



RLWC26 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People Policy and Reporting Procedure

Purpose

The purpose of the Rugby League World Cup Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People and Reporting Procedure (**Policy**) is to ensure that all Children, and Vulnerable People who engage with the Rugby League World Cup 2026 (**RLWC26** or the **Event**) are protected from abuse and harm from Relevant Persons.

The unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Vulnerable People, Children and Vulnerable People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, Children and Vulnerable People with a disability, Children and Vulnerable People who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, Children and Vulnerable People who are refugees or asylum seekers and, Children and Vulnerable People who are unable to live at home are considered by Relevant Persons and Relevant Organisations within the performance of their roles and responsibilities under this Policy.

Capitalised terms in this Policy are defined terms which can be found in Appendix 1 - Definitions, unless the context of their use requires otherwise. Where a capitalised term is not included in Appendix 1, that capitalised term shall take the same meaning as in the RLWC26 Tournament Manual unless specified otherwise.

This Policy aligns with National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and National Standards for Disability Services and has been developed with consideration to state and territory legislation.

Relevant Documents

This Policy must be read in conjunction with other relevant documents which include:

- RLWC26 Tournament Manual (**Tournament Manual**)
- Any applicable Deed of Participation
- Any applicable International Rugby League policies, rules and regulations (as applicable to an international event)
- Any regulations or rules put in place by the ARLC/NRL or a body with applicable authority, including any requirements that govern the Event
- ARLC Safeguarding Framework Policies
- Venues safeguarding policies where applicable

Where there are conflicting provisions, the laws of the applicable jurisdiction take precedence over the provisions in this policy.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Employees, Volunteers, Contractors, Participants and Official Party Members involved in the RLWC26 (together **Relevant Persons**). For the avoidance of doubt, this includes, but is not limited to:

- All ARLC staff (including but not limited to board members, ARLC Employees, ARLC Volunteers and ARLC Contractors)
- All Participants and their Official Party Members
- Any other person who has a current and valid registration via the RLWC26 Competition Management System (MySideline).
- All registered RLWC26 Players.
- Anyone engaged by ARLC to provide activities and services in relation to RLWC26, including third-party contractors.
- All persons who receive accreditation for RLWC26
- Any other person in circumstances where a ARLC deems them to have a sufficient connection to the RLWC26.

Commitment

The ARLC is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all Children and Vulnerable People who are involved in matches and events as part of the RLWC26. The ARLC has zero tolerance to abuse and harm of Children and Vulnerable People, and zero tolerance to racism.

Our policies and procedures seek to:

- address risks to child safety;
- promote gender equality; and
- establish and nurture a child safe culture and practices

In the event a concern or allegation of abuse relating to a Child or Young Person under the care of the ARLC is raised, it will be treated seriously by the ARLC, in a culturally sensitive, confidential and respectful manner. It will be fully investigated according to our policies and guidelines, consistent with industry best practice and relevant legislative instruments.

Failure by individuals to comply with this Policy is taken very seriously and may result in disciplinary action including but not limited to termination, as determined by the ARLC.

All Participants and Official Party Members will be advised of RLWC26 safeguarding approach via the Nations Information Portal, RLWC26 Tournament Manual, any applicable Deed of Participation and briefings. The Tournament Manual is a document outlining information for Participants and Official Party Members. It includes but is not limited to information about visas, meals, accommodation and football operations. The Deed of Participation is a legal document governing the participation of Participants and Official Party Members in RLWC26.

Key Requirements

ARLC is committed to ensuring that each person involved in the delivery of the RLWC26 understands their role and the behaviour expected of them in keeping Children and Vulnerable People safe from abuse and neglect, through the application of this Policy.

All Relevant Persons captured by this Policy will:

- be provided and have access to this Policy in advance of their attendance at RLWC26; and
- be provided and have access to the Tournament Manual

Selected positions will:

- be required to complete training which may be an online module or onsite briefing; and
- be required to participate in a tournament briefing before the commencement of RLWC26.

All Relevant Persons bound by this Policy must ensure that they follow expected behaviour around Children and Vulnerable People at all times. Individuals must not engage in any conduct which would be in breach of this Policy. Failure of individuals to comply with this Policy is taken very seriously and may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to termination of any applicable Deep of Participation, Police action or legal action.

