



Australian Government

Defence

Youth Engagement

Defence Youth Manual



Artwork Title: Learning and Walking Together

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Tribes: Ngunnawal, Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Laidlaw'.

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Acknowledgements

Defence acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia where we gather, live, work and stand. We acknowledge all traditional custodians, their elders past and present, and we pay our respects to their continuing connection to their culture, community, land, sea, water and skies. We extend this respect to all First Nations young people and acknowledge the importance of First Nations young people having a strong connection to their culture and country.

Artwork Meaning: The artwork story symbolises the important role that elders, communities and people have in sharing knowledge, wisdom, culture and stories that support our young people and future generations in their journey of life. It shows the importance of relationships and connection between people as the foundations of learning, listening, sharing and growing. The concept of Learning and Walking Together values First Nations peoples, our culture and how it contributes to the cultural capability and work of Defence.

This concept recognises opportunities for First Nations peoples to come together with Defence and provide stepping-stones through Defence youth engagement initiatives for growth and future careers. At the heart of the artwork is our young people and the surrounding Defence peoples, mentors, communities, families and elders that support through Learning and Walking Together.

Background and review process

The Defence Youth Manual, previously known as the Youth Policy Manual and was first published in December 2013. A significant review of the manual was undertaken in response to the Final Report released by the [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child](#)

[Sexual Abuse](#) in December 2017. The review led to enhancements to the Defence Youth Safety Framework. Although there were no recommendations for Defence in the Royal Commission Final Report, Defence was asked to address nine systemic issues based on the Defence Case Study.

Reviews of the manual conducted during 2020-2021, focused on alignment with the [Commonwealth Child Safety Framework](#) and [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) as well as the development of the Defence Youth Protection Management System.

The most recent reform of the manual commenced in March 2023. The reform was in response to the Defence Transformation Strategy and the Defence Strategic Review. As a result, the Defence Administrative Policy project was launched to streamline and simplify Defence policy. The Youth Policy and Programs Directorate led the reform in consultation with key youth stakeholders. This reform delivered an enduring principles-based [Youth Engagement Policy](#), The Defence Youth Manual, and guides in support of the policy.

Key Enabling Documents. The following documents should be read in conjunction with the Defence Youth Manual:

- [Defence Youth Engagement Policy](#)
- [Youth Engagement Policy guides](#) (located on [YOUTH HQ](#))
- [Defence Youth Engagement Statement](#)

The Defence Youth Policy Framework documents align with [Engage](#) – a strategy to include young people in the decisions we make, the [Commonwealth Child Safety Framework](#) and the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).

AMENDMENT CERTIFICATE

Proposals for amendment of the Defence Youth Manual are to be sent to:

Youth Policy and Programs Directorate
Department of Defence
Email: defence.youth@defence.gov.au

Next review: 2027

Amendment Number	Amendment	Amendment type	Effective date

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How to use the Defence youth manual

1. Defence values young people and recognises they are fundamental to Defence's future workforce. Defence youth engagement provides opportunities that support, develop and promote accessible pathways to Service. The manual outlines processes to assist Defence youth engagement programs successfully deliver on our policy intent. The Defence youth manual is divided into parts that can be accessed according to need, knowledge and skills and is supported by guides. It is expected that the reader will apply the youth engagement principles and guidance to their own youth engagement context.
2. The Defence youth manual is part of a tiered Youth Engagement Policy Framework. The manual describes the Defence Youth Protection Management System (DYPMS) and broader safety and wellbeing considerations that enables Defence to meet the requirements of the [Commonwealth Child Safety Framework \(CCSF\)](#) and [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations \(NPCSO\)](#).

Abbreviations and glossary

3. In Defence, youth are defined as anyone under the age of 18, which encompasses child, children, young person, young people, adolescent, minor and any other equivalent term. Abbreviations and definitions used in the Defence youth manual are listed in the Abbreviations and Glossary document.

Introduction to Defence youth engagement

4. **Defence has a duty of care to all youth with whom it engages.** For this reason, Defence's engagement with youth is to be conducted in an environment that ensures the health, protection and wellbeing of youth and in a manner that aims to deliver a positive experience.
5. The Australian Government expects that Defence's engagement with youth is of the highest standard. Effective youth engagement enhances and protects Defence's capability and reputation. Moreover, it minimises the likelihood of incidents, is consistent with the personal responsibilities of Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Defence Australian Public Service (APS) administrative decision-makers under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act (PGPA) 2013, enabling appropriate decisions to be made with due diligence and care.
6. The Defence Youth Engagement Policy gives effect to the Defence youth manual and its guides as part of the Defence Youth Engagement Policy Framework. The framework documents align with the Australian Government Youth Engagement Strategy - [Engage](#)). The Defence youth manual describes the approved Defence youth engagement processes that support Defence personnel to make informed risk based decisions when planning and delivering youth engagement activities.
7. Youth engagement requires a youth safe culture in our workplace with clear accountability and an understanding of the behavioural nature of youth.

Purpose

8. Defence's engagement with youth encompasses a wide spectrum and includes dedicated youth development programs, Defence community events, ADF deployments and the employment of youth within Defence's workforce.

9. The Defence youth manual outlines the One Defence approach to intentional youth engagement and the Defence Youth Safety Framework (DYSF) and provides a high-level description of the processes and how they fit together in a single unified model. Collaboration is expected across Defence services and groups, through the sharing of information, lessons learned in developing and delivering activities and programs.

10. The guidance provided in the Defence youth manual and its guides support the youth engagement policy principles and the delivery of expected policy outcomes, including that Defence youth activities are delivered in a coordinated and well-governed manner.

11. There is an expectation that professional judgement is used when applying the principles and guidance.

Youth engagement policy principles

12. Defence is committed to five outcome-focused principles, developed to raise appropriate awareness of Defence's youth engagement requirements and responsibilities. These principles inform development of subordinate documents, including plans, procedures and arrangements at all levels of the organisation.

13. This manual and its guides support Defence to achieve these principles. Those developing, planning or delivering intentional youth engagement activities should read the [Defence Youth Engagement Policy](#), and adopt procedures and processes as appropriate to their situation.

14. The five principles that form the basis of Defence youth engagement policy and the focus of the supporting guidance contained in the Defence youth manual are:

PRINCIPLE 1 – SAFETY AND WELLBEING

PRINCIPLE 2 – ONE DEFENCE

PRINCIPLE 3 - INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

PRINCIPLE 4 – HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENT

PRINCIPLE 5 - REWARDING, ENRICHING AND EMPOWERING

The Defence youth environment

15. **Defence youth environment.** As defined by the Defence's Youth Engagement Statement, the Defence youth environment consists of three categories:

- a. **Intentional.** Planned engagement to achieve specified outcomes - e.g. youth programs (including programs open to under 18 and over 18 years of age), recruiting, ADF families.
 - b. **Unintentional.** Unintentional or not the primary purpose of a Defence action - e.g. overseas deployments, domestic operations.
 - c. **Workplace.** Interacting with employees under the age of 18 in the APS or ADF.
16. **All youth are owed a duty of care.** Defence recognises the distinction between a youth program participant and an employee under the age of 18:
- a. The *primary reference for ADF employees under 18 years of age is Military Personnel Policy Manual, Part 7 Chapter 2 - [Management and Administration of Defence Members Under 18 Years of Age](#).*
17. The Defence youth manual is provided to guide decision making in regards to youth participants in a Defence youth program or youth engagement activity under **Intentional** engagement.
18. **Unintentional** youth engagement, such as operations and deployments, should also consider the guidance in the Defence youth manual in determining appropriate risk management strategies.

Defence youth safety

19. The [Defence WHS Management System \(WHSMS\)](#) defines enterprise-level safety management accountabilities, policy and guidance that is applicable to whole-of-Defence. Where applicable, group heads and service chiefs must also ensure compliance with additional safety domain policy defined by appointed safety domain owners.
20. The [Defence Work Health and Safety Accountability Framework](#) seeks to provide comprehensive and systemic guidance for the management of WHS risks arising from Defence activities.

The Defence youth safety framework

21. The [DYSF](#) articulates the principles that guide the Department of Defence to be a youth safe organisation. It focuses on preventing child abuse, managing related risks and responding to incidents and complaints and supports the Defence People System, workforce management component.
22. The DYSF is consistent with the whole of Government approach and Australia's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.
23. The DYSF is broader than a pure safety framework. It includes components designed to ensure that young people are safe, protected and respected, and that Defence personnel have the skills, confidence and knowledge to safeguard youth

within Defence. It encompasses all aspects of Defence's engagement with youth to ensure:

- a. **Physical safety.** Utilising existing service/group safety management systems and Defence safety domains to deliver a safe physical environment for youth.
- b. **Youth protection.** A work health and safety domain that relates to protecting youth from child abuse and includes managing risk, providing support and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.
- c. **Youth wellbeing.** Youth wellbeing is the support and education available to build mental, emotional and physical resilience and to provide youth with confidence and a sense of pride and purpose. Defence's duty of care for youth extends to addressing wellbeing issues specific to youth, which include youth mental health first aid, chaplaincy and psychology support.

