

# Child Protection

## Policy Scope

This policy relates to ACC Darling Downs Ltd.

## Policy

All children have a right to be protected from harm. The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures that the school has in place to protect children when they are onsite and also the procedures that the school has in place when there is a belief that the welfare of a child is at risk outside the school.

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## **Definition of Child Abuse and Neglect**

Child abuse and neglect is the maltreatment of a person under the age of 18 years. It is the result of action or inaction on the part of a person who has responsibility to care for a child resulting in harm or injury to the child. The harm may include delayed physical and/or intellectual development. The maltreatment experienced is normally described in five categories. Each category of maltreatment is described by a range of indicators.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse occurs when a child has experienced severe and/or persistent ill-treatment. It can include, but is not limited by injuries such as cuts, bruises, burns and fractures caused by a range of acts including beating, shaking, illicit administration of alcohol and other drugs, attempted suffocation, excessive discipline or physical punishment.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse covers a wide range of behaviour or activities that expose or subject a child to sexual activity that is exploitative and/or inappropriate to his/her age and developmental level. These behaviours include observation or involvement with inappropriate fondling of a child's body, making a child touch an adult's genitalia, showing pornographic material or sexual acts to a child, and sexual penetration of the child. Harm from sexual abuse may include significant emotional trauma, physical injury, infections and impaired emotional and psychological development.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is a sustained, repetitive, inappropriate, ill treatment of a child or young person through behaviours including threatening, belittling, teasing, humiliating, bullying, confusing, ignoring and inappropriate encouragement. Children who have been emotionally abused are likely to have a reduced capacity to experience a range of emotions, to express emotion appropriately and to modulate their emotional experience. Children who have been emotionally abused are likely to be fearful, withdrawn and/or resentful, distressed and despairing.

### **Psychological abuse**

Psychological abuse is the sustained, repetitive, inappropriate, ill treatment of a child or young person through behaviours including threatening, isolating, neglecting, discrediting, misleading, disregarding, ignoring and inappropriate encouragement. This abuse damages a child's intellectual faculties and processes, including intelligence, memory, recognition, perception, attention, imagination and moral development. Children are likely to feel worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered or only of value in meeting another's needs.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the failure of a parent/caregiver to provide a child with the basic necessities of life. These include adequate supervision, adequate food or shelter, suitable clothing, effective medical, therapeutic or remedial care and emotional security.

## **Mandatory Reporting**

### **Legislation**

Since 1st January 2009, the Children and Community Services Amendment (Reporting Sexual Abuse of Children) Act 2008 has been in effect and covers mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse in Western Australia. This amendment forms part of the Children and Community Services Act 2004.

### **Who is a Mandatory Reporter?**

In Western Australia, the mandatory reporters of child sexual abuse are the following professions in both the government and non-government sectors: doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers, police officers.

Teacher assistants, school chaplains and school psychologists are examples of people who work with children in schools that are not mandated reporters. However, all people working with children, whether mandatory reporters or not, should continue to report reasonable beliefs about all forms of abuse. These people who work with children also have a great knowledge of the children in their care and can be included in the consultative process with the teacher in the case of sexual abuse.

### **Who is responsible for reporting to the Department of Child Protection (DCP)?**

Once a teacher has formed a belief based on reasonable grounds, they are required to make the report to DCP, not the school principal. Prior to forming a belief, the teacher may, if they wish, consult with colleagues with specialist knowledge, for example, the principal, psychologist, school counsellor.

### **When does a mandatory reporter make a report?**

Mandatory reporters must report a belief, based on reasonable grounds in the course of their work, paid or unpaid, that child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring. This means that teachers working outside of the school grounds are also required to report when working in either a paid or unpaid capacity. For example, tutoring, volunteer teacher at youth centre, working as a Sunday school teacher.

A mandatory reporter can form the necessary belief, based on reasonable grounds, by noting the presence of indicators, disclosures, injuries, signs, symptoms and behaviours that heighten concerns about child sexual abuse.

### **How does a mandatory reporter form a belief on reasonable grounds?**

Teachers may wish to consider the following questions to assist them in deciding if their belief is based on reasonable grounds:

1. Can you describe the reasons why you believe a child has been, or is being sexually abused?
2. What has the child said or done to suggest they are being sexual abused?

