QUEENSLAND BLUE LIGHT ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

POLICY

Child Protection

ABN 67 047 589 753

Incorporated Association No. 1478

Policy Statement

Child protection is:

- Any action taken to protect children and young people against abuse and neglect by preventing it from happening or, in situations where it has already occurred, to prevent it from happening again.
- A set of strategies, skills, measures and structures used to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect.
- Anything we do to protect children from harm or the risk of harm.

QLD Blue Light Association Inc is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who participate in our programs and services. As an employee or volunteer you must:

- treat children and young people with respect and understanding, addressing their concerns at all times;
- understand your duty of care to protect children and young people from harm;
- have an understanding of the QBLAI Policies and Procedures that govern child protection;
- maintain your awareness of the indicators of abuse and neglect to be able to recognise when something isn't right; and
- familiarise yourself with the process to document and report concerns.

QBLAI has policies and procedures in place to ensure that the obligations under the Child Protection legislations and regulation are fulfilled. See the key elements of each policy and procedure below:

Code of Conduct Policy

Employees and volunteers must perform their duties bearing in mind their Duty of Care under the legislative requirements of the Child Protection Act

- Employees and volunteers must perform their duties in accordance with the QBLAI Child & Youth Protection Policy

Excursion Risk Management & Risk Management and Insurance Policy

- QBLAI is commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, including those who participate in our programs and use our services.
- All employees and volunteers are expected to treat children and young people with respect and understanding and address their concerns at all times.
- Outlines the procedures for handling disclosures and suspicions of harm.

CYRMS Handling Disclosures or Suspicions of Harm Policy

All employees and volunteers have a duty to report disclosed or suspected harm to a Police Officer. As appropriate, this could be their Branch Coordinator, the State Coordinator, or a local Police Officer. A Police Officer can then decide on the appropriate course of action, which may include contacting The Department of Communities Child Safety and Disability Services.

Objectives

To safeguard children from abuse, harm, and exploitation including child Safety, prevention of abuse and exploitation, reporting and response procedures, training, awareness and compliance

Scope

This policy applies to all branches and affiliates operating under the QLD Blue Light Association Inc. umbrella and is designed to ensure consistency in risk management practices across the organisation.

What does the law say about child protection?

These are the two key pieces of legislation and one regulation that governs child protection in Queensland:
Child Protection Act 1999

- The Child Protection Act 1999 is the legal framework that guides the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services in Child Protection in Queensland. The main principle of the Act (section 5A) is that the safety, wellbeing, and best interests of a child are paramount.
- The Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 is designed to promote and protect the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people in Queensland. Legislates a scheme requiring the development and implementation of risk management strategies and the screening of persons employed or carrying on businesses.
- The Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 regulates the development and implement of risk management strategies and screening of persons in particular employment or carrying on businesses. Designed to promote and protect the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people in Queensland.

What is a reportable concern?

You do not need to have proof to report any concerns you have about the safety of a child under the age of 16 – a reasonable suspicion of harm is sufficient. For example:

- **Disclosure** – A child or young person discloses that he or she has suffered or is suffering neglect or abuse.
- **Advice** – Someone else advises you that a child or young person has been or is being neglected or abused.
- **Observation** – Your observations of a child or young person's physical condition or behaviour leads you to reasonably suspect they have suffered from neglect or abuse.

What is harm?

Section 9 of the Child Protection Act defines 'harm' as any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing. Harm can be anything from a single isolated act to a number of incidents that take place over time and harm doesn't have to be intentional – it just needs to be an act or omission that didn't happen by accident.

Recognising the signs and indicators of harm

Children who have experienced abuse often show certain behavioural, emotional or physical signs of harm. The circumstances that lead to a risk of, or actual harm to a child, can be classified or grouped into four main categories.

Physical Abuse

Occurs when a child suffers, or is at risk of suffering, non-accidental physical trauma or injury. Indicators of physical abuse can include:

- beating
- shaking
- burning
- biting
- bruising or fractures caused by inappropriate discipline
- giving children alcohol, drugs or inappropriate medication

It does not always leave visible marks or injuries – it is not how bad the mark or injury is, but rather the act itself that causes injury or trauma to the child. Other indicators of can include:

- unexplained injuries
- wearing inappropriate clothing to cover injuries
- delays in receiving medical assistance
- repeated visits to health services for injuries
- parents showing little concern about the wellbeing of their child or the treatment of an injury

Sexual Abuse

Occurs when an adult, stronger child or adolescent uses their power or authority to involve a child sexual activity – jokes or touching, exposing children to sexual acts or pornography, sexual intercourse with a child or young person under the ages of 16 years (even if the child appears to have consented). It can be physical, verbal or emotional. Indicators of sexual abuse can include:

- greater sexual knowledge than would normally be expected for the child's age
- inappropriate or persistent sexual play
- persistent bedwetting/soiling
- regressive behaviour
- fear or avoidance of anything sexual
- poor social boundaries
- promiscuity, injuries or problems with sexual body parts.

