HERVEY BAY SURF LIFESAVING CLUB
COMPLAINTS REPORTING POLICY

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Related documents	Statement of Commitment to Child Safety; Child Safe Policy: Child Safe Code of Conduct; Child Safe Risk Management Plan; Member Protection Policy

1. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

1.1 At Hervey Bay Surf Lifesaving Club (HBSLSC) we strive to provide the best possible delivery of surf lifesaving activities, programs, services and events in an environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive.

1.2 We recognise that from time-to-time issues may arise that require assistance or support to resolve. At HBSLSC, we encourage members to raise their concerns so that we may address them fairly, transparently and promptly in line with SLSA and SLSQ policies.

1.3 The purpose of this Policy is to support early intervention/prevention, protect individuals, uphold a culture of safety and respect, and provide a clear process for responding to and resolving complaints.

2. COMMITMENT

2.1 HBSLSC is committed to:

- addressing any legitimate complaint regarding the welfare, health, and safety of all Members, PPA and/or Participants in SLS;
- dealing with all complaints in a fair, timely and transparent manner;
- allocating a complaint to appropriately trained personnel best able to deal with it.
- considering the reasonable wishes of all parties;
- providing communication on a regular basis about the progress of the complaint;
- clearly explaining the procedures and options to all parties involved in the process;
- maintaining confidentiality regarding complaints, subject always to legal requirements requiring disclosure necessary to deal with the complaint;
- ensuring members have access to education and resources about complaint policy;

- reporting any serious issues involving CYP or allegations of serious criminal conduct to relevant authorities, in accordance with relevant State and Territory legislation; and
- maintaining records of complaints and procedures in a safe and confidential manner.

3. SCOPE

3.1 This Policy addresses:

- Adult-to-adult misconduct, which is managed in accordance with Surf Life Saving complaints, member protection, and workplace conduct policies; and
- Reportable conduct involving children, which must be managed in accordance with the Queensland Reportable Conduct Scheme.

3.2 This Policy applies to:

- all Club personnel, including members (active, associate, life, probationary), volunteers and employees (clubs/branches);
- contractors and officials;
- visitors, spectators and third parties attending Club-run events or premises.

3.3 It applies in all environments and contexts where individuals are engaging in or representing surf lifesaving, including but not limited to:

- patrolling and training activities;
- surf club premises and licensed areas;
- competitions, carnivals and interclub events;
- junior activities and member development programs/events;
- social, fundraising and presentation functions;
- online platforms, digital communications and social media;
- Workplaces.

3.4 Conduct is reportable whether it occurs during volunteering/employment or takes place outside of volunteer/work hours or while off duty.

3.5 This Policy relates specifically to the reporting and investigation of misconduct and supports a broader suite of policies and codes designed to uphold a safe, respectful, and inclusive organisation. It should be read in conjunction with:

- SLSA Policy 6.05 – Member Protection
- SLSA Policy 6.06 – Complaints Resolution
- SLSA Policy 6.04 – Child Safe
- SLSA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy
- HBSLSC Child Safe Policy
- HBSLSC Child Safe Code of Conduct
- HBSLSC Member Protection Policy

- HBSLSC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

4. DEFINITIONS

In this Policy, the following words have the corresponding meanings:

Allegation is any information, report, disclosure, or complaint that suggests a person may have engaged in misconduct or reportable conduct. An allegation does not need to be proven or substantiated.

Complainant is the person who makes a report or allegation, and may include a child, parent, carer, worker, member, or member of the public.

Complaint is a formal expression of concern regarding alleged misconduct, including breaches of SLSQ policies, Member Protection matters, or reportable conduct involving children.

Confidential information includes any information relating to a complaint, allegation, investigation, or individual involved in a matter that is not publicly available and must be handled in accordance with privacy and legal requirements.

CYP is the short term for child or young person under the age of 18 years.

Investigator is a person appointed by SLSQ to assess and investigate allegations or complaints in accordance with this procedure and relevant policies.

Member includes any individual affiliated with SLSQ, including active, associate, probationary, and life members.

Misconduct refers to behaviour that breaches SLSQ policies, codes of conduct, or applicable legislation, including but not limited to sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying, or child safety breaches.

Pattern of Behaviour refers to multiple incidents or concerns that, when considered together, may indicate a risk.

Provisional Action refers to temporary measures implemented to manage risk and protect individuals while a matter is being assessed or investigated. These actions are not disciplinary findings and do not imply guilt.

Report is a submission of allegations that a Respondent has engaged in conduct which may be an alleged breach of relevant policies or legislation which does not meet the definition of a Complaint.

