

Policy Owner	Safeguarding Focal Point	Approved by	Board of Directors
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Click [here](#) or view the related procedure for a comprehensive definition list.

1. Context and Purpose

- 1.1. Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) are abuses of power and violations of dignity and human rights. They can occur in contexts of inequality, poverty, crisis, and displacement, where imbalances of power and access increase risks of harm. They can intersect with other forms of exploitation, including human trafficking.
- 1.2. Protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) is the organisational obligation to ensure our people and activities do not expose any people to harm.
- 1.3. At Caritas Australia we work with vulnerable communities in Australia and overseas, through our humanitarian and development programs, advocacy, community engagement, fundraising, and communications. These communities often face compounding inequalities. Our role and reach place us in a position of power, making strong safeguards essential to ensure that our presence does not increase the risk of exploitation, abuse, or harm.
- 1.4. This policy exists to ensure that all people are respected, protected, and kept safe in all our work. It sets clear organisational requirements for preventing, reporting, and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, and to ensure accountabilities for all personnel, partners, and representatives.
- 1.5. This policy aligns with relevant Australian legislation, [DFAT PSEAH Policy \(2025\)](#) and international human rights standards.

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.
- 2.3. Our commitments related to preventing exploitation, abuse and harassment of children (under the age of 18) are documented in our Child Safeguarding Policy.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1. We **uphold the dignity, equality and rights of all people**, without discrimination, and ensure safeguarding approaches are inclusive, equitable and responsive to diverse needs and intersecting vulnerabilities. We work in partnership with program partners and communities

to, address inequality. All people have an equal right to safety, respect, and protection from harm, including in-person and online.

- 3.2. We maintain a **safe and respectful organisational culture** in which power is exercised responsibly, safeguarding risks are actively managed, and concerns can be raised without fear. All personnel, partners and third parties must act in accordance with this policy, the Code of Conduct and Professional Behaviour Standards.
- 3.3. Protecting from and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment is a **shared responsibility** and is not optional. Every person working for or with Caritas Australia must uphold this policy, act ethically, challenge harmful behaviour and report concerns. We have systems in place to ensure all personnel, third parties and partners understand and adhere to our obligations.
- 3.4. All personnel, partners and third parties **must report** any suspected, witnessed, or alleged sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment immediately. All reports will be taken seriously and responded to immediately using a survivor centred, rights based and trauma informed approach, **with zero tolerance for inaction or retaliation**.
- 3.5. Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment **risk management is mandatory**. Risks are actively identified, assessed, and managed across all activities, with additional safeguards applied in higher risk environments, including humanitarian response. Local and culturally appropriate approaches are prioritised while meeting minimum organisational standards.
- 3.6. Caritas Australia has **zero tolerance** for any form of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment, including conduct that facilitates, enables, or constitutes human trafficking, forced labour or slavery-like practices. We will take action where sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment or non-compliance occurs. Proven breaches of this policy, the Code of Conduct or Professional Behaviour Standards **will result in disciplinary action**, which may include termination of employment or engagement, reporting to authorities and/or legal action.

4. Policy Implementation

- 4.1. Caritas Australia implements this policy through an integrated safeguarding framework that embeds the safety and wellbeing of all people across the organisation, through:
 - 4.1.1. **Awareness and Training:** requiring personnel, third parties and partners to understand their safeguarding obligations and are equipped to act in accordance with this policy.
 - 4.1.2. **Prevention:** identifying, assessing, and managing risks to vulnerable people through proportionate, risk-based safeguards across all activities and contexts.
 - 4.1.3. **Reporting:** maintaining accessible, safe, and confidential mechanisms for raising 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, survivor 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 Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment. This includes, but is not limited, to visibly supporting and promoting 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 Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment. 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
- Speaking Up Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblower Procedure
- Safeguarding Procedures