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| Policy name | Child and Youth Safe Policy |
| Policy date | October 2018 |
| Authorisation | Chief Executive Officer |
| Policy owner | Executive – Practice, Quality and Performance |
| Policy type | Enterprise Policy |
| Policy Setting | Enterprise – Whole of Organisation |

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Policy is:

- to outline Mission Australia’s commitment to maintaining child and youth safe environments across our organisation;
- to document the key components and underlying principles of Mission Australia’s approach to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, in accordance with principles and standards of best practice, and our legal and regulatory responsibilities;
- to ensure that our commitment to children and young people’s safety and wellbeing is embedded within our organisation’s culture, reflected in our policies and procedures and understood and practiced at all levels of the organisation; and
- to ensure that this commitment also guides our interactions with young people who are Mission Australia employees or volunteers.

2. Scope

2.1 This Policy applies to all Mission Australia ‘workers’ as defined under Work Health and Safety laws. All ‘workers’ in this definition includes employees (including Mission Australia Executive), contractors, subcontractors, outworkers, apprentices and trainees, work experience students and volunteers, including Board members and Board Committee members, who perform work for, or on behalf of, Mission Australia. For the purposes of this Policy, workers will be referred to as ‘staff’.

2.2 This is an organisation wide policy. References to ‘we’ or ‘our’ refer to all Mission Australia staff, as defined above.

3. Definitions

Child for the purposes of this Policy a child is any person under the age of 18 years.

Child and Youth Safe Organisation – an organisation that values children and young people and promotes their safety, protection and wellbeing and takes steps to prevent, identify, respond to and report harm or risk of harm.

Workplace –a workplace refers to any location / time where Mission Australia staff deliver a service. This includes Mission Australia service premises or offices, an outreach location (such as the home of a service user, or a public place like a community centre) or the venue of an event.

Youth and young person – for the purposes of this Policy, a child aged 13 – 17 years is referred to as a youth or young person.

4. Mission Australia Child Safety Statement of Commitment

All children and young people have a right to feel safe, and to be safe at all times. Mission Australia will not tolerate any abuse or neglect of children or young people involved with our services.

We are committed to creating environments which are child safe and child friendly in line with our *Founding Purpose* and *Values*. We take a preventative and proactive approach to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, that everyone understands and where everyone feels confident to have a say and raise any concerns.

We respect and value the rights of all children and young people, and support them to reach their full potential. We recognise that particular consideration needs to be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. We also acknowledge the particular needs of children and young people arising from their cultural and linguistic background, sexuality, gender diversity, disability, or as a result of domestic and family violence or other trauma.

Safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of all Mission Australia staff and the Board of Mission Australia.

Mission Australia will:

1. Drive a culture of child safety at all levels of the organisation.
2. Take all allegations or disclosures of abuse or neglect seriously, respond appropriately, report concerns to the relevant authorities, and uphold our values of Compassion and Integrity at all times. The safety of the child/young person will be our primary consideration and no Mission Australia person will obstruct any investigation or collude to protect any person or organisation.
3. Empower children, young people, families and communities to participate in decisions which affect their lives.
4. Value diversity and promote inclusive practices.
5. Employ and engage only people who are suitable to work with children and young people and provide high quality supervision and support.
6. Ensure children and young people who feel unsafe, or wish to raise a concern know who to talk with and feel comfortable to do so.
7. Ensure staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe.
8. Maintain the safety, suitability and security of our physical and online environments which children and young people access.
9. Embed Child Safe principles within our quality assurance practices.

10. Undertake regular review of policy and procedures that document how our organisation is child safe.

The above responsibilities are detailed within our Code of Conduct, organisational policies and procedures and our *Reconciliation Action Plan*.

5. Policy

5.1 Leadership, Governance and Culture

- 5.1.1 Mission Australia strives at all times to promote the safety, protection and wellbeing of children and young people.
- 5.1.2 Our staff must demonstrate the practices, behaviour and relationships consistent with our organisational values, *Mission Australia's Code of Conduct*, *Mission Australia's Working with Children and Young People Policy* and Human Resources policies and procedures in all their interactions with children and young people who access our services. These documents must be read, understood, and signed by staff when they commence employment or engagement with Mission Australia, and followed at all times during their employment or engagement.
- 5.1.3 Our staff must actively discourage and immediately report to management any behaviour, which may be considered to be a breach of *Mission Australia's Working with Children and Young People Policy*, *Mission Australia's Code of Conduct*, organisational policies and procedures or values. All breaches are managed in accordance with Human Resources policy and procedures.
- 5.1.4 We must comply with our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, national, state and territory child protection legislation and other relevant laws, regulations, standards and quality frameworks, accreditation, licensing, and contractual obligations when working with children and young people, as they apply to our services.

