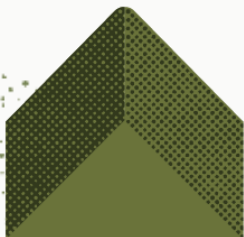




# WORKING WITH CHILDREN

UPDATED FEBRUARY 2024



**AUSTRALIAN  
MEN'S SHED  
ASSOCIATION**

Shoulder to Shoulder

## **1. Introduction**

Many Men's Sheds across Australia are involved in mentoring or intergenerational programmes within their Men's Shed environment. Men's Shed Management Committees have a responsibility to develop, implement and maintain child and youth focused risk management strategies.

These strategies aim to ensure that there are:

- Appropriate policies and procedures in place to identify and minimise the potential risk of harm to children
- Codes of conduct
- Procedures for 'recruiting' potential mentors
- Procedures for managing and training mentors
- Procedures for supervision and support of mentors
- Policies for identifying and reporting disclosures or suspicions of harm.

The Men's Shed aims to:

- Support the wellbeing of children and members
- Safeguard the welfare of children & young people, volunteers and committees
- Create a safe and supportive environment for children and members who may be participating in such programmes
- Develop and implement ongoing awareness and training on Duty of Care, Men's Shed Health and Safety, volunteer rights and responsibilities and confidentiality
- Develop and implement professional behaviour standards through Codes of Conduct or similar guidelines.

## **2. State & Territory Responsibilities**

In Australia, State and Territory governments are responsible for the administration and operation of child protection services and the associated screening and checks for those working with children and vulnerable people.

Legislative Acts in each State and Territory govern the way such services are provided.

Management Committees are advised to contact their relevant State Department for comprehensive information, requirements, exemptions and a guide to the procedures required.

The AMSA website also has available publications on Child Protection and screening procedures in *Shed Resources/External Publications/Working with Children* folder.

### **Who is exempt from a Working with Children Check?**

Management Committees are advised to contact their relevant State or Territory Department for comprehensive information, requirements, exemptions and a guide to the procedures required.

## **1. State & Territory Help and Assistance**

### **ACT- Justice & Community Safety-Office of Regulatory Services (ORS)**

Telephone: (02) 6207 3000  
Email: [wwvp@act.gov.au](mailto:wwvp@act.gov.au)  
Website: [www.ors.act.gov.au](http://www.ors.act.gov.au)

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### **NSW- Office of the Children's Guardian**

Telephone: (02) 9286 7219  
Email: [check@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au](mailto:check@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au)  
Website: [www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/check](http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/check)

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### **Northern Territory-SafeNT**

Telephone: 1800 SAFENT (1800 723 368).  
Email: [safent.police@pfes.nt.gov.au](mailto:safent.police@pfes.nt.gov.au)  
Website: [www.workingwithchildren.nt.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.nt.gov.au)

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### **Queensland- The Blue Card System**

Telephone: Blue Card Services on 1800 113 611 or 07 3211 6999.  
Website: <http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/>

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### **South Australia- Dept of Communities and Social Inclusion**

Email: [screening@dcsi.sa.gov.au](mailto:screening@dcsi.sa.gov.au)  
Website: [www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/screening](http://www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/screening)

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### **Tasmania- Department of Justice**

Telephone: 1300 13 55 13  
Website: [www.justice.tas.gov.au/working\\_with\\_children](http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/working_with_children)

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### **Victoria- Department of Justice**

Telephone: Customer Support Team 1300 652 8798 8.30am – 5pm Mon– Fri  
Email: [workingwithchildren@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:workingwithchildren@justice.vic.gov.au)  
Website: [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)

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### **Western Australia- Department of Child Protection and Family Support**

Telephone: (08) 6217 8100 or 1800 883 979 (toll free for country callers)  
Email: [checkquery@cpfs.wa.gov.au](mailto:checkquery@cpfs.wa.gov.au)  
Website: [www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au](http://www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au)

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The Working with Children Check is now mandatory in most States and Territories in Australia and these checks are working to provide a safer environment for children.



## **2. AMSA Policy Statement**

### **Working With Children & Young People Policy Statement**

This outlines the Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) policy guidelines for any Men's Shed that has children and/or young people attending.

The terms 'abuse' and 'neglect' refer to:

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Bullying
- Neglect
- Systems abuse

### **Policy Statement**

Many Men's Sheds across Australia are involved in mentoring or intergenerational programmes.

In order to keep children and young people safe whilst accessing Men's Sheds, AMSA is committed to protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. We promote an organisational culture within Men's Sheds that:

- Safeguards children and young people
- Enables access to information about training that allows members and volunteers to become skilled in protecting children and young people.