Detailed definitions of inappropriate conduct, and abuse and harm are listed in Appendix 1- Definitions

Recruitment and screening

ARLC applies minimum threshold requirements across all roles performed by Relevant Persons who work with Children and Vulnerable People on behalf of the ARLC. This is to reduce the likelihood of recruiting staff or volunteers who are unsuitable to work or volunteer with Children and Vulnerable People.

ARLC Employees and ARLC Volunteers are subject to Recruitment and Screening Procedures via the ARLC People and Culture team. This may include:

- Background checks
- Working With Children Checks (WWCC) or equivalent
- Clear commitment statement on position descriptions
- Child safe related interview questions
- Reference checks

Participants are responsible for ensuring that their Official Party Members have been recruited, screened, and employed in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations of their home jurisdiction. ARLC does not oversee or assume responsibility for the recruitment, selection, or employment practices of Participants or the individuals they bring to the Event.

A Wellbeing Manager for each Participant should be appointed in advance. This position will be act as the first point of contact for child safety concerns for each Participant and be responsible for the reporting and escalation of concerns in accordance with this Policy. A full list of responsibilities can be found in the Tournament Manual.

Safeguarding Training and Education

ARLC Employees and ARLC Volunteers will be provided with appropriate Safeguarding induction training.

Training for Official Party Members, will be determined by their roles. Required qualifications and training and experience for Official Party Members can be found in the Tournament Manual. These requirements must be met, and all training must be completed, before the commencement of the Event.

Wellbeing Managers from Participants are required to complete the NRL Clubs Child Safety Module. Compliance is available through MySideline and LMS reporting.

	Employees of the Game Module	NRL Clubs Child Safety Module	Tournament Briefing
Role/Position			
ARLC Employees	√		
Wellbeing Manager		√	√
Team Manager		Preferred	
Additional Staff		Preferred	
Venues Staff		Preferred	

Expected behaviours

ARLC expects all individuals bound by this Policy who engage in RLWC26 to behave in a respectful, inclusive and appropriate manner around Children and Vulnerable People at all times.

Individuals bound by this Policy are in breach of this Policy if they engage in any of the following behaviours either in person or online in relation to a Child or Vulnerable Person:

- Harmful Behaviours towards a Child
- Abusive Behaviour towards a person with a disability
- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Victimisation
- Vilification
- Request for any Child or Vulnerable Person to keep any communication secret from their parents/carers

- Supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to a Child or Vulnerable Person
- Have 1-1 unsupervised contact with a Child or Vulnerable Person

REPORTING PROCESS

Reporting Child Abuse and Harm to Vulnerable People

ARLC takes reports and allegations of Child Abuse and harm to Vulnerable People seriously. All suspected abuse, bullying, harassment, grooming and harm must be reported in accordance with this Policy.

Clear definitions of types of abuse and harm can be found in Appendix 1 - Definitions.

ARLC provides avenues for Children and Vulnerable People and their families and communities to make complaints about child abuse and harm.

Who should report?	All Relevant Persons bound by this Policy. Any persons who holds a reasonable belief that a Relevant Person has breached the policy.
What should be reported?	Observed, suspected abuse, or any instance of behaviour that may breach this Policy in relation to any Child or Vulnerable Person involved in the RLWC26 in the manner described in this Reporting Procedure. This includes, but is not limited to: • Disclosure or observation of abuse or harm of a Child or Vulnerable Person including: ○ Physical Abuse ○ Sexual Abuse ○ Emotional Abuse ○ Neglect ○ Exposure to Family and Domestic Violence • Allegation, suspicion or observation of abuse or harm of a Child or Vulnerable Person; • Abusive behaviour towards a Child or Vulnerable Person with a disability • Breach of the RLWC26 Children and Vulnerable People Safeguarding Policy and Reporting Procedure • Incidents of bullying, discrimination, harassment, racism, victimisation or vilification; • Safety issues regarding the physical environment or online environment where Children and Vulnerable People are present; and • Any behaviour that may constitute a criminal offence Clear definitions of types of abuse and harm can be found in Appendix 1 - Definitions
When should it be reported?	As soon as possible

