

# Child Protection Policy

## INTRODUCTION

Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited is a non-profit Christian organisation providing emergency relief and development assistance to suffering people around the world. Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited is meeting the physical needs of victims of war, famine, natural disaster, poverty and disease with the aim of demonstrating God's love and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. The aid and assistance are given without regard to the race, creed, gender, religion, or ethnicity of the beneficiaries.

In providing aid and assistance regardless of race, creed, gender, religion, or ethnicity of the beneficiaries, special care will always be given to protect children from any injustice or abuse of any type. These abuses include physical abuse, mental abuse, neglect or sexual abuse.

For the avoidance of doubt:

**Physical abuse:** This occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. 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:** This occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name-calling, verbal put downs or continual coldness from a parent or caregiver, to the extent that it affects the child's physical and emotional growth.

**Neglect:** The persistent failure or the 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.

**Sexual abuse:** This 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 locally. These can be contact or non-contact acts, including threats and exposure to pornography.

Our policy is aimed at protecting children as well as all our employees and associates who may interact with children during the course of implementing all of our programs.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that every child that Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited and our partners and other associates may interact with during the course of our work will be treated with the upmost dignity and respect and their rights under the UNCRC Convention are upheld.

If properly implemented, this policy will also protect Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited's staff, partners and associates from any suspicion of wrongdoing and will thus enable us to carry out our mission without unnecessary hindrances.

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## **POLICY**

It is Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited's responsibility to uphold the rights of children as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989), as we believe that protecting the most vulnerable is crucial to the faith we adhere to as Christians and should also be the essence of proper conduct for every human being.

- Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited will always seek to protect every child that we or our associates or partners interact with, from any harm or abuse that may otherwise be afflicted by our staff, partners or associates.
- We believe that child abuse is unacceptable under any circumstance.
- There should be no higher priority in our day to day activities than to protect the rights of children and the most vulnerable as we believe that we as Christians are called to show to love of Christ to all of those with whom we interact.

### **Recruitment and training:**

Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited is committed to child safe recruitment of all of its employees, irrespective of their role within the organisation. This includes the obtaining of Police or other relevant checks before appointments are made.

We are committed to including a focus on our Child Protection Policy in our induction and orientation training for new staff and to remind all employees continually of their responsibilities under this policy, specifically when they travel overseas to developing nations in the discharge of their duties.

Interaction with children in Australia is not ignored but this interaction is minimal as our projects are almost exclusively carried out overseas.

### **Communications:**

All Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited communications will portray children with dignity and respect and will ensure the rights and safety of children are protected.

Photographs or film of all children and local people in nations we work in will be used ethically.

In obtaining photographs or film, Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited will endeavour to be sensitive to local or cultural traditions for reproducing personal images.

Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited will ensure that all photographs and film images are honest and accurate representations of the context and facts.

### **Involving Children:**

Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited is committed to giving a voice to children and young people. Where appropriate, we will seek the views and input of children and young people during regular monitoring and evaluation visits conducted by our organisation.

### **Reporting/ Responses to Allegations:**

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Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited considers the abuse and exploitation of children to be completely unacceptable. We will take all concerns and reports of child abuse seriously and act on these reports immediately.

It is mandatory for all Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited staff and others to report concerns or allegations of child abuse. These concerns may relate to a child or a staff member involved in the organisation or a concern about a child or person/s outside of the organisation's programs. If you do have a concern you should immediately follow Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited's child abuse reporting procedures.

## **AUTHORISATION**

<Signature of Board Secretary>

<Date of approval by the Board>

Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited

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# Child Protection Procedures

## RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy applies to all directors, staff, volunteers, guests and contractors in the carrying out of our daily activities.

Our project partners will also be required to adhere to these policies in the carrying out of any Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited project.

When taking volunteers, guests or contractors on trips to observe or participate in our work in developing nations, we will ensure that no one without a prior police check will be allowed to be left alone with children without the supervision of one of our staff members.

