



RAWCS Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct

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1. Introduction

1.1 *Who we are*

1.1.1 Rotary Australia World Community Service Ltd (RAWCS) is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). We back doing good by supporting and facilitating a broad range of humanitarian and development projects, both in Australia and in developing countries. RAWCS administers three Tax Deductible funds:

1. **Rotary Australia Overseas Aid Fund (RAOAF):** This fund supports efforts by Rotary Clubs, Rotary Districts and other partners to deliver humanitarian assistance in developing countries. RAOAF focuses on both sustained development and immediate disaster response, working collaboratively with communities to deliver impactful, sustainable projects to meet identified needs.
2. **Rotary Australia Benevolent Society (RABS):** RABS supports Rotary Clubs, Rotary Districts and other partners to respond to specific community challenges within Australia. It offers an avenue for wider community involvement through tax-deductible donations. The Rotary Australia Compassionate Grants Projects within RABS uses matching funds from donations, such as those provided by Dick Smith's Trust, to assist Australians facing hardship.
3. **Rotary Australia Relief Fund (RARF):** This fund is dedicated to responding to national appeals and efficiently disbursing funds to appropriate aid projects. RARF's focus is on mobilising rapid support during national crises, such as natural disasters, providing a structured channel for public generosity to be transformed into effective aid. This fund acts as a hub for contributions from both Rotary and non-Rotary sources, ensuring swift and effective aid delivery to disaster-affected areas.

1.2 *Purpose*

1.2.1 RAWCS works both directly and indirectly with children through our programs and general project activities. During these visits, direct interaction with children can occur. It is therefore critical that RAWCS has clear and well-communicated strategies for ensuring that children and young people are protected from direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional, harm or abuse as a result of these activities, and that clear processes for responding to child harm, abuse or neglect are developed and followed.

1.2.2 The purpose of this Child Safeguarding Policy is to outline the preventative and responsive measures we have in place to safeguard children and ensure the care, protection and wellbeing of children is promoted. This policy aims to achieve this by:

- demonstrating our commitment and approaches to child safeguarding;
- outlining the expectations and responsibilities of our stakeholders;
- providing guidance on how to respond to concerns and allegations of child abuse; and
- setting high standards around personal behaviour in a code of conduct that must be adhered to by all our people and stakeholders.

1.3 *Scope and Governance*

1.3.1 This policy applies to RAWCS and all of its administered funds and subsidiaries – referred inclusively within this policy as RAWCS.

- 1.3.2 This policy applies to all persons working for us or on our behalf in any capacity and at all times, including when representing RAWCS either within Australia or overseas.
- 1.3.3 This policy applies to all RAWCS staff, volunteers, Board members, committee members, suppliers and contractors. Within this policy all of these are represented by the term: “**our people**”.
- 1.3.4 This policy and its obligations extends to any persons who visit our premises, programs or activities within Australia and overseas.
- 1.3.5 RAWCS program partners are required to adhere to this policy through demonstrated alignment within their own policies and procedures. Program partners are responsible for ensuring their downstream partners also follow appropriate policies and procedures.
- 1.3.6 Where RAWCS is assisting in a youth program which is under the control of another organisation such as a school, the protection requirements set out in this document still apply together with any additional requirement the other organisation may require.

1.4 RAWCS Commitment to Child Safeguarding

- 1.4.1 RAWCS affirms its commitment to the welfare of children and their protection from abuse and exploitation. Partners in Aid upholds the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), and in particular, Article 19, which states: “*State Parties shall protect the child ... from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.*”
- 1.4.2 We are committed to:
- promoting the care, protection and wellbeing of children in a way that recognises their right to grow in a safe and stable environment and their right to be protected from harm;
 - ensuring RAWCS projects respond appropriately to the needs of children in a way that fosters their health, development and dignity;
 - identifying and mitigating both immediate and cumulative risks to children in the context of our activities;
 - recognising the family as the primary means of providing for the nurture, care and protection of children; and
 - providing and promoting a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all our people and stakeholders.

