



POLICY STATEMENT

DATE: AUGUST 2002
SUBJECT: MEMBER PROTECTION POLICY
POLICY NO.: 6.5

1 BACKGROUND

Surf Life Saving Australia Limited (SLSA), subsidiary companies and affiliated clubs, branches and states, is committed to the health, safety and well-being of all its members and is dedicated to providing a safe environment for participating in surf lifesaving activities.

Abuse is defined as anything which individuals or organisations do, or fail to do, that directly or indirectly harms people or damages their prospects of a safe and healthy development. This includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, inappropriate training, inappropriate touching, sexual abuse and neglect. (National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, 2000)

This Member Protection Policy conveys a message to all SLSA members, and prospective members, responsible for surf lifesaving activities, particularly those involving members under 18 years of age, about minimising risk exposure of these members. All SLSA members, particularly age managers, coaches, officials, leaders, trainers and management personnel, have a responsibility to provide safeguards to protect the well-being of other members.

The abuse of youth members, by other members or non-members, is not acceptable and SLSA encourages all incidents of such abuse as described above to be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities. SLSA supports the designation of such authorities by the respective state, branch and club affiliates of Surf Life Saving Australia Limited in a protective procedure for handling inappropriate behaviour by an SLSA member or external influence.

Where such a protective procedure does not exist SLSA encourages the use of the SLSA Regulation 6.1 - Grievances; and SLSA Regulation 6.2 - Judicial Procedures; for addressing reports, notification or accusations of improper behaviour by an SLSA member. The SLSA Equity, Discrimination and Harassment Free Organisation Policy also should be referred to when addressing issues relating to harassment of a member by another member or outside source.

SLSA continues its support of the development of specific procedures and processes for addressing member protection in each state, in accordance with SLSA Policies and the laws of that state.

Special Note:

**For the purpose of this document the word “youth” will refer to a member or person up until the age of 18 years as per the SLSA Junior Development Policy.*

2 CODE OF CONDUCT

SLSA endorses the following Code of Conduct for SLSA members, particularly those responsible for activities involving members under the age of 18, and/or similar statements as endorsed by SLSA state centres:

- 2.1 As an SLSA member you should meet the following requirements in regard to your conduct during any SLSA sanctioned activity.
 - i. respect the rights, dignity and worth of others.
 - ii. be fair, considerate and honest in all dealings with others.
 - iii. be professional in, and accept responsibility for, your actions.
 - iv. make a commitment to providing quality service.
 - v. be aware of, and maintain an uncompromising adherence to, SLSA standards, rules, regulations and policies.
 - vi. operate within the rules of surf lifesaving including national and international guidelines that govern SLSA.

- 2.2 Surf Life Saving Australia Limited expects all members, supporters, advisors and associates to SLSA to abide by a Code of Conduct which upholds the principles and values of the organisation and this Member Protection Policy. Members should recognise that at all times they have a responsibility to a duty of care to all members of SLSA. Specifically:-
 - i. understand the possible consequences if you breach SLSA’s Member Protection Policy or Code of Conduct.
 - ii. immediately report any breaches of the SLSA Member Protection Policy or Code of Conduct to the appropriate authority.
 - iii. refrain from any form of abuse towards others.
 - iv. refrain from any form of harassment towards others.
 - v. provide a safe environment for the conduct of the activity in accordance with relevant SLSA policy.
 - vi. show concern and caution towards others who may be sick or injured.
 - vii. be a positive role model.

- 2.3 An SLSA Team Manager/Age Manager will:
 - i. be responsible for the overall welfare and well-being of team members and officials when travelling with a team.

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- ii. maintain a 'duty of care' towards team members and an accountability for the management of the team.
 - iii. have a sound knowledge of SLSA policies, responsibilities and competition rules, and ensure that the conduct of the affairs of the team is in accordance with these policies and guidelines.
 - iv. foster a collaborative approach to the management of the team.

2.4 An SLSA Coach or Official will:

- i. agree to abide by the code of conduct.
- ii. be responsible for matters concerning the coaching, training and development of surf lifesavers.
- iii. maintain a 'duty of care' towards others and an accountability for matters relating to training and competition.
- iv. have a sound working knowledge of SLSA policies, rules and regulations and coaching techniques.
- v. ensure that any physical contact with others is;
 - a) appropriate to the situation
 - b) necessary for the persons skill development
- vi. provide a safe environment for training and competition.
- vii. be a positive role model for surf lifesavers and SLSA.