24. The DYSF includes existing group and service safety management systems and Defence's safety domains (see [Figure 1](#)). The [Defence Safety Manual \(SafetyMan\)](#) defines enterprise-level safety management accountabilities, policy and guidance that is applicable to whole-of-Defence. Where applicable, group head and service chiefs must also ensure compliance with additional safety domain policy defined by appointed safety domain owners.

25. To ensure youth protection accountabilities and requirements are accepted and effectively implemented across Defence, youth protection is managed within the Defence WHSMS framework as a specialist safety domain owned by Chief of Personnel (CPERS). Consistent with this approach, the DYSF defines additional youth protection specific requirements that complement requirements defined in the Defence WHSMS and other relevant Defence policies.

26. The implementation of the DYSF as illustrated in [Figure 2](#) delivers on the following tenants:

- a. **Legislative foundation.** Includes the CCSF, NPCSO, the *WHS Act 2011* and relevant state and territory legislation.
- b. **Governance systems and processes.** Outlines how the DYSF is implemented, monitored and assessed for its impact on youth protection outcomes over time.
- c. **Assurance.** Effective management of youth protection performance assures that Defence provides a youth safe environment through effective implementation and continuous improvement of the DYSF.
- d. **Procedures.** The adoption of existing, established Defence procedures that ensure consistency of approach and the timely capture of accurate and consistent youth safety data. The DYPMS has adopted a safety system methodology and utilises the WHS SENTINEL IT system as the primary reporting and management tool. This includes Youth Protection Risk Management (YPRM) that details the approach, roles and responsibilities for managing risks associated with youth protection.

- e. **Sub-systems.** Includes service WHS systems, Defence's safety domains and elements of Defence Personnel administration systems to deliver a youth safe environment that ensures the health, protection and wellbeing of youth.

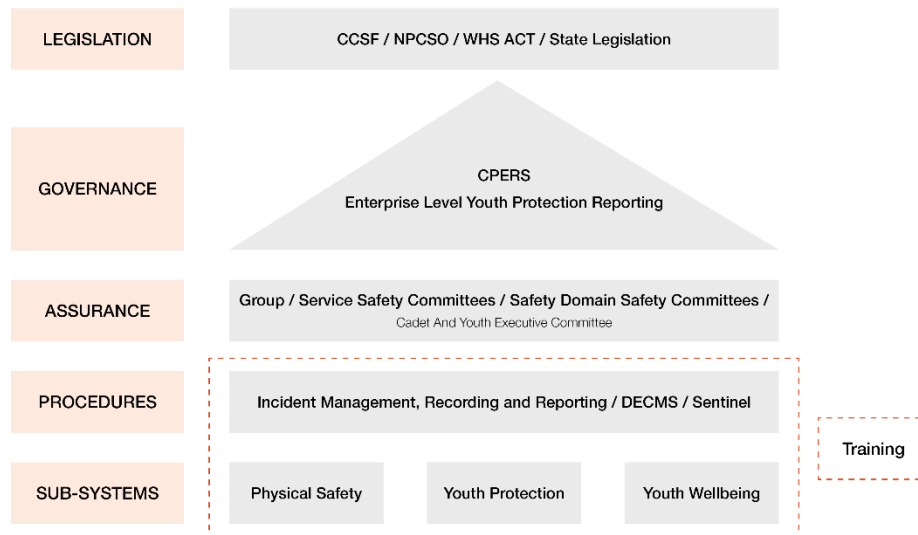


Figure 2: Implementation of the Defence Youth Safety Framework

Safeguarding people at higher risk of harm

27. The Defence youth manual supports enterprise wide principles for [Safeguarding People at Higher Risk of Harm](#) to enable a centralised and uniform approach for Defence engagement with vulnerable people, in order to safeguard their human rights and protect them when engaging with Defence personnel and staff, and to minimise associated risks.

28. The Defence youth manual also supports Defence initiatives such as [Respect@work](#) which creates safe, inclusive and respectful workplaces, as well as the [Defence Culture Blueprint](#) using our role in connection to community through youth engagement and our commitment to diversity and inclusion in all practices.

Diversity and inclusion

29. Diversity in Defence reflects the diversity and variety of personal experience that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. It can include characteristics such as cultural background and ethnicity, age, gender, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, language and education.

30. Defence recognises and understands that true inclusiveness does not mean treating everyone the same way, an inclusive culture means fostering a work environment where individual differences are valued. The unique knowledge and experience of our people are utilised to enhance our capability.

31. Defence aligns with the [NPCSO](#) by ensuring:

- a. Youth are supported and respected by Defence personnel and peers regardless of diversity differences;
 - b. Defence personnel undertake training to recognise and respond effectively to children and young people with diverse needs; and
 - c. First Nations communities and cultures are consistently recognised across all Defence locations in partnership with, and with permission of, local First Nations communities.
32. Defence diversity and inclusion priorities reflect those groups in Defence requiring priority attention, including:
- a. women
 - b. Indigenous Australians
 - c. people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds
 - d. people with disability
 - e. people with religious beliefs
 - f. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) persons
 - g. mature age and an intergenerational workforce
 - h. youth.
33. Further information and resources are available from [Defence Diversity](#).

Practices and measures

34. Defence is committed to providing an inclusive environment that encourages the participation of youth and contributes to the development of productive and confident young Australians. Defence demonstrates this commitment by:
- a. promoting diversity and inclusion when conducting activities and programs for youth
 - b. ensuring youth are supported and respected by Defence personnel and peers regardless of diversity differences.
35. To maximise the contribution of youth, it is essential that Defence captures and leverages the skills that diverse youth can bring to the organisation. Defence must consider the management of youth employment and build relationships in an inter-generational Defence environment across the range of Defence youth contexts.

The Defence youth safety commitment statement

36. To demonstrate its commitment to youth safety, Defence has developed a youth safety commitment statement.

37. The [Defence Annual Child Safety Statement of Compliance with the Commonwealth Child Safety Framework](#) articulates Defence's intent to promote the wellbeing of youth and protect young people from abuse by focusing on preventing, identifying and treating youth safety risks. In the context of Defence activities, Defence will:

- a. manage youth safety risks appropriate to the Defence context
- b. require all ADF members, APS employees, volunteers (including members of the ADF Cadets) and contractors, to demonstrate their commitment to youth by agreeing to undertake their duties in accordance with the appropriate Defence youth safety code of conduct
- c. complete appropriate suitability screening for all adults working with youth in the Defence environment
- d. require all ADF members, APS employees, volunteers (including members of the ADF Cadets) and contractors to complete appropriate youth safety education and training
- e. require all ADF members, APS employees, volunteers (including members of the ADF Cadets) and contractors to engage proactively with parents, guardians, specified next of kin and other agencies involved in the protection of young people
- f. ensure there is a mechanism for youth, the community, Defence youth program volunteers and participants and Defence personnel to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement
- g. develop and implement a clear process for reporting and responding to disclosures, suspicions and allegations of abuse or neglect in accordance with state and territory legislation
- h. maintain compliance with Australian Government policy and the requirements of the CCSF
- i. adopt and apply the NPCSO
- j. develop and implement processes to identify and address breaches of the DYSF
- k. undertake regular reviews of the DYSF to ensure it remains current and reflects emerging requirements and leading practices.

A One Defence focus for youth engagement through integrated and harmonised initiatives

38. Youth engagement forms an important component of Defence's connection and engagement with communities, educational institutions and our future workforce. Our programs contribute towards preparing youth for future challenges, whilst securing and strengthening our talent pipeline through enabling young people to gain exposure to the careers available within Defence.

39. The Defence Youth Engagement Statement clearly articulates the strategic importance of youth engagement activities, and outlines the five principles of youth engagement, forming the basis of the Youth Engagement Policy.
40. The One Defence approach to youth engagement is achieved through:
- a. youth engagement activities that are conducted in accordance with the Youth Engagement Policy and Youth Engagement Statement
 - b. collaboration across groups, services, community and industry, including for example, the creation of a community of practice to share information, lessons learned, or in developing and delivering activities and programs aligned with the One Defence approach.

Section 1: Defence youth protection accountability

41. Defence has a duty of care to ensure the health, protection and wellbeing of youth. Hazards and risks to the health, protection and wellbeing of youth are to be eliminated or minimised so far as reasonably practicable. This includes hazards and risks associated with unacceptable behaviour of adults, other youth or the youth themselves.
42. The youth protection requirements of the CCSF align closely with the elements of a safety management system. Hence, as previously stated, youth protection is managed as a specialist safety domain within the Defence WHSMS.
43. The intent of the following guidance is to ensure that the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for youth protection management and resources are defined, communicated and accepted. Defence youth protection roles, responsibilities and accountabilities policy is consistent with the NPCSO.
44. Other Defence publications which may be relevant to this policy include, but are not limited to:
- a. [Defence Instruction](#), which defines the generic roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of Defence accountable officers and policy owners.
 - b. [Defence WHS Policy](#), which defines the organisational-level WHS roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of safety domain owners, group heads and service chiefs, commanders, managers, supervisors and workers.