1.5 Policy References

- 1.5.1 This policy was developed with references to the following documents:
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
 - End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT)
 - National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Australian Human Rights Commission)
 - ACFID Code of Conduct
 - RAWCS Code of Conduct
 - RAWCS Commitment to Human Rights, Humanitarian Principles and Racial Justice Statement
 - RAWCS Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
 - RAWCS Gender Equity Policy
 - RAWCS Volunteer Policy
 - RAWCS Communication and Transparency Policy
 - RAWCS Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure
 - RAWCS Whistleblower Policy and Procedure

1.6 Definitions

Term	Definition
Child and young person	A child or young person is regarded to be any person under the age of 18 years, unless a nation's laws recognise adulthood earlier.
Child Safeguarding	Refers to the individual responsibility and duty of care of organisations to keep children safe and promote their wellbeing in the context of their program/organisation. This involves ensuring their staff, operations and programs do no harm to children or do not expose children to risk of harm or abuse.
Child Protection	Describes various actions taken by government, organisations and others to protect children from all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation. It includes national policies, laws, frameworks and programs related to issues involving children and their rights.
Working with Children Check	In Australia people who work or volunteer with children are screened for suitability. The Working with Children Check is legislated and operated by each state and territory.
Child Abuse	Child abuse includes physical, sexual or emotional harm, neglect, bullying, child labour and domestic violence. It occurs across cultures and can be inflicted by men or women on boys and girls.
Child Neglect	Neglect involves the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide a child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care, to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk.
Child Sexual Abuse	Sexual abuse care occurs when a child or young person is used by an older or bigger child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification – regardless of the age of majority or age of consent.
Child Exploitation	Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others that are to the detriment of the child's physical and mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development.
Child-Sex Tourism	End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) International defines child-sex tourism as: "...the commercial sexual exploitation of children by men or women who travel from one place to another, usually from a richer country to one that is less developed, and there engage in sexual acts with children, defined as anyone aged under 18 years of age." (ECPAT International, 2006)
Bullying	Bullying is the deliberate and repetitive use of power by an individual or group, with an intent to injure either physically or emotionally.
Exposure to Domestic Violence	Domestic and family violence occurs when someone tries to control their partner or other family members in ways that intimidate or oppress them through behaviours including threats, humiliation, emotional abuse, physical assault, sexual abuse, financial exploitation and social isolation.

2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1 RAWCS acknowledges the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's fundamental principle that children have their own indivisible rights. We take our responsibility to ensure the rights of children and their protection from harm very seriously.
- 2.2 All our people and project partners have a duty of care to the children and young people who are involved in our projects and programs.
- 2.3 This duty of care extends to ensuring that all actions possible will be taken to ensure that children and young people are protected from foreseeable harm. It extends to all children regardless of their background, abilities or personal characteristics.
- 2.4 Our child safe practices include promoting our child safe commitments on our website and in any promotional material that may be produced.
- 2.5 RAWCS has zero tolerance of abuse, bullying, sexual behaviour, transactional sexual behaviour or exploitation of any child or young person.
- 2.6 All our people and project partners will be required to be aware of this policy and to adhere to the principles and guidelines it contains.

3. Preventative Actions

3.1 *Child Safe Recruitment & Screening*

- 3.1.1 RAWCS is committed to child safe recruitment. We acknowledge that child abusers or sex offenders often seek employment or volunteer placements in organisations that work with children. Therefore, our recruitment practices aim to recruit the safest and most suitable people and deter those who wish to harm children from seeking engagement with RAWCS.
- 3.1.2 We are committed to child safe screening practices. We will not knowingly engage – directly or indirectly – anyone who poses a risk to children. All our people require a current Working with Children Check (or equivalent for the state/territory) and must keep this check renewed throughout their employment or volunteering.
- 3.1.3 Anyone representing RAWCS who travels overseas, and who may have contact with children, will be required to obtain a Working with Children Check.
- 3.1.4 All our people received safeguarding training as part of their induction and are required to commit to, and sign the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (Appendix 1).
- 3.1.5 RAWCS reserves the right to refuse employment or engagement to any person that poses an unacceptable risk to children.

3.2 Risk Management

- 3.2.1 Careful and ongoing risk management, especially during the design and planning stage of a project or activity, can reduce the risk of child abuse and exploitation occurring within projects and activities. All projects present potential risks to children, however projects that work directly with children require more stringent risk management.
- 3.2.2 We require medium-risk projects (work directly or have direct contact with children) and high-risk programs (work directly with children in high-risk programs/environments) to:
- conduct an initial child safeguarding risk assessment;
 - implement ongoing risk management strategies including regular policy and procedure reviews;
 - complete additional child safeguarding training if necessary; and
 - encourage reporting of any observation or belief that a child is being or has been abused, physically, sexually or emotionally, or is being neglected; any report by a child which suggests they have been or are being abused or neglected; and any observation or belief that an adult is or may be exploiting, abusing or neglecting a child.
- 3.2.3 Child safeguarding and child risk management are factored into project monitoring cycles including being incorporated into regular partner reporting processes.
- 3.2.4 Without thorough risk management, our activities and choices can cause unintentional harm and create risk for the very children we intend to support. This is especially the case when selecting locations for our programs and activities. For example:
- renting a cheaper facility on the outskirts of a town may result in children facing harms when travelling to and from the location;
 - running programs at locations that cannot be accessed by children with disability further reinforces stigma and increase inequality; or
 - selecting a building with closed off spaces can lead to inability to comply or enforce adequate supervision (two-adult rule) resulting in an increased likelihood of abuse occurring.
- 3.2.5 Ideally these factors should be assessed prior to starting activities to reduce extra costs associated with altering programs later.

