



# **Safeguarding Vulnerable People:**

## **Policy and Code of Conduct**

UPDATED January 2024



**AUSTRALIAN  
MEN'S SHED  
ASSOCIATION**

**Shoulder to Shoulder**

## **1. What is a vulnerable person?**

Vulnerable people can include:

- children and seniors
- people with impaired intellectual or physical functioning
- people from a low socio-economic background
- people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders
- people who are not native speakers of the local language
- people with low levels of literacy or education

All members are expected to uphold the dignity of all persons we work with and abide by the Policy and Code of Conduct for the Safeguarding of Vulnerable People.

The shed strongly condemns all forms of abuse and exploitation, including physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse of vulnerable people. Abuse and sexual exploitation constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of membership. The protection of vulnerable people is always paramount and all relevant legal steps will be taken corresponding to the legal and social conditions of the local situation.

## **2. Rationale**

This Policy for Safeguarding Vulnerable People has been developed to clearly articulate:

- Our strong commitment to the protection of vulnerable people;
- Our strong condemnation of all forms of abuse or exploitation of vulnerable people and,
- Practical steps to be taken to ensure vulnerable people are kept safe.

It provides guidance to members and others on how to work respectfully and effectively with vulnerable people.

Our shed is obliged to adhere to local and international criminal laws, which prohibit the abuse and exploitation of vulnerable people. These include local laws where the shed programs exist, and international laws and conventions in relation to all forms of abuse and exploitation, including: child sex tourism, sex trafficking, exploitation of labour and child pornography.

## **3. Guiding Principles**

- The shed does not tolerate any form of vulnerable person abuse or exploitation.
- All vulnerable people have rights, outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the right to be safe at all times.

- The shed believes in the empowerment and participation of vulnerable people and aims to create environments in which vulnerable people feel confident to contribute to discussions. In such an environment, vulnerable people will be more able to raise their concerns for their own safety and wellbeing.
- All members are expected to read and adhere to this policy.

#### **4. Definitions**

The shed, for the purposes of this policy, refers to all shed members, program participants, or others who may be seen to be representing the activities and/or values of the shed.

##### Child or young person

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the shed defines child or young person as any person below the age of 18 years regardless of local laws or other definitions.

##### Vulnerable Adult

The Australian Department of social Services defines a vulnerable adult as an individual aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.

Bullying is the inappropriate use of power by an individual or group, with an intent to injure either physically or emotionally. It is usually deliberate and repetitive. The bullying may be physical or psychological (verbal and non-verbal).

- Physically, bullying includes pushing, hitting, punching, kicking or any other action causing hurt or injury.
- Verbal bullying includes insults, taunts, threats and ridicules.
- Psychological bullying includes physical intimidation and ostracism.

Abuse can be physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect or sexual abuse.

Both boys, girls, men and women can be the victims of abuse, and abuse can be inflicted on a child by men and women, as well as by young people themselves.

- Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures, or threatens to injure, a vulnerable person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing.
- Emotional abuse occurs when a vulnerable person is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name-calling, being put down or continual coldness from parent or

caregiver to the extent that it affects the vulnerable person's physical and emotional growth.

- Neglect is the persistent failure or the deliberate denial to provide a vulnerable person with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care to the extent that the vulnerable person's health and development are placed at risk.
- Sexual abuse occurs when an adult, more powerful child or adolescent uses his or her power to involve a vulnerable person in sexual activity. That coercive power can be physical, verbal or emotional. Sexual abuse is prohibited regardless by the age of majority or age of consent locally. Neither a mistaken belief in the age of a child, nor consent, amounts to an excuse or defence to such situations.

Safeguarding Vulnerable People is the term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop vulnerable people being abused or maltreated.

Vulnerable people may also experience heightened vulnerability to abuse as a result of other factors, such as a disability or loss or absence of caregivers.

## **5. Scope of the policy**

This policy applies to all shed members and representatives. While recognising the different laws related to vulnerable people in different national contexts, all must abide by the Child Protection Code of Conduct in all contexts.

## **6. Safeguarding Vulnerable People**

### **6.1 Code of Conduct**

All members must adhere to the sheds Safeguarding Vulnerable People Code of Conduct prior to engaging in activities which involve, or may involve, vulnerable people.

The following guidelines are included in the Vulnerable People Code of Conduct that must be adhered to by all members.

#### **Members must:**

- treat all vulnerable people with respect
- Not use language or behaviour towards vulnerable people that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate
- Not engage vulnerable people in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services

- Never use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media to exploit or harass vulnerable people.
- comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy noncompliance in accordance with appropriate procedures
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions or any outcomes of an offence that relates to exploitation and abuse of vulnerable people, including those under traditional law,
- be aware of behaviour and avoid actions or behaviours that could be perceived by others as exploitation and abuse of vulnerable people

## 7. **Abuse reporting processes**

It is important for members to report concerns or allegations of vulnerable person abuse to the committee.

Concerns which must be reported immediately include:

- Any disclosure or allegation by a vulnerable person that he or she has been harmed, or fears being harmed, by a shed member
- Any observation or reasonable concern of inappropriate behaviour by a shed member which breaches the sheds Child Protection Code of Conduct
- Suspicious behaviour of a member in regard to sexual exploitation, or abuse of vulnerable people

The shed management committee will treat all reported concerns seriously. All reports made in good faith will be viewed as being made in the best interests of the vulnerable person regardless of the outcome of any investigation. The shed committee will ensure that the interests of anyone reporting abuse in good faith will be protected; however, making intentionally false or malicious claims will face disciplinary action.

### Confidentiality

The shed will ensure that the concern is handled with utmost care and confidentiality, including protecting the identities of the reporting individual, the person against whom allegations or suspicions have been raised, and the victim or potential victim of abuse. Details will only be released on a “need to know” basis or when required by relevant local or Australian law, or a notification to police or relevant child protection authorities is made.