Chapter 1. Youth protection roles, responsibilities and accountabilities

45. **Chief of Personnel.** CPERS is appointed the accountable officer and is the safety domain owner for youth protection. CPERS is accountable to the Secretary and Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) for:
- a. providing enterprise-level youth protection policy, guidance and tools for implementation within group/service WHSMS
 - b. ensuring, in conjunction with group heads and service chiefs, that adequate

resources are provided for effective youth protection management

- c. providing youth protection governance and assurance so that Defence meets its youth protection obligations.

46. **Head Reserve and Cadet Support Division (HRCSD).** HRCSD is the appointed Policy Owner for youth protection. HRCSD is responsible to CPERS for:

- a. developing, maintaining and issuing enterprise-level youth protection policy, guidance and tools that are compliant with the CCSF
- b. monitoring and reporting on the implementation of youth protection policy by the groups/services.

47. **Group Heads and Service Chiefs.** Group heads and service chiefs are accountable to the Secretary and CDF for:

- a. extending application of the group/service WHSMS where practicable to include youth protection management
- b. contextualised implementation of youth protection policy and guidance defined in the Defence youth manual within the group/service WHSMS where practicable
- c. ensuring, in conjunction with CPERS, that adequate resources are provided for effective youth protection management.

48. **Commanders, managers and supervisors.** Where youth are employed or engaged by or on behalf of a group or service, commanders, managers and supervisors must:

- a. extend the scope of their [WHS roles, responsibilities and accountabilities](#) to include youth protection
- b. effectively manage youth protection in accordance with policy and guidance defined in group/service youth protection orders, instructions and publications (OIP) and the Defence youth manual as applicable
- c. ensure that adult workers are aware of their WHS/youth protection responsibilities and comply with youth protection OIP
- d. ensure that adult workers working with youth¹ are aware of their WHS/youth protection responsibilities, and consider their age, maturity, understanding, behaviour and ability to make good decisions when conducting WHS/youth protection risk assessments and implementing risk controls.

¹ In the Defence context, Defence members and ADF Cadets under the age of 18 are considered 'workers' under the WHS ACT.

Chapter 2: Youth protection privacy, documentation, and record management

49. Having clearly documented youth protection procedures enables Defence to communicate expectations and achieve consistent application of youth safe practices across Defence. It also enables Defence to examine, through continuous review and improvement processes, adherence to youth health, protection and wellbeing principles and practices.

50. Defence also has a legal obligation to manage personal information in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and specifically in relation to youth, Article 16 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

51. This section defines requirements for effective management of youth protection documentation and records, including privacy requirements.

52. The intent of this guidance is to ensure that:

- a. youth protection documentation, processes, practices, procedures and training packages are documented, fit for purpose and continuously improved
- b. youth protection documentation and records are managed and protected in accordance with Defence records management and privacy policy
- c. Defence youth protection documentation, records and privacy policy is consistent with the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).

53. Other Defence publications which may be relevant to this guidance include, but are not limited to:

- a. [Defence Records Management Policy](#) (RMP), which prescribes records management requirements applicable to the whole of Defence
- b. [Defence Privacy Policy](#), which provides guidance on how Defence collects, stores, uses, discloses personal information and manages breaches and complaints
- c. [Defence Instruction Military Joint Enabling Provision 1](#), *Disclosure of Certain Personal Information in Relation to Youth Protection Incidents*, which provides the authority and circumstances in which it may be appropriate for Defence personnel to disclose personal information to protect the health, protection and wellbeing of youth.

Privacy and disclosure of personal information

54. Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that personal information and youth protection records containing personal information is managed in accordance with [Defence Privacy Policy](#).

55. **Privacy statement.** The following privacy statement must be used on all documentation, information technology systems and on any other occasion where Defence collects information relating to youth and Defence youth programs:

Defence collects your personal information for the purpose of administering, evaluating and reporting on Defence Youth Programs. The personal information you provide is subject to the Privacy Act 1988 and is handled in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and the Defence Privacy Policy.

The Defence Privacy Policy explains how Defence (including the Australian Defence Force Cadets) collects, stores, uses and discloses personal information, and is available at www.defence.gov.au/about/governance/privacy-policy. This policy is supplemented by privacy provisions contained in the Defence Youth Manual available at www.defenceyouth.gov.au.

The information you provide to Defence and any other information Defence collects about you may be used and/or disclosed by Defence to parents, responsible third parties or any law enforcement body, child protection agency or any other organisation where considered necessary to safeguard young people.

Personal information

56. Use of personal information. Personal information must not, without the consent of the person to whom the information relates, be used for any other purpose than that for which it was collected or disclosed to those for whom it was not collected, except where permitted in the Privacy Act and as follows.

57. Personnel authorised to disclose personal information. Only Defence personnel are permitted to disclose or authorise disclosure of personal information held by Defence about a youth or any other person. The youth or any other person to whom the personal information relates must be advised of any decision to disclose the information prior to the disclosure occurring to allow them the opportunity to self-disclose or to request a review of the decision.

58. Disclosure of personal information. Defence personnel may disclose or authorise disclosure of personal information held by Defence about a youth or any other person to the youth's parents/guardians/specified next of kin or a responsible third party if:

- a. the youth has been involved in a youth protection event
- b. they are reasonably satisfied in the circumstances that it is necessary and appropriate for the personal information to be disclosed to protect the health, protection and wellbeing of the youth, having considered:
 - i. the youth's age and any wishes expressed by the youth
 - ii. the nature of the personal information and its relevance to the youth's health, protection and wellbeing
 - iii. the nature and seriousness of the youth protection event/incident
 - iv. whether or not the youth or other person to whom the personal

information relates is willing and able to self-disclose the information.

59. Defence personnel are authorised to disclose personal information held by Defence about any young person if:

- a. there is a Commonwealth, state or territory legislative requirement to report certain matters to a Government oversight agency or enforcement body (the reporting requirement), or
- b. the disclosure of certain information is required by a court or tribunal order, and all of the conditions or criteria required by subparagraph (a) or (b) are satisfied.

60. **Review of decision to disclose personal information.** Following a decision to recommend disclosure of personal information of a youth, a review of the decision can be requested and natural justice will apply. A Defence Member other than the decision member conducts the review. Decision makers are responsible for making the youth aware of the review processes available to them when advising of a decision to disclose personal information.

61. Individuals can request access to, or correction of their personal information in accordance with the [Defence Privacy Policy](#). Copies of the policy can be obtained from the Defence Privacy webpage or by emailing defence.privacy@defence.gov.au

Sensitive information

62. **Non-disclosure of sensitive information.** Sensitive information such as health information is a subset of personal information that attracts additional conditions when collecting, using and disclosing. Defence personnel are not authorised to, and **must not** disclose or authorise disclosure of sensitive information to parents/guardians/specified next of kin, responsible third parties or government oversight bodies.

Complaints and breaches

63. **Complaints and breaches.** Advice about how to make a complaint or raise a potential breach of privacy can be obtained from the [Defence Privacy Policy](#).

Youth protection documentation

64. **Documentation requirements.** Youth protection documentation must be:

- a. in a language and format appropriate to the target audience;
- b. reviewed and/or updated as appropriate:
 - i. when relevant Commonwealth, state, territory or Defence legislation, policy and/or guidance changes
 - ii. when DYPMS and/or guidance changes
 - iii. when deficiencies are identified or suggestions for improvement are received

- iv. at least every three years
- c. available and accessible to youth, the community, Defence youth program volunteers and participants and Defence personnel as appropriate.

Records management

65. The [Defence Records Management Policy](#) (DRMP) outlines the requirements with which Defence must comply to fulfil its lawful obligations under the *Archives Act 1983*. The RMP describes the agreed approach for achieving compliance with legislation and whole of government policy.
66. DRMP applies to all records created as part of Defence decision-making or business activities. It establishes a clear, decisive and up to date records management policy for Defence personnel.
67. **Compliance.** All Defence personnel (ADF, APS and contracted personnel) must comply with DRMP. External service providers must comply with RMP where compliance is a condition of their engagement. Members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) Cadets, including Australian Navy Cadets, Australian Army Cadets and Australian Air Force Cadets, must also comply. Failure to comply may result in the member being subject to criminal penalties as outlined under the *Archives Act 1983*.
68. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse recommended that all institutions that engage in child-related work should implement the following five high-level principles for records and recordkeeping, to a level that responds to the risk of child sexual abuse occurring within the institution:
- a. creating and keeping full and accurate records relevant to child safety and wellbeing, including child sexual abuse, that are in the best interests of children and should be an integral part of institutional leadership, governance and culture
 - b. full and accurate records should be created about all incidents, responses and decisions affecting child safety and wellbeing, including child sexual abuse
 - c. records relevant to child safety and wellbeing, including child sexual abuse, should be maintained appropriately
 - d. records relevant to child safety and wellbeing, including those involving child sexual abuse, should only be disposed of in accordance with law or policy
 - e. individuals' existing rights to access, amend or annotate records about themselves should be recognised.
69. Defence must ensure that complete and accurate records of all Defence Youth Program activities and decisions are created, managed, retained or disposed of appropriately and in accordance with relevant legislation.

