staff to report** any reasonable concerns about child safety regardless of legal obligation to the Hostel Manager on duty, to their Operations Manager, or Frontline Services Director. That person is then responsible for advising the relevant authorities as per the local guidelines, on behalf of AHL.

Please refer to **Attachment A** for the mandatory reporting requirements and contact details in each state and territory. Refer to the [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) section for reports relating to allegations against AHL employees.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE – FAILURE TO REPORT

Following the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, all jurisdictions have implemented or strengthened laws to criminalise failure to report child sexual abuse.

There are legal penalties for failing to report sexual abuse in Australia. All adults (over the age of 18) are legally required to report child sexual abuse to police if they reasonably believe that a child or young person has been, or is being, abused by another adult.

Failure to report without a reasonable excuse is a criminal offence, with each state and territory having provisions to address this. These laws typically apply to known or reasonably believed abuse, not future suspicion. Reasonable excuses (of failing for report) may include:

- You know the abuse has already been reported to police or child protection.
- You reasonably believe the child (now aged 16+) does not want the matter reported.
- Reporting would endanger you or another person (excluding the alleged offender).

REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEMES – ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AHL EMPLOYEES

The Reportable Conduct Schemes requires AHL to respond to allegations of child-related misconduct made in relation to their workers and volunteers. AHL must report these allegations to their national body representing children and young people (in the participating states and territories). Reportable Conduct Schemes relevant to AHL operate in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia. A Reportable Conduct Scheme will commence in Queensland in July 2026. Northern Territory and South Australia do not have reportable conduct schemes. See **Attachment B** for more information.

DOCUMENTATION AND RECORD KEEPING

Written records of all allegations, suspicions or concerns of abuse and/or neglect and disclosures that form the basis of a report must be kept up to date and securely stored by in accordance with AHL Records and Information Management Policy.

POLICY DISTRIBUTION

This policy is to be adapted into appropriate resources and made available to children, young people, their families and the community via AHL's:

- [AHL website](#)

The policy and related documents will be directed to the attention of AHL People through:

- all staff email communications and verbal updates at all staff forums
- child safeguarding [Intranet page](#)
- virtual information/Q&A sessions
- induction and mandatory online training and onboarding refresher training including any face-to-face/facilitated training and review/continuous improvement reviews.

COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING:

All AHL People are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the commitment, responsibilities and obligations set out in this policy and related documents. Any violations of the responsibilities and obligations will be investigated promptly with prompt corrective and/or disciplinary actions taken as necessary. Disciplinary action under the APS Code of Conduct may include termination of employment.

Compliance with this policy and related documents will be monitored through mandatory training, audits, supervision, and feedback mechanisms.

This Policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required, to ensure continued effectiveness and alignment with evolving standards and changes to legislation.

GLOSSARY

<p>Abuse</p>	<p>Physical abuse – the use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning.</p> <p>Neglect – the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and welfare.</p> <p>Emotional abuse – refers to a parent or caregiver’s inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child, or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Such acts have a high probability of damaging a child’s self-esteem or social competence.</p> <p>Sexual abuse – the use of a child for sexual gratification by an adult or significantly older child or adolescent. Sexually abusive behaviour can include fondling genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, fondling breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism and exposing the child to, or involving the child in, pornography.</p>
<p>AHL People</p>	<p>All individuals who work for or represent AHL, including employees (ongoing, non-ongoing, irregular/intermittent/casual), volunteers, contractors, senior leaders, Board Directors, external providers/contractors and others acting on behalf of AHL.</p>
<p>Child or children/Young person or young people</p>	<p>Any individual under the age of 18. This includes infants, toddlers, children and adolescents. AHL recognises and supports their diverse identities, experiences and rights.</p>
<p>Child abuse material</p>	<p>Material that depicts (expressly or implicitly) a child under 18 years of age as a victim of torture, cruelty or physical abuse.</p>
<p>Child exploitation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One or more of the following: • committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of abuse against a child • possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting child exploitation material • committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of grooming or online grooming • using a minor for profit, labour, sexual gratification or some other personal or financial advantage.
<p>Child pornography</p>	<p>In accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, “child pornography” means “any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes”. For</p>

