



Australian Government



ABORIGINAL  
HOSTELS LIMITED

# CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON SAFEGUARDING BEHAVIOURAL STANDARDS

AHL Child Safeguarding Framework

December 2025

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## OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

At Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL), safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility and a core part of who we are.

Every person connected to AHL, regardless of role, location, or level of contact, plays a vital part in creating environments where children and young people feel safe in their surroundings, are protected by our practices and are empowered to grow strong in their identity, culture and community. Safeguarding is not the responsibility of a single team; it is the responsibility of AHL People.

Importantly, AHL has zero tolerance to child abuse, neglect or exploitation. Ensuring children and young people are protected, well cared for, supported and can thrive is our highest priority.

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. AHL creates and maintains safe and nurturing environments, delivered through high quality care that supports children and young peoples' safety, development and wellbeing outcomes.

We take any action necessary to:

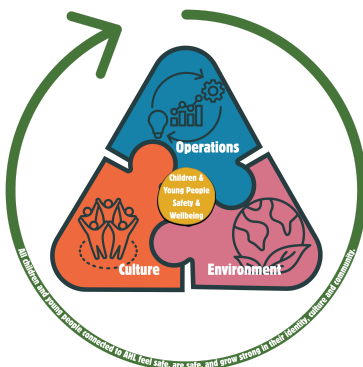
- create environments where children and young people's safety and wellbeing is at the centre of thought, values and actions
- place an emphasis on genuine engagement with, and valuing of children and young people
- create conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people
- create conditions that increases the likelihood of identifying any harm
- swiftly respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.

In doing so, children and young people in our organisation can:

- feel and be safe
- be protected from any form of abuse, violence, injury, neglect or exploitation
- feel respected, listened to, valued and supported to reach their full potential
- be supported to grow strong in their identity, culture and connections.

## OUR SAFEGUARDING FRAMEWORK

AHL's Child Safeguarding Framework was developed to guide our practice and to support AHL People to make sure all children and young people are, and feel, safe in our environments and hostels, in their families and in their communities. It is grounded in cultural safety, child rights and community-led practice, and is embedded in everything we do. The Framework has three (3) core pillars – **Culture, Operations, Environment**



1. **Safe and caring culture** built on leadership, governance, and values that empowers children and young people and places their needs at the centre of decision-making
2. **Safe operations** to ensure AHL People have the right policies, processes and practices to keep children and young people safe, and fulfill their safeguarding responsibilities with confidence
3. **Safe and inclusive environments** which makes every AHL space child-focused, culturally safe and inclusive, so children and young people can thrive.

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The Child Safeguarding Framework aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework, relevant state and territory Child Safe Standards and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It helps bring to life our commitment to:

- preventing child harm by incorporating proactive strategies, policies and procedures that assist in identifying, removing or minimising risks wherever possible
- informing children, young people, families, community members and colleagues/stakeholders regarding their rights, acceptable behaviour and appropriate practices Including providing information about where and how to seek help if concerns arise regarding a child or young person's physical, emotional, psychological or online safety
- taking all allegations or safety concerns seriously and investigating in accordance with policies and procedures
- adhering to legal and organisational obligations to contact relevant authorities when there are concerns about a child or young person's safety
- applying comprehensive people management processes and recruitment practices for all AHL People
- providing regular training, support and education opportunities for AHL People aimed at increasing child safeguarding awareness and capability
- providing an inclusive environment that promotes equality and diversity, and does not discriminate based on culture, values, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, background or disability
- providing culturally safe and affordable accommodation services for families with children and young people, as well as a home-away-from home environment for secondary education students
- regularly reviewing and improving practices and processes to ensure they effectively meet the safety and wellbeing needs of children and young people
- seeking and acting on advice and guidance from children and young people, families, community members and AHL People to maintain these standards.

Our Child and Young Person Safeguarding Handbook provides detailed information on our Child Safeguarding Framework and is a practical resource for all AHL People. It brings together our safeguarding policies, standards and practices into one accessible guide, and outlines how we embed safeguarding into our culture, operations and environments. It is designed to guide your actions, strengthen your confidence and support a culture of safety, accountability and respect across all parts of AHL.

### **OUR SAFEGUARDING BEHAVIOURAL STANDARDS**

The Child and Young Person Safeguarding Behaviour Standards (the Standards) supports our safeguarding approach and practice. The Standards ensure everyone knows how to conduct themselves around children and young people. The Standards set clear expectations for safe, respectful, and professional behaviour, so that children and young people feel protected, supported, and valued. The standards help AHL People understand their responsibilities, prevent harm, and build a safe culture where the wellbeing of children and young people always comes first.

The Standards apply to all AHL People (i.e. anyone who is employed by, or works at AHL including employees (ongoing, non-ongoing, casual), volunteers, senior leaders, Board directors, external

providers/contractors and others acting on behalf of AHL. The Standards apply to all activities, in the organisation which involve, result in, or relate to contact with children and young people, whether on or off AHL grounds.

