

Child Safeguarding Policy

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate HOME in PLACE's commitment to protecting children and young people from all harm and abuse.

In line with legislation in each operating jurisdiction, and as a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, HOME in PLACE is obligated to have policies and procedures implemented which promote the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people accessing its services and programs, in particular to minimise the risk of abuse of children and young people.

The policy aims to educate directors, employees, and others about significant risk of harm and promote a child safe culture where everyone is committed to keep children and young people safe.

In addition, the policy identifies the legislative requirements around mandatory reporting requirements for HOME in PLACE workers and our support partners including the requirement to report suspected significant risk of harm or neglect of a child or young person to government authorities (in accordance with the legislation of the relevant jurisdiction).

For all jurisdictions in which HOME in PLACE and our support partners provide services to children and young people, wholly or partly, HOME in PLACE's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people extends the obligation of all workers to report suspected child significant risk of harm or neglect to the relevant authorities in those jurisdictions as well as internally through HOME in PLACE secure online incident and reporting software, FOLIO.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all HOME in PLACE Directors, Committee Members, Workers, Associates, Partners, and Consultants (including researchers, photographers etc.) engaged in short- or long-term contracts to carry out national and international business activities on behalf of HOME in PLACE.

Associates' refers to others not included in the Definitions (section 7) of this policy for Directors, Committee Members and Workers and include visitors to our programs (including media), advisory group members, interns, supporters (donors, sponsors, advocates, ambassadors), trustees, members, Employees in consulting and partnership agencies, and any other individuals or groups that have been brought in contact with children and young people (including their personal information and images) while working with and / or supporting HOME in PLACE.

Partners refer to local, state, national, regional, and international agencies that HOME in PLACE has an official arrangement with via signed MoU or Partnership Agreement or Contract, to implement or deliver HOME in PLACE Programs, Projects and Initiative in Australia and any part of the world.

3. Policy Statement

This policy is explicitly endorsed by the HOME in PLACE Board, reflecting its commitment to providing a safe environment for all children and young people. The Board recognises the significance of maintaining rigorous child safeguarding standards across all areas of the organisation's operations.

HOME in PLACE recognises that by the nature of work, our operations may pose a risk to children and young people, therefore, this Child Safeguarding Policy has been developed to proactively identify and mitigate those risks.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safeguarding

HOME in PLACE is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. The rights of children and young people, to be safe and cared for, is supported by HOME in PLACE and HOME in PLACE undertake to ensure a child safe environment is maintained.

Guiding Principles

HOME in PLACE believes that all children and young people have the right to be safe at all times and acknowledges its duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people are safe from harm. HOME in PLACE will proactively work to provide safe and protective programs, activities, and environments.

The protection of children and young people is the responsibility of all HOME in PLACE Directors, Committee Members, Workers, Associates and Partners carrying out national and international business activities on behalf of HOME in PLACE. HOME in PLACE will ensure that all Workers and relevant Stakeholders are made aware of HOME in PLACE Child Safeguarding Policy and their responsibilities.

HOME in PLACE also adopted DFAT's Five (5) Principles on Child Protection and the Ten (10) National Child Safe Principles to guide HOME in PLACE's Child Safeguarding Policy and practices and incorporated them in the Children Safeguarding Policy (refer to Annexure 1 and Annexure 2).

Context

Child significant risk of harm affects children and young people of all genders and backgrounds. While it may occur globally, HOME in PLACE focuses on risk within our operating environments, this includes risks associated with family environments, communities, or individuals who may seek inappropriate access to vulnerable children through our programs.

Some children and young people are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation than others. Children and young people living in extreme poverty, children and young people with disabilities, children and young people from minority groups, children and young people living in residential care, children and young people living in emergency or conflict situations, children and young people on the move and children and young people who are homeless or living with others who are homeless are often at higher risk of abuse than others.

