# Wesley Mission policy

Child safe policy

1. **Purpose**

This policy applies to Wesley Community Services Limited (**Wesley Mission**) and provides a framework to enhance the consistent application of child protection legislation and child safe national principles. This policy demonstrates Wesley Mission’s commitment to the provision of safety for persons under 18 years of age who encounter a Wesley Mission program. Relevant Australian guidelines and standards have been adopted and built upon in the creation of this policy and other Wesley Mission policies and procedures to ensure Wesley Mission’s approach to child safety is consistent with, and exceeds, community expectations

1. **Scope**

This policy applies to all people engaged with and connected to Wesley Mission inclusive of all board members, executive officers, managers, and all employees, volunteers, foster carers and contractors within all of Wesley Mission (referred to as ***employees***). The principles of these guidelines must be applied in respect of all children and young persons who may come into contact with a Wesley Mission program, regardless of their official status as a client. This includes children that may be visitors to a service, or that may live with parents who are engaged in a Wesley Mission program.

For this policy, a child is a person under the age of 16 years and a young person is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years.

1. **Policy statement**

All children who are involved in Wesley Mission activities, events and/or programs have a right to feel safe and to be safe. Wesley Mission is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and continually empowered. As a child safe organisation, Wesley Mission shall continuously strive to:

* reduce the likelihood of harm to children;
* increase the likelihood of harm being discovered;
* respond appropriately and immediately to disclosures, allegations and/or suspicions of harm; and
* work together with the community to ensure that children’s needs are being prioritised.

Our policies and practices prioritise child safety and promote shared responsibility, not just at a leadership level, but throughout different employee levels by clearly outlining all employee responsibilities.

Abuse thrives on secrecy. To prevent child abuse across Wesley Community Services, we are committed to developing and maintaining an open and aware culture and ensuring safeguards for those who report abuse of children. We are invested in ensuring safeguards exist to protect children from all forms of abuse. Wesley Mission affirms that it will continually work to act in accordance with applicable legislation and adopt industry standards for best practice in all relevant areas.

1. **Principles**

To ensure child safe practice, Wesley Mission shall uphold and ensure the following areas are of operational focus:

* **Systems to ensure Adaptation, Innovation and Continuous Improvement**
  + Transparent and accountable processes are routinely assessed for improvement through action, assessment, and reflection.
  + Care is taken to ensure that a broad application of duty of care is present through all tenders, and throughout interaction with external stakeholders.
  + Privacy is protected and treated with the utmost respect in person, and through giving due diligence to data protection.
  + Recognition that safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children and young people takes priority over privacy for adults who may cause this to be compromised.
  + We will be open to external feedback and advice, ensuring that all feedback and advice is registered, analysed and forms the basis of organisation wide continuous improvement.
* **Participation and Empowerment of Children**
  + Wesley Mission recognises, and seeks to address, power imbalances between employees and children who are receiving a service.
  + Children and young persons’ views are sought, that directly influence policy, practice and service delivery of all programs that they’re involved in.
  + Inclusive and empowering language is used in all resources and documentation in programs that involve children and young people.
  + Strategies are created which encourage children and young people to be able to self-advocate about the service that they receive.
* **Human Resources Management**
  + A clear code of conduct for all employees, volunteers and contractors illustrates clear expectations of behaviour that is required for their roles.
  + Organisational commitment to child safety is felt externally through advertising and branding.
  + Reference checks and record checks for fitness and propriety are conducted with fairness and accountability to ensure as far as possible, that safe persons are engaged for work.
  + Position descriptions are regularly reviewed for any necessary inclusions regarding child safety.
  + Systems exist to ensure staff receive support, supervision and performance management in a fair, but accountable way.
  + Complaints management and disciplinary proceedings are conducted where necessary with integrity; focusing on fairness through comprehensive and balanced investigation.
  + Complaints are dealt with transparently and responses to those making them are issued in a timely manner.
* **Awareness and Understanding of Child Abuse and Organisational Responsibilities**
  + Risk management of all situations is inclusive of risks that are posed to children and young people, and where risks are identified, priority is given to reducing those risks as much as possible.
  + Appropriate relationships between staff and children and young people are encouraged in service areas where this is appropriate, and these are regulated with transparency and through continual monitoring to ensure a safe, but warm environment exists for children and young people.
  + Training and education are provided to all employees, volunteers, foster carers and contractors that are involved in child related work, to provide an awareness of both expected behaviour, and responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people
  + Statutory authorities are reported to with urgency, with significant weight for the immediate safeguard of any child or young person who is or appears to be enduring harm. This includes prompt involvement with Police, Community Services, and Health facilities to ensure immediate concerns are addressed prior to risk to agency is to be assessed.
* **Cultural Environment is a safe place for children and young people**
  + Children and young people are received warmly by staff at all centres, having genuine interest given to them for the duration of their stay.
  + Children and young people are not to be given any medication without the expressed permission from a parent or other suitable authorised person.
  + Children and young people are not to be left alone with a staff member unless assessment reveals that this is appropriate to do so, and safeguards are in place. In all circumstances, this is strategically analysed to ensure that children and young people don’t feel victimised by this action.
  + Staff are encouraged to actively advocate for, and promote the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children and young people in all circumstances.
  + Children and young people who experience a service actively have their feedback sought on a regular basis, and this feedback is given significant weight.
  + Staff approach children and young people without assumptions for the child’s or young person’s experience, and instead utilise curiosity to engage and enquire as to the child’s or young person’s experience.
  + All interactions with children are sensitive to their development stage, their ability level, culture, and their wishes.
  + Children and young person’s displaying challenging behaviours are to be treated in a respectful and calm manner that always ensures the continuity of both their emotional and physical safety . Any service areas that necessarily have to adopt strategies where this is not clearly achieved, have clear and thorough processes to reduce any possible harm and attempt the safest resolution possible.

1. **Responsibility and policy owner**

The owner of this policy is the General Manager , Wesley Dalmar Child ＆ Family.

The owner is responsible for implementing the policy and achieving the desired outcomes.

1. **Consultation and approval**

This policy has been developed in consultation with Child Safety Implementation Group, and the Wesley Mission QRC Review Group.

The policy has been approved by the General Manager, Wesley Dalmar Child ＆ Family and the Wesley Mission Management Committee.