How should I report?	If the Child or Vulnerable Person is at risk of harm or immediate danger, the reporting person is required to report the situation directly to the police of the relevant country: Australia- 000 New Zealand- 111 Papua New Guinea- 112 Regardless of whether the matter has been reported to police, the reporting person must immediately complete the online reporting form- Rely Report Form Alternative options for reporting: NRL Stoptline: Email- nrl@stoptline.com.au Phone (Australia) - 1300 30 45 50 Phone (Overseas)- +61 3 9811 3275 In-person: For Game Day- Security Staff Fan Activations- Authorised Event Staff
Responding to a disclosure	If receiving a direct or indirect disclosure of abuse and harm by a Child or Vulnerable Person. Relevant Persons must respond appropriately, ensuring that they avoid any further traumatisation or harm. It is not our role to investigate, rather to listen, retain and escalate information that has been provided and then advise to the relevant authorities. The following points are to be considered and applied when a reporting person is receiving a disclosure of child abuse from a Child or Vulnerable Person. - Remain calm - Listen without judgement - Provide reassurance - It is not our role to investigate - Don't make any promises - Say what you will do next - Document and report - Keep all details confidential

Report Management

Reporting mechanisms will be monitored by approved ARLC persons for assessment and triage.

All reports will be escalated to the Tournament Safeguarding Management Team.

In relation to reports, Tournament Management is responsible for:

- ensuring the immediate response was completed and take any further action needed
- leading any investigation where necessary
- notifying the ARLC where required
- ensuring reporting to external agencies such as Police, child protection authorities or other relevant government bodies where required.
- managing and implementing any sanctions on Relevant Persons
- arranging wellbeing support where required

Responsibilities

The table below outlines roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding during the RLWC26

Role	Responsibility
RLWC26 Tournament Director	Promote ARLC commitment to this Policy and its expectations Advocate for the safety of Children and Vulnerable People and promote their rights to participating in a safe environment Oversee the development and implementation of the Policy Ensure resourcing to Tournament Management and RLWC26 staff, volunteers and contractors The main decision maker for all sanctions and other safeguarding decisions.
Tournament Safeguarding Management: - Tournament Head of Venue Operations - General Tournament Operations and Project Planning - Team Services & Football Operations - Tournament Operations	Ensure all RLWC26 staff, volunteers and contractors understand their obligations in relation to this Policy. Oversee the development and implementation of the Policy. Triaging and investigating for all safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People concerns

Manager- Wheelchair - Stakeholder Relations Manager - General Manager Player Safety - National Safeguarding and Policy Manager	
ARLC 2026 RLWC26 Employees	Maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy Undertake any required training and screening set out in this Policy assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety.
Participant Wellbeing Managers	Complete required education Act as point of contact for their nation for all safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People concerns. Escalate all safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People concerns through Rely.
Game Day- Security Staff, Fan Activations- Authorised Event Staff	Understand their responsibility and the expectations of this Policy via Venue Management – head contractor. Attend a briefing on their role and how to escalate reports directed to them Report concerns or reports in line with this Policy
Participants, Official Party Members and other RLWC26 participants	Understand their responsibility and the expectations of this Policy Report concerns or reports in line with this Policy

RELATED LEGISLATION

Legislation relevant to the protection of Children and Vulnerable People is binding on the ARLC and all Relevant Organisations and Relevant Persons. A full list of relevant legislation is set out in Appendix 2 of this Policy.

Appendix 1- Definitions

Abusive Behaviour Towards a Child or Person with Disability- means any type of behaviour towards a Child or Person (whether in person, online or via any other means of communication) on the basis of their disability that is degrading, humiliating, exploitative, or otherwise denies human dignity or autonomy without reasonable justification. For the avoidance of doubt, this does not include behaviour towards a Child or Person with disability that is unrelated to their disability.

Adult- means a person aged 18 years or over

Australian Rugby League Commission Limited or ARLC – means the independent national governing body for Rugby League in Australia.

ARLC Contractor – means a person or entity that undertakes a contract to provide services for or in partnership with the ARLC

ARLC Employee – means a person employed by ARLC via an employment contract.

ARLC Volunteer – means a person who is connected with ARLC activities and services and is usually not paid for their contribution.

Bullying- means a person or group of people repeatedly and intentionally using words or actions, or the inappropriate use of power, against someone or a group of people to cause distress and risk to their wellbeing, whether in-person or online.

Child/Young Person- means a person under the age of 18 years

Child Abuse- means an act by a parent, caregiver, other adult or older adolescent that endangers a Child or Young Person's physical or emotional health or development.

