

DEFENCE YOUTH SAFETY COMMITMENT STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Defence interacts with children and young people in a variety of ways, both in Australia and overseas.
- 1.2 In the Defence youth context, the terms child, young person, youth and minor are equivalent and interchangeable.
- 1.3 Defence is committed to taking all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of youth with whom it comes into contact through the development of a youth safe culture and the promotion of both individual and collective responsibility for youth safety. Defence will achieve this through development, implementation and ongoing review of the [Defence Youth Safety Framework \(DYSF\)](#).

VISION

- 1.4 Young people have a safe and positive experience of Defence.

DEFENCE YOUTH SAFETY FRAMEWORK

- 1.5 The goal of the DYSF is the creation and maintenance of a youth safe organisation through the adoption of appropriate and consistent approaches to youth safety and youth safety governance.
- 1.6 The DYSF policy component consists of four parts:
- The Defence Youth Safety Commitment Statement articulates the Defence commitment to promoting the wellbeing of youth and protecting young people from abuse through a focus on preventing, identifying and treating youth safety risks.
 - Chapter 3** outlines how the framework is implemented, monitored and assessed for its impact on youth safety outcomes. The governance policy includes the vision for Defence youth safety, the purpose, youth safety principles in action and details of specific governance.
 - Chapter 4** details the approach, roles and responsibilities for managing risks associated with youth safety.
 - Chapter 5** details the actions required to ensure all youth safety incidents are reported and managed effectively and consistently from initial response and reporting, through to support and closure and acting on lessons learned.

PRINCIPLES AND CONTEXT

PRINCIPLES

- 1.7 The DYSF is underpinned by six principles derived from those of the [National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020](#):
- all youth under the age of 18 have the right to a safe environment
 - ensuring the safety and wellbeing of youth is a Defence priority
 - the best way to protect youth is to prevent abuse and neglect from occurring in the first place
 - the interests of any young person being abused or neglected or at risk of abuse or neglect are given the highest priority

- e. Defence values, supports and works in partnership with parents, guardians, specified next of kin and other agencies in fulfilling its youth safety responsibilities
- f. youth safety policies and interventions are evidence based.

CONTEXT

1.8 The DYSF incorporates policy and procedural guidance, risk management strategies and a range of supporting tools and resources designed to minimise the risk of abuse and neglect in each of the five contexts in which Defence interacts with youth. These are:

- a. service of ADF members and employment of APS under the age of 18
- b. Defence Youth Programs
- c. Australian Defence Force Cadets (ADF Cadets)
- d. domestic and international operations
- e. Defence entities.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

- 1.9 Taking into account the unique context of ADF activities, Defence will:
- a. manage youth safety risks appropriate to the Defence context
 - b. require all ADF members, APS employees, volunteers, including members of the ADF Cadets, and contractors to demonstrate their commitment to youth safety through their agreement to undertake their duties in accordance with the appropriate Defence or ADF Cadets youth safety code of conduct
 - c. conduct appropriate suitability screening for all adults working with youth in the Defence environment
 - d. require all ADF members, APS employees, volunteers including members of the ADF Cadets, and contractors to complete appropriate youth safety education and training
 - e. engage proactively with parents, guardians, specified next of kin and other agencies involved in the protection of young people
 - f. develop and implement a clear process for reporting and responding to disclosures, suspicions and allegations of abuse or neglect in accordance with state and territory legislation
 - g. develop and implement processes to identify and address breaches of the DYSF
 - h. maintain compliance with United Nations Security Council resolutions related to children and armed conflict
 - i. undertake regular review of the youth safety framework to ensure it remains current and reflects emerging requirements and leading practice.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

VICE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE

1.10 Chief Joint Capability (CJC) has overall responsibility for developing and monitoring overarching, consistent and effective whole of Defence youth safety policies and practices.

DEPUTY SECRETARY DEFENCE PEOPLE

1.11 Deputy Secretary Defence People (DEPSECDP) is responsible for ensuring that Defence people policies are consistent with and reflect the principles and approach to youth safety articulated in the DYSF.