Around the world children and young people are forced to endure the most hazardous forms of child labour, girls are subjected to early enforced marriage, children are kidnapped and forced into armed conflict as soldiers or sexually exploited by combatants. Children are trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation (including online) and experience severe corporal punishment in schools.

While most child significant risk of harm occurs within families and communities, children and young people also experience abuse and exploitation in organisations which provide them with support and services.

HOME in PLACE often work with vulnerable children and young people within our community housing, community and scholarship programs and recognise that this may attract individuals seeking inappropriate access. As a result, we are committed to implementing strong protective measures and safeguarding practices to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our services.

HOME in PLACE Code of Conduct (CoC)

POL-028-04 Code of Conduct Policy is a clear organisational guide of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in relation to working with each other, our clients, suppliers, partners, and primary and major stakeholders as well as working with children and young people. It provides common understanding of the standard of behaviour and the appropriate boundaries expected of HOME in PLACE's Personnel, Associates and Partners to keep children safe.

The HOME in PLACE Code of Conduct is provided to all HOME in PLACE Directors, Committee Members and Workers and acknowledged by them regardless of their contact with children and young people. It is also incorporated in HOME in PLACE's MoU, Partnership Agreement and Contracts with partnering government & non-government organisations and local community groups.

The Code of Conduct includes an additional Code of Conduct (Safeguarding of children) Commitments that clearly sets out the expected behaviours for people who may have contact with and/or work directly with children and young people.

Child Protection Officer

HOME in PLACE Group Executive Manager Governance (GEMG) has been appointed Child Protection Officer to respond to any questions or concerns about child safety related issues, and to be the primary contact/focal person in the event of any Reportable Conduct Incident. The GEMG is the contact person for external regulatory bodies and will coordinate with the GMD (Head of Organisation) if an investigation of incidents or allegations of harm are required.

Risk Assessment

Risk management is an ongoing part of our work involving and affecting children and young people. In order to provide safe activities, programs, projects, and environments for children and young people, HOME in PLACE conducts a child protection risk assessment on all activities, programs, projects, and initiatives, involving and affecting children either directly or indirectly, prior to commencement. Mitigation

strategies are put in place for any risk identified and these (and any emerging risks) are actively monitored throughout the activity, program, project, and initiative cycle.

Workers and associates (as relevant) are trained in child safeguarding and risk assessment and detecting signs of abuse. They are expected to be continually aware of potential risks to children and young people as well as to be actively minimising opportunities and situations where children and young people can be harmed.

Child safeguarding elements are included in our organisational Risk Register which is monitored by HOME in PLACE's Group Executives and the Jurisdictional Boards and their subsequent Governing Advisory Committees.

Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Workers and associates will encourage and support children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights. They will actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion within HOME in PLACE by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and their families. Home in Place does not tolerate racism and will respond to any instances of racism.

HOME in PLACE supports, guides and trains Workers and leaders to understand, respect and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people's culture and to understand the importance of this to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. HOME in PLACE actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and their families by implementing the Reconciliation Action Plan.

HOME in PLACE is committed to promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people by:

- Consulting and forming relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups and individuals, to create opportunity for Aboriginal voice in planning, policies and activities.
- Acknowledging the Traditional Owner groups in our area.
- Observing key events such as NAIDOC Week which celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- HOME in PLACE publicly commits to upholding the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and young people. This includes recognising the strengths of Aboriginal culture, ensuring the services are culturally appropriate and safe, and that Aboriginal children are supported to feel strong in their identity. HOME in PLACE is dedicated to ongoing learning and engagement with Aboriginal communities to continuously improve our approach to cultural safety.

Equity and Inclusion for Children and Young People

HOME in PLACE is committed to creating an inclusive, welcoming and culturally safe environment for all children and young people. Inclusion means that every child and young person has access to, can participate meaningfully in, and can experience positive outcomes whilst accessing services at HOME in PLACE.