Section 2: Defence youth safe culture

Chapter 1: Youth safe culture

70. Evolution of a youth safe culture requires leadership and commitment from personnel at all levels to utilise the foundations and direction contained within the [Defence Culture Strategy](#), to shape a youth safe culture that enhances our interactions with youth and supports a diverse and inclusive workforce.

71. A youth safe culture enables Defence personnel to have the skills, confidence and knowledge to safeguard youth within Defence, ensures youth wellbeing and physical safety and addresses unacceptable behaviour to ensure youth are protected and respected.

72. A youth safe culture is one where youth safe behaviours and practices are understood, displayed and fully integrated by all personnel into every youth related interaction, activity and program. Achievement of a generative youth safe culture requires leadership and commitment from commanders, managers and supervisors at all levels to develop trust, open and honest communication, and the sub-cultures depicted in Figure 3 below.

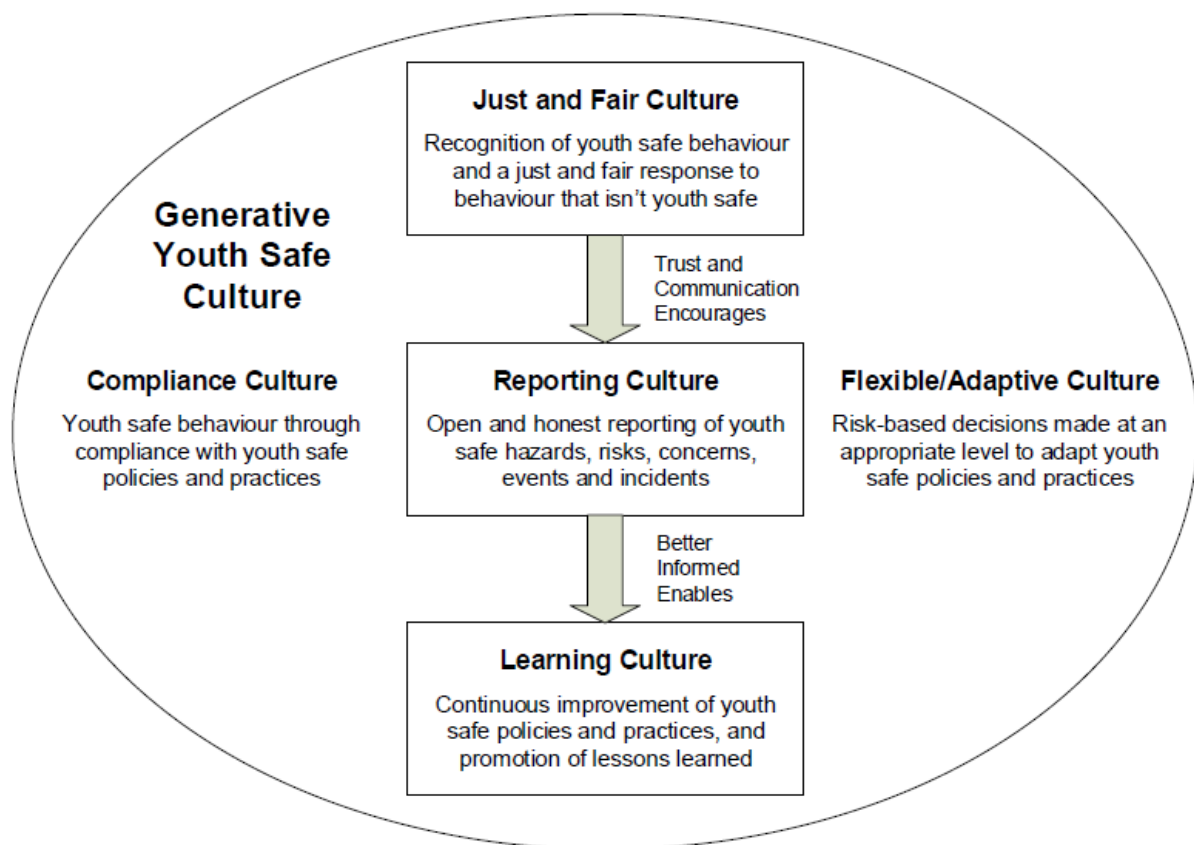


Figure 3: Sub-cultures of a youth safe culture

73. In order to achieve this, commanders, managers and supervisors at all levels should display the leadership and commitment to promote and develop a youth safe culture by applying the following:

- a. **Youth safe training compliance.** Youth and all adult personnel who engage with youth should be:

- i. provided the training, resources, support and empowerment to display youth safe behaviours and comply with youth safe policies and practices (for training information see [Guide 3: Defence Youth Protection Training Guide](#))
 - ii. encouraged and supported to proactively identify and provide feedback on ineffective or impractical youth safe policies and practices.
- b. **Flexible and adaptive decision-making.** Personnel who engage with youth should be encouraged and empowered to make risk-based decisions to adapt youth safe practices within the scope of their responsibility and authority.
 - c. **Displaying just and fair behaviours.** Youth and all adult personnel who engage with youth should be informed of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Procedural fairness should be afforded to anyone who breaches the code of conduct. Recognition for youth safe behaviour or penalty for misconduct, should be timely and consistent.
 - d. **Reporting.** Personnel should feel comfortable and should be encouraged to openly and honestly report youth safety concerns, hazards, risks, events and incidents at the lowest level through open reporting mechanisms (for example National DWEP manager or Cadet leader). Confidential reporting via the Youth Safe Confidential Complaint and Event Report/Notification (ConCERN) should however also be promoted and encouraged.
 - e. **Learning.** Youth safe performance should be periodically analysed to identify adverse trends, new hazards, deficient risk controls and/or systemic issues. Lessons learned should be captured in training and communicated to reinforce youth safe behaviours.

Chapter 2: Youth safe code of conduct

74. Defence is committed to ensuring the health, protection and wellbeing of all youth who engage with Defence. Clear definition, acceptance and adherence to the expected standard of conduct/behaviour by adults and youth is required to ensure a youth safe environment, where youth are protected from harm and which delivers a positive experience. All personnel who work with youth on behalf of Defence, must understand, sign and adhere to a code of conduct.

75. Defence youth safe code of conduct procedures are consistent with the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#): It defines ethical, acceptable and unacceptable youth safe behaviours and provides a mechanism to:

- a. acknowledge the responsibility and record the commitment of a person to adhere to the code of conduct
- b. hold a person to account if they breach the code of conduct.

Defence youth safe code of conduct procedures

76. **Youth-related work positions.** Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that adult personnel posted to or engaged by Defence in a youth-related work position (see Section 5, Chapter 1) read and sign the [Defence Youth Safe Code of Conduct \(Adult\)](#) before undertaking any youth-related work on

behalf of Defence. The code of conduct should be tailored to meet the Defence context in which youth are engaged and/or if appropriate, incorporated into a broader code of conduct associated with the role/position.

77. Defence youth programs. Commanders, managers and supervisors of Defence youth programs must ensure youth who participate in a Defence youth program read, adhere to and where practical sign the [Defence Youth Safe Code of Conduct \(Youth\)](#) prior to participating in the program. The code of conduct can be tailored to meet the Defence context in which youth are engaged and/or if appropriate, incorporated into a broader code of conduct associated with the program.

78. Education and training establishments. Commanders, managers and supervisors of education and training establishments must incorporate the codes of conduct into instructor and/or recruit/trainee code of conduct as appropriate.

79. Code of conduct management. Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that:

- a. a signed copy of the code of conduct is stored in Objective or CadetNet as appropriate
- b. any breach of the code of conduct is managed in accordance with Section 3, Chapter 3.

Defence youth protection training

80. HRCSD must ensure that the behaviours defined by the Defence youth safe codes of conduct are incorporated into Defence youth protection training packages.

81. Unacceptable behaviours. Unacceptable behaviour in the youth protection context is behaviour that, having regard to all of the circumstances, would be considered unlawful, offensive, belittling, abusive, or threatening to youth and/or averse to their morale, health, safety and wellbeing, or otherwise not in the interests of Defence (refer to [Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#)).

