

Child Protection Policy

1. Purpose

This Child Protection Policy (the Policy), informed by a set of principles derived from the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, provides the minimum standard for child protection related to HHUG's work. The Policy provides practical guidance to prevent, and minimise the risk of, child abuse and exploitation in all HHUG programs. HHUG will:

- Establish and maintain procedures to identify, prevent, and minimise the risk of harm, child abuse, or exploitation as a result of HHUG activities;
- Promote a child safe and a child friendly culture where everyone is committed to keeping children safe;
- Create an open environment where concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child can be raised and managed in a fair and just manner, which protects the rights of all;
- Protect staff, volunteers, members, stakeholders and HHUG from situations in which they may be at risk from false accusations or false perceptions of inappropriate dealing with children.

2. Scope

The Policy applies to all HHUG personnel including staff, volunteers (local and international), interns, members, board members, contractors and any other individuals or groups who are involved in HHUG sanctioned activities that will have direct contact with children (including their personal information and images).

3. Definitions

Child (plural 'children'): In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a 'child' means every human being below the age of 18 years.

Child Abuse: Child abuse may take one or more of the following forms:

Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a person intentionally injures, or threatens to injure, a child. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is a parent or caregiver's inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. Such behaviours are likely to damage a child's self-esteem or social competence.

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Neglect

Neglect is the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for the child's physical and emotional development and wellbeing.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when a child is used by another child, adolescent or adult for their own sexual gratification, or social and economic gain. Sexual abuse includes contact and non-contact activities which encompasses all forms of sexual activity (not only penetrative acts) involving children. Exposing children to pornographic images/video or taking pornographic photographs/videos of children are sexual abuse.

Child Protection: An activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm, particularly arising from abuse or exploitation.

Child pornography: In accordance with the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 'child pornography' means 'any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.'

Child-sex tourism: The 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.

Criminal Record Check: A check of an individual's criminal history record. In Australia, national criminal record checks are available through state and territory police departments. The type of employment should be specified as 'overseas employment.' Overseas, different checking procedures apply in each country. Individuals need to give their consent to a criminal record check and should be informed of the purpose for which the resulting police clearance certificate will be used.

Online grooming: The act of sending an electronic message with indecent content to a recipient whom the sender believes to be under 16 years of age, with the intention of procuring the recipient to engage in or submit to sexual activity with another person, including but not necessarily the sender.

Particularly vulnerable children: Children who are particularly vulnerable to abuse, such as children with physical and mental disabilities, homeless children, child sex workers and children impacted by disasters and conflict.

Staff: Persons either employed by an organisation or engaged by an organisation on a sub-contract basis (including paid and volunteer staff).

Volunteers: Persons engaged by an organisation on a voluntary or unpaid basis.

Working with Children: Working in a position that involves regular contact with children, either under the position description or due to the nature of the work environment.

4. Statement of Policy

HHUG has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and exploitation and is committed to taking all necessary steps to ensure that all children with whom we work are always provided with a safe environment. The commitment to protect children against all forms of abuse and exploitation is embedded in the organisation's culture, and responsibility to act is understood and accepted at all levels of the organisation. HHUG recognises that by the nature of our work, our operations may pose a risk to children, and to recognise the organisation's firm commitment to child protection in our work both in the Northern Rivers and across Australia, we have developed this Policy.

HHUG and its project partners are legally obliged to adhere to local¹ and international child protection laws, which prohibit the abuse and exploitation of children. These include the Australian and international laws and Conventions that relate to all forms of child abuse and exploitation.

¹ Relevant National Australian legislation relating to sexual abuse of children includes:

- Criminal Code Act 1995, Division 474. This Act provides for a penalty of 10 years imprisonment for possession of child pornography depicting a person under 18 years of age, and up to 15 years imprisonment for online grooming of a person under 16 years of age.
- Crimes Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences Against Children) Act 2010: This replaced the Crimes Act 1914 Part IIIA (Child Sex Tourism), and inserted expanded provisions previously contained in that part into new divisions of the criminal code: namely Divisions 272 and Division 273. Under this Act it is a crime for Australians to engage in, encourage, or benefit from sexual activity with persons under 16 years of age while overseas.

5. Principles

HHUG's approach to Child Protection is guided by the following principles:

5a. Best interests of the child: The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration when dealing with the safety and wellbeing of a child.

5b. Zero tolerance of child abuse and exploitation: HHUG has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and exploitation. HHUG will not knowingly engage personnel to be in direct or indirect contact with children, or access communities with whom we work, if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety. HHUG will take immediate action upon report of any suspected child abuse or exploitation.

5c. Shared responsibility: Child protection is a shared responsibility. This means that the successful implementation of child protection measures relies on all HHUG personnel who work with children to uphold the principles of the Policy. To this end HHUG will do working with children and police checks on all HHUG personnel who work with children. In addition, HHUG will work with partner

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organisations involved in the delivery of HHUG-supported programs and activities that work with children to have appropriate child protection measures, including a policy and associated protocols.

5d. Risk management approach: HHUG has a duty of care to provide protective environments for children in all its programs, projects and initiatives. Although it is not possible to eliminate risks of child abuse and exploitation, HHUG will identify, monitor and mitigate risks against in the assessment of its programs, operations, activities and partners to reduce the risk of a child being abused, exploited or harmed.

5e. Transparency and Accountability: HHUG will continually strengthen its internal child protection systems to improve accountability to our stakeholders, especially the communities with which we work. Specific child protection roles and responsibilities will be delegated to staff to embed child safe organisational practice across all HHUG’s programs, operations and activities that work with children. HHUG will strive to ensure a child safe culture across the organisation, where any child protection issues and concerns including poor practice can be discussed and where necessary, acted upon by HHUG management.

6. Reporting

HHUG aims to create a safe and supportive environment where personnel, partner organisations, dependants of personnel, project participants, and members of the public can raise concerns. All HHUG personnel are required to report any and all concerns or incidents regarding child protection immediately. HHUG takes all reports seriously and will respond immediately.

Individuals reporting child protection/exploitation/abuse matters in good faith or assisting investigation processes will be supported and protected by this policy without fear of retribution. Malicious reporting to harm another person's reputation or integrity will be treated as a breach of conduct.

Child protection/exploitation/abuse reports or concerns may be made through the contact details on HHUG’s website or to hello@hhug.org.au

7. Version Control.

HHUG will review and update this policy every three years, unless changes are required earlier, to ensure relevance and applicability.

	Updated By:	Reviewed By:	Approved By:	Next Review Date:
Person	HHUG Director Ella Rose Goninan	HHUG Director Luke Jaaniste	HHUG Board	
Date	25/06/2022	07/07/2022	12/07/2022	July 2025