



CHILD SAFE POLICY AND PROCEDURES



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.

Scope

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

This document includes:

1. Statement of Commitment to Child safety
2. Child Safe Code of Conduct
3. Child Safe Policy
4. Child Safe Procedures



1. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Outward Bound Australia a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where children are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to participants in our organisational environments.

We promote positive relationships between children and adults and between children and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to children in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international participants, participants with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) and other participants experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting participants based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our organisation, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our organisation has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.



2. Child Safe Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and children. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that participants also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults when on an Outward bound program.

All staff, volunteers and board members of Outward Bound Australia (OBA) are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of OBA are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to OBA's child safe policy at all times / upholding OBA's statement of commitment to child safety at all time
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to OBA's Head of Risk and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns to OBA's Head of Risk
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.



General Expectations

- Maintain professional boundaries at all times.
- Communicate respectfully and inclusively with all participants.
- Support participant privacy and dignity, including during activities like changing or toileting.
- Ensure bivvies, tents, and toileting areas are managed with consideration for participant privacy.
- Always announce your presence before entering a participant's bivvy, tent, or cabin.
- Wear appropriate clothing at all times (shirts and pants required when in sight of participants).
- Ensure separate sleeping arrangements by gender where reasonable, with an adult buffer if needed.

Digital and External Contact

- Contact with participants or their families outside the program must only occur with managerial approval.
- Online communication with participants is not permitted unless authorised (e.g. newsletters or post program surveys). Any online communication must be done through an Outward Bound email address or work phone number.
- Any post-program contact from under-18s (e.g. on social media or via text) must be reported to the Program Coordinator or Manager.

Unacceptable Conduct

Staff and volunteers must not:

- Develop 'special' relationships with participants that could be perceived as favouritism (e.g. gift-giving). Encourage or respond inappropriately to participant 'crushes' - instead, report to the Program Coordinator.
- Exhibit overly physical or inappropriate behaviours (e.g. sitting participants on laps, giving piggy-back rides).
- Engage in or tolerate conversations of an adult or mature nature in the presence of children.
- Use swearing, sexual innuendo, put-downs, or rude/perverse language at any time.
- Disclose or promote personal views on race, culture, religion, sexuality, or politics to participants.
- Discriminate against any participant for any reason, including race, culture, disability, or gender.
- Undertake personal care tasks children can manage themselves (e.g. toileting, dressing).
- Lock doors or engage in any behaviour that may isolate or put a child at risk.
- Go skinny-dipping or toilet/change clothes in view of participants.
- Ignore or dismiss suspected or disclosed child abuse.



3. CHILD SAFE POLICY



3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Management team

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.

Our management team (comprising the Executive Director, Head of Operations, Head of Risk, Head of Sales and Head of Partnerships) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with national legislation.

Management team will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all participants are considered
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between children and adults, and between children
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the community including at management team meetings, staff meetings and board meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of, and responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

3.2 Establishing a Culturally Safe Environment

At Outward Bound Australia we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every participant can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal participants, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal participants and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our program planning, policies, and activities.

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 programs
- 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 opportunities for children to share what walking across country means to them and be understanding of different views when hiking in nature
- Provide opportunities for children to share what locations they feel comfortable visiting on program, especially being aware of locations of significance
- Provide opportunities for children to opt out of any part of program if they are not culturally comfortable. For example, not summiting a mountain peak due to cultural significance; or not swimming in a particular swim hole due to cultural significance.

3.3 Participant empowerment

We inform participants and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other participants and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our participants know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Participants and families can also access information on how to report concerns at our website and communal program operational areas such as gear issue sheds and reception.

3.4 Family engagement

Our families and the community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns. To support family engagement, at Outward Bound Australia, we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

3.5 Staff Recruitment, Induction and Training

At Outward Bound Australia, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children or Working with Vulnerable People Check clearance or equivalent background check
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

All newly appointed staff will be expected to read and understand this Child Safe Policy and Procedure.

3.6 Training

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters. In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered annually and will include guidance on:



- our organisation's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and participants
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks



4. CHILD SAFE PROCEDURES



4.0 Staff procedures

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers follow our Child Safe Procedure. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the organisation.

4.1 Immediate response guidelines for staff

If a child discloses an allegation of abuse or is at risk of abuse:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid (appropriate to their level of training) and call 000 for urgent medical or police assistance where required to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Explain to them that this information will need to be shared to others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or other authorities.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with a Disclosure Form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to your Program Coordinator or any Outward Bound manager.
- Follow the Field Flow Chart in Appendix of this document.

4.2 Immediate response guidelines for staff who receive a complaint from a parent, teacher, carer or guardian saying their child was abused on an Outward Bound program

If a parent, teacher, carer or guardian reports their child has been abused on an Outward Bound program:

- Explain that your organisation has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the organisation's management, the police or child protection authorities.
- Do not make promises at this stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with a Disclosure Form to complete or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Once the Disclosure Form is complete, immediately notify an Outward Bound manager.