### **Objectives**

#### **A commitment to safeguarding children**

Through this statement, the Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) documents its clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people.

#### **Personnel roles and conduct**

AMSA encourages all Men's Sheds who have a role in mentoring children to ensure that each person involved in the shed operations understands their role and the behaviour expected in safeguarding children and young people.

#### **Recruitment and screening practices**

AMSA encourages all Men's Sheds to have appropriate measures in place to minimise the likelihood that the Men's Shed recruits any paid person who is unsuitable to work with children or young people.

#### **Personnel induction and training**

AMSA encourages all Men's Sheds to have induction, education and training programmes as a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people.

#### **Protecting Men's Shed Members**

AMSA recognises that by following child safe measures the likelihood of false accusations against any 'shedder' is minimised and therefore adds extra protection for members.

#### **Involving children, parents and schools**

In developing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment AMSA encourages involvement and communication with children, young people, their parents and their school or referring agency. We encourage parental and school involvement and behaviour that helps to protect children and young people.

### **Child abuse reports and allegations**

AMSA encourages each Men's Shed to have measures in place to ensure that all those people who work with children and young people understand their responsibility to report possible abuse or neglect and understand the reporting procedures.

### **Supporting a child-safe culture**

AMSA encourages each Men's Shed to have measures in place to ensure that all those members who work with children and young people understand their responsibility to report possible abuse or neglect and understand the reporting procedures.

### **Principles**

AMSA encourages each Men's Shed to undertake the principles of this Policy which are to:

- Respect and support the rights of children and young people and be committed to their safety, welfare and wellbeing. In so doing sheds recognise that children and young people have a right to be safe from abuse and neglect.
- Have a responsibility and Duty of Care to ensure all children and young people who access a Men's Shed are kept safe from abuse and neglect at all times.
- Be proactive in ensuring all possible measures and systems are in place to prevent abuse and neglect of children and young people occurring.
- Have strong organisational processes in place that continually monitor how each Men's Shed is doing in keeping children and young people safe from abuse and neglect.
- Act decisively and take appropriate action, using clear policy directions, where and when a Men's Shed finds any abuse or neglect of children and young people has occurred or been alleged in any of the Men's Shed programmes.
- Be prepared to devote whatever skills and resources are appropriate to ensure that shed systems work effectively to prevent and act against the occurrence of abuse and neglect of children and young people.

### **Policies**

AMSA encourages all Men's Sheds to have the following Guidelines in place:

- Whenever children/young people are present there will be a minimum of 2 Shed members present (in visual sight of) in the same area/space
- No child/young person is to be accompanied to the toilet/bathroom
- Men's Shed members should not have a relationship outside the Men's Shed with any child/young person who attends the Men's Shed (except where there is an existing relationship e.g. grandfather/grandchild )
- Men's Shed members should be vigilant for any suspicious interaction between a Shed members and a child/young person and, if noticed, report immediately to a member of the Management Committee and/or Shed Manager.
- All Shed members and volunteers are to be made aware of these policies.

### **Code of Conduct**

AMSA promotes the adoption and implementation of the following Code of Conduct:

#### **Men's Shed members will:**

- Follow the 'Working with Children and Young People Policy'
- Treat children and young people with respect, listen and value their ideas and opinions
- Respect cultural, religious and political differences
- Model appropriate adult behaviour
- Listen to children and take action to protect their wellbeing
- Report and act on any breaches of these standards of behaviour

- **Men's Shed members will not:**
- Seek to use children in any way to meet the needs of adults
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or language with children
- Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves
- Develop 'special' relationships with specific children for our own needs
- Show favouritism through provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- Have a relationship outside the Men's Shed with any child/young person who attends the Men's Shed (except where there is an existing relationship e.g. grandfather/grandchild).

### **Working with Children' Checks**

*NB: Men's Sheds should refer to their individual State or Territory requirements and legislation in regards to the legal requirements regarding 'Working with Children' checks.*

In Australia, State and Territory governments are responsible for the administration and operation of child protection services. Legislative Acts in each State and Territory govern the way such services are provided.

Men's Shed Management Committees are advised to contact their particular State/Territory Department to obtain guidance and advice.