Reportable Conduct includes the following conduct by a worker involving a child:

- a child sexual offence;
- sexual misconduct committed in relation to, or in the presence of, a child;
- ill-treatment of a child;
- significant neglect of a child;
- physical violence committed in relation to, or in the presence of, a child; or
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Reportable conduct may arise from a single act or a pattern of behaviour and may occur inside or outside of SLSQ activities.

Reportable Allegation is an allegation or information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that a worker has engaged in reportable conduct.

Reportable Conduct Scheme is a legislative framework under the Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld) requiring organisations to identify, report, and investigate allegations of child abuse or misconduct involving workers.

Respondent is the person who is the subject of an allegation or complaint.

Risk Assessment is the process of identifying and evaluating potential risks to children and determining appropriate actions to mitigate those risks. Risk assessments must be ongoing and reviewed as new information becomes available.

Sexual Misconduct (Adult-to-Adult) refers to inappropriate or unlawful sexual behaviour between adults, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, or other conduct in breach of relevant SLSA, SLSQ or HBSLSC policies and associated legislation.

Trauma-Informed Approach recognises the impact of trauma and ensures that responses to allegations prioritise the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of affected individuals, particularly children, while minimising the risk of re-traumatisation.

Worker is any person who carries out work for SLSQ in any capacity, including:

- Employees;
- Volunteers;
- Members performing duties or roles on behalf of SLSQ;
- Contractors and consultants;
- Office holders and appointed officials.

A person does not need to be paid to be considered a worker.

Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) is the independent oversight body responsible for administering and monitoring compliance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme in Queensland.

5. MAKING A REPORT – ADULT-TO-ADULT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

5.1 Where an adult discloses sexual assault by another adult, regardless of the relationship (e.g. member-to-member, employer/employee), there is no legal requirement to report the matter to the police on their behalf, unless the disclosing adult is considered impaired (as defined in the legislation). However, support should still be offered, including referrals to appropriate services, and individuals should be encouraged to report if they feel safe to do so.

5.2 A report may be made via any of the following channels:

- Triple Zero (000) – if there is an immediate threat to life or safety;
- SLSA Complaints Portal – https://complaints.sls.com.au,;
- direct report to SLSQ Complaints Team – via complaints@lifesaving.com.au;
- internal reporting to the Club's Member Protection Information Officer who may then refer it to the Complaints Manager;
- if the Complaints Manager has a conflict of interest, the matter may be referred to the Club President or directly to the SLSQ Complaints Team.

5.3 Reports can be made:

- verbally or in writing,
- anonymously, although this may limit the capacity to investigate,
- at any time, regardless of when the incident occurred.

6. INITIAL RESPONSE

6.1 Upon receiving a report, the responsible officer will:

- submit the report to SLSQ via the Complaints Portal for Child Safety Concerns: Child Safety Concerns or to the State Complaints Manager through complaints@lifesaving.com.au;
- acknowledge the report in writing (unless submitted anonymously);
- provide access to support services (counselling, advocacy);
- explain the investigation options and next steps; and
- confirm the complainant's wishes regarding:
  - police reporting;
  - requests for investigation by SLSQ or the Club under Policy 6.06,
  - declining further action.

6.2 Where criminal conduct is alleged, the complainant will be encouraged to report to the Police. SLSQ may assist but cannot report on their behalf unless the complainant is legally impaired.

6.3 Once SLSQ receives a report or becomes aware of information suggesting alleged Reportable Conduct, the matter will be handled in accordance with SLSA Policy 6.06 Complaints Resolution and the Complaint Handling Guideline.

7. REPORTABLE CONDUCT – CHILD SAFETY

What is Reportable Conduct?

7.1 Reportable conduct includes allegations or convictions of:

- child sexual offences;
- sexual misconduct in relation to or in the presence of a child;
- ill-treatment of a child;
- significant neglect of a child;
- physical violence in relation to or in the presence of a child;
- behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm.

7.2 This applies whether conduct happens inside or outside HBSLSC programs or activities, and even if no criminal charges are laid.

7.3 All Child Safety matters must be submitted through the SLSA Portal, then SLSQ will review and complete the requirements to Queensland Family Child Commission. These matters may still be managed in accordance with the SLSQ Member Protection Policy and Complaints Policy depending on the severity.

7.4 If the initial report is made by a CYP, the relevant Club personnel should:

- listen calmly and patiently, and give full attention to the CYP;
- not ask leading questions;
- if necessary, assist the CYP by reference to resources such as 'Feelings' or 'emoji' charts and 'Body Parts' diagrams;
- reassure the CYP and validate their decision to disclose; and
- explain the next steps, including the need to report the matter to someone who can help.