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	further information about child pornography offences, refer to the <i>Criminal Code Act 1995</i> .
Child pornography material	Material that depicts a person, or is a representation of a person, who is, or appears to be, under 18 years of age and is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or sexual activity, or is in the presence of a person who is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or activity, and does this in a way that a reasonable person would regard it as being, in all circumstances, offensive.
Child protection	A specific aspect of safeguarding that focuses on identifying, responding to and reporting abuse, neglect or exploitation. It includes legal obligations such as mandatory reporting and compliance with child protection laws.
Child protection policy	A statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the organisation is taking its duty and responsibility of care seriously.
Child safeguarding	The proactive and ongoing actions taken to promote the safety, wellbeing and rights of children and young people. It includes preventing harm, responding to concerns, creating safe environments and empowering children and young people to participate in decisions that affect them
Child Safe Organisation	An organisation that puts the best interests of children and young people first, actively works to prevent harm, and responds appropriately to concerns or disclosures
Contact with children	Working on an activity or in a position that involves or may involve contact with children, either under the position description or due to the nature of the work environment (also see <i>Working with children</i> definition).
National Criminal History check	A check of an individual's criminal history record. In Australia, national criminal record checks are available through state and territory police departments.
Grooming	Generally, refers to behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for a sexual activity. For example, an offender might build a relationship of trust with the child and then seek to sexualise that relationship (for example by encouraging romantic feelings, or exposing the child to sexual concepts through pornography).
Harm	Any detrimental effect on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm may be caused by financial, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, and/or sexual abuse or exploitation whether intended or unintended.

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Impact	The overall long-term effect produced by an investment. This includes position and negative changes produced by an investment (directly or indirectly, intended or unintended).
Informed consent	Ensure the child and the parent or guardian understand the implications, purpose, potential uses of photographs or images.
Online grooming	The act of sending an electronic message to a child, with the intention of procuring the recipient to engage in or submit to sexual activity with another person, including but not necessarily the sender, or of sending an electronic message with indecent content to a recipient who the sender believes to be a child.
Personnel	Personnel are either employed by an organisation, engaged by an organisation on a subcontract basis, or engaged by an organisation on a voluntary or unpaid basis. Personnel can include paid staff, volunteers, interns, trustees, board members.
Policy non-compliance	The failure to abide by AHL's policies.
Unacceptable risk	The portion of identified risk that cannot be tolerated, and that must be either eliminated or controlled. For people deemed an unacceptable risk, control mechanisms are not considered appropriate.
Working with children	Working with children means being engaged in an activity with a child where the contact would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the activity and the contact is not incidental to the activity. Working includes volunteering or other unpaid works.

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ATTACHMENT A – MANDATORY REPORTING OBLIGATIONS AND CONTACT DETAILS

This table lists details for all states and territories, whether or not AHL has hostels in those locations.

Location	Legislation	What must be reported	Reporting Authority	Further services and information	Contact details
ACT	<i>Children and Young People Act 2008</i>	Belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person has experienced or is experiencing sexual abuse, or non-accidental physical injury	Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS)	Child Youth and Protection Services are responsible for coordinating the care and protection of children and young people believe to be at risk of harm in the ACT. For further information on mandatory of child abuse or neglect, refer to Keeping Children and Young People Safe	<p>Phone:</p> <p>If you believe a child is in immediate danger, contact the Police on 000.</p> <p>For concerns related to abuse outside of a family context, contact ACT policing on 131 444.</p> <p>If you suspect a child is at risk of abuse or neglect by a family member or guardian, contact Child and Youth Protection Services on 1300 556 729 (24 hours, 7 days a week).</p> <p>Online: Complete an online child concern report</p>
NSW	<i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i>	Reasonable grounds to suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm (including physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect, exposure to family violence)	NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).	<p>Mandatory reporters are encouraged to use the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) to help determine whether a concern meets the threshold for reporting.</p> <p>Reporting a child at risk information is available on the DCJ website and may help you to decide whether you should call or not.</p>	<p>Phone:</p> <p>Call the Child Protection Helpline on 13 21 11 (24hrs a day, 7 days a week)</p> <p>Online:</p> <p>eReport through the ChildStory Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG)</p>

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Location	Legislation	What must be reported	Reporting Authority	Further services and information	Contact details
NT	<i>Care and Protection of Children Act 2007</i>	Any belief that a child or young person has suffered or is likely to suffer harm or exploitation	Department of Territory, Families, Housing and Communities	In the Northern Territory, every person is required to report suspected child abuse and neglect. For further information about the process of reporting concerns about a child's welfare in the Northern Territory, refer to the Report Child Abuse webpage .	<p>Phone: In an emergency, call Police on 000. If it's not an emergency, call Police on 131 444. Report suspected child abuse to the Child Protection Hotline on 1800 700 250 (24 hours, 7 days a week) or Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000.</p> <p>Online: Members of the public and professionals can submit a report online.</p>
QLD	<i>Child Protection Act 1999</i>	Significant harm or risk of significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse, and the child or young person may not have a parent able or willing to protect them	Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety	Child Safety Services is the lead child protection agency in Queensland. For information about the process of reporting concerns about a child's welfare in Queensland, refer to the Protecting Children webpage. For more information about mandatory reporting, refer to the Mandatory Reporting in Queensland webpage.	<p>Phone: If you believe a child is in immediate danger or a life-threatening situation call 000. If you suspect a child is experiencing harm, or is at risk of experiencing harm, or being neglected, contact your local Regional Intake Services (during business hours) or call the Child Safety Services' Enquires Unit: 1800 811 810. For after hours and weekends, contact the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on 1800 177 135 (24 hours, 7 days a week).</p> <p>Online: Professionals working in government and non-government agencies can also use this form.</p>
SA	<i>Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017</i>	Suspicion on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is or may be at risk (including physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect, exposure to family violence)	Department for Child Protection	The Department for Child Protection works to keep South Australia's children safe by protecting them from abuse and neglect. For information about the process of reporting concerns about a child's welfare in South Australia as a member of the public, refer to the Reporting child abuse webpage. For more information about mandatory reporting, refer to Mandated Notifiers and Their	<p>Phone: In an emergency, call 000. If you have a reasonable suspicion that the child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm, call the Child Abuse Report Line 13 14 78 (24 hours, 7 days a week).</p> <p>Online: For mandatory reporters, less serious concerns can be reported online.</p>

