



*"Practical solutions for the common good"*

# Abundant Water Child Protection Policy

Last reviewed: 7 April 2023

## Purpose of this Child Protection Policy

Abundant Water (AW) is committed to the protection of children from abuse and exploitation. AW considers any form of child abuse and exploitation unacceptable. AW believes it is important to have policies and procedures implemented which promote the safety and wellbeing of all children involved in our programs and activities. Most of the AW programs involve interaction with children and all of our programs impact children either directly or indirectly. This child protection policy provides a framework for protecting children from exploitation and abuse in the delivery of AW's programs.

AW staff and partner organisations must consider risks posed to children in the delivery of our programs. AW recognise risks to children are particularly high when:

- activities involve one-to-one contact
- children are very young, disabled, have been abandoned, displaced, are homeless and/or orphaned
- the areas in which children live are particularly isolated, and/or
- staff are not screened or supervised adequately.

Child exploitation and abuse traumatises children and adversely affects their development and well-being. Children who are exploited and abused experience a greater likelihood of long-term consequences, including mental health issues, reduced educational outcomes, drug and alcohol abuse, and increased likelihood of coming into contact with the law. At its core, child exploitation and abuse undermine a child's right to grow up safely.

## Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to AW staff, AW Board of Directors, volunteers, consultants, and downstream partner organisations retained by AW (hereby collectively referred to as AW associates).

## Child protection implementation

To protect children AW will undertake the following actions:

- all AW associates will be recommended training and sign AW's Child Protection Code of Conduct and Child Abuse and Exploitation Response Protocol (Annex 1 and 2). AW's employment/volunteer contracts contain provisions for dismissal, suspension or transfer to other duties for any employee who breaches the child protection code of conduct.
- AW will at all times portray children in a respectful and dignified way. A child, and where possible the child's family, must always be asked for consent when using their images, and provide details on how and where their image will be used. See the child protection code of conduct for more details (Annex 1).

- AW recruitment processes will include stringent screening measures to ensure AW does not employ inappropriate people. These include criminal record checks, referee checks, interviews with behavioural-based interview questions and background checks on all successful candidates before they begin work. Additional screening measures will be incorporated into the selection processes for positions that involve working directly with children.
- Require all AW associates to report to the CEO any cases of child abuse to which they become aware.
- If child abuse and exploitation is observed or reported the AW Child Abuse and Exploitation Response Protocol will be followed (Annex 2).

### Education in child protection

AW recommends all AW associates undertake [online child protection training from the Australian Human Rights Commission](#). Upon joining the organisation, all AW associates will be provided with a copy of the AW Child Protection Policy. The AW Child Protection Policy is separately available on the AW website (as well as included as part of AW's Code of Conduct) for ease of reference.

### Approval, compliance and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Director of Governance to assess its effectiveness and appropriateness. The assessment will be guided by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission's (ACNC) External Conduct Standards, as well as any organisational changes. Any significant changes to the scope and content of the policy require Board approval. Child protection targets and indicators will be integrated into AW's annual Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement Framework.

## Annex 1: AW Code of Conduct for working with children

I, \_\_\_\_\_ [insert name], acknowledge that I have read and understand AW's Child Protection Policy and response protocol and agree in the course of my association with AW, I must:

- treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- not use language or behaviour towards children that are inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity including paying for sexual services or acts.
- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.
- not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible.
- use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium.
- not use physical punishment on children.
- not hire children for domestic or other labour, which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour.
- immediately report to the in-country manager, CEO, or any member of the Board concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy noncompliance in accordance with appropriate procedures.
- immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with AW that relate to child exploitation and abuse.

When photographing/filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes, I must:

- assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child.
- obtain informed and explicit consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child. As part of this, I must explain how the photograph or film will be used.
- ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
- ensure file labels, metadata or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.
- I understand that the onus is on me, as a person associated with AW, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child exploitation and abuse.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Annex 2: Child Abuse and Exploitation Response Protocol

AW will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse. Note that these actions may not be taken consecutively.

- 1. Distance the alleged perpetrator:** The best interests of the child may warrant the standing down of a staff member or volunteer while an investigation commences. Staff members stood down must receive full pay and are entitled to a just process that does not pre-suppose guilt or innocence. The allegations should not be discussed or communicated to other people until such has been considered and a decision made by management. The decision made should be documented and filed.
- 2. Confidentiality:** Confidentiality is crucial to a fair and effective reporting procedure. It is unacceptable and potentially defamatory for concerns of child abuse (and abusers) to be spread throughout the organisation rather than being directed through a formal complaints process. All participants must understand the importance of following the set reporting lines when concerns arise. Confidentiality protects the child, the notifier, the respondent and the organisation, and ensures a fair and proper process.
- 3. Reprisal:** AW will not tolerate any form of coercion, intimidation, reprisal or retaliation against any employee who reports any form of abuse or exploitation, provides any information or other assistance in an investigation.
- 4. Counselling support:** Professional counselling support will be made available to all parties involved.
- 5. Investigation of complaints:** Physical and/or sexual abuse of a child is a crime. The Board, CEO or country manager may be required to notify authorities when there are reasonable grounds for reporting abuse. Allegations made overseas will need to consider national legislation or internal procedures to investigate and address the allegations.
- 6. Information collection and privacy:** The Board, CEO or In-country manager must record and store securely relevant information including:
  - date(s) of incident(s)
  - name of the organisation(s) involved, including any program partner
  - alleged offender's details, including name, nationality and occupation
  - details of the alleged incident(s)
  - whether local law enforcement authorities or Australian Federal Police have been informed
  - if it is a DFAT-funded activity, the name of the activity (if known)
  - details of what the organisation(s) proposes to do
  - any other relevant information.
- 7. AW must notify DFAT** of any reports associated with DFAT-funded activities.