Guides:

[Guide 2: Youth Safe Code of Conduct](#)

[Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#)

Section 3: Defence youth protection risk management

Chapter 1: Defence youth protection risk management

82. Defence is committed to ensuring the health, protection and wellbeing of all youth who engage with Defence. Risk management plays an important role in creating a youth safe culture and an environment where people identify, consider and address risks to youth before and as they arise.

83. The intent of this guidance is to ensure that all youth protection hazards and risks are identified and considered in line with the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations \(NPCSO\)](#) and [Defence Safety Risk Management Policy](#).

Proactive youth protection risk management

84. The purpose of proactive youth protection risk management is to identify potential risks to youth health, protection and wellbeing and to implement action to minimise those risks (refer to [Guide 7: Youth Protection Risk Management](#)). In assessing risks to youth, consideration must also be given to the developmental stage(s) and behavioural nature of youth.

85. **Enterprise-level risk management.** HRCSD must ensure that an enterprise-level youth protection risk assessment is undertaken and reviewed annually to assess the minimum reasonably practicable youth protection risk controls (including processes) as outlined in [Figure 4](#).

86. **Context-specific risk management.** Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that all youth protection risks, specific to the context in which youth are engaged, are identified and managed in accordance with service/group WHSMS risk management policy, applying the following processes:

- a. **Annual risk assessment.** A youth protection risk assessment must be undertaken and reviewed annually to assess all context-specific youth protection risks
- b. **Task/Activity risk assessment.** Risks to youth protection must be considered and effectively managed as part of any deliberate and/or immediate risk assessment for a task/activity
- c. **Risk control implementation and maintenance.** All reasonably practicable youth protection risk controls must be documented in orders, instructions and publications (OIP) as appropriate, implemented and effectively maintained (see Section 1, Chapter 2)
- d. **Risk control awareness.** All personnel, including youth, must be made aware of youth protection risk controls
- e. **Risk registers.** All youth protection hazards, risks and issues should be included in the relevant WHS hazard, risk or issues register.

87. **Risk management support.** For support relating to Defence youth protection risk management guidance, commanders, managers and supervisors should contact the Defence Youth Protection mailbox at youth.protection@defence.gov.au

Privacy

88. All information collected or used in relation to youth protection risk management policy must be managed in accordance with the privacy requirements outlined in Section 1, Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Suitability screening and Working with Children and Vulnerable People Checks

89. Defence is committed to providing a youth safe environment. Suitability assessment and Working with Children and Vulnerable People Checks (WWCVPC) for personnel required to work specifically with youth on behalf of Defence are primary risk controls to prevent harm to youth.

90. The intent is to ensure that personnel engaging with youth on their behalf are appropriately assessed by Defence and when required, obtain and maintain jurisdictional WWCVPC Clearance(s) in accordance with relevant [state or territory legislative requirements](#).

91. Defence working with children checks policy is consistent with the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) and the [National Standards for Working with Children Checks](#). [Guide 4: Suitability Screening for Working with Youth](#), provides further information on youth protection, suitability screening and working with youth.

92. **Youth-related work position.** A youth-related work position is any ADF, APS, contractor or volunteer position where the incumbent is required to, on behalf of Defence:

- a. undertake youth-related work as the primary duty/responsibility of the position;²
OR
- b. provide overnight care and supervision of youth participating in a Defence Youth Program or Defence Force Recruiting activity.
- c. **Youth-related work.** Youth-related work is supervised or unsupervised work, whether paid or unpaid, that:
 - i. involves face-to-face or physical interaction, or oral or written communication via any medium, with one or more youth on behalf of Defence; **AND**
 - ii. relates to religious activities and services, or activities and services that are provided specifically (only or mainly) for youth³.

Identification and annotation of youth-related work positions

93. **ADF and APS youth-related work positions.** Group heads and service chiefs must ensure all ADF and APS youth-related work positions within and/or related to their group or Service are identified and annotated in PMKeyS.

94. To avoid doubt and assist in identification of youth-related work positions, ADF and APS personnel **are not** in a youth-related work position if they are:

- a. commanders, managers, supervisors, instructors or the colleagues of, or

² A position is not a youth-related work position if any likely interaction/work with youth is incidental (secondary) to the primary duty/responsibility of the position and can generally be observed or monitored by others.

³ The majority of youth-related work is undertaken in Defence Youth Program and Defence Force Recruiting contexts.

service providers⁴ to, Defence personnel who are youth in a Defence workplace where youth-related work is not the primary duty, function or service provided by the unit/organisation/position

- b. required to support a Defence youth program activity, unless they are required to provide care and supervision of youth participating in an overnight activity⁵
- c. peers of Defence personnel who are youth undertaking education and training.

95. **Contractor and volunteer youth-related work positions.** Group heads and service chiefs must ensure that all contractor and volunteer youth-related work positions within and/or related to their group or service are identified and annotated in CadetNet⁶ or contract documentation as applicable.

96. To avoid doubt and assist in identification of youth-related work positions, contractors and volunteers:

- a. **are** in a youth-related work position if they are a Cadet Adult Volunteer, including Officers of Cadets and Instructors of Cadets, and Defence Approved Helpers
- b. **are not** in a youth-related work position if they are instructors of, or service providers⁷ to, Defence personnel who are youth in a Defence workplace where youth-related work is not the primary duty, function or service provided by the unit/organisation/position
- c. **are not** in a youth-related work position if they are peers of youth participating in Defence Youth Programs.

Selection of personnel for youth-related work positions

97. Adults working with youth are in a unique position to role model and promote Defence's values and behaviours by being respectful and acting with integrity. Role modelling is critical to creating a safe environment and providing a positive experience for youth, as well as protecting Defence's reputation. Careful consideration to the selection of personnel required to work or engage with youth is required.

98. Career management agencies, human resource managers, contract managers and youth program commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that *only personnel who are assessed as suitable* to undertake youth-related work are selected and posted, appointed or contracted to youth-related work positions (see [Guide 4: Suitability Screening for Working with Youth](#)).

99. Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that personnel who are not in a youth-related work position but are required to manage, supervise,

⁴ Including health, psychology, administration, logistics, accommodation and transportation services that are not specifically (only or mainly) provided for youth, but excludes chaplaincy services.

⁵ Commanders, managers and supervisors who support a discrete Defence Youth Program activity will be briefed well in advance in relation to youth protection requirements, including the need for WWCC if applicable, by the program/activity sponsor.

⁶ Annotation can be via assignment of a Cadet Organisation role within CadetNet.

⁷ Including health, psychology, administration, logistics, accommodation and transportation services that are not specifically (only or mainly) provided for youth, but excludes chaplaincy services.

instruct, or provide services to youth, are assessed as suitable (see [Guide 4: Suitability Screening for Working with Youth](#)).

100. **Contractors.** Where it is intended and/or applicable to contract youth-related work, contract managers must ensure that:

- a. appropriate [Commonwealth Child Safety Clauses](#) are included in the tender documentation and contract
- b. the selected contractor complies with the child safety clauses.

101. **Non-Australian based contractors and locally employed civilians.**

Commanders, managers and supervisors who intend to use non-Australian-based contractors or locally employed civilians overseas or in external Commonwealth territories in youth-related work positions should engage with the appropriate authority to determine their suitability to undertake youth-related work before they are contracted/engaged by Defence (see Section 3, Chapter 1). An appropriate authority may include but not be limited to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, local government, police, child protection and/or other local authorities.

Working with Children and Vulnerable People Checks

102. **Non Youth-related work positions.** Personnel who are not in a youth-related work position are not required to obtain a WWCVPC Clearance(s).

103. **ADF and APS youth-related work positions.** Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that ADF and APS personnel in youth-related work positions:

- a. obtain and maintain WWCVPC clearance(s) for the states and/or territories relevant to their youth-related work in accordance with each relevant jurisdiction's requirements while they remain in a youth-related work position
- b. are aware of their obligation to advise their commanders, managers and supervisors of any event or issue that impacts or could impact their WWCVPC clearance(s)
- c. sign a code of conduct and complete relevant youth protection training (see [Guide 2: Youth Safe Code of Conduct](#) and [Guide 3: Defence Youth Protection Training Guide](#)).

104. Commanders, managers and supervisors may allow ADF and APS personnel in youth-related work positions to undertake youth-related work pending the issue of a WWCVPC clearance providing:

- a. it is verified a WWCVPC application has been submitted to the relevant state and/or territory agency
- b. the WWCVPC application is not withdrawn
- c. the work does not involve providing overnight care and supervision of youth participating in a Defence youth program or Defence force recruiting activity.