2.5 An SLSA Administrator/Director/Officer will:

- i) agree to abide by the code of conduct.
- ii) be fair, considerate and honest with others.
- iii) operate within the rules of SLSA.
- iv) be professional in your actions. Your language, presentation, manner and punctuality should reflect high standards.
- v) resolve conflicts fairly and promptly through established procedures.
- vi) maintain strict impartiality.
- vii) maintain a safe environment for others.
- viii) show concern and caution towards others.
- ix) be a positive role model for others.

3 PROTECTIVE MEASURES FOR SLSA LEADERS

SLSA leaders are those members who undertake the delivery or supervision of surf lifesaving activities in their capacity as age or team managers, coaches, officials, administrators, patrol captains and like positions. These are responsible positions in the organisation and each leader must adopt the following risk minimisation measures to protect themselves from any misconceptions about their behaviour in performing their designated roles.

3.1 Risk Minimisation Measures:

Do not engage, or allow others to engage, in any of the following:

- i. abusive initiation ceremonies
- ii. inappropriate undressing/dressing in front of youths

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- iii. invading the privacy of youths while showering or toileting
 - iv. photographing youths while undressing/dressing, showering or toileting
 - v. sleeping in closed quarters with youths without a second adult representative, parent etc.
 - vi. aggressive, physically distressing or sexually provocative activities
 - vii. sexually suggestive comments about or to a youth
 - viii. inappropriate or intrusive touching of a youth
 - ix. joking, ridiculing, rejecting, isolating, or taking the 'mickey' out of a youth.

While many of the above points may not be legally actionable, they are against the principles and values of SLSA and guarded against in the Code of Conduct.

Leaders should maintain an open door policy when conducting briefings, meetings and assemblies of members. Leaders should invite all youths, parents, friends and other leaders to participate, particularly when performing interviews, transporting youth members and conducting excursions.

Male and female adults, leaders or parents must accompany youths when undertaking surf lifesaving activities away from home and especially overnight.

All members should be treated with respect and dignity. Be mindful of your language, tone of voice and body language, address the problem not the person.

Foster teamwork and group cohesion between leaders and youth by allowing for the ability to point out inappropriate attitudes and behaviour by members of the team. Abusive or inappropriate behaviour can not be tolerated and should be dealt with immediately.

Encourage youth members - don't pressure them. Be mindful of each youth's individual capacities for surf lifesaving activities and protect them from pressure to participate.

Respect youth member's privacy. Expect them to respect yours.

Do not become involved in excessive attention seeking behaviour, physically or sexually, by a youth. Be mindful of the very needy youth and redirect their attention to surf lifesaving activities.

Maintain your status as a ROLE MODEL to youths and other adults. Be friendly, courteous and kind. Don't abuse your position. Always set a good example in dress, behaviour, language etc.

Mixed teams of leaders supervising surf lifesaving activities provides for a healthier environment for leaders and youths.

Remember - one leader's inappropriate behaviour reflects on all of SLSA's leaders.

UNDERSTAND SLSA POLICIES on member protection and grievances, and respect them. For more information on risk management information in your state, contact your respective state centre office.

The SLSA Regulations (Grievance Procedures) are an excellent resource for a basic understanding of how to communicate issues within SLSA.

This forgoing list of risk minimisation strategies is not exhaustive but is designed to be a guide for SLSA leaders to uphold the values and principles of Surf Life Saving Australia.

CHECKLIST for SLSA Leaders where abuse is suspected

3.1 Use the following guidelines should you or any other member suspect abuse:

You have suspicion on reasonable grounds:

- i. When a youth tells you they have been abused.
- ii. When someone else tells you a youth has been abused.
- iii. A youth tells you they know someone who has been abused (often they are referring to themselves).
- iv. You observe a youth member's behaviour and/or injuries etc, and your knowledge of youth members, leads you to suspect abuse.
- v. You observe a member's abuse of another member.