GROUP HEADS AND SERVICE CHIEFS

1.12 Group Heads and Service Chiefs are responsible for:

- a. ensuring processes and procedures in their respective Group or Service, including the cadet organisations that they administer, are consistent with and reflect the principles and approach to youth safety articulated in the DYSF
- b. taking all reasonably practicable steps to ensure personnel in their respective Group or Service, including the cadet organisations that they administer, comply with the DYSF Head Reserve and YOUTH Division

HEAD RESERVE AND YOUTH DIVISION

1.13 Head Reserve and Youth Division (HRYD) is responsible for:

- a. supporting the CJC in the discharge of youth safety responsibilities
- b. developing and maintaining (including regular review) the DYSF
- c. monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the DYSF
- d. facilitating and coordinating consistent approaches to youth safety across Defence and within ADF Cadets
- e. providing youth safety advice and support to implementation

DIRECTORS GENERAL PERSONNEL

1.14 Directors General Navy People (DGNP), Career Management - Army (DGCM-A) and Personnel Policy Air Force (DGPERS-AF) are responsible for:

- a. ensuring ADF positions that involve routine interaction with members under the age of 18 as a key part of their role are identified and position profiles annotated
- b. ensuring member suitability screening is completed prior to the ADF member commencing in the position

AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE RECRUITMENT DELEGATES

1.15 APS recruitment delegates are responsible for:

- a. ensuring APS positions that involve routine interaction between adult APS position holders and people under the age of 18 are identified and annotated
- b. ensuring applicant suitability screening is completed prior to the APS member commencing in the position

COMMANDING OFFICERS OF UNITS WITH DEFENCE MEMBERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18

1.16 Commanding Officers of units with Defence members under the age of 18 are responsible for:

- a. assessing and managing unit youth safety risks
- b. adhering to state and territory incident reporting requirements
- c. ensuring the existence of and compliance with the unit/program Code of Conduct
- d. ensuring compliance with youth safety education and training requirements
- e. the inclusion of youth safety as an agenda item in relevant meeting agendas

- f. managing breaches of the DYSF, in particular behaviour contrary to the Code of Conduct or failure to report to relevant state and territory authorities, see Chapter on youth safety incident reporting
- g. proactive engagement with parents, guardians and specified next of kin
- h. conducting appropriate suitability screening as defined by Defence
- i. conducting an annual suitability screening currency audit

MANAGERS OF DEFENCE YOUTH PROGRAMS/DIRECTORS GENERAL CADETS/COMD AAC

1.17 Managers of Defence Youth Programs/Director General Cadets/COMD AAC are responsible for:

- a. assessing and managing program youth safety risks
- b. adhering to state and territory incident reporting requirements
- c. ensuring the existence of and compliance with the program Code of Conduct
- d. ensuring compliance with youth safety education and training requirements
- e. the inclusion of youth safety as an agenda item in relevant meeting agendas
- f. managing breaches of the DYSF, in particular behaviour contrary to the Code of Conduct or failure to report to relevant state and territory authorities
- g. proactive engagement with parents, guardians and specified next of kin
- h. conducting appropriate suitability screening as defined by Defence and/or ADF Cadet policy
- i. conducting an annual suitability screening currency audit

DEFENCE PERSONNEL, VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACTORS

1.18 All Defence personnel, volunteers and contractors are responsible for:

- a. complying with the requirements of the DYSF
- b. complying with suitability screening as directed
- c. reporting incidents of suspected youth abuse or youth pornography involving Defence personnel, volunteers and contractors in accordance with state and territory legislation and Defence Instructions and ADF Cadets guidance

DEFENCE PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN THE PROCUREMENT OF CONTRACTORS AND CONSULTANTS

1.19 Defence personnel involved in the procurement of contractors and consultants are responsible for:

- a. identifying positions requiring employment suitability screening
- b. conducting appropriate suitability screening as defined by Defence
- c. ensuring that Defence contracts in which contracted personnel and consultants may have contact with youth in a Defence context contain a provision by which the contractor and/or consultant agrees to comply with the requirements of the DYSF

Accountable Officer: Chief Joint Capability

Policy Officer: Head Reserve and Youth Division/Commander ADF Cadets