The Standards apply at all times. AHL recognises that if a person poses a risk to the health, safety and/or wellbeing of a child or young person in any environment, they pose a risk to children and young people in AHL environments. It includes online conduct, conduct in the workplace, and conduct in the general community.

A breach of the Standards 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.

### **Behavioural Expectations**

The expectations detailed below guide the behaviour and actions of all AHL People to promote child safety, wellbeing, cultural safety and inclusion.

#### ***Act in the best interests of children and young people (in all actions and decision)***

- Empower children and young people to express their views and participate in decisions that affect them.
- Support children and young people to safely raise concerns or complaints.
- not harm or exploit children and young people.
- Be willing to protect children and young people from harm and to understand the definitions, indicators and impact of child abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Respond proactively to any concerns or allegations of harm, neglect or abuse.
- Understand and uphold children and young people's rights and be respectful of, and towards, children and young people. Including, being a leader who stands up for the rights of children and young people, advocates for their best interests, and constructively challenges practices.

#### ***Promote equity, inclusion and cultural safety***

- Respect and value the diverse backgrounds and abilities of all children, including First Nations children and young people, and children and young people with disabilities.
- Actively respect, value and support the cultural safety of First Nations children, young people, and their families by embedding culturally safe, inclusive and responsive practices including, respect for kinship, Country, identity, and cultural expression.
- Actively reject behaviours or assumptions that stereotype or marginalise children and young people based on culture, ability, gender, sexuality, or socioeconomic background.
- Reflect on personal biases and areas for self-improvement.
- Respect the cultural and religious practices of families and communities unless practices are considered abusive/harmful to children under legislation.

#### ***Establish respectful boundaries and appropriate relationships***

- Always maintain professional boundaries and never engage in behaviour that could be interpreted as grooming, favouritism, intimate, or overly personal.
- Only touch children and young people in ways that are respectful, appropriate to the situation, and with their consent (e.g. first aid, comforting a distressed child).

***Enable safe online and digital engagement***

- Use digital platforms in ways that uphold the safety, privacy, and dignity of children and young people.
- Refrain from private messaging, 'friending', or contacting children or young people on personal social media or messaging apps.
- Only use organisational approved platforms for communicating with children and young people.
- Never post or share images, videos, or information about children and young people without informed consent and appropriate safeguards.

Informed consent means a person has been given clear and honest information about something that affects them - like a service, treatment, or activity - and they understand what it involves, including the benefits, risks, and choices available. They then freely agree (or choose not to agree) without pressure.

***Model respectful and protective behaviour***

- Speak to children and young people respectfully. Never shout, belittle, shame, or use threats.
- Intervene when other adults, children or young people engage in harmful or inappropriate behaviour.
- Use positive behaviour support strategies. Never use physical punishment, humiliation, or harmful disciplinary approaches.

***Identify, report and respond to concerns***

- Know and follow the law in relation to reporting child abuse, neglect, exploitation and domestic and family violence.
- Know and follow all AHL's policies and procedures when interacting with children and young people, especially in relation to protecting children and young people from harm.
- Never contravene any policies, regulations or laws in relation to the safety and protection of children and young people.
- Never ignore, delay or cover up concerns. Immediately report any suspicion, disclosure, or observation of child abuse, neglect, grooming, or misconduct even if the alleged perpetrator is a colleague or leader.
- Be responsive to any concerns raised about a child or young person. Including acting on any concern or suspicion that arises as a result of your own observations and interactions with children, young people, families, communities or other AHL Person.
- Never obstruct or prevent anyone from reporting suspected instances of abuse, harm or exploitation in accordance with AHL policies and procedures.
- Support children and young people sensitively if they disclose concerns.

***Uphold confidentiality and information privacy***

- Protect the privacy of children, young people, families and communities in accordance with privacy and information sharing requirements.
- Only share personal information if legally required or necessary to protect a child or young person. Information sharing decisions are to be made in consideration of the best interest of a child and young person's wellbeing and safety.
- Do not photograph, record, or share child-related information without informed consent and a legitimate purpose.
- Speak discreetly and respectfully about sensitive matters or concerns involving children, young people and their families.

***Support child and young person participation and feedback***

- Actively seek and value children and young people's opinions about what makes them feel safe and supported.
- Build the trust and confidence of children and young people to meaningfully participate in service, program and policy design, daily activities and decisions that affect them by valuing and responding to their contributions.
- Provide opportunities for children and young people to raise concerns or complaints and respond to them seriously and appropriately.
- Welcome and act on feedback about safety and inclusion from children, young people and/or their families.
- Create environments where children feel empowered, respected, capable and experience a safe sense of belonging.