105. **Contractor and volunteer youth-related work positions.** Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that contractor or volunteer incumbents or potential incumbents of youth-related work positions:

- a. obtain WWCVPC clearance(s) for the states and/or territories relevant to their youth-related work in accordance with each relevant jurisdiction's requirements **before they undertake ANY youth-related work** in that state or territory
- b. maintain WWCVPC clearance(s) for the states and/or territories relevant to their youth-related work in accordance with each relevant jurisdiction's requirements while they remain in a youth-related work position
- c. are aware of their obligation to advise Defence of any event or issue that impacts or could impact their WWCVPC clearance(s)
- d. sign a code of conduct and complete relevant youth protection training (see [Guide 2: Youth Safe Code of Conduct](#) and [Guide 3: Defence Youth Protection Training Guide](#)).

106. **WWCVPC non-clearance.** Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that personnel who apply for, but are subsequently not issued/re-issued a WWCC Clearance, are:

- a. immediately removed from or not placed in a youth-related work position and **do not undertake ANY youth-related work** on behalf of Defence
- b. administered in accordance with relevant personnel or member management policy.

107. **WWCVPC annotation and record.** Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure:

- a. each WWCVPC clearance, non-clearance or exemption⁸ is annotated against the individual in PMKeyS, CadetNet or other relevant personnel/contractor management system
- b. an electronic copy of each WWCVPC clearance, non-clearance or exemption is stored in the individual's personnel file on Objective or member record in CadetNet as applicable.

108. **Cost of WWCVPC clearances.** Commanders, managers and supervisors must cover the cost of obtaining and maintaining WWCVPC clearances from their allocated budgets.

Privacy

109. All information collected in relation to WWC/VPC policy must be managed in accordance with the privacy requirements outlined in the Defence youth manual guides.

Guides:

⁸ A WWCC Exemption relates to the situation where a jurisdiction advises that a WWCC is not required.

[Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#)
[Guide 4: Suitability Screening for Working with Youth](#)

Chapter 3: Youth protection complaint and event / incident management

110. Defence is committed to providing a youth safe environment and actively encourages youth who engage with Defence to report both Defence and non-Defence (community/family/domestic) related events/incidents, including youth protection complaints. The terms 'event' and 'incident' are interchangeable in this chapter.

111. All personnel have a legal and moral obligation to protect youth and report youth protection events, including complaints, to their commander or manager. Youth protection events are a specific category of 'unacceptable behaviour', managed within the Youth Protection Safety Domain.

112. Commanders, managers and supervisors have a legal and moral obligation to ensure compliance with statutory reporting requirements and to effectively manage youth protection events, including complaints.

113. Youth protection events are defined in [Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#). Key definitions relevant to this chapter are located [Guide 1: Definitions, Acronyms and Glossary](#).

Direction

114. This chapter provides direction to ensure youth protection events, including complaints, are accurately defined, reported and managed in accordance with Defence and statutory requirements. The guides that accompany this chapter provide supporting information for users to create and manage events.

115. Commanders, managers and supervisors are also responsible for ensuring mandatory, external to Defence reporting requirements for youth protection incidents are met. This may include reporting directly to state or territory police and child protection or other government authorities. Information on external reporting is provided in [Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#).

116. Defence youth protection event management guidance is consistent with Principles 3, 4 and 6 of the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).

Reporting avenues

117. **Youth protection complaint/allegation.** Any person may submit a youth protection complaint or allegation if they form a reasonable belief that a youth protection event/incident has occurred. A youth protection complaint or allegation can be made in writing or verbally. Mechanisms through which Defence becomes aware of a youth protection complaint or allegation include, but are not limited to:

- a. Commanders, managers or supervisors and/or adult volunteers
- b. the Joint Military Police Unit

- c. Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Response Office
- d. other support service hotlines/reporting mechanisms ([Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#))
- e. chaplains and training staff
- f. ConCERN process.

118. On receipt, all youth protection complaints or allegations must be managed as a youth protection event/incident.

ConCERN process

119. **Dedicated youth confidential complaint process.** HRCSD manages an independent Defence Youth Protection Confidential Complaint and Event Report/Notification (Youth Protection ConCERN) process that is:

- a. youth-focused
- b. understood and available to all youth, the community, Defence youth program volunteers and participants and Defence personnel.

120. The ConCERN process is not an avenue of redress for resolved complaints.

Youth protection event / incident management

121. **Purpose.** Youth protection event/incident management is critical to maintaining a strong youth protection culture. Accordingly, youth protection event/incident management specifies two distinct but parallel reporting and investigation chains that use current Defence incident management (Case Management) and WHS management system (Sentinel) to support all parties and achieve a youth protection outcome. Both Case Management and Sentinel are to be used for each youth protection event/incident.

122. **Initial response and actions.** Refer to [Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#); initial response and actions include:

- a. **Assess and respond.** Commanders, managers and supervisors must take appropriate immediate action to ensure the health, protection and wellbeing of personnel, in particular youth.
- b. **Confirm circumstances.** Determine what happened from those involved and/or witnesses as appropriate, but do not conduct interviews.
- c. **Safeguard and record evidence.** Safeguard physical evidence and keep a record of discussions and actions.

- d. Categorise incident. All events/incidents require classification and contextualisation in accordance with [Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#) and in addition to codification in Sentinel. The initial classification and codification may change as information becomes known during the investigation.

123. **Initial reporting.** Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure initial reporting requirements are met through both the relevant Defence and service/group incident reporting channels (Case) and Sentinel.

124. **Incident management through Case Management.** The purpose of this process is to ensure relevant parties are informed and address identified behavioural issues. Incident management should occur in accordance with the relevant Defence and/or group/service policies and procedures. Where appropriate, other administrative inquiries may be conducted in accordance with Defence group/service policies or requirements.

125. Youth protection events/incidents may also require external to Defence reporting, outlined in [Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#).

126. **WHS event investigation and reporting through Sentinel.** The purpose of this process is to conduct a 'no fault' investigation to identify contributing factors which led to the event, improve risk controls so as to prevent recurrence and ensure consistency in data reporting.

127. All youth protection events are to be entered into Sentinel, as this allows the Accountable Officer greater visibility across the enterprise. Only incidents occurring in the Defence Context (refer to [Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#)) require a WHS investigation to be conducted and recorded in Sentinel.

128. Commanders and managers must ensure findings and lessons learned from youth protection investigations are communicated through appropriate communication mechanisms to reinforce youth safe behaviours and culture within Defence.

129. Comprehensive guidance material for the creation through to closure of a youth protection event is available at [Sentinel Guide - Youth Protection Events](#). To assist capturing relevant information for input into Sentinel a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) has been created. The SIF is available at the [Youth Protection Assurance webpage](#) and its use is voluntary.

130. A flowchart for managing a youth protection event/incident is in [Figure 5](#).

131. **Higher notification in certain circumstances:** A youth protection event/incident must be immediately notified⁹ if the event/incident is:

⁹ youth.protection@defence.gov.au

- a. immediately notifiable to a service chief or group head in accordance with Defence or Group/Service policy, and/or to Comcare
- b. Class A or B event/incident that occurred in the Defence context
- c. likely to attract adverse publicity (this may include events that occurred outside of the Defence context that may have a significant impact on the complainant).

132. **Reporting timeframes.** A summary of reporting timeframes is outlined in Table 1 below. Assigning a classification for a Youth Protection Event/Incident is a five-step process in which the impact on youth, perceived intent, nature and context of the event/incident are considered. The process is detailed in [Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#).

YPE Classification ¹⁰	Immediate Mandatory Reporting	Case Report	Sentinel ¹¹
Class A	As soon as Practicable	Within 24 Hours	Within 14 days of confirming a YP event has occurred
Class B	As soon as Practicable	Within 24 Hours	Within 14 days of confirming a YP event has occurred
Class C	As per Service/Group requirements	As per Service/Group requirements	Within 14 days of confirming a YP event has occurred
Class D	As per Service/Group requirements	As per Service/Group requirements	Within 14 days of confirming a YP event has occurred

Table 1 – Event/Incident Reporting Requirements

Personnel protection and support

133. **Protection and wellbeing of youth.** The health, protection and wellbeing of youth involved in or affected by a youth protection event must be given primary consideration. Involved or affected youth, in addition to their parents/guardians if

¹⁰ Classification as defined in [Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#)

¹¹ Reporting timeframes align with Defence WHSMS reporting requirements.

appropriate, must be consulted, supported and kept informed throughout the incident management process.

134. It may not be appropriate to contact parents/guardians if a parent, guardian or family member is the respondent. Commanders, managers and supervisors must follow the advice of the civil police, relevant state/territory child protection or other government authorities and/or the Joint Military Police Unit.

135. **Personnel support.** Appropriate support and information, subject to privacy requirements (see Sect 1, Chap 2), must be provided to all involved or affected parties, including the complainant(s)/victim(s), alleged respondent(s), family(s), witnesses and/or other affected parties¹² as appropriate. Appropriate support may include but not be limited to:

- a. professional support from health practitioners, the [Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office \(SeMPRO\)](#) and the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)
- b. local support from commanders, managers and supervisors, Chaplains, and [Workplace Behaviour Advisers](#) and other local support officers.

136. Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that all youth protection complaints are taken seriously¹³ and effectively managed in accordance with the *Complaint Handling Principles*, as defined in the [Complaints and Alternate Resolution Manual \(CARM\)](#).

137. All support arrangements should be documented in accordance with Defence and relevant group/service requirements.

138. **Support or advice for commanders, managers and supervisors.** For information on the range of support and advice services relating to youth protection event/incident management, see [Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#).

Privacy

139. All information collected in relation to youth protection events/incidents must be managed in accordance with the privacy requirements outlined in Sect 1, Chap 2.

Relevant publications

140. Other Defence publications which may be relevant include, but are not limited to:

- a. [Complaints and Alternate Resolution Manual \(CARM\)](#)
- b. [Military Personnel Manual \(MILPERSMAN\) Part 3 Chapter 7 Member Support Coordination](#)

¹² Other affected parties may include members of the community and staff who received a disclosure or provide counselling/support to the victim(s).

¹³ This includes listening to the youth who makes a complaint or discloses abuse/unacceptable behaviour in any context, responding appropriately/sensitively to the needs of the youth, and acting on the information.

- c. [Military Personnel Manual \(MILPERSMAN\) Part 7, Chapter 2 – Management and Administration of Defence Members Under 18 Years of Age](#)
- d. [Defence Safety Manual \(SAFETYMAN\)](#).

Guides:

[Guide 8: Defence Youth Protection Event or Incident Management](#)

Section 4: Defence youth protection assurance

Chapter 1: Youth protection assurance framework

141. The DYSF details how the components are designed to ensure young people are safe, protected and respected. One of the key components in achieving this is ensuring the protection of youth from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse. In the Defence environment, Youth Protection also incorporates misconduct and unacceptable behaviour.

142. The Defence Youth Protection Management System is a component of the DYSF that builds on existing Defence WHS risk management and reporting processes to implement the CCSF and the NPCSO.

143. The intent of this guidance is to describe the Defence Youth Protection Assurance Framework (DYPAF) and outline how Defence will undertake assurance of youth protection matters across the Department.

Responsibilities

144. The following responsibilities have been drawn from Section 1, Chapter 1 and are relevant to the delivery of youth protection assurance. These responsibilities form the basis for the development of the DYPAF and guide how assurance will be delivered across the Department.

145. **CPERS** is responsible for:

- a. Accountable to the Secretary and CDF as the accountable officer and is the Safety Domain Owner for youth protection.
- b. Providing youth protection governance and assurance that meet Defence's youth protection obligations.

146. **HRCSD** is responsible for:

- a. Developing, maintaining and issuing enterprise level youth protection policy, guidance and tools that are compliant with the CCSF.
- b. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of youth protection policy by the groups and services.

147. Group heads and service chiefs:

- a. Are accountable to the Secretary and CDF for extending the application of the group/service WHSMS where practicable to include youth protection management and for contextualising implementation of youth protection policy and guidance.
- b. Must ensure that risk based youth protection assurance regime of applicable subordinate organisations / units are conducted to assure compliance and conformance with the group/service documentation.

148. **Defence Youth Protection Assurance Framework.** DYPAF includes processes aimed at assuring youth protection by:

- a. **Performance monitoring.** Compliance and conformance audits, inspections, closed loop and risk tracking and surveys conducted to monitor performance.
- b. **Performance measurement.** Key compliance and performance indicators used to measure performance.
- c. **Performance analysis and reporting.** Analysis and reporting of youth protection performance measurement outcomes conducted through committees.
- d. **Performance review.** Review of performance through audits, surveys and senior committees.

149. The DYPAF is depicted in [Figure 6](#) below.

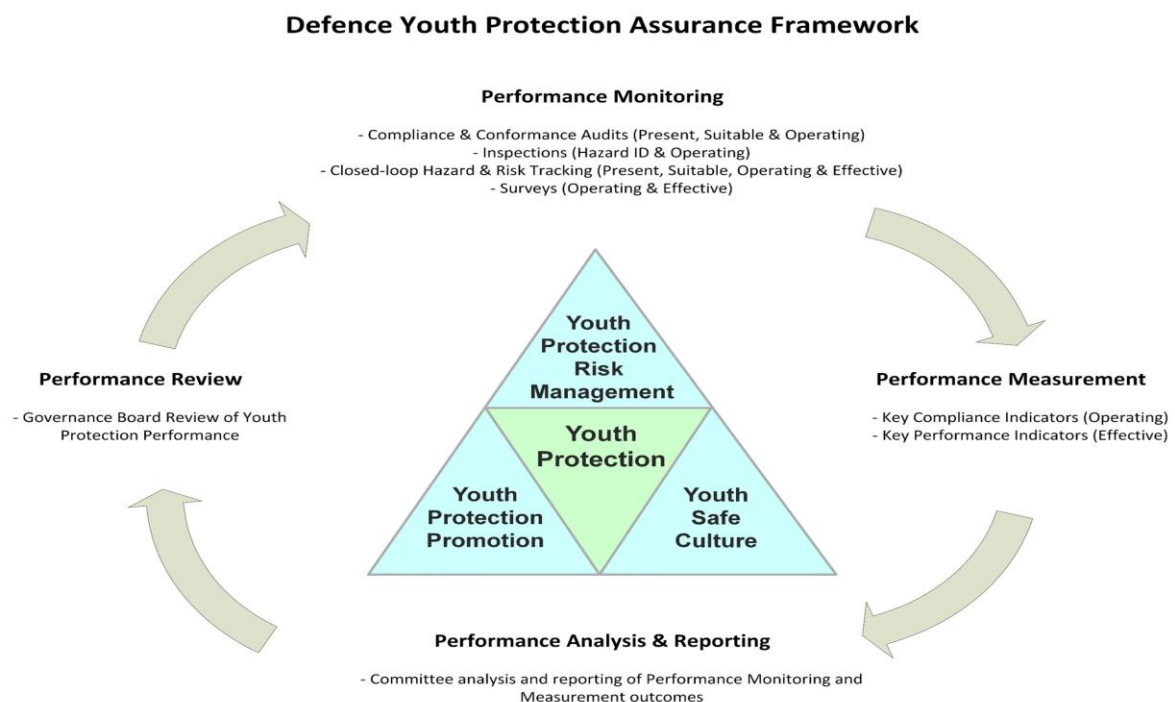


Figure 6 – Defence Youth Protection Assurance Framework

Compliance and assurance approach

150. RCSD and the groups and services are to deliver a risk based compliance and assurance model that is based on a tiered and cascading approach. The model requires a three staged approach to youth protection in Defence described below.

151. **Defence personnel.** This area incorporates any ADF or APS member or employee under the age of 18. The number of Defence youth managed in this environment at any one time is small and reduces throughout the year. The majority of these youth are located in Defence training establishments with only very small numbers under the age of 18 completing training and posted to ADF Units.

152. Defence training establishments are by definition a proportionately higher risk than broader Defence. The known level of offending is very low in training establishments however the damaging consequences for youth at a formative stage presents a heightened risk to youth in Defence training establishments.

153. **Group and service managed youth programs.** In additional to Defence and APS personnel, Defence operates a number of youth programs that have varying levels of contact with youth.

154. As a result, groups and services that work with youth are responsible for undertaking their own compliance and assurance programs and report the result of this to RCSD and at the Cadet and Youth Executive Committee (CYEC) yearly, normally November. RCSD is able to assist with developing a compliance and assurance program and provide relevant tools.

Defence youth protection assurance framework process

155. The DYPAF is cyclical and designed for continuous performance monitoring, measurement, analysis and reporting and review. It assists all levels of Defence in youth protection.

Assurance Levels

156. The DYPAF has three levels. These are:

- a. Group/Service level
- b. Defence Enterprise Level
- c. External to Defence level.

157. The DYPAF focuses on the Defence enterprise and group/service levels.

Performance monitoring tool

158. RCSD have developed and will maintain a tool to monitor compliance and provide assurance that youth protection risk is managed within Defence.

159. The monitoring tool is an Excel spreadsheet allowing users to filter assurance requirements based on risk and application in relevant youth contexts. The tool identifies who is responsible for compliance and assurance, methods to undertake assurance of specific risks, assurance frequency and types evidence that lead to compliance or otherwise. The tool also identifies the senior committees for reporting compliance risks.

152. A DYPAF Performance Monitoring Tool is regularly updated and will be located in the [Youth Protection Assurance](#) webpage.

153. Defence is committed to ensuring the health, protection and wellbeing of all youth who engage with Defence. Effective management of youth protection performance is required to assure that Defence provides a youth safe environment.

154. The intent of this guidance is to ensure that youth protection performance is monitored, measured, analysed, reported and reviewed within a governance framework. Defence and subordinate group/service Work Health and Safety Management Systems (WHSMS) define the framework.