3.2 If you suspect a youth member has been abused follow these procedures:

- i. Ensure the youth is safe (if they are in your care).
- ii. Maintain the safety of other youth members in accordance with SLSA Regulations and the Code of Conduct.
- iii. Obtain and document the following information to provide to the state appointed SLSA representative designated as liaison on member protection issues:
 - a) *the youth's name, age and address*
 - b) *your reason for suspecting abuse (ie. observation, injury, information)*
 - c) *your assessment of danger posed to the youth including information pertaining to the alleged perpetrator.*
 - d) *what arrangements, if any, exist for the immediate protection of the youth.*
 - e) *what involvement, if any, other agencies have in dealing with the suspected member protection issues.*

Make direct and confidential contact with the **Chief Executive** in your state surf lifesaving office.

The **Chief Executive** in your state surf lifesaving office is tasked with advising you on such issues as parental involvement, police involvement, medical treatment, SLSA's position, and the state authority's role. Remember, if in doubt, seek immediate advice.

In the event that you suspect abuse by someone who is not an SLSA member (eg. family member, club visitor) advise the state **Chief Executive** in your state surf lifesaving office to seek appropriate advice.

4 PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING ACCUSATIONS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR BY SLSA LEADERS/MEMBERS

Ensure all members are aware of the SLSA Member Protection Policy, SLSA Regulations and SLSA Code of Conduct when joining a surf lifesaving club.

Any person suspected of breaching any of the SLSA Member Protection Policy and Code of Conduct is to be reported to the Chief Executive at your state surf lifesaving office when all known facts and suspicions are to be confided in that officer.

Anonymous claims of abuse or breaches of the above Code and policies are to be taken seriously and immediately reported to the Chief Executive at your state surf lifesaving office for investigation.

4.1 If the issue involves suspected abuse then:

- i. The person reporting the suspected breach (or an advocate) will advise the state Chief Executive immediately on being made suspicious and declare all available details.**
- ii. The Chief Executive shall notify the relevant state protection authority and receive advice about the ensuing course of action for addressing the reported breach of SLSA's Member Protection Policy. The CEO's first priority is to ensure the safety and well being of the victim. This may involve the removal of the alleged offender. The CEO should insure that it is the risk that is removed and not the victim.**
- iii. The CEO should make an initial assessment of criminality. If the case is considered to be a criminal act than the CEO should immediately pass this information into the Police**
- iv. Whether the case in considered a criminal act or not the CEO should initiate an Member Protection Team to investigate the matter**
- v. The parents/guardians of any member identified as a suspected victim of abuse will be encouraged to contact the state Chief Executive for advice on professional support services.**

5 MEMBER PROTECTION TEAM

5.1 Team Composure

The State CEO shall appoint a member protection team that will comprise of two members. These members should have a detailed background in Member

Protection issues and may be members of the States Department of Community Services / Police etc, or have detailed training in the area of Member Protection Investigation.

Such members should carry out member protection investigations on behalf of the State CEO. A register of Member Protection Officers should be kept at SLSA.

5.2 Procedure

Once notified by the State CEO the Convener of the Member Protection Team shall interview the alleged victim.

The MPT should carry out an investigation following guidelines provided, this may involve the interview of witnesses. The investigation team may also interview the alleged offender.

The purpose of the investigation shall be to determine whether the person complained about has committed a breach of this Policy.

Following the investigation the MPT will present their finding to the State CEO and provide recommendations.

If an alleged breach of policy has been deemed to have occurred than the matter must be referred to the State Judiciary Panel for disciplinary action.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 Removal of Risk

If upon receipt of the allegation the CEO or the Member Protection Investigation team considers that pending the determination of the matter the person complained about may put at risk the safety and welfare of the complainant or others, it may order that the person complained about be:

- (a) suspended from any role they hold with SLSA, the relevant State or the relevant Affiliated Club; and/or
- (b) banned from any event or activities held by or sanctioned by SLSA, the States and/or the Affiliated Clubs; and/or
- (c) required not to contact or in any way associate with the complainant or other person about whom the alleged breach relates, pending the determination of the hearing.

There is no right of appeal of the decision by the CEO.

6.2 Management of Risk

Individual state centres are committed to investigating means for implementing member protection specific to their state operations. The tools for implementing member protection vary according to state legislation and guidelines set by government agencies and protection authorities. An example of a member protection vehicle is police screening of SLSA leaders as part of recruitment for a variety of surf lifesaving roles.

