

Policy Owner	Safeguarding Focal Point	Approved by	Board of Directors
Document Number	1-CS-POL-v3.5	Commencement Date	September 2005
Last Review Date	27 March 2026	Next Review Date	27 March 2029

Click [here](#) or view the related procedure for a comprehensive definition list.

1. Context and Purpose

- 1.1. Child Safeguarding is the obligation on an organisation to ensure their operations do not expose children to adverse impacts, including the risk of abuse, exploitation, harassment and human trafficking and that any concerns about children's safety within the communities where they work are appropriately reported and responded to.
- 1.2. At Caritas Australia our work is grounded in Catholic Social Teaching and the dignity of the human person, including the children (anyone under the age of 18) we work with in Australia and overseas through our humanitarian and development programs, advocacy, community engagement, fundraising, and communications.
- 1.3. Given that we work through local partners, operate in high-risk humanitarian and development contexts, engage with sensitive information and images, and conduct activities that involve travel, community engagement and public communications, there are increased risks of harm to children in our work and therefore, clear and consistent safeguarding standards are essential.
- 1.4. This policy exists to ensure that children are respected, protected and kept safe in all our work. It provides clear guidance on expected behaviour, reporting obligations and accountability for all personnel and partners, so that safeguarding is embedded in everything we do.
- 1.5. This policy is aligned to the [DFAT Child Protection Policy \(2025\)](#), [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) and upholds our commitment to the United Nations [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all Caritas Australia activities and personnel, at all times, including when representing Caritas Australia in Australia or internationally, both during and outside normal work hours. It also applies to visitors and third parties engaged in Caritas Australia premises, programs or activities.
- 2.2. Caritas Australia program partners and any organisations they engage to deliver activities on their behalf must demonstrate alignment with this policy through their own safeguarding policies and procedures. Program partners are responsible for ensuring equivalent standards are upheld.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1. Caritas Australia upholds the inherent **dignity and equal rights of all people**. All personnel must act with respect, professionalism and integrity in all interactions. All children, without

exception, have an equal right to protection from harm, exploitation, abuse and harassment, and discrimination or harmful conduct of any kind will not be tolerated.

- 3.2. Caritas Australia maintains a **child-safe culture** where the safety and wellbeing of children is embedded in all aspects of our work. Leaders at all levels, including the Board, are responsible for setting expectations, modelling respectful behaviour and ensuring accountability.
- 3.3. Caritas Australia places the **best interests of the child** at the centre of its work and decision making. We promote children's rights and engage with them in ways that are respectful, safe, inclusive, age appropriate and culturally sensitive.
- 3.4. Safeguarding children is a **shared responsibility** of Caritas Australia, our partners and the communities in which we work, it is not optional. Every person working for or with Caritas Australia has an individual obligation to uphold this policy, the Code of Conduct and Professional Behaviour Standards. We support partners and communities to strengthen safeguarding practices.
- 3.5. All personnel, partners and third parties **must report** any suspected, witnessed or alleged child exploitation, abuse, harassment or breaches of this policy, immediately. All reports will be taken seriously and responded to immediately using a child centred, rights based and trauma informed approach, with zero tolerance for inaction or retaliation.
- 3.6. Safeguarding **risk management is mandatory** and integrated into all organisational operations. Heightened-risk contexts are subject to increased safeguards and ongoing review.
- 3.7. Caritas Australia has **zero tolerance** for child exploitation, abuse and harassment, including human trafficking. Proven allegations of improper conduct or non-compliance with this Policy, the Professional Behaviour Standards or the Code of Conduct by Caritas Australia personnel, partners or representatives **will result in disciplinary action**, which may include termination of employment or contract, reporting to relevant authorities and/or legal action.

4. Policy Implementation

- 4.1. Caritas Australia implements this Child Safeguarding Policy through an integrated safeguarding framework that embeds the safety and wellbeing of children across the organisation, through:
 - 4.1.1. **Awareness and Training:** requiring personnel, third parties and partners understand their safeguarding obligations and are equipped to act in accordance with this policy.
 - 4.1.2. **Prevention:** identifying, assessing and managing risks to children through proportionate, risk-based safeguards across all activities and contexts.
 - 4.1.3. **Reporting:** Maintaining accessible, safe and confidential mechanisms for raising safeguarding concerns, with clear expectations that all suspected, witnessed or alleged safeguarding concerns, incidents or policy breaches are reported immediately.
 - 4.1.4. **Responding:** responding to safeguarding concerns in a timely, child-centred, rights-based and trauma-informed manner, with appropriate accountability, support and consequences for breaches.
 - 4.1.5. **Learning:** Using monitoring, reporting, reviews and feedback to strengthen safeguarding systems, culture and practice over time, including identifying trends, emerging risks and areas for improvement.

4.1.6. **Assurance:** Oversight and assurance of this policy are provided through governance and management reporting, monitoring of safeguarding risks and incidents, periodic reviews, and independent or internal assurance activities as appropriate. This policy is reviewed at least every three years, or earlier where required, to ensure it remains effective, current and aligned with legislative, donor and sector expectations.

5. Responsibilities

- 5.1. The **Caritas Australia Board** has ultimate responsibility for child safeguarding. This includes, but is not limited, to visibly supporting and promoting child safeguarding within the organisation and providing oversight of serious incidents and safeguarding risks.
- 5.2. The **Caritas Australia Leadership Team** is formally responsible for leading and driving the effective implementation of this policy and associated procedures. They are responsible for managing safeguarding risks within Caritas Australia's operations and ensuring personnel compliance with this policy.
- 5.3. The **Safeguarding Focal Point** is responsible for providing technical leadership on safeguarding, including child safeguarding and PSEAH. They are responsible for coordinating any assurance functions. They provide regular safeguarding reports to the board and coordinate the review and update of this policy.
- 5.4. The **Safeguarding Committee** is responsible for monitoring the effective implementation of this policy and promoting a strong safeguarding culture and facilitating learning and continuous improvement.
- 5.5. **All personnel** are responsible for complying with this policy, acting in accordance with Caritas Australia's values and Professional Behaviour Standards and reporting any safeguarding concerns through appropriate channels.

6. Related Documents

- Code of Conduct and Professional Behaviour Standards for Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults
- Protection from of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy
- Speaking Up Policy
- Whistleblower Procedure
- Safeguarding Procedures