

## ROTARY DISTRICT 9685 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

### **ROTARY INTERNATIONAL'S STATEMENT OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH**

*Rotary International strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotarians, Rotarians' spouses and partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people they come into contact with and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.*

*Adopted by the RI Board of Directors, November 2006*

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Youth Protection Policy applies to those Rotarians and non-Rotarians who participate in Rotary Youth Programs within or involving District 9685. The policy is in accordance with rules and procedures set out in the Rotary International Youth Protection Guide and the expectations of our insurers. It also complies with legislative requirements of Australia and New South Wales including the NSW Child Safe Standards. These requirements apply to all adult persons working with young people entrusted to their care and must be adhered to.

#### **2. Purpose**

- 2.1 The purpose of this Policy is to:

- a) protect young people entrusted to Rotary's care whilst participating in a Rotary program or activity;
- b) ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities and obligations to identify the possible risk of child abuse, and to establish controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or recognising such abuse when it occurs;
- c) provide guidance on actions that should be taken where a person suspects child abuse within any Rotary Youth Program;
- d) provide a clear statement to members, employees, directors, volunteers, spouses and contractors forbidding any such abuse;
- e) provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated;
- f) outline the screening requirements expected to manage Rotary's risk in relation to youth and youth programs.

#### **3. Commencement**

- 3.1 This policy commences on 1 May 2025 and replaces all other District 9685 youth protection policies and procedures, written or otherwise.
- 3.2 This policy is Version 3.

#### **4. Scope**

- 4.1 This Policy applies to all Rotary programs and activities operated by District 9685 and its member Clubs, and adults (people aged 18 and over) who are involved in any way in

these programs and activities.

## **5. Guiding principles**

5.1 This Policy is based on the following principles:

- a) Rotary has a zero tolerance for child abuse
- b) The best interests of the young person are paramount
- c) Youth protection is a shared responsibility
- d) All young people have a right to feel safe and be safe, and have rights to protection from abuse
- e) Rotary acknowledges the diversity of all people, including (but not limited to) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, youth from diverse backgrounds and disabilities, neurodiverse young people, and young people from the LGBTIQ+ community, and make reasonable efforts to accommodate their needs
- f) Everyone covered by the Policy must also comply with Rotary's Code of Conduct, which sets stringent standards for personal behaviour.

## **6. Definitions**

6.1 "abuse": Sexual, physical, psychological, or verbal mistreatment of a young person

6.2 "Youth": For the purpose of this policy, the term Youth refers to any individual who participates in a Rotary Youth Program regardless of whether or not he or she is of legal age of majority, and also referred to in this document as young people, children, child, youth, student, participant, or young person. It also includes any facilitators or program leaders who are under the age of 18.

6.3 Rotary Youth Program: Includes:

- a) District-organised Rotary Youth activities such as Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment, Rotary Youth Exchange, Pitch for Purpose, and other activities as may be developed or implemented from time to time; and
- b) Rotary or Rotaract Club organised youth programs such as student visits and intra-country exchange programs; and
- c) Rotary or Rotaract Club activities where individual, unsupervised contact with youth may be expected, for example staffing lost children facilities at markets or concerts, etc.

6.4 "Volunteer": A volunteer is any adult involved with Rotary Youth Program activities that has direct interactions with youth. Volunteers include but are not limited to:

- a) Club and District Youth Program Officers, Committee Members, Leaders, Mentors and others directly involved with the relevant Youth Program;
- b) Club Counsellors (for Rotary Youth Exchange Students);
- c) Rotarians, Rotaractors and their spouses who meet the above definition;
- d) Persons who host youth for activities or outings;
- e) Persons who are responsible for transporting youth to Rotary or affiliated Youth

Programs, events or functions;

- f) Host parents or other adult residents of host homes (including siblings, other family members and regular or frequent overnight visitors);
- g) Persons who are responsible for child-related activities and risk management at Club events.

6.5 “Responsible adult”: A responsible adult is any adult who, in a family or group situation for a short period of time, is responsible for caring for a youth. This person shall be in a position to offer the youth/student an educational, cultural, or recreational experience, such as visits to a cultural institution or a short tourist activity. This person may not have a verified Working with Children Check or be formally reference checked, because experience is such that there is virtually no opportunity for misconduct to occur. The Volunteers caring for a youth must be satisfied, in the same way a conscientious parent would be satisfied, that this person is suitable for their own son or daughter to stay with for a short period of time.

