Child Safety Policy

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children (understood as individuals under 18 years of age) who are involved in, or may be affected by, University activities.

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) This policy outlines the University's commitment to child safety, the appropriate standards of behaviour towards children, and the processes in place to ensure that all children involved in, or affected by, University activities are kept safe.

a. References to the Working with Children Clearance under Northern Territory (NT) legislation is taken to encompass the equivalent in any other Australian jurisdiction in which staff are employed, or which students, contractors, volunteers, and authorised visitors undertake activities approved by the University.

(3) The following Governance documents support this policy:

a. Children on University Premises Policy;
b. Working with Children Clearance Procedure; and
c. Child Abuse Allegation and Reporting Procedure.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This policy applies to all employees, students, contractors, volunteers, and authorised visitors, and encompasses all activities authorised by the University, or that could be perceived as being so authorised.

Section 4 - Policy

(5) The University is an inclusive and welcoming environment that supports the engagement and participation of children as part of the University community.

(6) The University has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to child safety and acting in the best interests of children at all times.

(7) The University endorses the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations:

a. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
b. Children and young people are informed about their rights and participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
c. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
d. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and in practice.

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e. Individuals working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
f. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
g. Individuals are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
h. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
i. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
j. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

(8) The University will actively respond to any suspected or alleged cases of child exploitation or abuse, and ensure that appropriate controls are in place.

Child-related work

(9) Employees, contractors, volunteers and authorised visitors of the University are required to hold a valid Working with Children Clearance in accordance with the Working with Children Clearance Procedure.

(10) Students engaged in activities authorised by the University that involve, or could involve, contact with children under the relevant state legislation, are required to hold a valid Working with Children Clearance.

(11) Child-related work may include, but is not limited to, provision of:

a. physical contact, face-to-face contact, oral communication, written communication or electronic communication with children;
b. community or leisure activities, where employees, students, contractors or volunteers are likely to come into unsupervised, regular, direct contact with children;
c. counselling or similar support services;
d. education and training of students under eighteen (18) years of age;
e. music or sports programs;
f. registered childcare services operated by the University; and
g. residential accommodation and related services.

(12) The cost of applying for, or renewing, a Working with Children Clearance for the purpose of commencing a role with the University will not be paid by the University, except in the case of renewals for current employees.

(13) Students participating in placements which involve direct contact with children must obtain a Working with Children Clearance.

Standards of behaviour for employees and students

(14) Employees and students who work, or have contact, with children, including in teaching and research, are expected to adhere to the following behaviours:

a. treat all children with respect;
b. listen, and appropriately respond, to the views and concerns of children;
c. be aware of, and never engage in behaviours that could be perceived as child exploitation or abuse;
d. comply with all relevant Australian State and Commonwealth legislation, and overseas legislation (where University activities take place outside Australia), including laws relating to child labour;
e. disclose immediately all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation

or abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before, or occur during, teaching or research activity; and

f. report immediately concerns or allegations of child exploitation or abuse, and policy non-compliance, in accordance with the Child Abuse Allegation and Reporting Procedure.

(15) Unacceptable behaviours towards children include, but are not limited to:

a. developing close relationships that could be seen as favouritism or a conflict of interest;
b. exchanging personal contact details, such as phone numbers, social networking sites or email addresses with children or their families, unless required for specific work related circumstances where the written permission of the supervisor, and a parent or guardian has been obtained;
c. using systems access to obtain information regarding children other than what is directly required for their role and work activities;
d. hiring children for domestic or other labour, which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury;
e. engaging children in any form of sexual activity, including witnessing technology-facilitated sexual activity;
f. inviting unaccompanied children into private residences or taking them away from the place or event their guardian has authorised them to be at;
g. using language or behaviour that is harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
h. sharing proximate sleeping quarters;
i. using computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media to exploit or harass children, or access child exploitation material; and
j. using physical punishment.

