Child Abuse Allegation and Reporting Procedure

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. The University is committed to an effective, robust and fair approach to reporting allegations of child exploitation or abuse.

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) This procedure outlines the process that must be followed in responding to, and reporting, suspected or alleged cases of child exploitation or abuse.

a. This procedure should be read in conjunction with the Child Safety Policy.

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This procedure applies to all University employees, students, contractors, volunteers, third party providers and authorised visitors.

Section 4 - Procedure

(4) Child exploitation or abuse may reasonably be suspected where:

a. a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
b. a child states that they know another child who has been physically or sexually abused;
c. a child shows signs of being physically or sexually abused;
d. a child's actions or behaviours place them at risk of significant harm;
e. someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
f. there are signs or indicators of abuse, including non-accidental or unexplained injury, persistent neglect, poor care, and lack of appropriate supervision; or
g. there is evidence of family violence, parental substance misuse or other factors impacting adversely on a child's safety, stability or development.

(5) Where there is reasonable belief that a child is being, or has been abused, or is at immediate risk of exploitation or abuse, this must be immediately reported to the Police by telephoning 000 if the reporter reasonably believes that not reporting the risk to police would result in the actual abuse of the child.

a. The immediate risk must also be notified to the:
    i. Director People and Culture where an employee is alleged to be involved; and/or
    ii. Director Student Engagement where a student is alleged to be involved.
b. The relevant Director is to inform the Vice-Chancellor of the report immediately.

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(6) Where a University student on a placement or practicum activity is aware of any such immediate risk of exploitation or abuse, the placement supervisor or the teacher supervisor must be immediately notified of the risk with a request to report the matter to the police.

(7) Where it is reasonably suspected that child exploitation or abuse (including possession of child exploitation material) is occurring on University premises, or in connection with University activities, this must be immediately reported to the Northern Territory Child Protection reporting line 1800 700 250, or other state equivalent, or to the Police by telephoning 000.

a. The suspicion must also be notified within 24 hours to the:
    i. Director People and Culture where an employee is alleged to be involved; and/or
    ii. Director Student Engagement where a student is alleged to be involved.
b. The relevant Director is to inform the Vice-Chancellor of the report immediately.

(8) Where an individual has reported instances of suspected child exploitation or abuse, but subsequently becomes aware of additional information, the individual must also report that additional information.

Responding to an allegation or disclosure

(9) Upon learning of an allegation or a disclosure of child exploitation or abuse, the Director People and Culture and/or Director Student Engagement as relevant, will:

a. ensure a safe environment and support for the alleged victim and any other children alleged to be involved or affected, taking account of whether a child is First Nations, from a culturally or linguistically diverse background, or has a disability;
b. taking a trauma informed, safety first approach, provide clear information to the alleged victim and their parent or guardian, if safe to do so, about what will be done in response to the allegation or disclosure, including any reporting obligations;
c. explain to those reporting the allegation or disclosure their external reporting obligations; and
d. keep confidential notes and records of all conversations, disclosures and of all follow-up actions, of which they must be clearly marked ‘Private and Confidential’.

(10) Where an allegation of child abuse is made against employees, students, contractors, volunteers or authorised visitors, the University may initiate precautionary actions, including but not limited to suspension or exclusion from University premises, systems, or other online environments, pending the outcome of a report made under this procedure. Precautionary actions are not penalties and are not intended to prejudice the outcome of a University disciplinary process.

(11) Where employees, students, contractors, volunteers or authorised visitors, are found guilty of an offense, then action will be taken under the Code of Conduct - Employees or the Code of Conduct - Students.

(12) Any investigation by the University into alleged child exploitation or abuse will be conducted in a way that avoids interference, or perceived interference, with any current external agency process.

(13) Where a matter has been reported to the police or an external agency and is subject to a criminal investigation, the University may suspend its internal investigation in consultation with the relevant agency.

(14) Appropriate access to support services will be provided to victims and their families where required, using trauma informed, safety first practices.

Confidentiality and record keeping

(15) When dealing with a case of suspected child exploitation or abuse, confidentiality must be respected in accordance with the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure.

(16) Only persons directly involved in the management of the relevant child's situation, and responsible for meeting the relevant reporting obligations, are to be involved in any discussions, or view any information, which might reveal the child's identity, the identity of the child's family, details of injury or suspected abuse.

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(17) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Employees 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.

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

(19) All employees 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	18th December 2025
Review Date	18th December 2028
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	17th December 2025
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 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.