3. Have you observed, or been told about, the presence of any of the 'possible indicators' of sexual abuse?
4. Did the child disclose sexual abuse? What did they say happened? Who did they disclose to and when?
5. What other behaviours have you observed and/or interactions with the child are of concern to you? What is the frequency and severity of the behaviour? How long has it been occurring?

### **How does a mandatory reporter make a report?**

A centralised Mandatory Reporting Service has been established to receive all reports of child sexual abuse in Western Australia. This service is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

There are two ways to make a report - verbal or written.

A verbal report is preferred in the first instance, particularly if the teacher has formed a belief that the child is still at risk of being abused, as it allows the Mandatory Reporting Service to respond quickly, ask clarifying questions and gather as much information as possible. However, it must be followed by a written report as soon as is practicable, usually within 24 hours. To make a verbal report, the Mandatory Reporting Service can be reached on 1800 708 704.

Failure to follow up a verbal report with a written report as soon as is practicable may result in a fine of \$3,000. A written report form can be downloaded from the mandatory reporting website [www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au](http://www.mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au).

If you do not have access to a computer, the form can also be mailed out to you. Once you have completed your written report, it can be returned using any of the following methods:

1. Email to: [mrs@dcp.wa.gov.au](mailto:mrs@dcp.wa.gov.au)
2. Fax to: 1800 610 614
3. Post to: PO Box 8146, Perth BC WA 6849

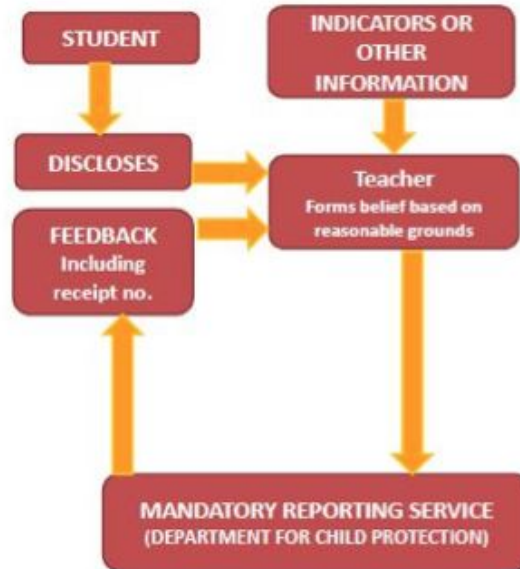
Once you have lodged a report, you will receive a standardised letter. This letter is proof that you have made a report so it is important that you keep it.

Once the report has been lodged, the Mandatory Reporting Service will assess the immediate risk to the child, and determine the need for further child protection assessment and investigation. A copy of the report is sent to the WA Police. The police determine if they need to be involved on a case by case basis.

The mandatory reporter will receive a feedback letter advising them of the DCP District Office it has been referred to, or whether no further action was recommended by the Mandatory Reporting Service.

## Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Abuse Flowchart

### MANDATORY REPORTING PROCEDURE



## Notification of Possible Child Abuse and/or Neglect (non-mandatory report) Flowchart

### NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (NON-MANDATORY REPORT)



## **Working with Children Check (WCC)**

### **Definition**

The Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 (the Act), that requires people who start or continue in “child-related work” to have a national criminal record check called a Working with Children Check (WWC Check).

Work is “child-related work” if the usual duties of the work involve, or are likely to involve, contact with a child.

### **Who must complete a WCC**

1. Teachers are required to have a police clearance. The Working with Children (WWC) legislation requires them to have a WWC Check.
2. Non teaching staff are also required to have a WWC check if their usual duties involve contact with children.
3. Volunteers who are not parents who have contact with children are also required to have a WWC Check.
4. Volunteers who are parents are exempt from getting a WWC Check, unless on an overnight camp.

### **Monitoring WCC Compliance**

1. The Manager of Administration will ensure that prospective staff and volunteers (as per the criteria above) submit their completed WWC prior to commencing employment at the school.
2. The Manager of Administration will keep a copy of the WWC on file at the school.

### **Staff Training**

1. The Principal will conduct an annual review of the Child Protection Policy with all staff.
2. The Principal will inform the school community on issues relating to Child Protection during the school year. Examples include:
  - a. Cyber-Safety Information Evenings
  - b. Child Protection Awareness for the School Community

### **Policy Review**

On change of legislation or at the discretion of the School Board of ACC Darling Downs Ltd.

### **Policy Version**

4.0