



Document Name:	Child Protection Policy Statement		
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Issued / Updated by:	Head of International Programs	Approved by:	National Council

1. Paramount principles

In relation to our work with children, Caritas Australia is guided by the principles of Catholic Social Teachings, and the following specific principles:

- Promoting and protecting the interests of the child at all times
- Zero tolerance of child abuse
- Mandatory reporting of suspected or confirmed child abuse
- Viewing child protection as a shared responsibility between Caritas Australia, our partners and the communities in which we work
- Including the views of children and young people, where practicable, in the development of our child protection framework

Caritas Australia recognises the personal dignity and rights of children towards whom it has a duty of care and undertakes to create a safe environment for children and young people and to protect them from physical or sexual exploitation or emotional abuse. For the purposes of this policy statement, Caritas Australia regards children and young people as those who are under 18 years of age.

Caritas Australia will not tolerate any form of child abuse or sexual exploitation. Caritas Australia takes its duty of care towards children very seriously and commits to the protection of children from various types of harm, abuse and exploitation in the delivery of its aid and development activities both overseas and within Australia.

2. Scope

This Policy Statement applies to all Caritas Australia staff, volunteers and other key stakeholders engaged directly or indirectly by Caritas Australia to deliver programs and services that involve contact with children, or who, in the course of their employment or association with Caritas Australia, may have contact with children, including contractors and their sub-contractors and consultants, advisers and contracted individuals.

3. Child Protection framework

The policy statement is guided by the Caritas Internationalis Child Protection Policy Framework and informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Child Protection Policy 2017, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct and related documents issued by the Australian Catholic bishop Conference (ACBC). Caritas Australia will aim at all times to create the safest possible environment for children that we and our partners are in contact with through the course of our work by implementing the following procedures and practices:

- a) Actively managing the risk of child abuse and sexual exploitation in the course of its work and encouraging and supporting partners to do the same in delivering aid and development projects.
- b) Developing and implementing robust recruitment and screening procedures which include verbal referee checks, criminal history and working with children checks conducted by accredited agencies prior to the engagement of staff and other persons covered by the Caritas Australia Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures where the work to be undertaken by the persons concerns involves, or may involve contact with children.
- c) Providing our staff with regular training on their obligations in relation to child protection and, through the efforts of the Caritas Australia Child Protection Officer, ensuring that our volunteers and partners and those associated with our partners are provided with appropriate training and information on their Child Protection obligations.
- d) Endeavouring not to engage directly or indirectly with anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children nor support any organisation that does not meet Caritas Australia's Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures standards.
- e) Not permitting personnel to be in contact with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety or wellbeing as determined by the Child Protection Officer.
- f) Ensuring that partners meet the terms of Caritas Australia's Child Protection Policy Statement, Child Protection Code of Conduct and Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.
- g) Encouraging and supporting awareness activities on child protection issues among partners (including their staff), communities in which they work, and other stakeholders associated with Caritas Australia partners whilst directly involved in Caritas Australia activities or programs.
- h) Ensuring that complaints relating to child protection are managed through Caritas Australia's complaints management process under the guidance and direction of the Caritas Australia Child Protection Officer.
- i) Ensuring that employees and volunteers and others including those who are in contact with children as a result of their involvement in a Caritas Australia program or activity will be required to comply with Caritas Australia's Child Protection Code of Conduct and Caritas Australia's Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.

4. Compliance framework

Caritas Australia commits to adhere to the nine minimum compliance standards of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Child Protection Policy set out below:

- a) The organisation has a child protection policy that applies to all personnel, partner's downstream personnel and subcontractors that are engaged by the organisation to perform any part of a DFAT funded activity. The managing partner must ensure the downstream organisation or individual subcontractor complies with the minimum child protection standards.
- b) The organisation's child protection policy includes a documented reporting procedure for child exploitation and abuse allegations, code of conduct and policy non-compliance, including available sanctions for breaches.
- c) The organisation provides child protection training for personnel.
- d) The organisation's child protection policy includes a commitment to preventing a person from working with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children.
- e) The organisation's child protection policy is subject to regular review, at least every five years or earlier if needed.
- f) The organisation undertakes a risk assessment to reduce the risk of any child being harmed as a result of operations or activities funded by DFAT. The assessment must identify risks, and document steps being taken to reduce or remove these risks.
- g) The organisation's employment contracts contain provisions for suspension or transfer to other duties of any employee who is under investigation and provisions to dismiss any employee after an investigation.
- h) Contact with children positions:
The organisation has robust recruitment screening processes for all personnel in contact with children. These recruitment procedures include:
 - criminal record checks before engagement
 - verbal referee checks
- i) Working with children positions:
Additional screening measures (such as interview plans that incorporate behavioural-based interview questions) must be used when candidates are applying for positions that involve working with children.
- j) The organisation has a child protection code of conduct that meets the minimum standard set by DFAT.

5. Organisational responsibilities

5.1 People and Culture Team

The People and Culture Team is responsible for ensuring that this Child Protection Policy Statement is updated in accordance with the approval review schedule.

5.2 Child Protection Officer

The Caritas Australia Child Protection Officer serves as the focal point for safeguarding issues involving Caritas Australia and is the key contact for DFAT Child protection Office and is responsible for:

- a) Ensuring the Caritas Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and related child protection documents and procedures are implemented in a timely and effective manner and are compliant with all relevant standards and contractual obligations on Caritas Australia in relation to child protection issues.
- b) Identifying and implementing appropriate Child Protection Training Programs within Caritas Australia, including programs conducted for overseas-based staff and for Caritas partners.

- c) Ensuring that training programs are implemented by Caritas Australia in a manner that maximises the objective of protecting the welfare and safety of children in receipt of Caritas Australia programs and Caritas Australia activities
- d) Conducting regular risk assessments to ensure that all known risks in relation to Caritas Australia programs and activities are minimised and to identify and take action to mitigate newly identified risks
- e) Taking prompt and appropriate action in relation to allegations involving children of improper conduct by Caritas Australia staff, contractors or partners. Until further advised, the Caritas Australia Child Protection Officer is the Head of the International Programs Team.

Proven allegations of improper conduct relating to children by Caritas Australia staff may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment and/or legal action.

Review

This policy statement will be reviewed at a minimum every three years.

6. Revision history

Version No.	Date Approved	Approved By	Description of Changes
n/a	Aug 2010	n/a	Original publication
n/a	Nov 2011	CEO	Revised publication
n/a	Nov 2014	CEO	Revised publications to incorporate the change to DFAT & updated legislation, updated logo
CA-PC-POL-011 v2.0	28 Jun 2018	National Council	Revised to incorporate DFAT policy requirements, add Child Protection Reporting Process and to explain the responsibilities of the Child Protection Officer
CA-PC-POL-003(i) v2.1	2 Nov 2018	People and Culture	Re-numbered the document number to be consistent with the Policy and Procedure Development Framework. 003 refers to Child Protection suite. (i) refers to the Policy Statement while (ii) refers to the Code of Conduct.