***Participate in continuous learning and reflection***

- Have a commitment to continually increasing your knowledge of child protection issues, prevention and safeguarding practices that enhance wellbeing.
- Engage in regular training on safeguarding, cultural awareness, trauma-informed practice, and organisational policy.
- Reflect on your own practices and unconscious biases and seek guidance when unsure about what you should do.
- Contribute to a culture of openness, accountability, and continuous improvement in safeguarding practices.

***Champion safeguarding culture***

- Take personal responsibility for contributing to a AHL's safeguarding approach and practice
- Speak up when others act unsafely or unethically.
- Model respectful, inclusive and protective behaviour at all times.
- Encourage AHL People to uphold these Standards and challenge unsafe or disrespectful behaviour.
- Support the implementation of our Safeguarding Framework, Handbook, policies, practices, and governance arrangements that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

**Behaviour that is Not Acceptable**

Any behaviour toward children and young people which is illegal will not be tolerated regardless of where the offence occurred. Any allegation of behaviour that may be against the law will be reported to the Police and any other relevant body, authority or agency required or considered appropriate to receive the information.

Allegations involving the following behaviours towards children or young people will be reported to relevant authorities:

***Sexual offences***

- Actions include but are not limited to, sexual contact of any kind. This also includes exposure to or involvement in pornography, prostitution, exploitation and sexting.

***Physical assault or battery***

- Actions include, but are not limited to, hitting, choking, kicking, pinching, pushing, throwing objects at and/or making threats to cause physical harm.

***Neglect***

- Actions include but are not limited to failing to provide the basic necessities of life, intentional or reckless failure to supervise, and failing to act to protect children and young people.

***Other criminal offences***

- Any other behaviour towards children and young people which is against the law will be reported to the Police. Examples include, but are not limited to, stealing from children and young people, exploitation, supplying children and young people with alcohol or drugs, and the confinement, isolation or other inhumane treatment of children or young people.

AHL People that are found to have engaged in any such behaviour will be subject to an investigation and disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, and any other available legal remedy.

Some behaviours may not be illegal, but AHL considers them to be inconsistent with our values and commitment to safeguarding children and young people. Behaviour and conduct can include, but is not limited to:

***Sexual misconduct***

AHL defines 3 types of sexual misconduct:

1. *Crossing professional boundaries* – behaviour involving an inappropriate and overly personal or intimate relationship, conduct towards or focus on a child or young person or group of children and young people. This includes:
  - intimate relationships with children and young people
  - taking children and young people to your house or in your personal vehicle
  - intentionally seeing children and young people outside of work when no family connection exists
  - engaging with children and young people through personal social media accounts, phone, email or other electronic communication
  - kissing and being overly affectionate toward children and young people.
2. *Sexually explicit comments and other overtly sexual behaviour* – behaviour which includes:
  - sexualised behaviour towards children and young people
  - inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature
  - unwarranted and inappropriate touching
  - personal correspondence and communications with a child or young person in relation to the adult's romantic or sexual feelings
  - watching children and young people undress.
3. *Grooming behaviour* – a behaviour or pattern of behaviour that demonstrates that an AHL Person is grooming a child or young person for sexual activity. Under state and territory jurisdictions, grooming is considered a criminal offence. AHL will report any suspicions of grooming to the relevant authorities. Grooming behaviour can include:

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- persuading a child or young person or group of children and young people they have a 'special' relationship by spending inappropriate time with them
- showing special favour
- inappropriately giving gifts
- asking the child or young person to keep the relationship a secret or to themselves
- grooming adults (e.g. parent, family members) that have contact with that child or young person in order to avoid detection.

### ***Work outside of AHL role***

- Offering and/or accepting an offer (paid or voluntary) to provide informal services such as private babysitting, private tutoring, or similar to children or families where no family connection exists is actively discouraged.
- AHL People are reminded that if they are found to have engaged in conduct which breaches the Standards or APS Code of Conduct while providing care/services in or out of AHL environments, they may be subject to an investigation and potential disciplinary action.

### ***Images***

- Taking, transmitting, live streaming or saving photographs, images or videos of children or young people on any personal electronic device (including smart glasses), is not permitted, with or without expressed consent.

### ***Other harmful behaviour***

- Handling children/young people roughly or aggressively such as pulling or grabbing children, particularly by their arms, legs or neck; swinging or picking up children by their arms or swearing, yelling, screaming, scolding or intimidating children/young people verbally or physically.
- Engaging in behaviour which causes emotional or psychological harm to children or young people, such as a pattern of hostile or unreasonable behaviour or degrading comments to a child.

These behaviours may be in contravention of standards expected by regulators and other agencies. As a result, we may refer allegations relating to the above-mentioned conduct/behaviour to any relevant body, authority or other agency that AHL considers appropriate to receive the information. AHL People that are found to have engaged in this behaviour will be subject to an investigation and potential disciplinary action.

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**SIGNED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

To be read, understood and signed by all AHL People:

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the **Child and Young Person Safeguarding Behavioural Standards**. I agree to uphold the Standards and understand that breaches may result in disciplinary action or legal consequences.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_