5.2 Children and Young People's Participation and Empowerment

- 5.2.1 We consistently promote a child and youth safe, inclusive culture that places a high priority on ensuring our service environments promote the empowerment and participation of all children and young people, including those with particular needs and vulnerabilities.
- 5.2.2 Our staff must ensure that all children and young people who access our services are aware of, and understand, their rights and responsibilities, and are supported to exercise these rights and responsibilities via relevant processes.
- 5.2.3 We recognise that friendships and peer support are important in helping children and young people feel safe, supported and connected.
- 5.2.4 Where our services provide activities or programs for groups of children or young people, staff encourage and support them to develop an agreement that outlines expectations of appropriate behaviour between themselves, and between children/young people and staff, from their perspective.

- 5.2.5 Where social media has been identified as an effective and appropriate medium to facilitate the participation of children and young people, our staff must comply with the *Mission Australia's Social Media Policy* and associated Guidelines, to ensure it is safely and appropriately used.
- 5.2.6 In accordance with *Mission Australia's Enterprise Privacy Policy and Procedure*, children and young people must be informed when they access our services, as appropriate to their age and level of understanding, about how their personal information will be managed and how their privacy rights will be respected. This includes informing the child/young person about when it becomes our legal obligation to share their information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations, should their safety and wellbeing be considered at risk.
- 5.2.7 Children and young people who access our services are to be provided with information in relation to accessing their documents and records, and are supported to do so, in accordance with relevant policy. Our work with children and young people is documented using language that is easily understood and respectful of children and young people who access our services.

5.3 Family and Community Involvement

- 5.3.1 Our staff are to promote this Policy and make it readily accessible, in the relevant format, to any child, young person, parent, carer or other stakeholder to ensure a clear understanding of our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our services.
- 5.3.2 When required, other service-specific child safe and child friendly procedures, practices or guidelines are also to be made available.
- 5.3.3 Families are encouraged to participate in decisions affecting their child/ren, where it will not compromise the safety of the child or young person.
- 5.3.4 Our staff are to engage with families and communities and listen to their views in regard to our child and youth safe practices, policies and procedures. Information shared will help inform our practices and procedures.

5.4 Equality and Diversity

- 5.4.1 We use inclusive and empowering language, which is accessible, takes account of language and literacy levels and cultural differences and is easy for children and young people to understand.
- 5.4.2 We value diversity, will not tolerate any discriminatory practices and promote the participation of all children and young people engaged with our services. We identify and address any barriers for children and young people that may limit their participation.
- 5.4.3 We develop and implement strategies that support us to engage children and young people with high or complex needs, and those who are at risk of coming into the child protection system.

5.4.4 Our child and youth safe policies, procedures and practices are culturally secure and promote the active participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. We develop and maintain relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, elders and organisations to support culturally strong practice.

5.4.5 Our child and youth safe policies, procedures and practices are culturally secure and promote the active participation and engagement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children, young people and families.

5.5 Staff recruitment and suitability

5.5.1 Mission Australia must apply rigorous recruitment, screening and selection processes (that are in accordance with the Fair Work Act) and ensure staff are appropriately qualified, skilled and experienced to competently and safely deliver high quality services to children and young people.

5.5.2 The advertisement for each employment and volunteering position at Mission Australia is to clearly state our commitment as an organisation to child and youth safety and wellbeing.

5.5.3 Our position descriptions clearly define: expectations, responsibilities and accountabilities for each role; the required experience and qualifications; our values and mission statement; and what is expected in respect of our commitment to, and responsibility for, child and youth safety and wellbeing.

5.5.4 We are to uphold a focus on the safety of children and young people throughout the recruitment, suitability and screening process, through the verification of identity, qualifications and professional experience.

5.5.5 All prospective Mission Australia employees and volunteers must complete a formal background check including a National Criminal History Check. When applying for a position working directly with and/or, in certain states, having access to the sensitive information of children and young people, all prospective Mission Australia employees and volunteers must also undertake the relevant Working with Children Check for the state/s or territory/ies they work in.

