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## Wesley Mission Policy

# Child protection

### 1. Purpose

Wesley Mission acknowledges that a safe and nurturing family environment is essential to promote the healthy growth and development of children. When families become vulnerable, for whatever reason, the safety and wellbeing of children can be put at risk or children may even be subjected to some form of abuse. This policy provides direction and guidance to ensure that all allegations of significant risk of harm to children and reportable conduct (persons involved in inappropriate behaviour in relation to a child) is managed and reported appropriately. It will also establish coordinated strategies for dealing with the problem of child abuse and neglect in a responsible, effective and consistent manner.

### 2. Scope

All Wesley Mission management and staff, volunteers, contractors and stakeholders, within and outside of hours of employment.

Wesley Mission employees and volunteers are expected to report information they may have or any allegations of risk of harm or reportable conduct against a child (ie. a person under 16 years of age) regardless of whether or not they are mandatory reporters. (Mandatory reporters are those who in the course of their professional work deliver health care, children's services, welfare, residential services, education or law enforcement to children or hold a management position with direct responsibility for the supervision or provision of such services.) ([see Guidelines](#))

### 3. Policy statement

Wesley Mission believes that children and young people have a right to grow and develop in an atmosphere that is conducive to nurturing their physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and social growth. We are committed to ensuring that children and young people are protected from situations of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Wesley Mission provides family and community services that are child centered and family focused assisting families to increase environmental safety and reduce risk factors for children and young people, engaged in a Wesley program and for children placed in out of home care situations who cannot live with their parents as a result of significant harm.

Wesley Mission will actively work to:

- reduce risks and improve safety for children by maintaining a safe environment for children and families, employees and volunteers within our programs
- provide opportunities for community education, parent education and support in relation to child safety, risk factors and child protection
- work proactively with parents, children and young people to develop safety plans and protective behaviours with individuals and in educational group settings;
- inform families of Wesley Mission's responsibilities under Child Protection legislation 1998 and amendments Chapter 16 A (2009-10) sharing information about children at risk of harm;
- proactively resource, support and thereby empower individuals to make appropriate choices regarding their responses in times of risk and stress.



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### Principles

For Wesley Mission to ensure that children and young people are protected from all types of abusive situations and have opportunities to grow and develop in a nurturing atmosphere we will embrace the following principles:

- **implement practices that ensure all legislative requirements are adhered to**

As a designated non-government agency Wesley Mission is obliged to investigate all allegations of reportable conduct made against an employee and to report such allegations to the appropriate authorities including the NSW Ombudsman whose role it is to provide oversight of the process of the investigation. (see Guidelines)

We will also report allegations of reportable conduct which are sustained (Category 1) or not sustained due to insufficient evidence (Category 2) to the Commission for Children and Young People.

- **Employees will immediately report all risks of significant harm to children to their immediate supervisor/manager and NSW Family and Community Services HELPLINE**

A child protection report must be completed using Wesley Mission template provided to capture this event, relevant approvals and follow action to ensure that children are safe.

- **complete appropriate prohibited employment and screening checks for all applicants for employment working in a child related setting**

All applicants for employment with Wesley Mission, working in a child related setting with direct unsupervised contact with children will undergo Criminal Record checks and Working with Children Checks and will be asked to complete a Prohibited Employment Declaration. All new employees will be responsible for the cost of their own checks prior to commencement with Wesley Mission.

- **provide appropriate induction and orientation programs for all new employees**

All new employees are required to attend a generic Wesley Mission Orientation program, be in receipt of an Induction Handbook and participate in a compulsory industry orientation program. Each Industry group is required to develop specific induction and orientation programs, which include comprehensive planned orientation activities. (see Guidelines)

- **maintain clear boundaries between social and professional relationships**

Employees must not disclose at any time, except as required by legislation to do so, the details or content of a child protection report or allegation against a Wesley Mission employee or volunteer or stakeholder. Employees must discuss any social contact with past or present clients with their immediate supervisor and maintain clear boundaries between social and professional relationships with clients. Real or apparent conflicts of interest should be avoided and advice and assistance from the supervisor immediately sought if a possible conflict of interest arises.

Without the explicit permission of their supervisor employees must not reveal phone numbers or home addresses to clients or include any member of their family when acting in a professional capacity. If they choose to disclose personal information about themselves and/or their families, they should ensure they don't undermine professional boundaries or put themselves or their family at risk.

A client shall not be included in a professional interaction with another client

Employees should always be aware of and sensitive to children with culturally diverse or indigenous backgrounds and cultural practise without deviating from the accepted child protection policy.



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- **ensure special care is taken when employees or volunteers relate to children and young people as they are more vulnerable to abuse within relationships**

Employees should avoid being alone with a child or young person unless they can be observed by others and should never form relationships with children or young people which may blur the boundaries of their professional relationship. Activities arranged for children or young people should be fully documented and available for review.

Any form of contact of a sexual nature with a child or young person is prohibited, as is any form of psychological abuse (see Guidelines).

- **adhere to Wesley Mission's Employee Conduct & Discipline policy and procedures**

Where incidents of inappropriate behaviour occur, managers shall quickly and thoroughly implement the organisation's Employee Conduct & Discipline policy, including the provision to stand down employees under investigation, or immediate dismissal in the event of serious breaches.

- **follow the Ombudsman's guidelines for behaviour management of children and young people**

All behaviour management of children shall be in accordance with operational area policies and shall not include any prohibited or restricted practice as described in the Ombudsman's Guidelines on Behaviour Management.

- **follow the Uniting Church Synod's guidelines and those required by statutory authorities when a minor is to be interviewed**

In all interview situations with minors the dignity and rights of every child are to be respected in every circumstance and special attention paid to each child's right to privacy and confidentiality.

- **Wesley Dalmar provides the compliance oversight for the provision of accommodation for all children in statutory care, in accordance with the standards set by the Children's Guardian**

Agencies providing accommodation for children or young people in statutory care (i.e. with Court Orders giving all or part of parental responsibility to the Director General of Community Services or the Minister for Community Services) must be accredited by the Office of the Children's Guardian. In Wesley Mission this accreditation is held by Wesley Dalmar Out of Home Care.

- If any other Wesley Service is providing accommodation for one of these children, the Executive Manager of that service is required to notify the Principal Officer of Wesley Dalmar, Executive Manager Child & Youth Mentoring so that they can ensure compliance with the statutory requirements for these children and the standards set by the Office of the Children's Guardian.

#### 4. Responsibility and policy owner

The policy owner is General Manager Corporate

#### Employees and volunteers shall:

- be open, transparent and accountable in their dealings with children and young people. A failure to do so could result in disciplinary proceedings.



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### Executive, Operations and Program Managers and Team leaders shall:

- provide oversight of all employees and volunteers to ensure they are performing their duties in line with this policy.
- ensure employees and volunteers updated child protection training every three years and address this in the employee's annual personal review and development meeting

### Executive Manager Human Resources in consultation with relevant Executive Managers Operations shall:

ensure this policy is reviewed annually or whenever legislative changes occur.

## 5. Consultation & Approval

This policy has been developed in consultation with Human Resources and Child Family & Disability Support

Graham Harris, General Manager Corporate approved the policy

### Employee declaration

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understood Wesley Mission Child Protection Policy above and will abide by it.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (employee)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Supervisor declaration

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have explained that any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action

Employee's Supervisor Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_