



Safeguarding Policy

The Australian Institute of International Understanding (AIIU) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria, and the nation and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters, sky and cultures.

We pay our respects to Elders, children and young people of past, current and future generations as the holders of the memories, the traditions, the culture and the spiritual wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Victoria, and the nation. AIIU acknowledges the important role of Aboriginal people and culture within the Victorian and broader Australian community, and the Strength, Resilience and Endurance of the Stolen Generations Survivors.

1. **Our belief**

All people, regardless of their age, gender, race, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The General Manager of AIIU is committed to promoting and protecting the welfare and human rights of people that interact with the organisation, or are affected by, its work (wherever those operations might be) – particularly those that may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. AIIU has no tolerance for abuse, neglect or exploitation and will take a survivor-centric approach in all that AIIU does.

All Representatives of AIIU share responsibility for safeguarding persons, particularly vulnerable persons, from abuse, neglect or exploitation. Beyond this, particular people have specific responsibilities in relation to safeguarding (set out in this policy), and they must carry out these duties without exception.

2. **Purpose**

The purposes of this safeguarding policy (the **Policy**) are to:

- (a) help protect people that interact with, or are affected by AIIU;
- (b) define the key terms AIIU uses when talking about protecting people or safeguarding;
- (c) set out and develop the way AIIU manages safeguarding risks;
- (d) set out the specific roles and responsibilities of persons working in and with AIIU;
- (e) facilitate the safe management of incidents; and
- (f) support a positive and effective internal culture towards safeguarding.

This Policy supplements and must be read in conjunction with AIIU's Child Safe Policy. This Policy is intended to set out in a clear and accessible manner AIIU's policy on safeguarding with practical steps to ensure compliance.

3. Definitions

safeguarding means protecting the human rights of people that interact with, or are affected by, AllU, particularly those that might be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation (such as vulnerable persons). This refers to any responsibility or measure undertaken to protect a person from harm.

abuse, neglect or exploitation means all forms of physical and mental abuse, exploitation, coercion or ill-treatment. This might include, for example:

- (a) sexual harassment, bullying or abuse;
- (b) sexual criminal offences, including serious sexual criminal offences;
- (c) threats of, or actual violence, verbal, emotional or social abuse;
- (d) cultural or identity abuse, such as racial, sexual or gender-based discrimination or hate crime;
- (e) coercion and exploitation; or
- (f) abuse of power.

incident means a situation where abuse, neglect or exploitation of a person (particularly a vulnerable person) has occurred or there are reasonable grounds to suspect that such abuse, neglect or exploitation of a person (particularly a vulnerable person) has occurred.

reasonable grounds to suspect is a situation where a person has some information that leads them to believe that abuse, neglect or exploitation has taken place, is taking place, or may take place. It comes with a low burden of proof (in fact, no proof is needed at all) but is based on some information. Questions that may help a person to determine whether they have 'reasonable grounds to suspect' might include:

- (a) could you explain to another person why you suspect something? This helps to make sure that your suspicion is based on information, even if you have no proof; and
- (b) would an objective other person, with the same information as you, come to the same conclusion? This helps to make sure that your suspicion is as objective as possible.

Representative means an employee, director, volunteer, or independent contractor, wherever located.

A **survivor-centric approach** means considering and lawfully prioritising the needs, right and wishes of survivors.

vulnerable persons means children (being a person under the age of 18) and certain other persons with a physical or intellectual disability, who suffer mental health issues or illness, are experiencing financial difficulty, who have needs for care and support, who are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, who suffer social or financial hardship, have difficulty communicating in English or the local language or are otherwise unable to care for or protect themselves.

4. Scope

This Policy applies to all Representatives of AIIU.

5. Roles and responsibilities

While the responsibility to protect people is shared by all who work at or with AIIU, some individuals have specific obligations with which they must comply.

The General Manager of AIIU has ultimate responsibility for:

- (a) protecting all people that interact with, or are affected by AIIU;
- (b) ensuring that there are appropriate and effective ways for AIIU to do this;
- (c) ensuring that AIIU observes all relevant laws relating to safeguarding; and
- (d) ensuring that AIIU takes a survivor-centric approach.

The Regional Managers of AIIU must:

- (a) ensure AIIU has effective and appropriate ways to manage safeguarding and legal compliance;
- (b) ensure that reasonable steps are taken to ensure AIIU's partner organisations (in relation to exchange programs):
 - 1) are aware of this Policy; and
 - 2) represent to AIIU that they will comply with this Policy as if they were a Representative; and
 - (c) ensure that reports to external parties are made where require

The Leadership Team of AllU must:

- a. promote a positive culture towards safeguarding;
- b. implement this policy in their area of responsibility;
- c. ensure that the risks of incidents have been considered in their area of responsibility;
- d. ensure that there are appropriate controls in place to prevent, detect and respond to incidents;
- e. facilitate the reporting of any suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation; and
- f. take a survivor-centric approach to potential incidents and ensure that any incident is dealt with transparently and accountably.