3.3 High Risk Program Areas

More thorough risk management is also needed for the following high risk program areas:

- 3.3.1 **Disaster Response and Humanitarian Emergencies:** Disaster situations can have a disproportionately negative impact on the immediate and long-term wellbeing and development of children. Disasters often disrupt the social patterns or groupings that protect children and exacerbate pre-existing risks to children caused by entrenched poverty, power disparities and weak social protection frameworks. Some individuals also take advantage of the chaos to exploit and harm children. For this reason, RAWCS is committed to ensuring that we uphold our commitment to child protection and safeguarding throughout all our disaster relief responses.
- 3.3.2 **Children with Disabilities:** Children with disabilities face heightened risks of harm due to their dual vulnerability as children and the impact that such barriers, such as stigma and exclusion, have on their life. We are committed to ensuring, through all programs, that proactive measures and

strategies are taken to ensure the inclusion, participation and equal opportunity for children with disabilities. This includes ensuring children with disabilities:

- are incorporated into child safeguarding risk assessments and risk minimisation strategies;
- are included in projects by taking proactive measures to reduce the barriers they may face (e.g. talking to the community about disability perceptions, ensuring buildings are accessible, partnering with organisations already working with children with disabilities); and
- have their voices heard within projects and when designing projects (e.g. ensuring children with disabilities have a representative on youth-led committees, seeking the views of children with disabilities and their parents/guardians).

3.4 Use of Child Photos, Images, Videos and Information

3.4.1 We ensure that the best interests of each child are protected over any other consideration.

3.4.2 Photographs or videos of children must not be taken for personal use. However, RAWCS occasionally uses images of children and young people in newsletters and other publications. Informed permission (either verbal or written) will be obtained from children and their parents/guardian before their images are used in publications.

3.4.3 Photos, images, videos or other likenesses of children and/or personal information related to children that could compromise their care and protection or be considered exploitative will not be made available through any form of media, including social media and any encrypted messaging platform.

3.4.4 Images of children are not to be accompanied by any identifying information relating to their location or place of residence. Images with corresponding text which may identify a child should be removed.

3.4.5 When photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes, the following standards must be applied:

- before photographing or filming a child, obtain informed consent from both the child and their parent or guardian using a form in the relevant language and child-friendly approaches, including pictures;
- explain to the child and parent or guardian how the photograph or film will be used, in age-appropriate language and with an interpreter if necessary;
- take care that local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to before photographing or filming a child;
- ensure children are adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexualised or submissive;
- ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts;
- avoid including identifying information in file labels, meta-data, or text descriptions when sending or publishing images in any form;
- explain that consent to use an image may be revoked if they change their mind, and how consent can be revoked; and
- do not identify children engaged in activities that may be culturally marginalised or challenge cultural norms for their own protection.

3.4.6 Interviews with children shall be conducted in a sensitive manner and only when a parent or guardian is present.

- 3.4.7 In all cases, portrayal of children will ensure that they are portrayed as resilient, capable and not weak or vulnerable. Images will not identify the location of children or enable them to be contacted by potentially harmful people.
- 3.4.8 Images should never show children naked or in a sexualised manner.
- 3.4.9 Nothing that suggests a way whereby an outsider could contact the child or his or her family will ever be published.

3.5 *Child Involvement & Participation*

- 3.5.1 The right for children to be heard, taken seriously and be involved in decisions that affect them is one of the fundamental values of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and key to the fulfilment of all other child rights. Ensuring children's views are heard and valued contributes towards children's development, leads to more informed decision-making and serves to protect children who are not silenced in the face of abuse, violence or discrimination.
- 3.5.2 RAWCS is committed to increasing child and youth participation. This will include ensuring that when working directly with children, our people and partners:
- provide opportunities for children's views to be heard and then incorporate these views into projects and policies (e.g. child-led committees, child-friendly feedback forms, small group discussions). This includes involving children and young people in decisions regarding if and how their stories and images should be used and how they wish to be portrayed; and
 - develop child/youth friendly reporting and complaints mechanisms (e.g. protective behaviours training, posters, suggestion boxes).
- 3.5.3 Where appropriate, we will also consult children in a manner appropriate to their age and maturity when conducting project monitoring and evaluation.