- a. **Emotional or Psychological Abuse-** Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a Child or Young Person does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a Child or Young Person. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviours continue to an extent that results in significant damage to the Child's or Young Person's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.
- b. **Exposure to Domestic and Family Violence-** Exposure to domestic and family violence occurs when a child sees, hears, or is impacted by acts of violence towards other family members in the child's home. The acts are typically done by (and in relation to) a parent or carer but may also be done by other members of the child's family.

- c. **Grooming-** Behaviours that manipulate or control a Child/Young Person, their family, guardian and carers or other support networks, or organisations, with the intention to gain access to the Child/Young Person, obtain the Child/Young Person's compliance, maintain the Child/Young Person's silence, and avoid discovery of sexual abuse
- d. **Neglect-** Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide a Child or Young Person with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the Child's or Young Person's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.
- e. **Physical Abuse-** Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a Child or Young Person to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a Child or Young Person. Physically abusive behaviour includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, excessive and physically harmful over-training and kicking. It also includes giving Children and Young People harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury, can also be considered physical abuse if they place a Child or Young Person at risk of being hurt.
- f. **Sexual Abuse-** Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or a person of authority (e.g. older) involves a Child or Young Person in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the Child or Young Person for their own benefit. Sexual Abuse can include making sexual comments to a Child or Young Person, engaging in or enticing Children or Young People to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a Child's or Young Person's genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a Child or Young Person. Encouraging a Child or Young Person to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos, engaging in or enticing a Child or Young Person in sexual conversations over the internet and Sexual Exploitation are also considered forms of sexual abuse. Sexual exploitation occurs when a Child or Young Person is forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce child sexual exploitation material. Such child sexual exploitation material can be in the form of actual photos or videos or published on the internet. Exploitation can also involve a Child or Young Person who are forced into prostitution

Child Protection Legislation- means all state/territory Child/Young Person protection legislation as amended from time to time, a summary of which is available in this Policy at Appendix 2.

Child Safe Organisation- means an organisation that complies with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Child/Young Person Safe Practices- means the Child/Young Person safety requirements and practices adopted and implemented by Relevant Organisations to help ensure the safety of Children/Young People.

Contractor- means a Contractor is any person or firm that undertakes a contract to provide services for or in partnership with a Relevant Organisation.

Discrimination- means differential treatment (either in-person or online) based on a personal characteristic including, but not limited to:

- age;
- disability;
- race or ethnicity (including skin colour, nationality or migrant status);
- sex (including pregnancy, marital or relationship status, family responsibilities, breastfeeding, intersex status or gender identity);
- sexual orientation; or
- religion.

Employee - means an employee is any individual with a valid employment contract with a Relevant Organisation, regardless of the nature of the contract

Harassment- means behaviour of a nature and level of seriousness which includes, but is not limited to:

- telling insulting jokes and/or making derogatory comments about racial groups or people of diverse genders and sexualities (either in-person or online);
- sending explicit or sexually suggestive emails, text messages or other electronic communications;
- displaying racially offensive or pornographic images or screen savers;
- making derogatory comments or taunts about someone's race, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (either in-person or online);
- asking intrusive questions about someone's personal life, including their sex life (either in-person or online);
- intentionally stalking someone (either in-person or online); or
- intentionally disclosing (either in-person or online) the transgender identity or sexual orientation of someone without consent

Harmful Behaviour Towards a Child/Young Person - means any behaviour involving a Child/Young Person that is objectively age inappropriate and/or places the Child/Young Person at risk of harm. This includes but is not limited to:

- a. Child Abuse;
- b. harmful training methods including physical punishment or overtraining which may cause harm to a Child/Young Person;
- c. excessive or unnecessary emphasis on appearance, weight requirements or muscularity (either in-person or online) that may include practices such as:
 - encouraging or enforcing excessive dieting or restrictive eating;
 - excessive weigh-ins or focus on weight goals, body composition testing that is a sport requirement that carries punishment for the outcome (for example repeated bouts of exercises as punishment for weight gain); or
 - unsafe practices that could put health at risk in order to reach weight or appearance requirements without adequate medical support (for example dehydration or restrictive eating).
- d. forcing a Child/Young Person to train or compete when ill or injured;
- e. threatening or humiliating a Child/Young Person (either in-person or online);
- a. using disciplinary action involving physical punishment or any form of treatment that could reasonably be considered as degrading, cruel, frightening or humiliating;
- g. making sexual comments to a Child/Young Person or engaging in open discussions of a sexual or adult nature with (either on person or online), or in the presence a Child/Young Person;
- h. taking inappropriate photos or footage of a Child/Young Person; or
- i. inappropriate and/or intimate physical contact with a Child/Young Person which is sexual in nature or causes them to feel uncomfortable or feel pain or distress.

