

Establishing and maintaining tenancies

Child protection policy

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Policy: 1.2.15

Section name: Establishing and maintaining tenancies

Document name	Child protection
Applicability	Mission Australia Housing
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1 Purpose

- 1.1 To outline the position of Mission Australia Housing (MAH) in relation to protecting children and young people.
- 1.2 To outline circumstances which may cause staff to make a report to **child protection** authorities.
- 1.3 To describe the process of reporting a child welfare concern to child protection authorities.

2 Related policies

- 2.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the relevant child protection and wellbeing legislation and guidelines in each operating state.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to staff responsible for managing tenants and properties of MAH.

4 Guiding principles

- 4.1 MAH upholds the right of children and young people to protection, stability and wellbeing.

- 4.2** MAH responds to child welfare concerns in a timely and efficient manner, wherever possible under an early intervention framework by:
- Recognising the signs of abuse and neglect
 - Reporting actual and suspected cases to relevant authorities as required.
- 4.3** Staff have a consistent understanding of reportable matters across all operating states.
- 4.4** MAH upholds accountability and transparency through its record keeping practices.

5 Policy

- 5.1** Staff of MAH must report any cases of **child abuse, neglect** or harm involving tenants of MAH or their household to state child protection authorities. MAH has a special status under child protection legislation, which makes mandatory the requirement to report any perceived or actual instances of harm and/or abuse involving children of tenants and housing applicants, and children who are guests of tenants.
- 5.2** Staff must make a report to state child protection authorities wherever there is reasonable belief that a child is at risk of harm. Staff will not be required to have evidence of abuse, neglect or harm in order to make a report and under no circumstance should staff investigate for evidence of such. MAH may be in breach of its duty of care under the legislation where staff suspect risks, fail to report them and subsequent harm to a child occurs.
- 5.3** Staff will make a report to child protection authorities where:
- Neighbours or support agencies report concerns for the welfare of a child living in or visiting a property
 - Staff observe potential child risks or incidents
 - A child has disclosed abuse, harm or neglect to staff
 - A child has requested the intervention of child protection authorities
 - A tenant with children is to be evicted and they do not have alternative accommodation arrangements in place.
- 5.4** Staff will inform the National Operations Manager of all child safety reports and/or concerns.
- 5.5** Staff will inform tenants of their right to appeal organisational decisions and to complain about the services of MAH as per the [Appeals and Complaints Policy](#).
- 5.6** Staff will store any information about child welfare issues in the tenancy management system.

6 Definitions

Child: under most Australian legislation, children are classified as minors aged under 18 years. This means that they are typically under the care of a legal guardian, either a parent or substitute decision maker who has certain obligations to protect a child. Some operating states distinguish between children (aged up to 16) and young people (aged between 16 and 18 years), but all states give special protections to children and young people at risk. Any significant perceived or actual risks to children and young people should be reported to a child protection authority.

Child abuse: child abuse may include unwanted sexual or physical contact (including violence) or threatening behaviour that impacts on the behaviour of a child, such as domestic violence between two adults.

Child neglect: child neglect is an omission more than an action. Neglect refers to a failure to provide age appropriate care or to act in the best interests of a child. Two examples of child neglect include: failing to feed a child and neglecting to send a child to school.