3.6 *Training & Awareness*

- 3.6.1 All our people have a role to play in upholding and promoting the rights, protection and wellbeing of children. Therefore, we need to ensure we are equipped and trained. RAWCS is committed to educating all our people to:
- ensure they understand their obligations under this Child Safeguarding Policy;
 - increase their awareness of child protection and exploitation;
 - equip them to recognise risks to child safety and implement child safeguards; and
 - ensure they understand their obligations to report concerns or suspicions and are aware of the appropriate way to report.

3.7 *Working with Partners*

- 3.7.1 Partner Organisations will be made aware of this policy with the expectation that they too will adhere to it in the absence of an equivalent child protection policy in their organisations.
- 3.7.2 This policy will form part of all partnership agreements between RAWCS and our partner organisations.

- 3.7.3 Staff employed by partner organisations who work with children should be recruited using child safe practices.

4. Responsive Actions

4.1 Reporting Procedures

- 4.1.1 RAWCS acknowledges that child abuse and neglect reporting procedures vary between countries and that those which apply in Australia may not apply in the countries where we work. Nonetheless, RAWCS will adopt the key principles outlined below in responding to and reporting child abuse or neglect.
- 4.1.2 **What to report:** any observation or belief that a child is being or has been abused, physically, sexually or emotionally, or is being neglected; any report by a child which suggest they have been or are being abused or neglected; and any observation or belief that an adult is or may be exploiting, abusing or neglecting a child.
- 4.1.3 **When to report:** immediately.
- 4.1.4 **Whom to report to:** if the abuse or neglect is occurring in Australia or the perpetrator is acting in Australia, report to the police or the state child protection authority. If there is a suspicion of child sex exploitation, pornography, sex tourism or similar, report to the Australian Federal Police. All incidents should also be reported to the CEO of RAWCS via complaints@rawcs.org.au
- 4.1.5 If the abuse or neglect occurs overseas and is observed in the course of an in-country visit, it should be reported to the RAWCS Volunteer Team Leader and National Manager Projects and Volunteers. The CEO of RAWCS should also be informed simultaneously via complaints@rawcs.org.au
- 4.1.6 If it is not possible to report it to the relevant partner organisation, or if no action is taken, again, this should be reported to the CEO of RAWCS via complaints@rawcs.org.au and, where appropriate, it should also be reported to the police.
- 4.1.7 **What will happen next?** In Australia, the police or child protection authority will conduct an enquiry and take appropriate action. If the incident involves a Rotarian, volunteer or someone connected to RAWCS, the CEO and the Board will take action appropriate to the outcome of the authority's investigation. Overseas, the RAWCS National Manager Projects & Volunteers will liaise over the appropriate course of action which will include an investigation, steps to protect the child, appropriate reporting to relevant authorities in both countries and appropriate action in-country to minimise the likelihood of the incident occurring again.
- 4.1.8 **What happens if the allegation is proven or suspicion credible?** Where an incident has been proven or there is credible suspicion, RAWCS will automatically terminate a staff member, remove a volunteer from the team, or any other representative's association with the organisation. Any breaches by a Rotarian must also involve Rotary International and/or the relevant Rotary District.
- 4.1.9 All incidents or reports will be taken seriously by RAWCS and acted upon immediately. All actions will be taken in the best interests of the child or young person.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
National Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ultimate accountability for our organisational policies • Guiding governance and culture of RAWCS through strategic leadership • Approving this policy and holding the CEO accountable to how effectively this policy is implemented.
CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring this policy is upheld • Informing the Board of any concerns relating to child safeguarding and child protection. • Ensuring all our people are accountable to this policy.
National Manager Projects & Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring all project participants are aware of, and comply with this policy. • Fostering a culture of integrity by actively promoting and supporting whistleblowing channels to report unethical behaviour or policy violations.
Volunteer Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with this policy and ensure its is upheld by volunteer team members. • Reporting any breach of this policy to the National Manager Projects & Volunteers
All our people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and following this policy and related procedures • Ensuring that your actions are in line with this policy, and that your work reflects the Guiding Principles and Policy Commitments above • Not encouraging others (directly or indirectly) to breach this policy • Reporting any breach to your supervisor/manager.