HOME in PLACE believes that all children and young people are entitled to fair and equal treatment, regardless of their background, and that diversity of experience enriches our organisational environment. We recognise that all families are unique, and that children and young people learn in different ways and at different rates.

HOME in PLACE commits to:

- Ensuring all children and young people are treated equitably and with respect, regardless of their background, ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs, sexuality, gender, age, socioeconomic status, ability, additional needs, family structure or lifestyle.
- Creating a sense of belonging for all children and young people, where diverse identities, experiences, skills and interests are respected, valued and given opportunity to be expressed complying with all relevant anti-discrimination legislation.
- Ensuring children and young people are free from any forms of discrimination or harassment.

Participation of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Australia is a culturally diverse community made up of many nationalities, cultural backgrounds, languages and religious groups. HOME in PLACE is committed to promoting the cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by:

- Providing training and development to workers and volunteers on cultural sensitivity and competency.
- Being respectful, inclusive and welcoming of families from a range of backgrounds.
- Asking children and families about their culture and cultural support needs.
- Identifying occasions which are important to different cultures and dietary requirements.
- Asking families about their preferred format for the provision of information including translation or interpreting into community languages.

Participation of children and young people with a disability

Children and young people with a disability have a particular need for special care and protection to ensure they are safe. Children and young people with a disability are more vulnerable to social isolation, may have a lower capacity to raise concerns, communication difficulties, and signs of their abuse could potentially be viewed as merely part of their disability.

HOME in PLACE is committed to upholding the safety and wellbeing of children and young people with a disability by:

- Anticipating unsafe situations in our risk assessment processes.
- Implementing sound recruitment processes for staff.
- Making reasonable adjustments to the physical environment, where necessary.
- Empowering children and young people with a disability by assisting them to build their self-esteem and confidence.
- Being inclusive and collaborative with families.

Participation of LGBTI children and young people

LGBTI children and young people can face issues which stem from social and cultural beliefs and assumptions about gender and sexuality, including systemic discrimination at an individual, social and political level. These issues may include social exclusion, violence, abuse and discrimination, a lack of family support, and barriers to accessing support services.

HOME in PLACE is committed to combatting these issues, by promoting the safety, inclusion and support for LGBTI children and young people in the following ways:

- Educating children and young people, staff and volunteers within the organisation about diversity.
- Respecting privacy and confidentiality in relation to all children and young people.
- Referring LGBTI children and young people to external support services, where need is identified.

Involving Families and Communities

HOME in PLACE recognises the important roles that families play and involves parents or guardians and carers when significant decisions are made about their child. We encourage families to provide feedback by emailing us or providing feedback through our feedback process.

HOME in PLACE provides information to families to ensure that they are involved in decisions about their child or young person. We distribute this information by:

- Making the Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct, Client Service Charter and Child Friendly Complaints Handling Policy publicly available on our website.
- Sending out information in induction packs which contains information on our approach to child safety, our management structure and our complaints management system.
- Sending out our newsletter which updates families on our latest news.

HOME in PLACE involves families and communities by:

- Creating an inclusive environment for all families.
- Ensuring information is easy to understand and accessible.
- Providing opportunities to provide feedback.
- Ensuring transparent complaints handling processes.

Overview of Communication and Use of Children's Images Guideline

HOME in PLACE is committed to promoting and respecting the right of children and young people to integrity, privacy and confidentiality and safety and to ensure a child safe environment. This commitment is extended to the communication and use of children's and young people's information and images by HOME in PLACE.

HOME in PLACE's Communication and Use of children's Information and Images Guideline is attached as Annexure 3.

Worker Recruitment, Selection and Training

HOME in PLACE is committed to child safe recruitment, selection, and screening practices and to educating Workers, Associates and Partners, in child protection, in assessing, mitigating, and preventing risks and creating child safe environments.

HOME in PLACE will not knowingly engage, directly or indirectly, anyone who poses a risk to children and young people. These practices aim to recruit the safest and most suitable people to work in our programs.