What Is Not Reportable Conduct?

7.5 The Reportable Conduct Scheme does not apply to behaviour that is reasonable and appropriate for the discipline, management or care of a child.

7.6 Examples of conduct that is not reportable include:

- reasonable behaviour management by supervisors or instructors;
- accidental injury to a child where there was no negligence or reckless behaviour;
- appropriate physical contact necessary for instruction, safety or emergency response;
- lawful and reasonable directions provided to a child in a sporting or training environment;
- trivial incidents with no risk of significant harm, such as a briefly raised voice to get attention without targeting a child or causing distress.

Threshold for Reportable Conduct

7.7 Club personnel are not required to prove that reportable conduct has occurred before making a notification. A matter must be reported where there is information that gives rise to a reasonable belief that alleged reportable conduct may have occurred.

7.8 The threshold for reporting is intentionally low and is based on:

- available facts and information;
- credibility and plausibility of the allegation; and
- whether a reasonable person would suspect the conduct may have occurred.

8. IMMEDIATE RISK and EMERGENCY RESPONSE

8.1 If a child is in immediate danger: call the Police or Emergency Services on Triple Zero (000),

8.2 If harm/neglect is suspected within a family setting (not organisational misconduct): contact the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety.

8.3 Upon becoming aware of a reportable allegation, SLSQ may take immediate risk management action to protect CYP. This may include:

- suspension pending investigation;
- restricting duties;
- supervision arrangement; or
- temporary removal from child-related activities.

9. REPORTS THAT ARE NOT COMPLAINTS

9.1 A Report is a submission of allegations that a Respondent has engaged in conduct which may be an alleged breach of relevant policies or legislation which does not meet the definition of a Complaint.

9.2 Reports received by Club personnel may be recorded for information purposes only with no further action taken.

9.3 The process for managing a Report will be at the discretion of the Complaints Manager.

9.4 In some circumstances, Reports may be managed through the Complaints Process. Factors that may be considered in determining whether to progress a Report through the Complaints Process include (but are not limited to):

- the seriousness of the alleged conduct;
- the availability of evidence that could be relied upon in an investigation;
- whether a person or organisation has been directly affected by the alleged breach and, if so, their circumstances and preferences;

- the perceived risk to surf lifesaving; and
- whether there have been other Reports relating to similar allegations.

9.5 Where multiple Reports relate to the same or related alleged conduct by the same Respondent, they may be combined for the purposes of the Complaints Process.

9.6 A Report may be made anonymously, but this may limit the action that can be taken in relation to the allegations.

10. RESPONSIBILITY FOR MANAGING COMPLAINTS

10.1 HBSLSC will appoint a Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO) as the first point of contact for any Member with a concern or complaint, to assist them by providing information and guidance on rights, responsibilities and options within the complaint resolution process.

10.2 The MPIO does not:

- manage any aspect of the complaint process, including not doing any of the following:
  - assessing if a complaint meets the required thresholds for 'prohibited conduct'
  - under a relevant policy;
  - making a judgment about whether an allegation brought forward is vexatious (knowingly false or untrue);
  - conducting a risk assessment about threats to safety or temporarily standing down individuals complained about;
  - conducting any form of investigation;
  - acting as a panel member on a tribunal hearing;
  - applying or communicating sanctions to a respondent to a complaint.
- advocate on behalf of any involved party during investigations or hearings;
- share information about complaints, or discuss complaints, with anyone other than the person making the complaint, relevant authorities or people managing complaints;
- provide any form of legal counsel or advice; or
- mediate any sort of complaint or personal grievance.

10.3 HBSLSC will appoint a Complaints Manager, who will be responsible for managing complaints and the Club's obligations under this Policy.

10.4 All Complaints will be classified according to the case classification outlined in the SLSA Complaints Handling Guideline, namely:

- **Category 1** (Blue/Low) matters involve minor allegations of Breach of policy and mostly (although not always) involve a mistake, misunderstanding, or an absence of intent to harm. There are rarely, if any, complicating factors.
- **Category 2** (Amber/Medium) matters allege policy breach violations and may

involve the risk of moderate or reasonable harm, or repeated, more severe or more complex Category 1 allegations.

- **Category 3** (Red/High) matters may involve criminal behaviour and/or immediate risk of harm, and includes child abuse, sexual abuse and includes sexual misconduct, as well as serious assault, doping and corruption.