Emotional Abuse

Occurs when a child's social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual development is impaired or threatened. It can include emotional deprivation due to persistent rejection, hostility, teasing/bullying, yelling criticism and/or exposure of a child to domestic violence. Indicators of emotional abuse can include:

- extremes of behaviour
- poor peer relationships
- delayed physical, emotional or intellectual development
- compulsive lying or stealing
- high levels of anxiety
- lack of trust in people
- erratic appetites
- self-harming

Neglect

Occurs when a child's basic necessities of life - food, housing, health care, adequate clothing, personal hygiene, hygienic living conditions, timely provision of medical treatment and adequate supervision are not met, and their health and development are affected. Indicators of neglect can include:

- signs of malnutrition
- stealing food
- poor hygiene
- unattended physical or medical problems
- inadequate supervision
- constant tiredness
- frequent lateness or absences from school
- inappropriate clothing
- frequent illnesses, infections and/or sores

Documenting & Reporting Concerns - when to report

There are two key rules to documenting and reporting concerns that a child may be or may have been the subject of harm. Remember – you do not need to have proof to report any concerns you have about the safety of a child under 16.

- Just do it! – document everything.
- Keep it safe! – keep information safe and confidential.

How to respond to a disclosure

Responding to a disclosure of child abuse can be quite confronting, but it is important to remain calm and reassuring at all times. Tips on responding to disclosures:

- Remain calm - do not express shock, panic or disbelief – provide calm reassurance that they are being listened to and heard.
- Private place - find a private place to talk.
- Thank and recognise - thank the child for coming to talk to you about it and recognise their bravery for talking about something that may be difficult.
- Listen don't investigate – encourage the child to talk in their own words and ask just enough questions to understand what they are disclosing.
- Reassure - reassure the child that every child has a right to be safe, there are laws to help protect children and they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Do not promise - don't make any promises you can't keep, such as promising you will not tell anyone – you need to tell someone to get help for the child.

Observe Confidentiality

Keep information confidential – only those who absolutely need to know should be told at this point. This should ONLY be the Police, (if the matter is urgent and you are concerned the child may be in imminent danger ring 000) or the Police Officer at your branch.

Who to report to

The nature and the urgency of the situation will always dictate when and to whom you should report a concern that a child is at risk of or is being harmed. If you consider the risk of harm for the child requires immediate attention for any reason (e.g. The child is in imminent danger of further harm, or the harm is life-threatening), phone triple 000 immediately.

For non-urgent situations, you should report the matter to the police officer at your branch who will take appropriate action which may include reporting to Child Safety Services and in some cases the police as well (where the harm involves a criminal matter). You do not need to decide if the matter is reported to Child Safety Services, the police officer will make that call.

Reporting disclosures or suspicions of harm

As above, if you consider the risk of harm for the child requires immediate attention for any reason (e.g. The child is in imminent danger of further harm, or the harm is life-threatening), phone triple 000 immediately. Do this BEFORE you fill out a BL22.

If you receive a disclosure, observe or suspect harm to a child or young person, you should fill out a BL22 Child Concern, Suspicion of Harm and Disclosure Form. This form is to help you accurately record information, which will only been seen by the police officer at your branch and the President of the Association.

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Do not discuss the matter with anyone who is not a Police Officer.

Working with Children and Youth

Strict guidelines and practices must be followed for all employees and volunteers who undertake child-related activities with QBLAI. The following rules are to be followed at all times:

- Persons working with children or youth under 18 must maintain an open-door policy when conducting activities, programs, briefings or meetings;
- **It is a requirement that at least two adults are present** during activities, programs, meetings and briefings where under 18s are present.
- Both male and female adults or parents/caregivers must accompany under 18s in all QBLAI activities away from our regular branch activities.

It is important that people working with under 18s do not engage in or allow others to engage in any of the following:

- Initiation ceremonies
- Inappropriate dressing/undressing in front of youth
- Invading the privacy of youth when showering or toileting
- Photographing youths while dressing, showering, toileting and other circumstances
- Sleeping in close quarters with youth without a second adult present
- Aggressive, physical distressing or sexually provocative activities
- Sexually suggestive comments to or about youth
- Inappropriate or intrusive touching
- Joking about, ridiculing, rejecting, isolating or belittling a youth or child.

Social media and photography

In accordance with QBLAI marketing and promotions procedures, participants of our activities and events will be made aware of the potential of photography at any event through physical signage and/or permission forms which may be used to promote the association. It is also a requirement that QBLAI employees and volunteers are not friends with children from our services on any social media platform.

Legislative requirements

This policy has been developed to ensure that QBLAI adheres to all relevant and current legislation:

- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011
- Child Protection Act 1999
- National Quality Standards

How can you meet your duty of care?

- Keep up to date with all training.
- Follow all QLD Blue Light policies and procedures.
- Practice child protection strategies daily.
- Look out for indicators of harm, document and report.
- Always err on the side of caution – it is better to report than to ignore.
- **Remember** – the worst thing that can happen as a result of reporting your concerns is that an investigation finds that there is no risk of, or actual harm.

VERSION CONTROL		
Document Name	**Version**	**Date**
Introduction to Child Protection	V1	Dec 2022
QBLAI Policy_Child Protection v2_032025	V2	March 2025