

Position statement on

CHILD ABUSE

St John Ambulance Australia (St John) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of any child in our care—we take child safety very seriously. St John has zero-tolerance towards child abuse.

All St John entities have a responsibility for ensuring a safe and supportive environment for children engaged in St John services, activities or programs. Our Members should always respect and foster the dignity and self-esteem of children and empower them to speak out if they feel unsafe. No child engaged with St John services, activities or programs should ever experience, or should have ever experienced, abuse while in the care of St John.

St John in Australia is a federated structure, made up of 9 separate organisations. Each organisation operates under its own state or territory child safety legislative framework. As such, each St John organisation has its own child safety policies and procedures governing important aspects of creating child safe environments such as recruitment and selection, screening of new members, information sharing, appropriate conduct when working with or around children, reporting, reportable conduct schemes (for relevant states and territories), managing allegations of abuse that are historic in nature and redress claims.

In each jurisdiction, St John aims to foster a culture where all members, employees, volunteers and contractors can raise concerns about child safety, without fear of repercussions or reprisal. This culture is reinforced by annual training for all adult members in child safety plus strict application of policies and procedures. In addition, St John has developed a best practice personal safety education curriculum to support youth members in their learning and development about safety. This learning empowers children to talk about their safety and helps them to understand what actions they can take if they feel unsafe.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) has shed light on the extent and impact of the horrific crimes against thousands of people who have experienced sexual abuse as children while in the care of an institution. St John recognises the harms caused to people who have experienced abuse, including the far-reaching impact on victims' lives. Nationally, all St John organisations are committed to caring for any person who has experienced abuse as a result of their engagement with St John—whether recently or in the past. If any person is experiencing, or has experienced, abuse while engaged in a St John service, program or activity, we urge them to contact the St John entity in the state or territory in which the abuse occurred. Any person who alleges that they are a victim of abuse will be treated by St John with kindness and compassion and we will ensure that they receive support and care during any complaints process should they wish for this to occur (such as via counselling or psychological services).

St John will take all allegations of child abuse, including historic allegations, very seriously and will respond promptly in accordance with our child safety policies and procedures. We will take all necessary actions to safeguard children from harm where an alleged offender is engaged with St John. **Doing nothing is not an option.**

All St John entities will ensure compliance with legislative requirements and strive to continuously improve their policies, procedures and practices and provide training to our workforce on creating child safe environments. Every child in St John's care should always feel and be safe. This is why each St John entity will gain and maintain accreditation with a reputable child safety organisation as an organisation that provides child safe environments.

If you, or anyone you know, needs support please call a helpline such as Lifeline 13 11 14; BeyondBlue 1300 22 46 36; Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467. If you need to contact a St John organisation, please visit www.stjohn.org.au.