The scope of this policy also covers the protection of Australian schoolchildren who accompany us to visit overseas projects in developing nations.

## PROCEDURES

It is mandatory for all Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited staff and others to report concerns or allegations of child abuse. These concerns may relate to a child or a staff member involved in the organisation, or a concern about a child or person/s outside of the organisation's programs. If you do have a concern, you should immediately follow Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited's child abuse reporting procedures.

### What should be reported?

- Any disclosure or allegation from a child/community member or staff regarding the safety, abuse or exploitation of a child.
- Any observation or concerning behaviour exhibited by a Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited staff, volunteer or other relevant stakeholder that breaches the Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited Code of Conduct for working with children.
- Inappropriate use of the organisation's photographic equipment or computers including evidence of child pornography.
- Staff engaging in suspicious behaviour that could be associated with sexual exploitation or trafficking.

### Who to report to?

- **Overseas:** Child abuse reports should be made to the Country Director or Regional Director. If this is not possible, reports can be made directly to the Australian based Executive Director.
- **In Australia:** Child abuse reports should be made to the Executive Director.

### Reporting of child abuse in Australia:

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- Child abuse reports should be made directly to the Executive Director.
- Reporting child abuse in Australia is a clearer process compared to responding to incidents that occur overseas. In all Australian states and territories, sexual or physical abuse of children is a crime. The age of consent in most Australian states and territories is 16. However, it is important to check in each jurisdiction as the age limit may be different.
- Additionally, in some jurisdictions it is a criminal offence for persons who are in positions of power and trust (e.g. teacher, parent, carer) to engage in sexual activity with children under the age of 18. It is important to research the laws and child protection provisions in each Australian state and territory and ensure that these details are included in the child protection policy.
- Reporting child abuse can be made either to the local state police or the state child protection authorities. If there is an allegation or suspicion of child sexual abuse by a staff member or volunteer in the organisation, these matters will be reported to the state police. In most Australian states there are specialised units dealing with child sexual crimes. If there are concerns that a child is being sexually abused by someone external to the organisation, Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited will contact the state police and/or child protection authorities.
- Concerns about the welfare of the child in relation to neglect and/or emotional abuse will be reported to the child protection authorities in each state or territory. Contact details of these authorities are:
  - **New South Wales: Department of Community Services**  
PH: 13 3627
  - **Victoria: Child Protection Line**  
PH: 13 1278
  - **Queensland: Child Safety Regional Intake Service**  
Please see website <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/about-us/contact-us/child-safety-service-centres/regional-intake-services> for phone numbers of local regional intake service centre.  
After Hours please contact Child Safety After Hours Service Centre (CSAHSC) on 1800 177 135 or 07 3235 9999.
  - **South Australia: Child Abuse Report Line**  
PH: 13 1478
  - **Western Australia: Department for Child Protection and Family Support**  
PH: (08) 9222 2555
  - **Tasmania: Child Protection Services**  
PH: 1300 737 639
- Concerns about people engaging in child sex tourism, child sex trafficking and child pornography should be reported to the Australian Federal Police (Transnational Sexual Crimes Squad). Contact details are:
  - **People Trafficking and Child Sex Tourism Department**  
PH: 131 AFP (131 237)

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### **Reporting of child abuse allegations overseas:**

- Child abuse reports should be made to the Country Director or the Regional Director. If this is not possible, reports can be made directly to the Australian based Executive Director. An initial assessment will be made based on the quality and reliability of the information and a decision will be made on what steps to take.
- A local reporting procedure will guide the process based on whether the allegation constitutes a criminal offence in the country, or whether it is a breach of the Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited code of conduct and will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- The first step will be to gather all the relevant information and address any health and protection needs of the child. The matter may be directly referred to the local police and/or authorities if the allegations are considered to be criminal offences.
- If the incident has occurred outside of the program, the matter will be referred to an external body or agency dealing with child protection matters in the country.

