

MERCY SHIPS AUSTRALIA LTD

MERCY SHIPS AUSTRALIA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

Mercy Ships Australia is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children. Mercy Ships Australia recognises:

- a. that a child, by reason of his or her physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care; and
- b. that there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions.

Mercy Ships Australia has therefore prepared the following Child Protection Policy. In implementing the Child Protection Policy Mercy Ships Australia will:

- Ensure that all workers understand their legal and moral responsibility to protect children from harm, abuse and exploitation;
- Ensure that all workers understand their responsibility to work to the standards that are detailed in the Child Protection Policy;
- Ensure that all workers understand their duty to report concerns that arise about a child, or a worker's conduct towards a child, as follows:
 - If the incident occurs outside Australia, to the person named for the purpose of reporting child protection issues in the induction of all workers and volunteers on a ship operated by Mercy Ships; and
 - If the incident occurs in Australia, to the Chief Executive Officer, Mercy Ships Australia;
- Ensure that any procedures relating to the conduct of workers are implemented in a consistent and equitable manner in accordance with the company's employment manual, the Child Protection Policy and any legal requirements;
- Provide all opportunities for all workers to develop their skills and knowledge particularly in relation to the welfare and protection of children;
- Ensure that any group, school, church or other outside donor agency with whom Mercy Ships Australia works has access to this Policy and procedures upon request;
- Endeavour to keep up to date with national and international developments relating to the welfare and protection of children;
- Review the Child Protection Policy on an annual basis.

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

SECTION 1 – Introduction:

Mercy Ships Australia fundraises within churches and other groups where children or young people may be taking part. Mercy Ships Australia is committed to safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children. Equally Mercy Ships Australia wishes to protect its workers (employees and volunteers) from allegations which may be vexatious. These procedures have been designed to ensure the welfare and protection of any child who takes part in any of Mercy Ships Australia's activities. The procedures recognise that child protection can be a very difficult subject for workers to deal with to the extent that it is sometimes easier to close your eyes to what is happening or believe that it is somebody else's problem to deal with. Mercy Ships Australia is committed to the belief that protecting children is everybody's responsibility and therefore the aim of the Policy is to provide guidelines that will enable all workers and volunteers to act appropriately to any concerns that arise in respect of a child.

Where required by law, Mercy Ships Australia will:

- a. obtain the relevant checks for any employee who will be working with children; and
- b. require employees and volunteers to attend child protection training and education.

For the purposes of this Policy, "child" means every human being below the age of eighteen years.

Underpinning Principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- It is the responsibility of all adults to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Adults who work with children are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Adults should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- The same professional standards should always be applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual preference.

Adults should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. In particular, adults should be conscious of the following:-

Dress and Appearance: Whilst a person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression, adults who work with children should ensure they are dressed appropriately for the task and work they undertake. Those who dress in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations.

Infatuations: Occasionally, a child may develop an infatuation with an adult who works with them. An adult who becomes aware that a child is developing an infatuation, should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior manager so that appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment.

SECTION 2 – Recognising the Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

Definitions of abuse fall under umbrella headings of Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Neglect.

PHYSICAL ABUSE: May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent/carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE: Is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

SEXUAL ABUSE: Involves forcing or enticing a child or a young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may include physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

NEGLECT: Is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/pr psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- Ensure access to adequate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Concerns about a child's safety can come to light in various ways:

- A child alleges that abuse has taken place or that they feel unsafe;
- A third party or anonymous allegation is received;
- A child's appearance, behaviour, play, drawing or statements cause suspicion of abuse and/or neglect;
- A child reports an incident(s) of alleged abuse which occurred some time ago;
- A report is made regarding the misconduct of a worker towards a child.

SECTION 3 – Who to contact for child protection concerns

If a person is concerned about a child's welfare or safety outside Australia, the concern should be reported to the person named for the purpose of reporting child protection issues in the induction of all workers and volunteers on a ship operated by Mercy Ships. The procedure outlined during the induction should then be followed.

If a person is concerned about a child's welfare or safety in Australia, the concern should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer, Mercy Ships Australia on:

- Telephone: 07 5437 2992;
- By mail marked private and confidential: PO BOX 1080
CALOUNDRA QLD 4551;
- By mail marked private and confidential and delivered to head office:
Suite 4, 24 Bulcock Street, Caloundra Queensland Australia

The role and responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer are:

- To ensure that all staff are aware of what they should do and who they should go to if they are concerned that a child's safety or welfare.
- Ensure that any concerns about a child are acted on, clearly recorded, referred where necessary and followed up to ensure the issues are addressed.

- To record any reported incidents in relation to a child or breach of child protection policies and procedures. The record will be kept in a secure place and will remain confidential unless its disclosure is required by law.