All staff and volunteers of AllU must:

- a. familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, policies and procedures for safeguarding;
- b. comply with all such requirements;
- c. report any incident to the appropriate authority when it is reasonable to suspect that a person's safety or welfare is at risk, noting there is a clear requirement for reporting of complaints and concerns to authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and to cooperate with law enforcement. The reporting of any actual or alleged incident and/or complaints are informed by AllU's Action Plan for dealing with Actual and Alleged Abuse, Complaints Handling Policy, the Reportable Conduct Scheme, Record Keeping Procedural Guidelines and Privacy Policy, all of which can be easily accessed on the AllU website [here](#).
- d. report any suspicion that a person's safety or welfare may be at risk to the appropriate authority; and
- e. provide an environment that is supportive of everyone's emotional and physical safety.

6. Managing safeguarding risk

The way AllU manages the risks of safeguarding will be:

- (a) **Holistic.** AllU and its stakeholders will work to prevent, detect and take action on incidents.
- (b) **Risk-based and proportionate.** AllU will regularly assess the risks to people in its operations and develop proportionate controls to mitigate those risks.

- (c) **Survivor-centric.** AIU will put survivors at the center of its approach to safeguarding.
- (d) **Lawful.** AIU will ensure that it understands and complies with the law in everything it does, in all jurisdictions in which it works.

AIU will manage the risk of safeguarding by:

- (a) having up-to-date and documented risk assessments;
- (b) maintaining a register of AIU's legal obligations for safeguarding and workplace health and safety in all the jurisdictions in which it operates;
- (c) having an action plan that sets out how it will manage safeguarding;
- (d) adhering to this and other relevant policies;
- (e) doing due diligence checks of staff, volunteers and third parties;
- (f) implementing policies, procedures and systems that introduce controls to reduce the likelihood and consequence of incidents;
- (g) conducting awareness-raising for stakeholders on risks, expectations, and individual responsibilities;
- (h) accepting reports (including anonymous reports) made under this Policy;
- (i) having and implementing a Safeguarding Incident Response Plan; and
- (j) monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness and proportionality of its safeguarding approach.

7. Managing incidents

AllU's rights

Harassment, abuse, neglect and exploitation are all serious misconduct and AllU reserves the right to:

- (a) take disciplinary action against those it believes are responsible, which may include dismissal, ensuring that it adheres to its obligation to comply with all aspects of Australian employment law;
- (b) take civil legal action; and
- (c) report the matter to law enforcement.

Reporting suspected incidents

All Representatives must, as soon as practicable, report any:

- (a) incident that has taken place, may be taking place, or could take place; and
- (b) suspicion that an incident has taken place, may be taking place, or could take place.

A Representative may do this through direct reporting to:

- (a) their Regional Manager
- (b) the Assistant General Manager; or
- (c) the General Manager.

A report can be made anonymously. This can be done by sending an anonymous letter or email, or by making an anonymous phone call.

However, it may be difficult for AllU to seek further information from the Representative where the report is made anonymously and there is no way for AllU to contact the Representative.

If a Representative believes that another person is at risk of immediate harm or the victim of a criminal offence, they must contact the authorities (e.g. the police) immediately.

The General Manager of AllU must be notified of any material incident under this Policy.

Responding to suspected incidents

All suspected, perceived, potential or actual incidents will be managed through the incident response plan.

External reporting

AllIU must report any material suspicion of a criminal offence to the police or the relevant criminal judicial and/or government regulatory body.

8. Privacy and data protection

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved in accordance with the terms of AllIU's privacy policy.

9. Availability

AllIU will ensure all Representatives and partner organisations (in relation to exchange programs) have access to this Policy.

10. Review of this Policy

- (a) The General Manager is responsible for facilitating an annual review of this Policy each calendar year, and after any material incident.
- (b) AllIU will record, review and analyse complaints, issues, concerns and safety incidents for the purpose of identifying causes and systemic failures, and to inform continuous improvement. AllIU's ***Evaluation Framework: Policies, Guidelines and Programs*** outlines the process by which it will do this.
- (c) This Policy may be amended only by endorsement by the General Manager.
- (d) In accordance with the processes outlined in its ***Engagement Overview***, AllIU will share findings and actions taken in response to relevant reviews of its policies, guidelines and programs, including those related to child safety incidents, with students, families/guardians, staff and volunteers.

APPROVER

General Manager, AllIU

Approved: 01 July 2025

REVIEW

This policy is to be reviewed by 30 June 2026