Note: if you are uncertain if an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion gives rise to a concern about child abuse, you must always err on the side of caution and report the concern to a manager. If the concern relates to your manager, you must report the incident to a different manager, Executive Director or to any member on the Outward Bound Board.



4.3 Coordinator Field procedure

As a Program Coordinator or anyone who receives the initial field call-in, if you receive a report of abuse or disclosure, you must follow this procedure:

Immediate Response Guidelines for Program Coordinator

1. Is the participant or others in immediate danger? If Yes, take all steps to remove participant from immediate danger.
2. Once participant is not in immediate danger, encourage the staff member to follow the process outlined in section 4.1.
3. Prompt the Group Leader or staff member to use the Disclosure Form and take notes in your PC communications log.
4. If the victim and others involved are on program in a remote location, immediately separate the parties involved and take steps to remove the affected child from program. If the alleged perpetrator is on program, do not transport both victim and alleged perpetrator in one vehicle.
5. Take all reasonable steps to keep the child in a calm and safe state. If they are comfortable with a certain Group leader or adult, try to keep that adult with them throughout the process. Follow all Standard Operating Procedures, ensuring a child is never left alone with an adult without witnesses.
6. If the disclosure of abuse is pertaining to a past incident or an incident already known to authorities, in some instances, it may be appropriate for the child to remain on program. A child may only stay on program after a disclosure of abuse after consultation with Head of Operations or Head of Risk. The organisation would take into account the child's state of mind, preference, triggers, severity of disclosure and parent and guardian consultation to decide whether it is appropriate for the child to stay on program.
7. Regardless of whether the child remains on program or is removed, the full reporting process must be followed.

Reporting Process for Program Coordinators

1. Once the above immediate response has been followed, alert a manager that a disclosure has been reported. This could be reported to either Head of Operations or Head of Risk.
2. Alert the client representative (back up teacher, organiser, accompanying adult) that a disclosure has been reported. Do not give details of the report. They may be able to offer historical advice of information.
3. Plan the child's next immediate steps in consultation with the client representative and Outward Bound manager. This may include removal from program, immediate pick up by parents or guardians or removal back to school or appropriate safe location.
4. At end of program, ensure that the Group Leader or staff member removes all pages from their notebook related to the disclosure. Place the notebook pages in a sealed envelope labelled with "Confidential, Disclosure details, date, program name" and give the envelope to Head of Risk.
5. Offer support to the Group Leader or staff member who reported the disclosure. Encourage them to seek further support if required.



4.4 Managerial Procedure

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant Outward Bound staff have been informed, the Head of Risk must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. If the Head of Risk is involved in the case or not available, the Executive Director will follow these reporting procedures. If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you must still act.

As Outward Bound operates across multiple states, ensure the correct state reporting procedure is followed.

State where child is normally based	Contact Information for mandatory Reporting
NSW	Child Protection hotline on 13 21 11 (24/7 hotline) The MRG and reporting to the Child Protection Helpline (nsw.gov.au)
ACT	Provision of Information to Child and Youth Protection Services (act.gov.au) You can also contact Child and Youth Protection Services: call 1300 556 729 email childprotection@act.gov.au
VIC	https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting
WA	Online: https://mandatoryreportingweb.communities.wa.gov.au (link is external) Call: 1800 708 704
NT	Call: 1800 700 250 CARE Services (nt.gov.au)
QLD	Mandatory reporting - Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services (dcssds.qld.gov.au)
SA	Call: 13 14 78
TAS	Call: 1800 000 123

The Head of Risk will ensure that detailed notes are taken of any immediate or ongoing action taken by the organisation to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion. They will also ensure that all notes and other records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, including the schools immediate and ongoing actions, are stored securely on the organisation's computer database or archived securely.

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.



4.5 Developing an Investigation Plan

Complaints involving the alleged inappropriate conduct of an employee towards any child are taken seriously and an investigation must be commenced. 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.

The Head of Risk, in consultation with Executive Director is responsible for developing an investigation plan, appointing an investigator and preparing a report and making findings. The Head of Risk must take into account any real or perceived conflicts of interest during the investigation.

The Head of Risk must consult with the relevant state authority which can provide oversight, guidance and education to the head of a relevant entity when they investigate reportable allegations made against an employee, volunteer or a contractor (where the role requires that person to hold a Working with Children Check clearance).

Outward Bound Australia provides employees subject to allegations with procedural fairness and information about review or appeal mechanisms.

The investigation process will typically involve:

- interviewing the alleged victim and witnesses;
- gathering other relevant evidence;
- writing to the employee detailing the allegations and requesting a response;
- preparing an investigation report; and
- making findings on the outcome of the investigation.

At the end of an investigation, where there are sustained findings of sexual offence, sexual misconduct or serious physical assault, the employee's name will be notified to the Office of the Children's Guardian. The notification will trigger a risk assessment on the employee's Working with Children Check. Other possible outcomes of an investigation include:

- no further action,
- disciplinary action, or
- changes to policy and practice.

