



SAVE THE CHILDREN'S REPORT ON CHILD SAFEGUARDING 2021

1. Statement of commitment to keeping children safe

Our commitment to safeguarding

Whether we are responding to a disaster or humanitarian crisis, running early childhood programs, or campaigning for child rights, safeguarding children and adults in the communities we work in is always our priority. We want to ensure that everyone who comes into contact with our organisation is safe. We call this area of our work 'safeguarding'.

Our safeguarding commitment is to ensure that children and adults are protected from both deliberate and accidental harm and abuse caused by Save the Children staff and other representatives.

How we work to prevent misconduct

The key to safeguarding is prevention and making reporting concerns as easy as possible for children, parents, carers, community members and staff. Our reporting strategies are diverse, and we strive to continuously improve the feedback and reporting mechanisms available to children and the community to ensure they are suited for the particular setting, program and culture.

We employ safeguarding specialists who support our staff in understanding both online and physical program risks and support them to monitor, evaluate and manage those risks. The Safeguarding Team also supports leadership and other teams to build a safe environment and a strong safeguarding culture in our programs. They provide staff training on safeguarding and conduct a program of safeguarding compliance checks across our programs. These specialists also lead investigations of reported safeguarding concerns and manage how incidents are handled.

Some of the steps we take to ensure that children and adults are safeguarded

- We have zero tolerance for abuse, harm and exploitation. All allegations and safety concerns are treated very seriously and in accordance with relevant legislation as well as our policies and procedures.
- We ensure staff and volunteers have ongoing educational opportunities available to increase their awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children of diverse needs, including children with disability, children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and/or queer, and children who are unable to live at home.
- We ensure children, their families and communities we work in are aware of the standards of behaviour they can expect from us.
- We proactively promote and maintain clear, accessible and anonymous reporting and feedback mechanisms, including for those with disabilities and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- We ensure that safe, robust recruitment and screening practices are applied (including criminal checks and working with children checks, verbal referees and behavioural based interview questions).
- We provide in-depth safeguarding training for all staff during their onboarding process and at least once every two years.
- We ensure all representatives are aware of the risks of child and adult abuse, their safeguarding responsibilities, and the requirements to report.
- We embed 'safer programming' steps throughout the programme cycle, including risk assessments and robust management plans.

- We contact relevant authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety, in line with our legal and ethical obligations to children and young people.
- We learn lessons from all incidents and ensure improvement opportunities are implemented.

Our safeguarding policies

We have a number of policies in place across our organisation that help us deliver our commitment to safeguarding. Under the Safeguarding Framework we have the following policies to protect children and adults, as well as our employees and other representatives:

- [Child Safeguarding Policy](#) and Guidelines
- [Prevention from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy \(PSEAH\)](#) and Guidelines
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Exploitation Policy](#)

These underpin everything we do. We also adhere to the [UN Secretary General's Bulletin Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse](#) and other national and international standards.

We have a short [video](#) explaining our Child Safeguarding Policy for children, adults and communities.

2. Interaction with children as part of our operations

Save the Children Australia manages and implements programs that support children in 21 countries around the world. We directly deliver programs in the Pacific region, support Save the Children International Programs around the world and support children and families in our own community, running programs in more than 197 communities and locations across Australia.

We work in partnership with local communities, all levels of government, other NGOs, community and advocacy groups, corporate partners and individual donors to create change for children, families and their communities. We support downstream partners with the skills, capacity, and systems to fulfil their responsibilities consistent with our Safeguarding Framework.

Our goal is to build a better world for and with children. We focus on:

- Emergency response and humanitarian assistance
- Child protection
- Education
- Health
- Poverty alleviation
- Climate change
- Child rights advocacy

Through our Australian Services, Pacific Programs, International Programs and Social Enterprises, our interactions and contact with children is diverse and evolving. Whether in an online or physical setting the types of contact include:

- Group settings (e.g. focus groups or play groups)
- One to one interactions (e.g. tuition or interviewing children and young people)
- Close physical contact (e.g. nappy changing)
- Access to personal data or images (e.g. creating and sharing promotional material)
- Incidental contact (e.g. supervised field/site visits)
- Overnight accommodation (e.g. camps, supported accommodation and refuges)

Click on the link for more information on [our work](#).

3. Outcomes of the annual child safeguarding risk assessment

Our annual child safeguarding risk assessment is underpinned by an agency-wide assessment of the safeguarding risk context in which we operate and by the risk and controls information contained in our safeguarding risk register.