SECTION 4 – Procedures to Follow if you are Concerned about a Child in Australia

Mercy Ships Australia believes it should act on reports or suspicions of abuse. It acknowledges that taking action in cases of child abuse is never easy. However, Mercy Ships Australia believes that the safety of the child should override any doubts or hesitations. When worrying changes are observed in a child's behaviour, physical condition or appearance a person should:

Stage 1

- Initially talk to the child about what they have observed. It is okay to ask questions, for example: "I've noticed that you don't appear to be yourself today. Is everything okay?" Never use leading questions;
- Listen carefully to what the child has to say and take it seriously;
- Never investigate or take sole responsibility for a situation where a child person makes a disclosure;
- Always explain to children that any information they have given will have to be shared with others;
- Notify the Chief Executive Officer;
- Prepare a full and accurate written statement and give it to the Chief Executive Officer. Appendix 1 contains a template to assist in the preparation of a statement.
- Respect confidentiality and file documents securely.

Stage 2

- The Chief Executive Officer will take immediate action if there is a suspicion that a child has been abused or is likely to be abused. In this situation the Chief Executive Officer will contact the police and/or the local child protection agency.
- The Chief Executive Officer may also seek legal advice about a situation that is beginning to raise concern and advice from the local child protection agency.

SECTION 5 – Allegations against a Worker or Volunteer

If a person is concerned about a child's welfare or safety because of the behavior of an employee or volunteer of Mercy Ships Australia:

- The person who is concerned about a child's welfare or safety must ensure that the child is safe and away from the worker or employee.
- The Chief Executive Officer should be informed immediately of the nature of the concern. In the case of an allegation against the Chief Executive Officer, a director of Mercy Ships Australia should be informed immediately.
- The person with the concern should make a full and accurate written statement of what was seen, heard and/or told as soon as possible after the incident giving rise to the concern and give the statement to the Chief Executive Officer. The statement will be given to the police and/or the relevant child protection agency if they require it. Appendix 1 contains a template to assist in the preparation of a statement.
- The Chief Executive Officer should arrange an internal investigation of the incident and, if the Chief Executive Officer believes appropriate, the police and/or relevant child protection agency should be notified and their advice sought. It is expected that the employee or volunteer against whom allegations have been made will be suspended as a matter of routine during the course of the investigation.

SECTION 6 – Recording and managing confidential information.

Confidentiality

Adults may have access to confidential information about children in order to undertake their responsibilities. In some circumstances they may have access to, or be given, highly sensitive or private information. These details must be kept confidential at all times and only shared when it is in the interests of the child to do so. Such information must not be used to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass the child concerned. If an adult who comes into contact with children is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, he or she should seek guidance from the Chief Executive Officer.

SECTION 7 – Disseminating/Reviewing Policies and Procedures

- A copy of this Policy can be found on the company's website at: www.mercyships.org.au.
- This Policy will be reviewed annually by the board of directors.
- Any changes or amendments will be notified to staff and posted on the company's website.

Appendix 1

In Strict Confidence

Template for Statement Reporting Concerns/Allegations of Abuse, Harm and/or Neglect

This template is a guide for a person who wishes to make a statement reporting concerns/allegations of abuse, harm and/or neglect. The completed statement should be sent in an envelope marked "private and confidential" to the Chief Executive Officer. However, you should not delay advising the Chief Executive Officer of your concerns in order to complete the statement: notify the Chief Executive Officer of your concerns as a matter of urgency and then complete the statement and send it to the Chief Executive Officer as soon as possible.

Details of person against whom a concern is raised	
Surname:	
Title:	
First Name:	
Position Held:	
Background/Context	
Reason for raising a concern: Please be as specific with the allegations as you can. Ideally what, when, where and how. Please provide names, etc of other witnesses.	

Please provide information of any action taken to safeguard the child/children at risk.	
Please outline any noticeable impact of the alleged abuse upon the child/children e.g. any changes in eating, sleeping patterns or behavior, dress or attitude.	
Where possible provide any background details relating to the child/children e.g. age if known, medical conditions, mobility etc.	
Please provide details of the relationship between the child/children and adult being reported e.g. youth worker, volunteer, etc.	
Details of any other Agencies involved to date e.g. Police, Social Services, etc. Please provide name, telephone number etc. where possible.	

I confirm to the best of my knowledge, the above information is accurate and that this submission is made in good faith.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name

Telephone Number: _____

Mobile: _____

Daytime

Appendix 2

Useful Contacts/Support Organisations

If you have a concern that a child is being harmed as a result of abuse or neglect, you must not keep these concerns to yourself. Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.

You need to ensure that you speak to the appropriate organizations who can listen to your concern, and then take appropriate action.

- Contact the child protection agency in your state or territory.
- If you have reason to believe a child is at immediate risk of harm, contact the police on 000.