### **Reporting**

AMSA encourages Men's Sheds to consider that all members and volunteers in child-related interaction are mandatory reporters. They must report to the relevant government department any suspicion or knowledge of a risk of harm to a child or young person, provided they have become aware of the risk through their work with their Men's Shed:

- Unless the urgency of the situation precludes it, prior to making a risk of harm report, all members must discuss the risk of harm issue with their Shed Manager/Coordinator
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**When a Risk of Harm report is completed, a copy of the report must be provided to the:**

- AMSA
- Relevant auspicing agency (if applicable)
- Men's Shed Manager
- Men's Shed Management Committee

It is acceptable for a member to make a report jointly with their Men's Shed Manager/Committee and this will acquit the reporting obligations of both parties.



### **Reasonable grounds for making a report exist where:**

- A child tells you he/she has been abused or neglected
- You witness omissions of care towards the child
- Someone else tells you that a child has been abused or neglected (e.g. a relative, friend, sibling)
- You become aware of a situation where an adult's behaviour leads you to suspect that the child may be abused or neglected
- You observe that the child has injuries or medical symptoms that could be consistent with physical or sexual abuse or neglect
- A particular child's behaviour leads you to suspect that the child may be abused or neglected
- You observe abusive or neglectful behaviour by a caregiver towards a child
- A child witnesses the abuse of another child or witnesses domestic violence
- You have current concerns that the abuse or neglect may continue or be repeated

### **3. Duty of Care in the Men's Shed**

All Men's Sheds and their members owe a Duty of Care to any person within the Men's Shed. This duty is a legal term, which by definition means 'an obligation, recognised by law, to avoid conduct fraught with unreasonable risk of danger to others'.

This Duty of Care applies not only to volunteers, members of a Men's Shed, but also to visitors who may visit from time to time.

The Men's Shed Management Committee must be committed to protect children and young people from harm. It should:

- identify positions that are 'child-related'
- Develop and implement a policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children & young people including training of volunteers/supervisors and committees in Child Protection issues
- Assess the potential risk to children within the Men's Shed
- Encourage an environment of trust
- Develop and implement guidelines on how to respond to disclosure or discovery of abuse or neglect
- Develop and implement guidelines and procedures that will underpin the investigation of complaints and allegations fairly
- Plan the work of the Men's Shed to maximise Duty of Care and safety of all participants
- Develop and implement ongoing training on Duty of Care, Men's Shed Health and Safety, volunteer rights and responsibilities and confidentiality
- Develop and implement professional behaviour standards through Codes of Conduct or similar guidelines.

To help find the right mentors to work with children and young people, the Men's Shed Management Committee should:

- Develop and provide information packages to members that includes the obligations and rights of volunteers under child-related legislation
- Develop and issue clear role statements or position descriptions to all members
- Develop and implement an effective and timely complaint management, investigation, disciplinary and reporting systems in relation to child-related legislation
- Provide effective supervision, where appropriate, of members to minimise breaches in Duty of Care.

## **7. Insurance and Working with Children**

### **For those Men's Sheds with AMSA Insurance.**

*Extract from Everest Risk Group FAQ's V10.0 p9:*

Item (g) in the list of 'Included' activities shows: *Mentoring and tutoring of students and those from the age of 12*

It is important to note however, there are certain Laws and Regulations surrounding the participation of children in the Shed environment. We would suggest, prior to having children on site, enquiry is made to make sure your Shed complies.

Furthermore, where the Shed is providing instruction at the behest of a school or other organisation, to further protect the Shed and its members, we suggest having a formal agreement with the school or organisation where they are responsible for the Loss or Damage to third party property or bodily injury when caused by the child.

As a matter of risk mitigation, we (Everest Risk Group) and AMSA, fully recommend the implementation of a formal written policy for the respective Shed on the subject of Children in Sheds.

### **For those Men's Sheds with another Insurance Provider.**

AMSA highly recommends that the Management Committee consult with their Insurer to ascertain whether coverage is in place, what that coverage provides, requirements for a formal written policy, age limitations, constraints and other obligations.

## **State and Territory Departments**

ACT- Office of Regulatory Services

Website: [www.ors.act.gov.au](http://www.ors.act.gov.au)

NSW- Office of the Children's Guardian

Website: [www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/check](http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/check)

Victoria- Department of Justice

Website: [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)

Western Australia- Department of Child Protection and Family Support

Website: [www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au](http://www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au)

Queensland- The Blue Card System

Website: <http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/>

Tasmania- Department of Justice

Website: [www.justice.tas.gov.au/working\\_with\\_children](http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/working_with_children)

South Australia- Dept of Communities and Social Inclusion

Website: [www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/screening](http://www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/screening)

Northern Territory

Website: [www.workingwithchildren.nt.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.nt.gov.au)