5.5.6 Our staff must ensure they comply with their relevant state or territory legislative obligations as an employer, employee or volunteer. Our Human Resources policies and procedures must also be adhered to where screening checks result in disclosable outcomes.

5.5.7 We understand that suitability and screening processes are a critical, and legislated preventative measure to ensure child and youth safe environments, but we recognise that these cannot identify people who have not been previously convicted or are yet to offend. Accordingly, they are only one of the strategies required to prevent harm to children and young people and create safe environments.

5.6 Complaints and Feedback

- 5.6.1 Staff must provide information on the feedback and complaints process in an appropriate and accessible format to children and young people when they access Mission Australia services.
- 5.6.2 Children and young people who access our services are to be provided with information about other agencies or persons that they can raise concerns with and who are able to support them, or advocate on their behalf.
- 5.6.3 All complaints are to be taken seriously and responded to promptly and with procedural fairness. Where necessary, changes will be made to policy, procedure and/or practice as a result of a complaint.

5.7 Staff support and development

- 5.7.1 We build the capability of our staff through professional development, supervision and support, to promote and maintain a child and youth safe organisation.
- 5.7.2 Specific induction and training is provided to Mission Australia Board members. This covers the particular responsibilities of the Board that are outlined within the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- 5.7.3 New employees and volunteers are to participate in a comprehensive induction and orientation process to child and youth safe policies, procedures and practices. Line Managers will ensure new employees and volunteers complete all relevant mandatory training in child protection, child development and child safe practices, as required by sector standards and legislation, and in accordance with our organisational requirements. Orientation/training is also to be provided to contractors and sub-contractors as required.
- 5.7.4 We are committed to the provision of high quality supervision practices for all staff encompassing regular reviews of workplace performance, behaviours and relationships, and opportunities to share observations and problems, and to safely explore views about child and youth safety issues.
- 5.7.5 Our employees participate in an annual Performance and Development Review, as an additional process by which managers are able to formally review their staff members' individual contributions to the provision and promotion of child and youth safe practices.
- 5.7.6 Mission Australia employs young people, provides opportunities for work experience and vocational placement for young people, and engages young people in volunteering experiences. Procedures for employment, work or study placement, and volunteering opportunities for young people reflect the developmental characteristics and features of this age group.

5.8 Safe physical and online environments

- 5.8.1 Our staff are responsible for embedding a culture of risk management across our organisation as per *Mission Australia's Enterprise Risk Management and Incident Management Policies and Procedures*.

- 5.8.2 Our staff must abide by any program or activity-specific guidance outlined in risk management plans when undertaking specific practices involving children and young people within the local context.
- 5.8.3 Risk assessments for employee and volunteer positions, activities and events at our services, sites or other locations must be conducted in accordance with relevant *Mission Australia's Enterprise Risk Management and Incident Management Policies and Procedures* and *Mission Australia's WHS Policies and Procedures*. Staff are to identify and address actions required to minimise risks to children and young people, during both routine, new or high risk activities.
- 5.8.4 We must take all allegations or disclosures of abuse or neglect seriously, respond appropriately and report concerns to the relevant authorities. Incidents, allegations or disclosures involving children and young people are to be internally reported, escalated and investigated as required, and externally notified or reported to our funders and/or regulatory agencies as required.
- 5.8.5 Our staff must complete induction and ongoing training on managing risks and creating safe environments, to ensure the safety, suitability and security of physical environments for children and young people in our services, centres and programs.
- 5.8.6 Staff are to be educated about expectations of online behaviour and, where relevant, how to identify and mitigate risks in the online environment. The online environment will be used in accordance with *Mission Australia's Working with Children and Young People Policy*, *Mission Australia's Code of Conduct* and *Mission Australia's Social Media Policy*.
- 5.8.7 Staff must implement any procedures in relation to people visiting services to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people when they have visitors.
- 5.8.8 Staff must ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people working or volunteering at Mission Australia and children accompanying an adult to a Mission Australia workplace or event.

5.9 Continuous Improvement

- 5.9.1 Mission Australia is committed to strengthening, embedding and maintaining an organisation-wide child and youth safe culture through a process of ongoing continuous improvement.
- 5.9.2 We must implement an ongoing cycle of assessment, action and reflection including regular review of policies and practices to ensure child and youth safe policies and practices are understood and embedded at all levels of the organisation.
- 5.9.3 Incidents and complaints are to be critically reviewed to: identify trends; identify and manage risks and systemic issues; and improve our child and youth safe policies, procedures and practices.