## **7. Consultation and Participation**

7.1 Child, family and community involvement is important in promoting the rights of children and Rotary District 9685 encourages the participation of children, family, caregivers and the broader community in the implementation of this Policy.

## **8. General District responsibilities**

8.1 The District Governor shall be responsible for:

- a) supervising and controlling all youth activities in the district, including those associated with Rotary Youth Exchange;
- b) appointing a District Youth Protection Officer as per the requirements of the Rotary Youth Exchange Handbook as published and updated by Rotary International from time to time;
- c) appointing Chairs for each District-organised Rotary Youth Program. The Chair of each youth program may delegate the administration of their youth protection responsibilities to a member of their committee, with appropriate oversight.

8.2 The District Youth Protection Officer shall be responsible for:

- a) Providing annual training to Rotary Youth Program Chairs, delegates, Club Youth Protection Officers and others as required on appropriate youth protection policies and procedures and maintain records of participation;
- b) Maintaining and updating this policy and associated procedures and forms, in consultation with the District Governor and Committee of the Association;
- c) Maintaining an up to date knowledge of current government and Rotary International Youth Protection requirements;
- d) Appointing and maintaining a committee of experienced advisors to support the work of youth protection in the district;
- e) Monitoring all participating Clubs and Rotary Youth Programs to support them to comply with youth protection requirements;

- f) Ensuring the District is registered as an Employer with the Office of the Children's Guardian;
- g) Maintaining oversight of the screening and suitability checks undertaken by Rotary Youth Program Chairs, delegates, and Club Youth Protection Officers;
- h) Providing support and advice to Rotary Youth Programs and Club on youth protection issues as required;
- i) Receiving complaints and allegations of incidents involving youth and undertake investigations as required, producing investigation reports with recommendations to the District Governor for action;
- j) Providing advice and support to youth programs and Clubs affected by allegations of abuse of a young person;
- k) Maintaining confidential records of individuals prohibited from contact with youth and ensure these prohibitions are implemented consistently throughout the district from year to year;
- l) Participating in zone-wide efforts to improve youth protection.

**8.3 The Rotary Youth Program Chair or their delegate shall:**

- a) Attend annual training on youth protection policies and procedures including reporting requirements;
- b) Verify Working with Children Checks through the Office of the Children's Guardian website;
- c) Receive, interview and referee check Youth Program Volunteers using the Rotary Youth Program Volunteer Information and Declaration Form (as set out below);
- d) Maintain records of completed Rotary Youth Program Volunteer Information and Declaration Forms and verified Working with Children Checks in perpetuity, in a form that is able to inspected by the District Youth Protection Officer, the Office of the Children's Guardian and other government officials as required;
- e) Report any prospective volunteers who fail verification and screening to the District Youth Protection Officer so that their information can be recorded;
- f) Undertake youth protection requirements as designated by Rotary International in accordance with the specific procedures for each Rotary Youth Program.

**8.4 Individuals prohibited from working with youth may not serve in any locally-appointed Club or district role where they may be in contact with youth, including but not limited to: District Interact Chair, Interact Club Advisor, District RYLA Chair, District RYPEN Coordinator, District Youth Exchange Chair, District Youth Protection Officer, other District Program Coordinators/organisers as are appointed from time to time.**

**9. General Club responsibilities**

**9.1 The President of each Rotary Club is responsible for the oversight of all Rotary Youth Programs and other Club activities involving young people, including compliance with**

youth protection requirements.