The following guidelines may be used as a measure by SLSA state centres for addressing member protection issues:

- i. Report the matter to the relevant state department of welfare services, children's services or member protection.

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- ii. Report the matter to the police and preferably the member protection unit as appropriate in your state.
 - iii. The suspected victim and other family members shall be asked to approach their local GP to obtain a referral to professional support services and medical specialists.
 - iv. The GP can contact the state Chief Executive for advice of the name of an appropriate specialist known to SLSA.
 - v. Inform all other states and Surf Life Saving Australia of such action to guard against future application for membership.
 - vi. Check periodically to ensure the former member is having no further contact with members of SLSA.
 - vii. Periodically follow up on the victim's progress after initial counselling and that they have access to available care.

6 ACTION ON ABUSE REPORTED DIRECTLY TO SLSA

- 6.1 In the event that suspected abuse of an SLSA member is reported in the first instance to SLSA then the following actions are to occur:
 - i. The SLSA Grievance Handler is to conduct a preliminary investigation and report confidentially to the SLSA CEO as to whether abuse is suspected.
 - ii. If abuse is suspected the SLSA CEO will report the matter immediately and confidentially to the respective state centre responsible for investigating the matter in accordance with this policy and procedures.

7 DEALING WITH CRIMINAL CHARGES AND/OR CONVICTIONS

- 7.1 Where a member is charged and/or convicted for a criminal offence involving sex, drugs fraud or other offences which breach SLSA policies or codes against another member it is especially essential that these protocols be put into place to:
 - i. Look after the welfare of any "victims";
 - ii. Ensure Association judicial processes are unhindered;
 - iii. Not compromise Police investigations, ie natural justice; and,
 - iv. Ensure surf lifesaving services (public safety) are maintained.
- 7.2 As soon as a Club or member become aware that a member (or themselves) has been charged with a criminal offence, the Club or member shall immediately advise the Branch and State and convene a Special General Meeting to do the following:
 - i. Adopt a 'Position Statement & Protocols' as per Appendix A;
 - ii. Suspend the member charged
 - iii. In consultation with your State and involved/interested parties, appoint a senior experienced person to be the 'Club Liaison Officer'(CLO) to;
 - a) liaise with State
 - b) liaise and provide assistance to the Police and other authorities;

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- c) deal with any allegations about breaches of the “protocols”;
 - d) act a spokesperson for the Club;
 - e) liaise with the accused and accuser (and families);
 - f) generally be responsible for monitoring and enforcing the “Protocols”.

The suspended member shall be banned from participating in all Surf Life Saving activities and shall be banned from accessing or utilising Club facilities and equipment.

Immediate relatives of the charged member and/or the accusing member shall be required to step aside from any Executive Officer position within the Club to diffuse any potential conflict of interest or negative perceptions until the issue is resolved.

Close friends of the charged member and/or accusing member should carefully consider whether they can fulfil Executive Officer responsibilities in a proper unbiased manner, and step aside if in doubt.

The State Centre shall liaise with all parties, including the Police, Club Management Committee (via the appointed Club Liaison Officer) and any members/alleged “victims” or complainants.

Offers for counselling support (eg DES, LifeLine, Anglicare, Sexual Assault Support Services) for members shall be communicated to members by the Club.

7.3 As soon as a club member is convicted of a serious criminal offence:

The Club and State shall follow the actions outlined under “WHEN A MEMBER IS CHARGED WITH A CRIMINAL OFFENCE”.

The State (and Branch) shall be advised as soon as a Club becomes aware of a member being convicted of a criminal offence.

The Club shall expel the member. (Note: A Life Member who is convicted shall also have his/her Life Membership revoked.)

Both the Club and State shall use their best endeavours to reconcile with the victim (and family) eg: formal acknowledgment of convictions and regret.

7.4 Breaches of these protocols shall be dealt with in the following manner:

- i. All members must be made aware that any breaches of the protocols will be dealt with severely.
- ii. Allegations of breaches eg harassment, public comment, etc, shall be investigated promptly by the Club Liaison Officer.

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- iii. The Club Liaison Officer shall provide a report on the outcome of the investigation to the Club Management Committee.
 - iv. Proven breaches shall result in suspension for no less than 12 months
 - v. Repeated breach shall result termination of Membership
 - vi. The penalised member may appeal to their respective State Centre

7.5 Communications

Only the appointed Club and State spokespersons shall make any public or media comments.

