

ALWS CHILD SAFEGUARDING REPORTING PROCEDURE

This reporting procedure is to guide the process and follow up of reports relating to Child Safeguarding concerns.

WHO CAN REPORT

Reports concerning the safety of children can be made by anyone, including, but not limited to:

- *ALWS personnel (staff member, board member, volunteer, casual helper, contractor).
- *Personnel of partner organisations.
- *Children and adults involved in ALWS activities.

If ALWS personnel hears or receives information about a Child Safeguarding incident or concern from a member of the public, or a partner or another ALWS personnel, they should:

- Listen to the information they are sharing but do not probe or investigate it yourself
- Ensure you have the name and contact details of the person informing you
- Direct and encourage them to make a report themselves (ie initially to police if there is a risk to children and also to the ED, Child Safeguarding Focal Point or Board Chair depending on circumstances). If possible direct them to this procedure.
- Initiate the reporting procedure yourself with the information you have, following the process outlined in this procedure.

WHAT CAN BE REPORTED

- A) **SUSPICIONS OR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE OR RISK OF ABUSE TO CHILDREN:** You have concerns that a child may have been abused or exploited or is at risk of abuse or exploitation by an ALWS personnel or personnel of an ALWS partner organisation.
- B) **CONCERN ABOUT PERSONNEL BEHAVIOUR:** You have concerns that an ALWS personnel or personnel of an ALWS partner organisation may have not followed the ALWS Child Safeguarding Policy or the ALWS Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct. i.e. issues of policy or code of conduct non-compliance, but not child abuse (which is instead covered by Scenario A above).
- C) **EXTERNAL CONCERNS:** ALWS personnel has concerns that a child may have been abused or exploited or is at risk of abuse or exploitation by someone in the community. This could include disclosure by a child to ALWS personnel during their duties with ALWS.

HOW TO REPORT

IN AUSTRALIA

If a child has been abused or exploited or is at risk of abuse or exploitation in Australia (Scenario A), IMMEDIATELY notify:

Local police: 131 444

Or

*NSW: Child Protection Helpline 132 111

*Qld: Crisis Care 1800 177 135

*SA: Child Abuse Report Line 131 478

*Vic: Child Protection Emergency Service 131 278

*WA: Family and Children's Services 1800 622 258

*Tas: Department of Health and Human Services 1300 737 639

*ACT: Care and Protection Services 1300 555 729

*NT: Department of Health and Families 1800 700 250

OVERSEAS

If a child has been abused or exploited or is at risk of abuse or exploitation when overseas visiting an ALWS Partner (Scenario A), IMMEDIATELY notify:

The Director of the partner agency and trigger their reporting mechanism.

THEN, IN AUSTRALIA AND OVERSEAS FOR ALL SCENARIOS (A,B & C)
WITHIN 24 Hours

Inform the Executive Director

Or,

If the Executive Director is not available, inform Child Safeguarding Focal Point

Or,

If the report is regarding the Executive Director, contact the ALWS Board Chair

NB: Contact details listed at the end of this document

IN SOME CASES

Reporting to DFAT

If the incident involves any DFAT funded activity, project or partner, ALWS (Child Safeguarding Focal Point or Executive Director) will immediately report any suspected or alleged instances of child abuse, exploitation, harm or policy non-compliance to the DFAT Conduct and Ethics Unit via childwelfare@dfat.gov.au

Reporting to the LCA

If the incident could have impact on the Lutheran Church, the Executive Director will inform the LCA Executive Officer

CONTACT DETAILS

ALWS Executive Director	Jamieson Davies	02 6021 5329/0400 409 177
ALWS Child Safeguarding Focal Point	Anne Fitzpatrick	02 6021 5329/0423 192 241
ALWS Board Chair	Pastor Peter Hage	0466 303 999

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS

It is important when reporting, that reports are made only to the designated person listed in this procedure and this information is not shared with others inside or outside the organisation. Breaches of confidentiality can have negative effects on the child involved, their family, the complainant and alleged offender.

The Executive Director will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. ALWS will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

In all actions in these processes, the best interests of any children involved will be the primary consideration.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

A) You suspect or are concerned that a child has been abused or exploited or is at risk of abuse or exploitation by an ALWS personnel or personnel of an ALWS partner organisation.