Working with Children Clearance

Obligations

(16) All employees, students, contractors, volunteers and authorised visitors are required to:

a. carry their Working with Children Clearance document at all times while engaged in child-related work; and
b. notify the University immediately of any change in circumstances which impacts a person's ability to maintain a valid Working with Children Clearance, including charges for child-related offences, and having conditions imposed on their Working with Children Clearance, in accordance with the Working with Children Clearance Procedure.
c. All contractors are responsible for their organisation's compliance and must maintain a register of their employees' Working with Children Clearance status.

(17) Organisational units that engage a contractor must monitor the contractor's compliance with this policy and ensure all contractors are complaint.

Consequence of not having a clearance

(18) It is an offence under the Northern Territory Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 and other applicable state based legislation to employ, or otherwise engage, a person to undertake child-related work, unless that person holds a valid Working with Children Clearance. A penalty may be imposed on individuals or organisations where there is failure to comply.

(19) The University will exclude current, new and prospective employees, students, contractors, volunteers

or authorised visitors from engaging in child-related work if:

a. their Working with Children Clearance is revoked; or
b. they are denied a Working with Children Clearance.

(20) Where a Working with Children clearance is revoked or denied, this may impact the individual's ability to maintain their employment with the University.

(21) Commencement of employment will not take place until:

a. the relevant person has been issued with a Working with Children Clearance and the University has verified this, or an exemption has been granted by the relevant Northern Territory Government department, or by the relevant government department in the jurisdiction in which the person works; or
b. The relevant person has provided evidence to People and Culture that they have applied for a Working with Children Clearance prior to commencement in the position or role.

University's obligations regarding students under 18 years of age

(22) The University has obligations under the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 and the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 regarding the welfare of, and protections for, international students on student visas who are under 18 years of age. In particular, there may be requirements for welfare support and protections where a student's parents, legal custodian or eligible relative is no longer able to provide them, or during critical incidents or emergencies that disrupt welfare arrangements.

(23) Please refer to the International Students - Welfare of International Students U18 Procedure for more information.

(24) Support will be trauma informed and specialised services will be provided where appropriate.

Reporting suspected child abuse

(25) Under the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 or relevant state based legislation, it is mandatory to report suspected or alleged cases of child exploitation or abuse to the Northern Territory Child Protection reporting line on 1800 700 250, the Northern Territory police force, or relevant state-based authority. The Director People and Culture must be informed of employee breaches, and the Provost must be informed of student breaches.

(26) Employees must report any behaviour that is suspected of being child exploitation or abuse or policy non-compliance, including any new information regarding persons already reported, in accordance with the Child Abuse Allegation and Reporting Procedure.

Confidentiality and records

(27) Confidentiality is required for any matter that may give rise to misconduct or investigations as a result of a breach of this Policy.

(28) Information and records pertaining to child safety and child abuse may only be divulged to those who hold the appropriate delegation, position or legal requirement to be notified (either internally or externally), with the following exceptions:

a. where the matter is subject to legal proceedings or other actions which require the presentation of records held by the University by way of subpoena or similar; or
b. where there is a risk of harm to persons unless information or records are divulged; or
c. where there is a clear public interest obligation to share information, such as a duty to disclose information to a professional accreditation board, or a duty to report under legislation.

(29) All records and documents considered part of child safety reporting must be stored on an appropriate, confidential University file. Records of reports must be kept in accordance with the University's Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure and the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(30) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct – Staff or the Code of Conduct – Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025 and the Code of Conduct – Students.

(31) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees and Complaints Policy - Students.

(32) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	30th January 2026
Review Date	30th January 2029
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	30th January 2026
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Fiona Coulson Vice-Chancellor
Implementation Officer	Peta Preo Director People and Culture
Enquiries Contact	Peta Preo Director People and Culture

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Authorised visitor" - Bona fide visitors that the University may, from time to time, provide with access to facilities to enhance their ability to complete tasks for the University or to liaise with the University. Such visitors may include, but are not limited to: emeritus, adjunct or honorary academic staff; alumni; external auditors or consultants; potential clients or business partners; contractors or vendors; conference delegates; and students and staff of other universities with reciprocal arrangements.

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