- 9.2 All Rotary Clubs will have a designated Youth Protection Officer whose duties involve supporting the Club's board to maintain their youth protection compliance procedures ensuring the completion of all required protection documentation as required by State or Territory legislation. Clubs may call the Youth Protection Officer a Verification Officer or Child Protection Officer instead of Youth Protection Officer.
- 9.3 The Club Youth Protection Officer will be appointed by the President of the Club. They must be listed in the District Club Executive Management System (currently ClubRunner).
- 9.4 If a Club does not appoint a Club Youth Protection Officer, the President of the Club is deemed to be acting in this role until such time as a Club Youth Protection Officer is appointed.
- 9.5 The Club Youth Protection Officer will:
- a) Advise organisers and volunteers for Rotary Youth Programs arranged by, or participated in by the Club, regarding the correct procedure for screening and pre-approving volunteers;
  - b) Attend training on youth protection policies and procedures including reporting requirements;
  - c) Ensure that Club programs and activities involving youth have sufficient procedures in place to manage youth protection risks, including a risk assessment;
  - d) Ensure the Club is registered as an Employer with the Office of the Children's Guardian;
  - e) Verify Working with Children Checks through the Office of the Children's Guardian website;
  - f) Receive, interview and referee check Youth Program Volunteers using the Rotary Youth Program Volunteer Information and Declaration Form (as set out below);
  - g) maintain records of completed Rotary Youth Program Volunteer Information and Declaration Forms and verified Working with Children Checks in perpetuity, in a form that is accessible to the District Youth Protection Officer, and may be inspected on request by the Office of the Children's Guardian and other government officials as required.
- 9.6 For insurance purposes, it is a requirement that all Clubs complete and return the Club Insurance & Compliance Declaration to their District Insurance Officer by the date advised each year.

## **10. Screening requirements**

- 10.1 The suitability of all adults assisting in Rotary Youth Programs will be carefully assessed in accordance with their roles.

### **10.2 Youth Program Volunteers**

- a) Youth Program Volunteers must undertake the following screening prior to

commencement:

- i. complete a Rotary Youth Program Volunteer Information and Declaration which is checked and finalised by the relevant Club or District Officer, including reference checks;
  - ii. have a current Working With Children Check which has been verified by the relevant Club or District Officer.
- b) It is a Rotary International requirement that the Chairs of all District Youth Programs, even though they may not have direct contact alone with young people, are assessed as a Youth Program Volunteer.
- c) Rotary Youth Program Volunteer Information and Declarations remain valid for 3 years following the date of completion and may be used for multiple programs/activities across district and Clubs on production of the completed form.

### 10.3 Rotarians and their adult family members

Rotarians and their adult family members volunteering at Rotary Youth Programs or other activities involving young people are expected to hold a current, verified Working with Children Check to allow for emergency situations to be managed with minimum risk. Any Rotarians or spouses who do not hold a current, verified Working with Children Check must be specifically excluded from assisting in emergency situations involving youth.

### 10.4 Responsible Adults

Responsible Adults do not require any specific screening. Wherever possible, it is desirable to have two or more Responsible Adults together with a young person at any one time or more than one young person present. If the situation requires it, Responsible Adults may still be required to have a current Working with Children Check.

### 10.5 Transportation

- a) Transportation refers to the conveyance of young people by private transport.
- b) When a young person is being transported in a vehicle with the driver only, the driver will have undergone screening by way of a Volunteer Declaration.
- c) Where there is a driver and another adult person in the vehicle, each should have a WWC clearance as a minimum.
- d) Regardless of number of adults in the vehicle, the young person should occupy the rear seat of the vehicle, preferably alone.
- e) Drivers must have a current and valid driver's licence, with no less than one year's driving experience.
- f) It should be understood that these guidelines are for the benefit of both the young person and driver alike, and common sense should be applied in all circumstances.
- g) Screening of drivers and other adults in private transport with young people is to be undertaken by the Rotary entity responsible for the decision for the young person to travel in that vehicle. For example, if a sponsoring Club offers to drive a young person to RYPEN, the sponsoring Club is responsible

for ensuring the correct screening has been undertaken.

#### 10.6 External organisations

- a) Where Rotary is assisting in a child and youth program which is under the control of another, non-Rotary organisation, the protection requirements set out in this document still apply together with any additional requirement the other organisation may require.
- b) A Rotary youth committee, Club or other Rotary entity must ensure a non-Rotary organisation has appropriate screening and safety procedures in place for a youth program prior to officially promoting, selecting, and/or sponsoring students for such a program.

### 11. **Rotary Youth Exchange – specific risks**

- 11.1 Rotary Youth Exchange is a District program administered for Clubs by the District Youth Exchange Committee. To participate in the Rotary Youth Exchange Program, each District and Club must be “Certified” by Rotary International.
- 11.2 The very nature of the Program has specific risk management requirements and RI Certification procedures must be strictly adhered to.
- 11.3 The Rotary Youth Exchange Program manual details these requirements.