### **When to report?**

- Child abuse concerns should be raised immediately.

### **How should it be reported?**

- Verbally and in writing via email or letter.

### **What will happen next?**

- The Country Director, Regional Director, and the Australian based Executive Director will discuss the allegations and then decide upon the next step. This will involve either:
  - Interviewing the person/persons who made the allegations or other witnesses to gather more information with which to make a decision;
  - Reporting to local police and/or child protection authority;
  - Report made to the Australian Federal Police;
  - Concern handled internally if it is not a criminal matter; or
  - No further action taken.
- Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited will treat all concerns raised seriously and ensure that all parties will be treated fairly and the principles of natural justice will be a prime consideration. All reports will be handled professionally, confidentially and expediently.
- All reports made in good faith will be viewed as being made in the best interests of the child, regardless of the outcomes of any investigation. Samaritan's Purse Australia Limited will ensure that the interests of anyone reporting child abuse in good faith are protected.
- Any employee who intentionally makes false and malicious allegations will face disciplinary action.
- The rights and welfare of the child is of prime importance. Every effort must be made to protect the rights and safety of the child throughout the investigation.

### **Responding to disclosure by a child:**

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- When a child/young person tells you that he or she has been abused, they may be feeling scared, guilty, ashamed, angry and powerless. You, in turn, may feel a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, anger, and sometimes disbelief.
- If a child discloses abuse, whatever the outcome, the child must be taken seriously.
- It is important for you to remain calm and in control and to reassure the child/young person that something will be done to keep him or her safe.
- When a child or young person discloses that they are being harmed, you can show your care and concern for the child/young person by:
  - Listening carefully;
  - Telling the child/young person you believe him or her;
  - Telling the child/young person it is not their fault and he/she is not responsible for the abuse;
  - Telling the child/young person you are pleased that he/she told you.
- You will not be helping the child/young person if you:
  - Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone;
  - Push the child/young person into giving details of the abuse. Your role is to listen to what the child/young person wants to tell you and not to conduct an investigation (beware of asking any leading questions as this may prejudice any subsequent investigation);
  - Indiscriminately discuss the circumstances of the child/young person with others not directly involved.
- Try and obtain some details, such as where the abuse has taken or is taking place, e.g. at school, home, work etc; is it currently occurring or did it occur in the past; and the name of the perpetrator if possible, but this is not necessary.
- It is possible that some children or young people will make a disclosure and then ask you not to tell anyone. It is important you seek guidance from your In-Country Director or the Senior Staff member in the agency you are working in to discuss how the child or young person can be supported and the disclosure managed.

**Other actions to take:**

- **Protect the child:** Once an allegation is made, there should be an immediate response that protects the child from further potential abuse or victimisation. The child may require medical assistance or counselling support. Where possible the child should remain in the place of residence or relevant program. Exceptions may be made where the child is deemed to be at risk of victimisation by peers as a result of the allegation or because the alleged abuse has occurred in home-based care. If the child is in immediate danger, you should make arrangements for the child to go to a safe place.
- **Distance the alleged perpetrator:** The best interests of the child may warrant the standing down of a staff member or volunteer. The manager should recommend the appropriate action in writing to the Executive Director. Any staff member stood down in this manner continues to receive full pay—this measure recognises that the member is entitled to a just process that does not pre-judge guilt or innocence. Any volunteers who are stood down should similarly receive any reasonable reimbursement of costs.
- **Confidentiality:** All reports, the names of people involved and the details will remain confidential. Only the Country Director, Australian Based Executive Director, Regional Director and the people involved will be informed of the report. Details will be released

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on a 'need to know' basis or when required by relevant local or Australian law, or a notification to police or child protection authorities is made.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Child Protection Code of Conduct

## **AUTHORISATION**

<Signature of Executive Director>

<Name of Executive Director>

<Date>

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