

Worksheet 1: Make a Commitment

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Key points:

Clubs and members have a responsibility to recognise and understand their roles in providing a safe environment for all, including children and young people. Recognising roles and responsibilities is a first step for clubs and members in the commitment to safeguarding children, and informing and educating those in Surf Life Saving about the 'Safeguarding Children and Young People Program' and their responsibilities.

Your Club's Commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People

As a starting point in the safeguarding process, we are asking our clubs to join us in making a commitment, specifically, a Commitment Statement for Safeguarding Children and Young People.

Why is a Commitment Statement important?

In the protection of children from abuse and harm it is recommended that your club clearly and publicly makes a commitment to safeguarding children and young people. A Commitment Statement for Safeguarding Children and Young People is an important first-step in:

- Providing a safe environment for all, including children and young people
- Taking an inclusive approach to all activities
- Educating and informing those within your club and the wider community about your club's safeguarding responsibilities.

What should a Commitment Statement cover?

A Commitment Statement for Safeguarding Children and Young People should acknowledge a club's obligations, including:

- Protecting and nurturing children and young people
- Understanding the rights of children and young people
- Respecting and listening to children and young people and addressing concerns raised
- Asking for consent to disclose information about children and young people where necessary
- Using best practice standards in recruitment and screening of prospective employees and volunteers
- Striving to ensure that Persons in Position of Authority do not harm children and young people
- Provide training and support for people in positions of authority to fulfil their roles and understand their obligations
- Supporting parents and carers of children and young people, communicating honestly and effectively.

In acknowledging the points above, your club's Commitment Statement should:

- Address abuse and neglect committed within the community, as well as within the movement by its -personnel
- Articulate formally that all personnel involved within your club must report via the appropriate avenues should they have a suspicion or concern for an incidence of abuse or neglect being committed by anyone within or outside the movement
- Encourage children and youth within the club to speak up if they do not feel safe or something does not feel right
- Build a culture that challenges inappropriate behaviour.

We have included the SLSA Commitment Statement below as an example of the approach we have taken at the national level. This Commitment Statement now exists as an important component in our overall commitment to the Safeguarding Children and Young People Program.

The SLSA Commitment Statement

Every person and organisation bound by this statement of commitment must always place the safety and welfare of children above all other considerations. Surf Life Saving Australia acknowledges that our staff and volunteers provide a valuable contribution to the positive experiences of our junior and youth participants within the movement. Surf Life Saving Australia aims to ensure this continues, and to protect the safety and welfare of its junior and youth participants.

Surf Life Saving Australian further endeavours to provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people through the implementation of its Safeguarding Children and Young People program which includes several measures such as:

- Prohibiting any form of abuse against children and young people;
- Providing opportunities for junior/youth members to contribute to and provide feedback on program development;
- Carefully selecting and screening people whose role requires them to have regular contact with children and young people.
- Ensuring the Codes of Conduct, particularly for roles associated with junior activities and junior sport, are promoted, enforced and reviewed;
- Providing procedures for raising concerns or complaints; and
- Providing education and/or information to its members on child abuse and child protection.

Surf Life Saving Australia requires any child who is abused or anyone who reasonable suspects that a child has been or is being abused by someone within our organisation, to report it immediately to the police or relevant government agency and, in the first instance online via www.sls.com.au/safeguarding

All allegations of child abuse will be dealt with promptly, seriously, sensitively and confidentially. A person will not be victimised for reporting an allegation of child abuse and the privacy of all persons concerned will be respected.

Safeguarding Children and Young People is everyone’s business.

Developing and endorsing a Commitment Statement for your club

It is your club’s responsibility to develop and endorse a Commitment Statement.

To help you with this important step, we have developed an editable Commitment Statement you can tailor for your club.

To get started on your safeguarding development/refinement journey, we encourage you to include ‘Safeguarding Children and Young People’ as a standing item on your club committee agenda.

It is a good idea to discuss approving and endorsing a Commitment Statement the first time this item is discussed at your meeting.

Action Plan

- Identify a club committee member to take leadership for overseeing the implementation of the club’s development/refinement of approach to safeguarding children and young people
- Ensure ‘Safeguarding Children and Young People’ is included on your club committee agenda
- Distribute Handbook, Worksheet 1, draft Commitment Statement to club committee with meeting papers for review
- Encourage discussion at your committee meeting and consider any implications for club practices
- Once Commitment Statement is approved/endorsed, follow up with communication to club members.

What next?

We encourage your club to think about ways to put your Commitment into practice. Some strategies include:

- Post the Commitment somewhere prominent on your club website
- Promote the Commitment in your club newsletter and/or via social media
- Continuously reflect on club practice to ensure the Commitment is adhered to at all times
- Schedule an annual review of the Commitment club committee to ensure practice is maintained and continuously improved.

Notes

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Commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Our Club:

- is committed to the safety and wellbeing of every child and young person who takes part in our activities, programs, events or services
- is committed to providing children and young people with a positive and nurturing experience
- will support families and the community to promote the healthy development and wellbeing of all children
- will strive to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse and harm
- will work to create an environment in which children and young people are safe and feel safe at all times
- will listen to children and young people and address any concerns that they raise with us
- will support our members and the community to report any suspicion, or concern in relation to the mistreatment, or potential mistreatment, of a child or young person
- will challenge inappropriate behaviour of any of its members or members of the community
- will ensure all children and young people, no matter what cultural ethnicity, language, religion or disability, shall be able to participate in surf lifesaving in a fun and safe environment
- will appoint a Member Protection Information Officer, or equivalent, and ensure this person is trained on the obligations and responsibilities with respect to safeguarding children and young people
- will strive to ensure that persons in a position of authority do not harm, abuse or exploit children or young people who are involved within our club
- may not ask for consent to disclose information to police or an external child protection agency in the event we have concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person.

As part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people, our club:

- is committed to supporting parents and carers to protect their children and young people
- will offer assistance that builds on a family's strengths and make up, is sensitive to their culture and religious beliefs and empowers them to meet the changing needs of their children and young people
- is committed to communicating honestly and opening with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children and young people
- will promote and distribute information to parents and carers about our safeguarding commitment to children and young people as part of an introduction to our club
- endeavours to be transparent in our decision-making, with parents and carers, as long as doing so does not compromise the safety of a child/young person or breach the SLSA Privacy Policy.

This commitment was endorsed and approved by our club on:

Club President

Signature.....

Name.....

Date.....

Club Secretary/Committee Member

Signature.....

Name.....

Date.....