HOME in PLACE will promote child safe practices that keep children and young people safe in the organisation and in their own community and provide information about child protection to the children and communities in which we work. This information will include reporting child significant risk of harm if they have concerns about a HOME in PLACE Worker, Associate or Partner or another representative in the organisation.

Our child safe practices including educating and training Workers, Associates and Partners are clearly stated in the HOME in PLACE's Worker Recruitment and Selection (Workers working directly or in contact with children) Guideline. Refer to Annexure 4.

Working with Partners

HOME in PLACE is committed to ensuring that any implementing partner is a child safe organisation by including Partners in the Scope of HOME in PLACE's Child Safeguarding Policy (CSP) and incorporating HOME in PLACE Child Safeguarding Policy and HOME in PLACE Code of Conduct (including children safeguarding) in all MoU's, Partnership Agreements and Contracts and ensuring that our Partners - have effective CSP and practices in place to ensure child safety and child safe environment.

Our practices are to ensure our implementing partner is a child safe organisation are clearly stated in the HOME in PLACE's Working with Partners (Child Safeguarding) Guideline. Refer to Annexure 5.

Responding to and Reporting Child Protection Concerns

HOME in PLACE considers the abuse and exploitation of children and young people to be completely unacceptable and is committed to ensuring that Workers and Associates are aware of their legal and moral responsibilities to report suspected child significant risk of harm within and outside of the organisation.

It is mandatory for all HOME in PLACE's Workers, Associates and Partners to report any witnessed, suspected, or alleged incidents of child exploitation or abuse, any significant risk of harm, or any breach of this policy and / or HOME in PLACE Code of Conduct both internally through HOME in PLACE online Incident and Reporting platform (FOLIO), in line with HOME in PLACE reporting procedures, and to the relevant authorities.

These concerns may relate to a child or young person, or Worker involved in the organisation or a concern about a child or young person or person/s outside of the organisation's programs.

HOME in PLACE is committed to implementing a reporting process which is clear, truthful, fair, and professional. HOME in PLACE will take all concerns and reports of child significant risk of harm seriously and act on these reports immediately.

HOME in PLACE's Child Significant Risk of Harm Reporting Procedure identifies:

- What to report;
- When to report;
- Who to report to;
- How to report; and
- What will happen next.

The HOME in PLACE Child Significant Risk of Harm REPORTING Process is attached as Annexure 6.

Responding to Disclosure by a Child.

HOME in PLACE has in place a Child-Friendly Complaint Handling process that includes access to support from appropriate support agencies and/or a person(s) who have undertaken relevant working with children training or equivalent. Refer to HOME in PLACE's - Child Friendly Complaint Handling Policy and PROC-012-02 Child Friendly Complaint Handling Procedure for information about this process.

Reporting Concerns (by Jurisdiction)

i. NSW (mandatory reporting)

In NSW, mandatory reporting is regulated by the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. HOME in PLACE Workers must lodge a mandatory eReport via the ChildStory 'Reporter Community' website maintained by the NSW government or by calling the Child Protection Helpline on 13 21 11.

Registering

Mandatory reporters are required to register in order to submit an eReport. Once registered, mandatory reporters:

- Can create and submit eReports after using the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG), if the MRG outcome is "Report to Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)" or "refer to child Wellbeing Unit (CWU)."
- Will be notified by email when there is a change to status for report.
- Can log into the ChildStory Reporter Community website to see the status of any previous reports that have been submitted.

Making a report

Employees are to login to the Reporter Community via the login button on the page at the link below and complete the mandatory reporting guide (MRG) following the instructions on this page and submit the eReport.

Use the following link to access the Reporter Community webpage:
[Lodging an eReport via NSW Government ChildStory Reporter Community](#)

ii. Victoria

To make a report to child protection a person is required to have formed a reasonable belief that a child or young person has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect, and that their parent has not protected or is unlikely to protect the child or young person from harm of that type.

