

CHILD & YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

This policy applies to all leaders, staff, members, mentors, chaplains and volunteers involved in the programs and activities of the Australian Young Christian Workers' Movement (AYCW/ YCW).

1. AIM OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is:

- To protect children and young people who are involved in the YCW and Australian Young Christian Students' Movement (AYCS) from abuse.
- To protect staff and volunteers with clearly defined rights and responsibilities, and ensure appropriate steps are taken if concerns are raised regarding misconduct or any form of abuse, including child abuse.

The YCW believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and keep them safe, and are committed to work practices that protect them.

Our policy aims to:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of positional power
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly
- Ensure that all leaders and programs are safe
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

2. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY

The YCW is committed to working with children, young people and vulnerable adults by providing an environment that is physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

The YCW is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding measures include the: Code of Conduct, Mentors' and Chaplains' Policy, Mentors' and Chaplains' Acknowledgement and Agreement Form.

The following values reflect the culture we are committed to promoting within the YCW:

- Respect for the worth and dignity of every person
- Inclusiveness and social justice
- Solidarity and collaboration
- Transparency, integrity and honesty

- Responsible stewardship
- Professionalism and excellence

We recognise that:

The welfare of the child is paramount and is everyone's responsibility as outlined in the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

3. BACKGROUND

The YCW is in contact with young people from 17-30 years as participants, volunteers and members. The YCS works more closely with young people under the age of 18, and they have a comprehensive and separate Child Protection Policy. The YCW, all members, staff, mentors, chaplains and volunteers, owe children a special duty of care. We have important legal and moral responsibilities to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, staff and the community. YCW is likely to be in contact with those under 18 via volunteering programs or YCS.

4. THE POLICY

A. Definitions

In this document:

- 'Child' refers to anyone under 18 years of age.
- 'Staff' refers to anyone working as part of YCW including volunteers and paid workers, whether full-time, part-time, occasional or one-off.
- 'National Executive' is the elected leadership team for the Australian YCW.
- 'Mandatory reporters' refers to staff, mentors, chaplains and volunteers who have a legal obligation to report suspected cases of abuse or neglect to Government authorities. The list of occupations that are mandated to report differs state to state.
- 'Significant harm' means the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm due to abusive or neglectful behaviors, including physical injury, sexual abuse or emotional or psychological harm.
- 'Towards Healing' means the current version of the Catholic Church's Towards Healing principles and procedures document for responding to complaints of abuse.
- 'Abuse': Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to:
 - Physical abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Family violence
 - Sexual abuse

- Grooming
- Neglect
- Bullying
- Spiritual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Homelessness

B. Safe recruitment

All prospective staff, volunteers, mentors, and chaplains will be screened before they are appointed:

- **Working with Children checks and Police Checks** All potential *paid* and *non-paid staff* must consent to a Working with Children check, which will detect any relevant offences in their criminal record. [Working with Children and Police Checks by State](#)
- **Prohibited Employment Declaration.** This form must be signed by all paid and unpaid staff that have contact with children.
- **Referee checks.** All potential paid and unpaid staff must supply two work or character referees. The worker responsible for recruiting that staff member must contact these referees and as part of the reference check, ask the following question: 'To your knowledge are there any reasons why this person would not be suitable to work with children?'

C. Initial and ongoing training

YCW requires all staff, mentors, chaplains and volunteers to attend initial training (such as Tier One Training, Orientation), including this Child and Youth Protection Policy, and on-going training every two years.

D. Provide an open and safe environment

YCW will afford participants a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation. We will be accountable and transparent.

We will create a child and youth friendly environment, allowing people to raise their concerns in an appropriate manner. We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.

E. Supervision

YCW has a legal responsibility to take all reasonable care to protect children from harm while they are engaged in YCW activities. Adequate supervision is vital to protecting children, staff and property.

Adequate supervision means:

- A minimum ratio of 1 staff member to 10 children during any day activity.
- A minimum ratio of 1 staff member to 6 children during any overnight activity. Where both male and female children are present, both a male and female worker is present.

One adult is not to be alone with children. This includes driving a child in a car. There should be two staff present in any car carrying children. There should be two adults present at any event where there are children.

F. If children are suspected to be at risk

The following procedure applies if staff becomes aware that a child may be at risk of significant harm or may have been assaulted:

- Take it seriously
- Don't probe or investigate
- Follow the reporting procedure below.

G. Reporting Procedure

If a staff member, mentor, chaplain or volunteer, has a concern that a child may be at risk of significant harm, then they must report the situation and all relevant information to the National President (or Mentor-National Team if the National President is unavailable or if the situation relates to the National President). They must report this information regardless of their own views about its relevance, accuracy or seriousness.

Where neither the National President, Mentor-National Team, nor any other member of the National Executive is available, workers may be required to report the incident directly to their state authority. Reporting requirements vary state to state.

Mandatory reporting requirements by state

ACT	Office for Children, Youth and Family Support	Ph: 13 22 81
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NSW	Department of Family and Community Services	Ph: (02) 9716 2222
QLD	Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women	Ph: (07) 3224 8045
SA	Department for Child Protection	Ph: (08) 8124 4185
VIC	Department of Health and Human Services	Ph: 1300 650 172
WA	Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support	Ph: (08) 9222 2555

The National President (or Mentor-National Team) will inform the Professional Standards Office of the local diocese about any reports of children at risk of significant harm, and where possible will work with the Professional Standards Office to report the matter to relevant state authorities.

H. Allegations against non-paid/paid workers (involving children)

In the case of allegations of risk of significant harm to a child made against paid/non-paid workers:

- Matters must be referred to the National President (or Mentor-National Team) within 24 hours.
- The privacy and reputation of the child and alleged perpetrator must be respected. The matter should not be discussed with other staff members or young people.
- The National President (or Mentor-National Team) will inform the Professional Standards Office of the local diocese, and work closely with them to undertake necessary investigations, reporting and other measures.
- The staff member will be removed from any contact with young people for the duration of the investigation.
- We will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate help for a just and fair resolution.
- The incident is to be formally noted and records kept securely.

The YCW must at all times comply with *Towards Healing* in relation to any allegations of risk of significant harm to a child made against paid/non-paid workers.

I. Allegations against non-paid/paid workers (not involving children)

In the case of allegations of any abuse or misconduct made against paid/non-paid workers that does not involve a child:

- Matters must be referred to the National President (or Mentor-National Team)) within 24 hours.

- The privacy and reputation of the alleged victim and perpetrator must be respected. The matter should not be discussed with other staff members or young people.
- The National President (or Mentor-National Team)) will inform the Professional Standards Office of the local diocese, and work closely with them to undertake necessary investigations, reporting and other measures.
- The staff member will be removed from any contact with young people for the duration of the investigation.
- We will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate help for a just and fair resolution.
- The incident is to be formally noted and records kept securely.

The YCW must at all times comply with *Towards Healing* in relation to any allegations of abuse or misconduct made against paid/non-paid workers.

J. Disciplinary action

YCW and its staff have a moral and legal responsibility to abide by the above practices. Major or repeated breaches of this policy will lead to disciplinary action which may include restrictions, suspensions and, in serious cases, termination of the person's employment or voluntary role. The National Executive will determine the appropriate disciplinary actions for breaches of this policy.

We are committed to reviewing our policy every three years.

This policy was approved by the national President AYCW
January 2018