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Location	Legislation	What must be reported	Reporting Authority	Further services and information	Contact details
				<u>Role and Preparing to Report Child Abuse.</u>	
TAS	<i>Childre, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997</i>	Reasonable grounds to believe, or suspect, that a child or young person is suffering, or at risk of suffering, abuse or neglect	Department for Education, Children and Young People	The Child Safety Service in the Department of Education, Children and Young People works to protect children and young people who are at risk of abuse and neglect in Tasmania. For information about the process of reporting concerns about a child's welfare in Tasmania, refer to the department's <u>Child Safety Service</u> webpage. For information about mandatory reporting and making a notification refer to the <u>Reporting Concerns</u> webpage.	<p>Phone: If a child is at immediate risk, call 000. If you have concerns for the safety or welfare of a child, call the Child Safety Service on 1800 000 123 (24 hours).</p> <p>It is preferred that all contacts are made by phone; however, an online contact form is available.</p>
VIC	<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i>	Belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	The Child Protection Service is specifically targeted to help children and young people at risk of significant harm in Victoria. For information about child protection and mandatory reporting requirements in Victoria, refer to the department's <u>Child Protection</u> webpage. For information about mandatory reporting, refer to the department's <u>Mandatory Reporting</u> webpage.	<p>Phone: For life threatening concerns, call 000.</p> <p>If you have concerns that a child is at risk of significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect, contact the <u>service</u> that covers the area where the child lives. Their business hours are 8:45 am – 5:00 pm (Mon–Fri): North Division Intake – 1300 664 977 South Division Intake – 1300 655 795 East Division Intake – 1300 360 391 West Division Intake – rural and regional only – 1800 075 599 West Division Intake – metropolitan only – 1300 664 977.</p> <p>For after-hours assistance contact: After Hours Child Protection Emergency Service 13 12 78 (5:00 pm – 9:00 am Mon–Fri, 24 hours on weekends and public holidays).</p> <p>If you have a significant concern for the wellbeing of a child but do not believe they are at risk of significant</p>

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Location	Legislation	What must be reported	Reporting Authority	Further services and information	Contact details
					harm and the immediate safety of the child will not be compromised, contact The Orange Door .
WA	<i>Children and Community Services Act 2004</i>	Belief on reasonable grounds that a child has been or is being sexually abused.	Department of Communities	The Department of Communities offers a range of services to support children and families in Western Australia. For further information about the process of reporting concerns about a child's welfare, refer to the department's Child Protection webpage. For information about mandatory reporting in Western Australia refer to the department's mandatory reporting information webpage.	<p>Phone: For life-threatening concerns, call 000. If you are concerned about a child's wellbeing, contact the Central Intake Team 1800 273 889 After hours Crisis Care 1800 199 008, text on 0477 131 114</p> <p>Online: Professionals can report a concern about a child using this form. Mandatory reporters with less serious concerns can use the department's secure Mandatory Reporting Web System.</p>

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ATTACHMENT B – REPORTING BODIES FOR REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME (ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AHL EMPLOYEES)

Location	Reporting Body	Role
ACT	<i>ACT Ombudsman</i>	Designated organisations are required to report allegations of child abuse or misconduct involving employees, volunteers or carers. The Ombudsman reviews these investigations and may intervene if necessary
NSW	<i>Office of the Children’s Guardian</i>	Administers the scheme under the Children’s Guardian Act 2019. Relevant entities must investigate and report allegations of reportable conduct to the OCG
NT	NA	NT does not have a reportable conduct scheme
QLD	<i>Queensland Family and Child Commission</i>	Will administer the scheme starting 1 July 2025 with full compliance by 1 July 2027. Organisations must report and investigate allegations of child abuse or misconduct
SA	NA	SA does not have a reportable conduct scheme
TAS	<i>Office of the Independent Regulator</i>	Leaders of organisations must report suspected reportable conduct to the Independent Regulator who oversees investigations and enforces compliance under the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023
VIC	<i>Commission for Children and Young People</i>	Organisations must notify the CCYP of allegations of reportable conduct involving workers or volunteers. The CCYP
WA	<i>Ombudsman Western Australia</i>	Heads of organisations must notify the Ombudsman of allegations or convictions of child abuse. The Ombudsman monitors and reviews allegations