Contact Child Protection

Where concerns relate to an alleged perpetrator of abuse, who may pose a risk more generally to all children and young people, the concerns should be reported to Police.

In Victoria, reports to child protection must be made to a protective intervener, or other appropriately delegated officer. Reports cannot be made via the department's social media, website, or email, as staff who monitor the department's website are not delegated officers. Almost all reports are made to child protection by phone.

To make a report, you should contact child protection at the office that covers the local government area (LGA) where the child normally resides.

Telephone numbers to make a report during business hours (8.45am to 5pm), Monday to Friday, are listed below.

North Division: 1300 598 521

South Division: 1300 555 526

East Division: 1300 360 452

West Division: 1300 360 462

If you're worried about a child's wellbeing, but don't believe the child needs protection.

If you have significant concern for the wellbeing of a child or young person, but do not believe they are at risk of significant harm, and where the immediate safety of the child or young person will not be compromised, a referral to The Orange Door (replacing Child FIRST) may be appropriate.

The Orange Door provides families assistance with the care and wellbeing of children and young people, including those experiencing family violence, to contact the services they need to be safe and supported.

Referring to The Orange Door is appropriate where families are:

- experiencing significant parenting problems that may be affecting the child or young person's development, experiencing family conflict, including family breakdown, under pressure due to a family member's physical or mental illness, substance abuse, disability, or bereavement, isolated, or unsupported experiencing significant social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact a child or young person's care or development.

The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:

- The reporter chooses to inform the child or young person or family of the report.
- The reporter consents in writing to their identity as the reporter being disclosed.
- a court or tribunal decides it needs this information in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person.
- A court or tribunal decides that in the interests of justice the evidence needs to be given.

iii. Western Australia

For immediate concerns: If you have a life-threatening concern about a child or young person, contact the police on 000.

Concern for a child or young person's wellbeing: If you are concerned about a child or young person's wellbeing, please contact the Central Intake Team on 1800 273 889.

Crisis Care: Crisis Care provides Western Australia's after-hours response to reported concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing and information and referrals for people experiencing crisis.

Professional referrals: If you are a professional and want to report a concern about a child or young person, please use the following link: <https://www.communities.wa.gov.au/referralform>.

iv. Queensland

For immediate concerns: If you have a life-threatening concern about a child or young person, contact the police on 000.

If you have reason to suspect a child or young person is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse, contact: a Regional Intake Service (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) <https://www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/contact-us/departments-contacts/child-family-contacts/child-safety-service-centres/regional-intake-services> or the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on 1800 177 135 if outside business hours.

v. New Zealand

For immediate concerns: If you have a life-threatening concern about a child or young person, contact the police on 111.

Making a report of concern

If you're worried about a tamaiti or rangatahi and want to make a report of concern or just have a general enquiry, our customer service specialists are on hand to answer your pātai and pass you through to the right area to help you out. They can be contacted on: 0508 326 459 or email contact@ot.govt.nz

Following your report, a social worker will review your information and determine what supports would be best as a next step for your concern.

Failure to Disclose Child Sexual Abuse Offence

Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in any Jurisdiction by an adult against a child under 16 years of age must report that information to police.

Policy Review and Audit

It is imperative that HOME in PLACE's Child Safeguarding Policy is a relevant and current document. It is also extremely important to monitor and assess the effectiveness of our policy implementation.

HOME in PLACE's Group Executive Manager Governance (GEMG) will ensure this policy is reviewed every three years. The review will include consultations with HOME in PLACE's Workers, Associates, Partners, and Primary stakeholders. Any change made to the Policy will be reviewed and approved by the Group Managing Director.

In addition, HOME in PLACE undertakes an annual self-audit of the HOME in PLACE Child Safeguarding Policy implementation across HOME in PLACE operations, in order to review adherence to our child safeguarding policies and standards as part of the Australian Council for International Development reporting requirements.