Employees have the following rights if a complaint is being investigated:

- procedural fairness including a timely, impartial and confidential investigation;
- no decision made until the staff member has an opportunity to know the details of the complaint and has an opportunity to respond fully.



- information about the process, adequate and specific details to respond to the complaint, progress on the matter, reasonable notice regarding any meetings and information regarding the outcome and any findings.
- support throughout the process by family, colleagues, union or legal representatives and an entitlement to free confidential counselling through the employee assistance program; and
- review of the outcome, by contacting the relevant state's Ombudsman's Office or pursuing their rights through legal channels.

4.5 Review of Child Safety Practices

At Outward Bound Australia, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with staff and our wider community.

The Head of Risk is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the Outward Bound community.

4.7 Related Policies and Procedures

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Operations Manual
- Human Resources Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- NSW Office of the Children's Guardian – Child Safe Standards, Feb, 2022
- ACT Children and Young People Act 2008
- Victorian Commission for Children and Young people – New Child Safe Standards July 1, 2022
- WA Department of Communities Section 125A of the Children and Community Services Act 2004



4.7 Field Disclosure Flow Chart

What is immediate danger?

- attempted self-harm or suicide while on program. Any threat to harm themselves and you believe they will act on it.
- threatening suicide, and you believe they will act on it.
- Threatens to harm others and you believe they will carry out the threat.
- alleges that a person on program has abused them or is likely to harm them.

Participant makes **disclosure**. This could have been said to another participant, instructor, adult or back up member.

Group Leader (or most appropriate adult) to talk to the person directly and ascertain level of severity. GL to advise participant of Duty to Disclose. A GL must inform the participant they will be contacting an outside party if a participant discloses any type of abuse, self-harm, or suicidal intentions.

Is the participant or anyone on program in **immediate danger**?

NO- GL to use Mental Health SOAP Note and Disclosure Form as appropriate.

YES- GL to react immediately to secure the situation. **Contact PC. PC to immediately contact 000, HOO or OnCall and enact CIP.**

Which category of disclosure best describes the incident?

Once there is no immediate danger, continue the flow chart

Self Harm (actual or ideation)
Suicidal thoughts (actual or ideation)
Severe Mental Health Displays

Use the **Mental Health SOAP Note** to prompt for questions and support the discussion with the person.

Disclosure of Abuse or neglect

(regardless of if prior, on or after program)

Use the **Disclosure Form** to prompt relevant questions. The Mental Health SOAP note can also be a good tool to gauge their headspace.

Call in to PC letting them know:

- a disclosure has been reported
- the **Disclosure Form** has been completed
- GL **recommendation** for next steps (does the participant want their parents involved? – if dealing with sensitive information, do not disclose names or details to anyone outside parties (school, teacher, company))
- Give relevant details to the PC so they can assist in responding safely to the incident.

Contact PC and report the Mental Health SOAP Note Incident report.

PC to log incident as per normal procedures.

PC to support GL, offering the back-up teacher or other staff member to visit the group in person.

If the participant will be **in immediate danger** after program the PC must consult with client representative (teacher, organiser, therapist) and report the incident.

If the participant will be **in immediate danger** after program, the PC must alert the HOO or OnCall to discuss whether they can remain on program.

Head of Risk must be informed as soon as practicable.

Once PC has the relevant details, PC must alert the HOO or OnCall

The HOO or OnCall will then follow Child Safety regulations as to who should be notified.

Once incident has been finalized, alert Head of Risk and:

- give them the Disclosure Form
- Remove all pages from the GL notebook related to the Disclosure

Seal these documents in an envelope with participant name, date, program on the front and give to Head of Risk for archiving.



4.8 Disclosure Form

You have a legal obligation to report and respond to reports of suspected child abuse. You can provide this form to a child or their family if they disclose an allegation of abuse or safety concern in your organisation. All incident reports must be stored securely.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse, phone 000

Date and Time of Report		Location of Report	
Name(s) of children involved		Does the child(ren) identify as Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islander?	
Name and role of Staff or adult involved			
Details of the allegation/suspicions			
Nature of Incident	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical violence <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual offence <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional or psychological offense <input type="checkbox"/> Neglect	Are you recording:	<input type="checkbox"/> Disclosure made directly to you? <input type="checkbox"/> Disclosure or suspicions from a third party? <input type="checkbox"/> Your suspicions or concerns?
When did it take place?			
Who was involved?			
Details of the allegation/suspicions. State exactly what you were told/observed and what was said. Use the persons own words as much as possible.			
Actions taken so far:			



Document History and Version Control		
Contact Person: Head of Risk	Next Review: June 2026	
Date Approved	Approved By	Brief Description
3/7/24	Ellie Hargrave, Head of Risk	<p>Combined multiple policies into one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe Child Code of Conduct• Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operations Manual – Child Protection Reporting Process• Operations Manual – Disclosure Codes• Disclosure Report Form• Child protection Intervention• Child Protection Reporting process
9/6/25	Ellie Hargrave, Head of Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual review completed