I Comments shall be confined to facts only eg

- a) SLSC co-operating fully with Police and other authorities
- b) SLSC does not condone alleged behaviour
- c) Cannot comment on specifics of allegations or the case

II Every opportunity should be taken to highlight SLSA's pro-active stance on matters relating to Member Protection eg

- a) Member Protection Policies
- b) Code of conduct
- c) Team Management requirements
- d) Screening of Youth Leaders

III The Club Management Committee shall ensure all relevant personnel (members, parents, "supports" etc) are briefed on the issue. Regular updates should be communicated

10 SLSA RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES MATRIX

Surf Life Saving Australia youth members, leaders and the organisation reserve certain rights as members and carry with them certain responsibilities. These are reflected in the Right and Responsibilities Matrix shown below.

	RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
YOUTH	<p>Youth Members have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. to be safe; ii. to be listened to; iii. to be respected; iv. to privacy; v. to take calculated risks in a protective environment; vi. to an inclusive environment; vii. to be referred to professional help if needed; viii. to be protected from abuse by other members or outside sources. 	<p>Youth members are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Showing respect to other youth members and SLSA leaders; ii. Keeping themselves safe; iii. Accurately reporting inappropriate behaviour or risky situations for youth members
SLSA LEADERS	<p>SLSA leaders have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. access to ongoing training and information on all aspects of leading/managing surf lifesaving activities for youths, particularly member protection; ii. support in the reporting of suspected abuse; iii. access to professional support services; iv. fair and equitable treatment by SLSA according to SLSA Regulations and Policies; v. be protected from abuse by youths, other adult members and parents. 	<p>SLSA leaders are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. fostering team work to ensure the safety of youth members in their care; ii. using appropriate team management behaviour; iii. responding to youth members' statements concerns about alleged abuse; iv. ensuring the rights and responsibilities of youth members are enforced; v. reporting suspected abuse to the appropriate SLSA authority; vi. not abusing members physically, emotionally or sexually; vii. maintaining confidentiality about sensitive information as designated by the appropriate SLSA authority.

<p>SLSA</p>	<p>SLSA has the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. expect all leaders to comply with its Code of Conduct; ii. expect all youth members to maintain standards of reasonable behaviour; iii. take appropriate action if members breach the Code of Conduct or an SLSA Policy. iv. expect all members to undertake appropriate training when advised to; v. that leaders will not abuse members physically, emotionally or sexually; vi. take appropriate action in the event of accusations; vii. acquire police checks relating to convictions in relevant areas. 	<p>SLSA is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. providing a safe environment for members; ii. providing ongoing training and information for SLSA leaders; iii. wide promotion this policy and procedures; iv. designating a contact in each state for liaison relating to member protection issues; v. facilitating open discussion on member protection issues; vi. insisting states provide support to members who report accusations of abuse; vii. providing appropriate referrals for members reporting accusations of abuse; viii. treating suspected abuse information confidentially; ix. taking appropriate action if members breach standards of reasonable behaviour or SLSA policies and Regulations.
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APPENDIX "A"

POSITION STATEMENT AND PROTOCOLS

..... SLSC acknowledges that concerning allegations and charges have been laid against a member which are subject to formal court proceedings.

The Club Management Committee wishes to ensure that the judicial processes are unhindered and that the operations of the Club, and the valuable safety (and other) services provided to the community are not compromised in any way.

Members and supporters of the Club acknowledge and will adhere to the following:

- The legal issue(s) are being dealt with by appropriate authorities.
- The legal processes must be allowed to run their course unhindered by all concerned.
- The Club, its officers and members will co-operate fully with appropriate authorities and acknowledge that any actions inhibiting "due process" may be interpreted as "Contempt of Court".
- Any actions, including adverse comments or any other dealings (eg harassment, abuse etc), against the members (or their families) concerned with the legal proceedings will not be tolerated.
- The Club Management will deal swiftly and sternly with any reports and/or actions, which adversely affect the interest or welfare of the members, families, witnesses, etc., involved in the legal proceedings.
- Members will refrain commenting on the issue to anyone except appropriate legal/law personnel.
- Members will remain focussed on carrying out Club duties and responsibilities.
- No discussions on the issue or the legal proceedings shall be permitted at Club Meetings.