Identity Check- means verification of someone's identity through validation of more than one form of identification.

Official Party – means the Participant's official delegation of no more than 32 people consisting of 23 Players together with the 9 Non-Playing Members as defined in the RLWC26 Participation Agreement.

Official Party Member – means each Player and Non-Playing Member of a Participant's Official Party.

Participant – means a nation (including that nation's relevant rugby league governing body) who is participating in the RLWC26 by submitting a team or teams to participate in the Event.

Policy- means this Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People Policy including any annexures and appendices.

Relevant Persons- means a Relevant Person as defined in the 'Scope' of this Policy

Relevant Organisations – means the ARLC, ARLC Contractors, Participants, Tournament Management and, where applicable venues hosting a RLWC26 match or event and their staff

Rugby League World Cup 2026 (RLWC26)- means the men's, women's and wheelchair tournament being held in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea in October/November 2026.

Victimisation- means behaviour including, but not limited to:

- a. dismissal of a person or disadvantage to their involvement in sport because they have or intend to make a complaint;
- b. exclusion of a person from a sport activity because they were a witness to Prohibited Conduct; or
- c. failure to select an individual on merit because they have supported another person in lodging a complaint

Vilification- means behaviour including, but not limited to:

- a. speaking, writing or otherwise communicating (either in-person or online) about a person's sex or gender identity in a way that could make other people dislike, hate, or ridicule them;
- b. publishing claims that a racial or religious group is involved in serious crimes without any evidence in support;
- c. repeated and/or serious verbal or physical abuse (either in-person or online) about a Protected Characteristic of another person;
- d. encouraging violence against people (either in-person or online) who belong to a particular sex or gender identity, or damaging their property; or
- e. encouraging people to hate a racial or religious group using flyers, stickers, posters, a speech, or publication, or using websites, social media applications or email.

Volunteer- means any person engaged by a Relevant Organisation in any capacity who is not otherwise an Employee or Contractor, including parents or carers that volunteer, directors, office holders, coaches, officials, administrators and team and support personnel.

Vulnerable Person- means an individual who cannot easily protect themselves from harm, abuse or exploitation due to age, illness, disability or other life circumstances.

Working with Children Check (WWCC)- means any applicable Australian background check requirement, however named in the applicable jurisdiction, assessing the criminal record, child protection information and other information of those working or volunteering in child related work. Each Australian State or Territory has their own legislation and requirements.

Appendix 2- Legislation

	PRINCIPLE PROTECTION ACT	MANDATORY REPORTING/ HELPLINES CONTACT
Australia	Family Law Act 1975 (Cth) • Family Law Regulations 1984 Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) Disability Services and Inclusion Act 2023 (Cth)	Police- 000 National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline- 1800 880 052
New South Wales	Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) Children's Guardian Act 2019 and Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021 Disability Inclusion Act 2014	Child Protection Helpline- 13 21 11 Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline- 1800 628 221
Queensland	Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD) Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 Disability Services Act 2006	Child Protection Brisbane- 1300 682 254 Townsville-1300 706 147 Gold Coast- 1300 679 849 Elder Abuse Helpline/ Public Guardian- 1300 30 2121
Western Australia	Children and Community Services Act 2004 Disability Services Act 1993	Central intake Team- 1800 273 889 Advocacy and Support (WA)- 1800 193 331
New Zealand	Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 Disability Support services Act 2026	Police- 111 Oranga Tamariki- 0508 326 459 Disability Helpline- 0800 11 12 13

OFFICIAL

Papua New Guinea	Lukautim Pikini Act 2015 Disability Services Act 2025	Police- 112 Pikinini Watch PNG- +675 7310 6757 FemiliPNG - +675 7916 9063 National Capital District Different Abilities Advocacy Agency (NCDDAA)- +675 342 1079
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