5.10 Identifying, Responding to, and Reporting Harm and Risk of Harm

- 5.10.1 Safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of all Mission Australia staff.
- 5.10.2 All children and young people have a right to feel safe, and to be safe at all times. Mission Australia does not tolerate any abuse or neglect of children or young people involved with our services.
- 5.10.3 All staff must ensure the best interests of children and young people are paramount when responding to, and reporting concerns about, their safety and wellbeing.
- 5.10.4 The prevention, identification and reporting of suspected or actual abuse to, or neglect of, children and young people is an integral part of a child and youth safe organisation. Our *Mission Australia's Reporting Risk of Harm Policy* will ensure that as individual staff members, and as an organisation, we are meeting our legal and ethical obligations to report risk of harm or harm to children and young people.
- 5.10.5 Our staff must be familiar with all practice guidelines relevant to their service to assist them to appropriately and safely respond to children and young people, should they disclose information to them about abuse or neglect.
- 5.10.6 In the situation where a staff member makes a child protection report, we must ensure that support is available for the child or young person, other affected people (such as family members) and for the employee making the child protection report, particularly where an ongoing service is provided to the child or young person and/or their family.
- 5.10.7 Our workers complete training in our organisational policy and procedures to internally and/or externally report and investigate allegations of child abuse or neglect concerning Mission Australia workers.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 The Board

In accordance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, it is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that:

- Mission Australia has the appropriate policies, procedures and culture in place to:
 - proactively promote child safety;
 - safeguard against the risk of harm to children and young people; and
 - ensure that management responds effectively if harm is suspected or confirmed.
- Mission Australia's strategic plans and statements about our mission are developed with specific consideration of child safety.

6.2 Line Managers

- It is the responsibility of Line Managers to induct all staff new to Mission Australia to this Policy during their period of induction and orientation.
- It is the responsibility of Line Managers to lead the embedding of a child safe culture within their area, and to proactively seek out, identify and address any issues or concerns.

6.3 All Staff

- It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure practices comply with this Policy and any future revisions made.
- It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure they have read, understood and comply with this Policy.
- It is the responsibility of all staff to actively promote a child safe culture within their area, and to raise any issues or concerns which they observe.

6.4 Policy Owner

- The policy owner is responsible for reviewing and updating this policy when required.

7. Mission Australia Contacts

- National Practice Support Team – practicesupport@missionaustralia.com.au
- Legal Team - [SPARK](#) or 1300 136 248
- Enterprise Risk and Assurance Team - complianceteam@missionaustralia.com.au

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Resources

Appendix A – Resources

| Mission Australia Resources | |
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| Community Services National Policies Workspace | CS - Client Record Retention and Disposal Policy CS – Reporting Risk of Harm Policy CS – Working with Children and Young People Policy |
| MA Intranet – Document Library | Code of Conduct Employment Screening Policy Enterprise Incident Management Policy and Procedure Enterprise Privacy Policy and Procedure (incl. consent form and brochure) Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Procedure Enterprise Work Health and Safety Policy Good Working Relationships Policy Grievance Management Policy and Procedure Induction and Orientation Policy Managing Underperformance and Misconduct Policy Recruitment Policy Social Media Policy and associated Guidelines Whistleblower Policy WHS Policies and Procedures |
| MA Intranet Page | Reconciliation Action Plan Mission Australia’s Founding Purpose and Values |
| MA Early Learning Policy Workspace | ACECQA Notifications Procedure Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy Child Protection Notification Guidelines and Reporting Record Emergency Management Plan Supervision Risk Minimisation Procedure and Plan |
| MA Housing Workspace | MA Housing National Establishing and Maintaining Tenancy National Child Protection Policy |
| Quality Program Workspaces | MA Quality Standards, Activities and Action Plan |
| External Resources | |
| Royal Commission Website Australian Human Rights Commission Website Legislation | National Principles for Child Safe Organisations United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 – NT Child Protection Act 1999 – QLD Children and Community Services Act 2004 – WA Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 – SA Children and Young People Act 2008 – ACT Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 – NSW Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997 – TAS Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 – VIC Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) (the “Privacy Act”) |