### 12. **Abuse and harassment allegation reporting guidelines**

- 12.1 Should any person know or have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been or is being abused, harassed, mistreated, or neglected, in a Rotary program, it is their legal obligation to notify all appropriate State and Territory authorities. It is not a requirement to have proof or evidence as it is the role of state authorities to investigate.
- 12.2 Any adult to whom a young person reports an incident of sexual abuse or harassment is responsible for following these Allegation Reporting Guidelines.
- 12.3 Receiving a Report

Any adult to whom a program participant reports abuse or harassment must:

- a) Listen attentively and stay calm. Acknowledge that it takes a lot of courage to report abuse. It is appropriate to listen and be encouraging. Do not express shock, horror, or disbelief.
- b) Assure privacy but not confidentiality. Explain that you will have to tell someone about the abuse/harassment to make it stop and to ensure that it doesn't happen to other students.
- c) Get the facts, but don't interrogate the participant. Ask questions that establish facts: who, what, when, where and how. Reassure the young person that they did the right thing in telling you. Avoid asking 'why' questions, which may be interpreted as questioning the young person's motives, implying they are at fault, or suggesting you don't believe them. Remember your responsibility is to report this information to the proper authorities.
- d) Be non-judgmental and reassuring. Avoid criticising anything that has happened or anyone who may be involved – even the accused, because it could be someone they care about. It is especially important not to blame or criticise

the young person. Emphasise that it was not their fault and that they were brave and mature to come to you.

- e) Be patient and understanding. A person who has experienced trauma might find it difficult to talk about the details of their experience. Encourage them to report as much as they can or as they feel comfortable discussing. Try to minimise any need for them to explain their experience again.
- f) Document the allegation. Take confidential notes that include details such as dates and locations they reference, as soon after the report as you can. Try to use the young person's exact words.

#### 12.4 Responding to an allegation

The following steps must be taken immediately after alleged abuse or harassment is reported. Some of them may be performed by any program volunteer. Others, as specified, should be performed by a district officer.

**a) Protect the young person.**

Ensure their safety and security of the young person by removing them from the situation immediately and preventing all contact with alleged abuser or harasser. Reassure the young person that this is for their own safety and is not a punishment.

Take immediate action to safeguard the young person's health and wellbeing, and get them medical or psychological care, if necessary. If both the person who reported the problem and the person who is accused are young people, provide support to both of them.

**b) Report the allegation to appropriate authorities**

Immediately report all cases of sexual abuse or harassment – first to the appropriate law enforcement authorities and then to the Club and district leaders. The investigation of alleged abuse or harassment must be left entirely to law enforcement agencies. All investigations must be conducted by authorities that are not affiliated with Rotary.

In most situations, the first Rotary contact is the District Youth Protection Officer, who will be the liaison to and seek guidance from the appropriate agencies. If the allegation involves this individual, the District Governor should be the main Rotary contact.

In the case of the Rotary Youth Exchange Program, the first Rotary contact is the Rotarian counsellor who has responsibility for seeking the advice of and interacting with appropriate agencies. If the allegation involves the conduct of the Rotarian counsellor, the District Youth Exchange chair should be contacted.

The district will cooperate with police and legal investigations.

**c) Remove the accused person from contact with youth**

The Club President or District Chair shall immediately withdraw the accused person from all active duty, which could entail standing down, re-assignment



to other duties that do not have direct contact with young people, or to work under increased supervision while the matter is being investigated. (Note that it is not the young person that is withdrawn from a program).

The District Youth Protection Officer or Club Youth Protection Officer will also comply with any applicable reportable conduct schemes and ensure they report the allegation to the appropriate external authority when required.

**d) Avoid gossip and blame.**

Do not tell anyone about the report other than those who need to know or are required by these guidelines. Take care to protect the rights of everyone who is involved during the investigation.

**e) Do not challenge the alleged offender.**

The adult to whom the young person reports must not contact the alleged offender. In cases of abuse, interrogation must be left entirely to law enforcement authorities. In cases of non-criminal harassment, the District Youth Protection Officer and District Governor are responsible for investigating and will be in contact with the alleged offender after the young person has been moved to a safe environment.

**f) Follow-up and implement safeguards**

The District 9685 Rotary Youth Protection Incident Report Form must be completed for all allegations or incidents. This form can be found on the District website.