If the report concerns an ALWS Personnel

The reported personnel will be asked to take paid leave from their duties until an investigation has been completed. It should be made clear that such suspension does not imply guilt, but rather protects all parties whilst an investigation is undertaken.

The Executive Director will investigate the report in a timely manner while following any police requests for cooperation. The investigation will be carried out respecting the rights of the alleged victim and the alleged offender with the best interests of the child at the heart of the process.

Parents or caregivers will be informed if appropriate and in consultation with police or relevant authorities.

Where it is established that abuse or exploitation has taken place or there is unacceptable risk to children, the relevant personnel will be dismissed from their post immediately.

Where it is established that abuse or exploitation has not occurred and there is no risk to children, steps will be taken to sensitively reinstate the personnel member without delay. If risk to children remains, the personnel's duties will be reviewed to avoid contact with children.

No action will be taken against personnel who report in good faith information indicating perceived misconduct.

If the report concerns ALWS Partner Personnel

If abuse or exploitation occurred overseas by partner personnel, ALWS Executive Director will report to partner agency (initially by notifying the program director).

In all cases

- Relevant parties may be informed (e.g. LCA insurance, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) depending on the nature of the report.
- ALWS Risk Management and Code of Conduct will be reviewed.
- Support for child/ren and adults involved is available (see page 4).

B) You suspect or are concerned that an ALWS personnel or personnel of an ALWS partner organisation does not follow the Child Safeguarding Policy or the Code of Conduct (policy non-compliance). This includes possession of child exploitation material.

If the report concerns an ALWS Personnel

If there is a risk to children the reported personnel will be asked to take leave from their duties, or duties will be adjusted to prevent contact with children until an investigation has been completed. It should be made clear that such suspension does not imply guilt, but rather protects all parties whilst an investigation is undertaken.

The Executive Director will investigate the report in a timely manner. The investigation will be carried out in respect the rights of the alleged victim and the alleged offender with the best interests of the child at the heart of the process.

Where it is established that policy non-compliance has taken place, the relevant personnel will (depending on the nature of the non-compliance):

- *be dismissed from their post

or

- *be issued a formal warning, and

- *be provided with appropriate training, and

- *be given additional supervision in relevant areas of their work

and may

- *have their duties adjusted to lower the risk to children.

and

- * parents or caregivers will be informed if appropriate

Where it is established that policy non-compliance has not occurred, steps will be taken to sensitively reinstate the personnel member without delay.

No action will be taken against personnel who report in good faith information indicating perceived misconduct.

The Executive Director will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. ALWS will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

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In all cases

- Relevant parties may be informed (e.g. LCA insurance, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) depending on the nature of the report.
- ALWS Risk Management and Code of Conduct will be reviewed.
- Support for child/ren and adults involved is available (see page 4).

C) You suspect or are concerned that a child has been abused or exploited or is at risk of abuse or exploitation by someone in the community and an ALWS personnel becomes aware of this.

ALWS will cooperate with any police actions.

If abuse or exploitation occurred overseas by partner personnel, ALWS Executive Director will report to partner agency (initially by notifying the program director).

Support for child/ren and adults involved is available (see below).

SUPPORT FOR CHILD/REN

What to do and say if a child tells you about actual or potential abuse.

- Accept what they say.
- Take the allegation seriously.
- Reassure them they have done the right thing by telling someone and that they are not to blame for the behaviour of others.
- Let them know that the allegation must be reported and that total confidentiality cannot be promised.
- Allow them to speak freely but do not press them for information.
- Let them know what will happen next.
- Record the process carefully (see “Receiving a Report” above) and in detail immediately after the allegation in order to ensure greatest accuracy.
- Inform them that they can talk to someone further by ringing the Kids Help Line number (1800 551 800)

DO NOT:

- React emotionally.
- Seek any more information than is absolutely necessary.
- Leave the child alone immediately after a disclosure.
- Make promises that you cannot keep (particularly about not telling others).

SUPPORT FOR ADULTS

Free advice for children and adults from trained counsellors about child abuse is available from:
Child Wise 1800 991 099/ +61 3 9645 8911

ALWS staff can access counsellor of their preference and have the invoice sent to ALWS (see Personnel Policy 4.9 “Employee Assistance”).