

10.10 – CHILD PROTECTION

1. Scouts ACT is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for children and young people involved in Scouting. Scouts ACT recognises the United Nations Children’s Fund “Convention on the Rights of the Child”, and seek to ensure that young people and children are treated and protected accordingly. This policy is developed with the intention of establishing model rules for the management of child protection which comply with Scouts Australia operational best practice adopted in June 2014, described in paragraph 4.
2. There are four key principles underlying this policy:
 - a. The best interests of the child or young person must always be the primary consideration.
 - b. All children and young people must be treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
 - c. All children and young people have the right to protection from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.
 - d. All children and young people have the right to express their view on matters that affect them.
3. Scouts ACT will:
 - a. Act with zero tolerance of all offences involving any form of abuse or neglect of children and young people.
 - b. Ensure that all adults involved with Scouts ACT are carefully selected, and that the appointment and training of adult leaders is conducted with consideration given to child protection. Current provisions include ensuring that all applicants:
 - sign the Scouts Australia code of conduct.
 - sign a Prohibited Employment Declaration.
 - hold a current ACT Working With Vulnerable People card (WWVP card) and that this is renewed every three years.
 - are checked through referees with probing questions.
 - c. Ensure that all adults accept responsibility for the health, welfare and safety of children and young people involved, both physically and emotionally.
 - d. Respond promptly to any suspicions or allegations of inappropriate behaviour of uniformed and non-uniformed adults and youth members. Investigate any incidents with respect for the needs and rights of all parties. All such incidents are to be reported in accordance with the ACT Branch Policy 10.9 Reporting of Actual or Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth.
 - e. Restrict access to confidential information to those who need to know.
 - f. Provide information to parents as to who has responsibility for child protection, safety, health and welfare within the Scout Group and in the Branch.
 - g. Support parents to pursue external processes if they consider that their concerns are not being adequately addressed.
 - h. Ensure that strict limits apply to access to area where children and young people would ordinarily require privacy, such as toilets, showers, dressing rooms and tents.
 - i. Train leaders in appropriate techniques to ensure that they observe operational best practice described in paragraph 4.

Operational Best Practice – unaccompanied adult members working alone with young people in non-emergency situations must be avoided

4. Scouts Australia has adopted an operational best practice. Scouts ACT applies the following practice consistent with the Scouts Australia model:
 - a. At any section meeting/activity there must, where reasonably possible, be at least two Leaders or a Leader and another adult. If there are both male and female youth members present the expectation is that there will be both a male adult and female adult present at least one of whom will be a Leader holding a Certificate of Adult Leadership and the other will hold an ACT WWVP card.
 - b. At a regular section meeting, if a Leader fails to arrive and this results in another Leader being alone with the youth members it is expected that the Leader will try to arrange for a parent or other adult with WWVP card to be present for that meeting. If there are no such adults able to assist at short notice the meeting may proceed as the Leader has taken steps to try to bring the situation into compliance with the strategy.
 - c. If the section has only two adult Leaders and one Leader resigns the section may continue to operate with one Leader provided that:
 - The Group can show it is conscientiously seeking to obtain a replacement Leader.
 - Adult Helpers/Rover Youth Helpers /Adults with WWVP card are recruited to provide the second adult at the meetings/activity keeping in mind that the extra adults should be chosen to maintain adequate male and female supervision.
 - The Parent /Adult Helper does not need to participate in or assist with the activity: they merely need to be there. Rover Youth Helpers should assist with the activity.
 - d. When transporting youth members to a planned activity, efforts should be made to have two adults with WWVP card in each vehicle. If this is not possible the minimum requirement is there be two youth members with the driver (who should hold a WWVP card) and both should get out at the last drop point.

ACT Government requirement

5. In conjunction with the ACT Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011, all 18 years and over members of Scouts ACT are required to be registered with the ACT Office of Regulatory Services whether or not they are compelled to do so by this Act.
6. In addition, Scouts ACT requires that all 16 and 17 year old members must hold a WWVP card in order to:
 - a. participate in any overnight activity with members under the age of 16 years old, or
 - b. apply for appointment as a Youth Helper (or continue as a Youth Helper), participate in Canberra Gang Show or volunteer at Branch or National sectional camps.
7. Individual members are responsible for obtaining their initial registration and renewing this every 3 years. Additional information about the requirements and the online form, is available at: http://www.ors.act.gov.au/community/working_with_vulnerable_people

8. Members are required to provide the Branch Office with a photocopy of their card following initial registration and after each renewal.

Termination of Membership

9. If a Member of Scouts ACT has their membership suspended whilst they are under investigation by Scouting or the civil authorities, a Member may resign from Scouts ACT at any time irrespective of the stage of the inquiry into their actions. This may be recorded on the Appointments Committee list as a “resignation” until such time as the inquiry has concluded. However, the resignation will not prevent the inquiry from continuing, and does not prevent the individual from engaging with the inquiry. If the inquiry is completed and it is recommended that the individual should have been terminated (and this is subsequently approved by the BEC) the Appointments List will be amended to reflect that the person did not resign and were instead terminated.

AUTHORITY

10. This policy, or amended policy, was approved by the ACT Branch Executive Committee on 17 December 2012, 24 July 2014 and 20 May 2021.