6. Failure to comply with this Policy

- 6.1 Any breach of this Policy by our people may be regarded as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action (up to and including dismissal where relevant).
- 6.2 A breach of this Policy may also amount to a civil or criminal contravention under the Australian whistleblower protection laws (in particular, the regime contained in the *Corporations Act* and the *Taxation Administration Act*), giving rise to significant penalties.

7. Policy Distribution

- 7.1 We will ensure that all our people and partners are notified of and made aware that they are required to comply with the policy.
- 7.2 This policy will be publicly available on our website.

8. Review

- 8.1 We are committed to continuous improvement to our policy, procedures and practices. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years by the CEO and approved by the National Board of Directors to ensure it is working in practice and updated as required.

8.2 Feedback on this and other policies is openly encouraged from our people, partners, stakeholders and the communities we work with. Feedback, as well as emerging good practice and collaborative lessons learnt across the development sector, will be used to strengthen this and related policies and procedures.

9. More information

9.1. If you have a query about this policy or need more information, you can contact us via:

- email: info@rawcs.org.au
- phone: +61 2 8833 8306
- post: Rotary Australia World Community Service Ltd
25/1 Maitland Place
Maitland Place
Norwest NSW 2153
Australia

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Appendix 1: Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct

Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct

I have read and understand the RAWCS Child Safeguarding Policy and Child Safeguarding Procedure.

General obligations

I agree and understand that these obligations apply:

- while I am working for RAWCS or engaged in activities related to RAWCS;
- when I am publicly displaying a connection to RAWCS (for example, wearing a t-shirt);
- in situations where I am recognised as a representative of RAWCS;
- at all times when I am working in roles and or on projects in Australia or overseas.

As a RAWCS supplier, I agree and understand that these obligations apply during my work or activities with RAWCS when:

- having direct or indirect contact with children and/or their families and carers;
- supervising others who have direct or indirect contact with children and/or their families and carers;
- accessing records relating to children and/or their families and carers; and
- having governance responsibility or management oversight of programs or services accessed by children and/or their families and carers.

I will:

- Act in accordance with the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct at all times.
- Behave respectfully and ethically towards children and their families.
- Keep children's safety and wellbeing at the forefront of what I do and act in their best interests.
- Consider and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of children.
- Comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation, including laws related to children working.
- Immediately disclose if I have been charged with, or convicted of, any offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse.
- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or nonverbally) that they do not feel safe or well.
- Respond to any child safety and wellbeing concerns, complaints or allegations of harm to a child promptly and in line with this policy and the processes outlined.
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation, abuse and neglect, and policy noncompliance in accordance with internal and external reporting processes as outlined in the Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Demonstrate appropriate personal and professional boundaries.
- Only access children's records for legitimate work purposes.

I will not:

- Use language or behaviour towards children (including on-line behaviour) that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, exploitative, demeaning, neglectful, coercive or culturally inappropriate.
- Access children's records for non-work-related purposes or use children's data or images in any way that may compromise their rights, safety or wellbeing.
- Engage in any unlawful activity with, or in relation to, a child.
- Engage in any activity that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child.
- Be alone with a child unnecessarily or engage in unnecessary physical contact.

- Arrange personal contact, including online contact, with children I am working with for a purpose unrelated to RAWCS activities.
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse.
- Take or share any photos or images of children unless required for approved work purposes.

If I think this Code of Conduct has been breached by myself or another person in their RAWCS work in I will:

- act to prioritise the best interests of children, including taking actions promptly to ensure that children are safe;
- immediately report the breach and actions taken in response, including any child safety and wellbeing concerns, as per incident reporting and response process outlined in the Child Safeguarding Policy;
- follow RAWCS policies and procedures for receiving and responding to complaints and concerns.

Filming and photographing children and use of children's images for work related purposes

When photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes, I will:

- comply with all relevant RAWCS policies and procedures to ensure children's and their family's consent, dignity, safety and wellbeing;
- take care to ensure local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to before photographing or filming a child;
- obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child, including an explanation of how the photograph or film will be used;
- ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner;
- ensure children are adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
- ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts;
- ensure all files are securely stored and shared in line with data security requirements to prevent their misuse, and all file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child if sharing images electronically or publishing images in any form.

Acknowledgements

I also understand that any breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct must be reported immediately by me as part of my commitment to accountability and continuous improvement. I understand that in certain circumstances a breach may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, termination of services, legal action, and/or criminal investigation and prosecution.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

Organisation: _____