All adults who know about an allegation must make sure that the District Youth Protection Officer or District Rotary Youth Exchange Chair (as applicable) have informed Rotary International of the allegation within 72 hours.

The District Youth Protection Officer or District Rotary Youth Exchange Chair (as applicable) will ensure that the parents or legal guardians of the participants (whether the participant is accused or making the accusation) have been notified.

After reporting allegations to the Rotarian counsellor or District Youth Protection Officer follow up to make sure steps are being taken to address the situation.

**g) Investigation**

The District will appropriately investigate all allegations relating to an incident of abuse in accordance with its obligations and to the extent reasonably practicable. In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the District to continue a suspension of a member and defer conducting its own investigation until after an investigation conducted by authorities (e.g. the police).

The District Governor will, with advice from the District Review Committee (of which the District Youth Protection Officer shall be a member), the Zone Insurance and Protection Committee in conjunction with Aon, and/or Rotary International determine an appropriate method of investigation.

All people covered by the District Youth Protection Policy and Procedure must cooperate fully with any investigation by a Government Department, the Police, Rotary International or the District.

**h) Outcome**

The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but may include withdrawal from active duty, re-assignment to duties with no contact with young people, increased supervision, recommendations to the Rotary Club and / or Rotary International about whether the person remains a fit and proper person to hold Rotary membership.

**13. Concerns held by the District Youth Protection Officer or District Governor but no complaint**

13.1 Where there are concerns held by the District Governor or District Youth Protection Officer, they may request the relevant District Program Chair or Club president, that within 72 hours that they advise in writing:

- a) Details of any known incidences or concerns
- b) Evidence of Club or district committee's compliance with the policy including volunteer declaration and screening checks
- c) Copies of a program risk assessment
- d) A compliance statement from the Club President or program chair

13.2 In circumstances where this has not resulted in program adjustment or satisfactory compliance of a Club the District Governor may raise concern with the Zone Insurance and Protection Committee in conjunction with Rotary International, the Zone insurance broker (Aon) and the insurers.

13.3 In a circumstance where there are unresolved concerns about a district program, the District Management Committee shall consider appropriate action.

**14. Privacy and confidentiality**

14.1 Rotary Districts and Clubs will collect, use, disclose, and hold personal information in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*.

14.2 There are two guiding principles in respect to a young person's privacy.

- a) First, Rotary Districts and Clubs will operate on the best interests principle. All employees, members, directors, volunteers and contractors will do what they believe to be in the best interest of the young person. This principle supersedes all others.
- b) Second, the Rotary Districts and Clubs will respect a young person's confidentiality except in situations where it conflicts with the best interests principle.

14.3 As much as is reasonably possible, an individual's confidentiality is to be protected. Both those who are making reports and those about whom accusations are being made are entitled to confidentiality.

14.4 Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, employees, directors, volunteers and contractors must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches

confidentiality, other than to report and act consistent with this Youth Protection Policy or Procedure and relevant legislative requirements

## **15. Communication**

- 15.1 The District and Clubs have an obligation to be proactive in its communication with young people within its programs about child safety and appropriate behaviour
- 15.2 In accordance with District Policy, the only person able to make comment to the media about any matter pertaining to Child Protection issues of the District is the District Governor. The District Governor will take advice from the District Youth Protection Officer and/or the Zone Insurance and Protection Committee in conjunction with the Zone insurance broker (Aon).
- 15.3 Media comment from an individual Rotary or Rotaract Club is the responsibility of the President of that Club. It is strongly recommended that Presidents seek advice and support from District Governor and District Youth Protection Officer before making comments to the media. Comments made by one Club have significant potential to impact all Clubs in the Rotary family.
- 15.4 All communications must not interfere with the rights of the young person, the natural justice owed to the accused person, nor jeopardise any investigation by a relevant authority.

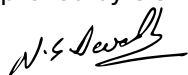
## **Variations**

Rotary District 9685 reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

## **Associated Documents**

- Rotary Code of Policies 2.120
- Rotary Youth Protection Guide (775EN520)
- Rotary Youth Exchange Handbook (746EN1218)
- District Risk Management Policy
- District Crisis Management Plan
- District 9685 Rotary Youth Protection Incident Report Form
- Rotary Youth Volunteer Information and Declaration Form
- Protecting Youth Program Participants – RI Online Training Module

Approved by COTA on 30 April 2025



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