Safeguarding risk context survey

Between August and October 2021, Save the Children Australia rolled out a safeguarding risk context survey to identify the population of children and young people that we are likely to serve and to assess the risk dimensions present in the activities in which we engage with them. The survey was completed for a total of 134 activities, programs or awards active during 2021. The purpose of the survey was to collate safeguarding risk context information from the four programmatic divisions working directly with children to help build a better understanding of their safeguarding risk context profile, and to support management in their decision-making when it comes to the allocation of resources and prioritisation.

The outcomes of the annual child safeguarding risk assessment revealed that overall, Save the Children operates in a medium-risk safeguarding context for 55% of all our activities, programs and awards.

Similarly, 22% of our activities, programs and awards were self-assessed as operating in a high-risk context and 22% self-assessed as low risk.

From a divisional perspective, our International Programs are the ones with the highest risk profile, ahead of the Pacific Region, Australian Services and our Social Enterprises.

Safeguarding Risk Register

Our Safeguarding Risk Register has been developed based on known operational safeguarding risks identified through risk assessments at programmatic level, assurance activities and other internal sources such as the Safeguarding Framework and Workplan.

The safeguarding risk categories and associated risk descriptions captured in our Safeguarding Risk Register are outlined in the table below:

| SAFEGUARDING RISK CATEGORIES | RISK DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| Culture, leadership and governance | Safeguarding is not embedded in Save the Children's culture, leadership and governance. |
| Compliance | Non-compliance with requirements such as Save the Children policies, legislative and regulatory obligations, National Principles of Child Safe Organisations, Global Child Safeguarding Protocol, accreditation and other donor requirements. |
| People management | Staff, volunteers and/or partners intentionally or unintentionally inflict harm to children. |
| Training, awareness and technical support | Staff, volunteers, partners and the community are not skilled or adequately trained in child and adult safeguarding awareness, prevention, reporting and response. |
| Safer and inclusive programming | Programs delivered by Save the Children and/or implementing partners are unsuitable or unsafe for participants. |
| Reporting and response | Inadequate or lack of reporting or response to incidents or concerns exposes the organisation to a continued risk of serious harm, abuse or non-compliance. |
| Media and communications | Improper storage, handling, usage and security of sensitive material such as images or children's personal information. |

Our seven safeguarding risk areas listed above have been mapped to key controls which have been assessed for effectiveness from a control design perspective. Save the Children’s overall control environment has been self-assessed as adequate.

Further control improvements and risk mitigation initiatives are captured in our Workplan for 2022 and will assist in enhancing the safeguarding culture at Save the Children Australia. We are committed to this journey and recognise that it is a continuous effort as the types of work we engage in evolve, contexts and regulations change, and new risks emerge. In this space, there is always work to be done. Some of the key mitigation strategies undertaken in 2021 are included under Section 4 of this Statement.

We are also regularly audited by donors and other oversight bodies (such as DFAT and SCI Global Assurance in 2021), who provide external assurance of the operating effectiveness of our safeguarding approach and compliance status. Safeguarding risk position updates are also presented to the relevant governance committees on a quarterly basis.

To the right is an overview of the outcomes of our annual child safeguarding risk assessment, which produced a Medium residual safeguarding risk rating.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Safeguarding Risk Context | MEDIUM |
| Control Environment | ADEQUATE |
| Residual Impact Rating | SEVERE |
| Residual Likelihood Rating | UNLIKELY |
| Residual Risk Rating | MEDIUM |

4. Child safeguarding initiatives undertaken in 2021

As a result of our mapping of safeguarding risks and key controls, we designed a comprehensive Safeguarding Workplan for 2021 which aimed to develop our safeguarding approach and improve the effectiveness of controls. The focus of our safeguarding initiatives in 2021 has been on:

- releasing our new [PSEAH Policy](#) and Guidelines (the safeguarding of adults in the communities where we work) [and updating our Child Safeguarding Policy](#) and Guidelines
- building staff and partners' capacity in line with the 2021 Safeguarding Training Plan
- improving children's participation with the help of the [2020 Child Safeguarding Scorecard](#)
- publishing new safeguarding awareness material such as the Australian Services Statement of Commitment to the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People, the child-friendly safety leaflet and safety cards for both children and adults
- strengthening our safeguarding risk management approach and improving the effectiveness of our control environment with the development of a safeguarding risk context questionnaire and dashboard, and our first operational Safeguarding Risk Register.

Our Safeguarding Team works closely with safeguarding specialists across the Save the Children global movement to share knowledge and resources. In 2021 the new resources developed include:

- [Disability-inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines](#)
- [Disability-inclusive Child Safeguarding Toolkit](#)
- Creating an inclusive and accessible feedback and reporting mechanism
- Managing, analysing and presenting feedback data for action
- Close the feedback loop
- Child Safeguarding – Social media platform mitigation tool, major risk mitigation matrix.

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