Legislation and Compliance (by Jurisdiction)

HOME in PLACE complies with legislative requirements for mandatory reporting, as it relates to our organisation.

NSW

In NSW, HOME in PLACE is a mandatory reporter and mandatory reporting is regulated by the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (the Care Act). HOME in PLACE Workers are expected to report child safety concerns to their immediate Supervisor through the online Incident and Reporting Platform (FOLIO) in line with HOME in PLACE reporting procedures.

Queensland

In Queensland, mandatory reporting is regulated by the Child Protection Act 1999 and whilst HOME in PLACE is not a mandatory reporter under Queensland legislation, HOME in PLACE Workers are expected to report any concerns to their immediate Supervisor where "they form a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse and may not have a parent able and willing to protect them" through the online Incident and Reporting Platform (FOLIO) in line with HOME in PLACE reporting procedures.

Victoria

In Victoria, mandatory reporting is regulated by the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and whilst HOME in PLACE is not a mandatory reporter under Victoria legislation, HOME in PLACE Workers are expected to report any concerns to their immediate Supervisor where "they form a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical injury, sexual abuse, emotional or intellectual development, physical development or health and/or abandonment

or parental incapacity" through the online Incident and Reporting Platform (FOLIO) in line with HOME in PLACE reporting procedures.

Western Australia

In Western Australia, mandatory reporting is regulated by the Child and Community Services Act 2004, and whilst HOME in PLACE is not a mandatory reporter under Western Australian legislation, HOME in PLACE Workers are expected to report any concerns to their immediate Supervisor where "there is reasonable belief that sexual abuse and other types of abuse including physical abuse, neglect and psychological harm has occurred" through the online Incident and Reporting Platform (FOLIO) in line with HOME in PLACE reporting procedures.

New Zealand

In New Zealand, mandatory reporting is regulated by the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (Children's and Young People's Well-being Act 1989, and whilst HOME in PLACE is not a mandatory reporter under New Zealand legislation, HOME in PLACE Workers are directed to report the abuse or likely abuse to a Statutory Agency, Police or the Child, Youth and Family Services. A HOME in PLACE worker is expected to report any concerns to their immediate Supervisor where "any child or young person has been, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically, emotionally or sexually) ill-treated, abused, neglected, or deprived" through the online Incident and Reporting Platform (FOLIO) in line with HOME in PLACE reporting procedures.

HOME in PLACE have an obligation under the Crimes Amendment Act 2019 to take all reasonable steps to protect a child or vulnerable adult and therefore, must take reasonable steps if they become aware that the child is at risk of death, grievous bodily harm, or sexual harm.

Under the Children's Act 2014 Organisations receiving government funding and providing services linked to child safety have an obligation to have a child protection policy and take steps to prevent child significant risk of harm and ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Reportable Conduct Scheme is applicable to organisations operating in NSW, QLD, TAS, VIC, and ACT. The head of the organisation is required to report any allegations of child abuse against a staff member or volunteer to the relevant external authority. These obligations do not take the place of any mandatory reporting obligations.

Conducting investigations

Where external authorities have been contacted about a concern, allegation or incidence of child abuse, they may undertake an investigation. All employees must fully cooperate with any internal or external investigation that takes place.

Even when an external investigation is not required, HOME in PLACE will ensure that an internal investigation is conducted to prevent future occurrences of similar incidents. Internal investigations will be conducted in accordance with the principles of natural justice and will remain confidential (however there may be a need to interview or consult other staff members during the investigation).

While an investigation is in progress, the employee against whom an allegation is made may be stood down until a decision is made about whether an offence has been committed. If the investigation concludes that an offence has been committed, or is likely to have been committed, disciplinary action will be taken proportionate to the severity of the offence.

4. Definitions and Acronyms Glossary

For clarification of any definitions or acronyms contained within this document, please click on the [Glossary](#) for information.

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