10.5 All Category 1 or 2 Complaints will be allocated to the Complaints Manager.

10.6 All Category 3 Complaints will be handled by SLSA and/or SLSQ.

10.7 Complaints relating to any other policy breaches, not outlined in clause 10.3, such as personal grievances, employment, governance, eligibility and selection disputes, and competition-related rules, should be submitted to, and managed by, the relevant organisations as follows:

- general complaints including bullying, harassment, dissatisfaction with decisions, member to member matter – HBSLSC or Wide Bay Capricorn Branch;
- Branch or State-related complaints or inter-club matters – WBC Branch or SLSQ;
- all Child Safe related matters, allegations of Sexual Misconduct or any Serious Criminal Conduct – SLSQ or SLSA; and
- national-related complaints or inter-State matters – SLSA.

10.8 In the case of cross jurisdiction complaints, the proper recipient of the Complaint will be as follows:

- where the matter is between two or more clubs/members from clubs within the WBC Branch - the WBC Branch;
- where the matter is between two or more clubs/members from clubs affiliated to different Branches within Queensland – SLSQ;
- where the matter is between two or more Branches (or members acting in their role as Branch representatives) within Queensland – SLSQ; Where the matter is between two or more Branches (or members acting in their role as Branch representatives) or clubs/members from different states – SLSA; and
- where the matter is between two or more States – SLSA.

10.9 Depending on the nature and seriousness of a matter or if a conflict of interest arises, the Complaint may be assigned to the relevant organisation one level above by the Complaints Manager.

10.10 The relevant organisation at the higher level may, at its discretion, refer a Complaint

- back to the involved Relevant Organisations; or
- to an independent panel; or
- to another Relevant Organisations; or
- determine that it should be managed by the higher-level relevant organisation.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY

11.1 All parties involved in the complaint process must maintain strict confidentiality during and after the process. Information relating to the complaint, including the identity of the parties, allegations, evidence and discussions, must not be disclosed to any person who is not directly involved in managing the matter. This includes:

- not discussing the matter with other members or third parties;
- ensuring any Board or Committee discussions are generalised and de-identified; and
- maintaining all complaint documentation and records securely and confidentially.

11.2 Any unauthorised disclosure of information or breach of confidentiality obligations may constitute a breach of this and SLSQ policies and may result in disciplinary action.

12. DOCUMENTATION AND RECORD KEEPING

12.1 HBSLSC will maintain accurate and complete records of:

- all allegations received;
- assessment and decision-making processes;
- risk assessments and actions taken;
- notifications made to QFCC and other authorities;
- investigation processes and outcomes.

12.2 Such records must be:

- securely stored;
- accessible for audit and oversight; and
- maintained in accordance with privacy and legislative requirements.

13. NON-COMPLIANCE CONSEQUENCES

13.1 Failure to comply with obligations under this Policy or the Reportable Conduct Scheme may result in legislative and organisational consequences.

13.2 Legislative Obligations (Child Safety Matters): Failure by the Head of Entity (or delegate) to meet reporting obligations under the Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld) may result in:

- financial penalty of up to 100 penalty units; and
- regulatory action by the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC), including compliance monitoring and potential publication of non-compliance on a public register.

13.3 Organisational Consequences: Breaches of this procedure or failure to comply with

reporting requirements may also result in disciplinary action in accordance with SLSQ policies, including:

- Member Protection Policy;
- Complaints Policy; and
- Child Safe Policy.

13.4 Disciplinary outcomes will be determined based on the nature and seriousness of the breach, and may include suspension, removal from duties, or other appropriate sanctions.

14. RELATED PROCEDURE INSTRUMENTS

This Policy complies with and supports:

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld), including s.17 duties and Part 5 (Divs 5 & 7A)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth), including Positive Duty Reforms
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)
- SLSA Policy 6.05 Member Protection
- SLSA Policy 6.06 Complaints Resolution
- SLSA Guidelines Complaint Handling and Risk Management
- SLSQ Employee Sexual Harassment Policy
- SLSA Child Safe Policy
- Child Sexual Offence Reporting - SLSQ Governance Manual
- Complaint Management Process - SLSQ Governance Manual
- Club Resources - SLSQ Governance Manual
- Child Safe | Surf Life Saving Queensland
- Reportable Conduct Scheme | Queensland Family and Child Commission

15. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed on 1 September 2027 or earlier if:

- legislative changes occur;
- policy updates are made at SLSA or SLSQ level;
- issues are identified during incident reviews; or
- incident trends and club-specific risk factors change.

Signed: .....

Ron Thomas - President

Date: 16.9.26