



Risk and Compliance – Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

Version	Nature of change	Title	Date
1.0	Publication	First edition	04/07/18
2.0	2020 Under Review	Revised format edition	17/11/2020
2.1	Minor changes	Second Edition	31/3/2021
3.1	Updated to Include NSW & Vic Child Safe Standards	Third Edition	23/06/2022

Purpose

Outward Bound Australia commits to zero tolerance of child abuse. We act to protect children from abuse in our organisation, and build an environment where children feel respected, valued, and encouraged to reach their full potential. This policy outlines how Outward Bound Australia prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

Statement

Outward Bound Australia acknowledges the Ngunnawal People, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we operate. We acknowledge and respect their contributions, experience and knowledge as First Nations people. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

Outward Bound Australia (OBA) is committed to child safety and wellbeing.

- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our employees and volunteers.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse and racism, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Our organisation is committed to preventing harm to children, including sexual abuse and identifying risks early and reducing the likelihood or harm.
- Our organisation has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- OBA is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks, child safe practices, cultural safety, identifying signs of abuse and practical ways to respond to disclosures as well as not tolerating any instances of racism.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and unique identities, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We encourage and support children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, employees and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

Scope

This policy applies to all full-time and part-time, casual employees (and includes volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors, Board members and students on placement).

Definitions

Child/Children – a child is a person aged 0-18 years

Child abuse and harm – includes: a sexual offence committed against a child, an offence such as grooming, physical violence against a child, causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child, serious neglect of a child.

Concerns/ complaints –

A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to Outward Bound Australia related to one or more of the following:

- our services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Outward Bound Australia
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person at Outward Bound Australia
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

Policy

Role of Management

Management has the role of making sure Outward Bound Australia prioritises children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

Management will champion and model a child safe culture at Outward Bound Australia. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. Management will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Outward Bound Australia has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. Management will make sure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

Management will conduct an annual review of how effectively Outward Bound Australia is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Outward Bound Australia will be sought as part of this review.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development and review of the code of conduct and Child Safety & Well Being Policy.

Children's empowerment and participation

Outward Bound Australia is a child-centred organisation.

We want children to develop new friends through Outward Bound Australia and encourage children to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and take action if this occurs.

We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights including the right to be safe. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We regularly communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

Outward Bound Australia values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families. Outward Bound Australia supports children's participation in the following ways:

- Regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- Information provided to children and families about Outward Bound Australia operations, staffing and programs are made suitable for different age groups and diversity of the children.

Families and communities

Outward Bound Australia recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

Outward Bound Australia provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct on our website.

Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families

Outward Bound Australia is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of all courses
- consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture, during programs
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- providing training for staff and volunteers on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week

- seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at Outward Bound Australia, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture.

Valuing diversity

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- provide training for all staff and volunteers on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety
- welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- offer students and families through our enrolment forms the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our students, their interests and cultures
- strive to reflect the diversity of our community through representation in our staff
- have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

Code of Conduct

- Outward Bound Australia has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Staff and volunteers comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.
- All third-party contractors are also expected to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and where they are engaging with children will have to sign an agreement to comply with the code, prior to delivering any services.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility and that the people working with children are suitable and supported.

Our organisational leadership and culture aims for all staff, visiting teachers and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children; the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds; and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting

children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, in each relevant state or territory, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check (or vulnerable people) in the relevant state or territory and to provide evidence of this Check. We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children / participants is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting system (UPLOADs), including investigation updates. All records are securely stored. If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to Disclose: Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- Failure to Protect: People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

OBA is required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about Failure to Protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical, and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

If there are any over 16 year olds on a trip with participants aged 16 or under, those participants, supervisors, accompanying adults not related, will be required to have a current working with Children Check.

Complaints and reporting

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

Outward Bound Australia has a complaint handling policy that includes information for staff and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. An easy-to-understand complaints information sheet will be provided for children, families and the community to know about the complaint process and the supports available to those making a complaint and those involved in the complaint process.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then staff and volunteers at Outward Bound Australia must report it in accordance with the complaint handling policy and Operations Manual. Outward Bound Australia staff and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to the relevant state police. Under the complaint handling and disciplinary policies, staff and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
- having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at Outward Bound Australia
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at Outward Bound Australia
- removing their access to the Outward Bound Australia IT system and facilities.

Complaints can be emailed to either the Risk and Safety Manager, the Head of Operations or the School Director

If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.

Record keeping

Outward Bound Australia is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.

All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system.

Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

Associated policies, forms or documents

Safe Child Code of Conduct

Complaints Handling Policy

Risk Management Policy

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

- Operations Manual – Child Protection Reporting Process
- Operations Manual – Disclosure Codes
- Disclosure Report Form
- Child protection Intervention
- Child Protection Reporting process

NSW Office of the Children's Guardian – Child Safe Standards, Feb, 2022

Victorian Commission for Children and Young people – New Child Safe Standards July 1, 2022