155. Defence youth protection management is consistent with the [Commonwealth Child Safe Framework \(CCSF\)](#) and the [Defence WHS Assurance Policy](#)

156. **Youth protection performance management.** Youth protection performance management incorporates monitoring, measurement, analysis, reporting and review within the governance framework displayed in [Figure 7](#) below. Youth protection performance management includes processes aimed at assuring:

- a. **Compliance.** Assurance that Defence policy complies with legislation including the CCSF and NPCSO
- b. **Conformance.** Assurance that Defence policy, processes and risk controls are being implemented and complied with
- c. **Performance.** Assurance that Defence policy, processes and risk controls are effective in eliminating or otherwise minimising youth protection hazards and risks, so far as reasonably practicable, to provide a youth safe environment.

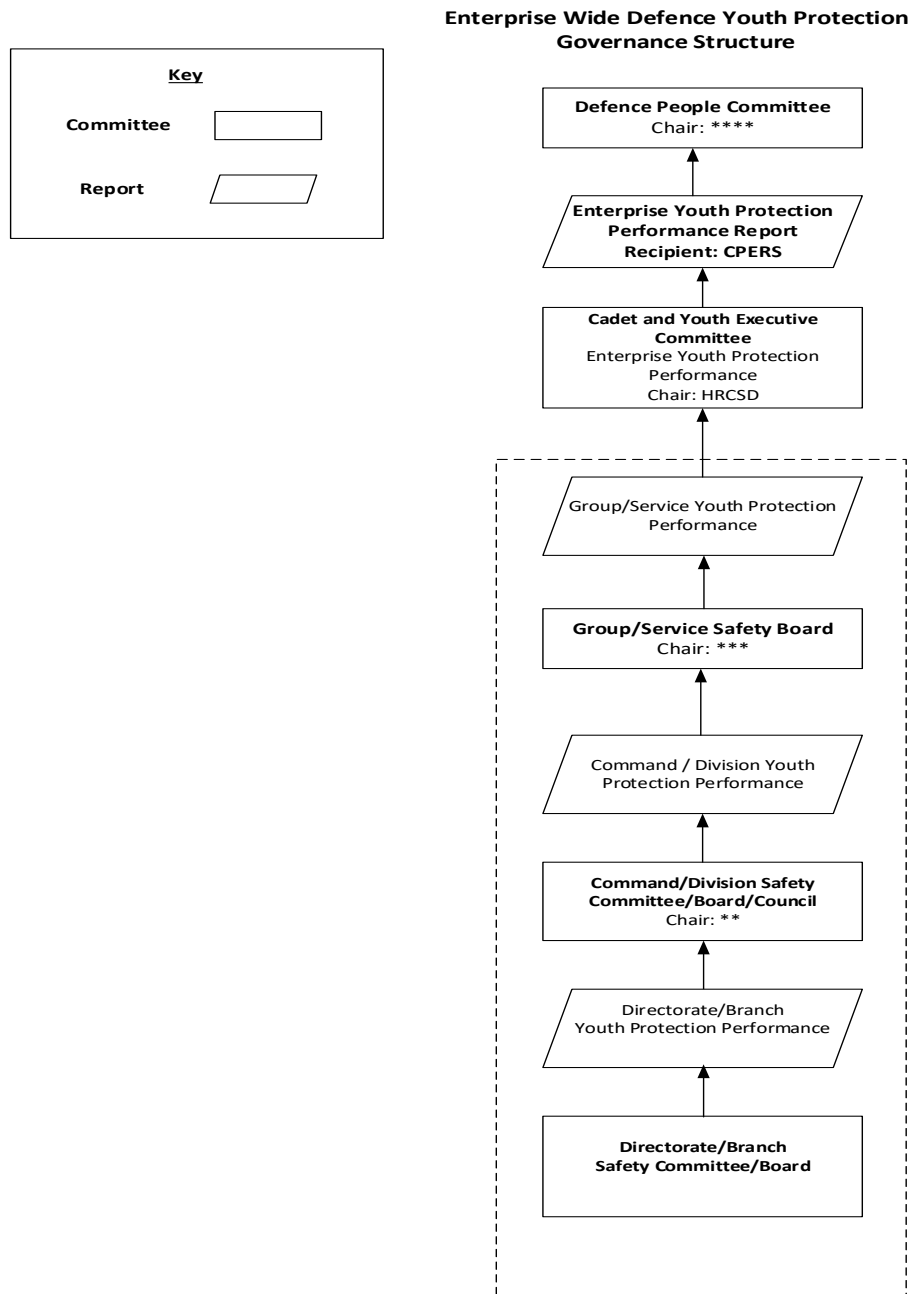


Figure 7: Enterprise Wide Youth Protection Governance Framework

Youth protection performance monitoring

157. CPERS, group heads and service chiefs must ensure that youth protection performance is effectively monitored via a combination of youth protection audits, workplace inspections and surveys as appropriate.

Youth protection audits

158. Enterprise-Level Youth Protection Audit. HRCSD must ensure where appropriate that enterprise-level youth protection audits or other assurance activities are conducted in accordance with Defence WHSMS Audit Policy.

159. **RCSD Audit.** At a minimum, desktop audits must be conducted to confirm that the DYPMS complies with the CCSF the NPCSO and that the groups and services comply with the Defence DYPMS.

160. Other Internal Audits. Audits by other Defence ¹⁴agencies should be coordinated and conducted as appropriate

161. **Group/Service youth protection audits.** Group heads and service chiefs must ensure that youth protection audits of applicable subordinate organisations/units are conducted to assure compliance and conformance with the group/service documentation. Youth protection audits should be risk-based, integrated into group/service WHS or other audit programs where practicable and managed in accordance with relevant group/service audit policy. A copy or extract of any group/service audit report related to youth protection should be provided to RCSD by emailing youth.protection@defence.gov.au

Workplace inspections

162. Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that workplace inspections conducted in accordance with group/service WHSMS policy consider and address youth protection hazards and risks (see Section 3, Chapter 1) as appropriate.

Youth protection surveys

163. **RCSD coordinated youth protection surveys.** HRCSD should ensure youth protection surveys are periodically conducted to obtain feedback and analysed to gauge youth protection knowledge, culture and management system effectiveness, as follows:

- a. **Enterprise-level surveys.** Youth protection should be integrated into enterprise-level safety and/or cultural surveys coordinated by other Defence agencies where practicable.
- b. **Targeted surveys.** Targeted youth protection surveys of Defence youth programs and other contexts where Defence heavily engages with youth should be conducted where practicable. Youth protection surveys should be conducted at least once every three years. Consideration should be given to providing the family of youth and the community the opportunity to participate in a youth protection survey.

¹⁴ For example, Defence People Group Audit and Fraud Control Division and Defence WHS Branch.

- c. **Communication of Results.** The results of all surveys must be communicated to all participants including youth and the community (see Section 5, Chapter 2). RCSD should ensure feedback provided by youth and families from targeted youth protection surveys is incorporated into youth engagement policy and practice where appropriate.

164. **Other Youth Protection Surveys.** Commanders, managers and supervisors should ensure that youth protection is integrated into any safety and/or cultural surveys as appropriate.

165. **Ethics Committee Approval.** All youth protection related surveys must be approved by the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee or Defence People Group Low Risk Ethics Panel as applicable.

Youth protection hazard and risk closed-loop tracking

166. Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure that youth protection hazards, risks and associated risk management ¹⁵records are monitored, tracked, reviewed and/or closed as appropriate in accordance with group/service WHSMS policy, as follows:

- a. **Hazard and risk monitoring and review.** Youth protection hazards and risks must continue to be monitored until elimination of the hazard and risks/so far as reasonably practicable. Review of youth protection risk controls should be both periodic and event based
- b. **Hazard and event/incident report closure.** Youth protection hazard and event/incident reports must be reviewed for quality and completeness. Actions and recommendations must be tracked to completion before closure of the report.

Youth protection performance measurement

167. **Commanders,** managers and supervisors at all levels must ensure that youth protection performance for their scope of responsibility is periodically measured against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) outlined in Table 2.

KPI Title	KPI
Youth Protection ConCERNs	The number of Youth Protection ConCERNs submitted
Class A & Class B Youth Protection Events/Incidents	The number of Class A and Class B youth protection events/incidents that occur in the Defence environment
Youth Protection Training	% of personnel who have completed relevant Defence youth safe training package(s)

¹⁵ Includes youth protection hazards reports and event/incident reports.

Suitability Screening and Working with Children Checks	Youth protection related question(s) are included in selection processes for youth-related work positions. % of personnel who have required Working with Children Checks clearance
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Table 2: Youth Protection KPIs

Youth protection performance analysis

168. **Commanders**, managers and supervisors at all levels must ensure that youth protection performance for their scope of responsibility is analysed and reported as appropriate and in accordance with Defence and group/service WHSMS policy.

169. **Youth Protection Performance Analysis.** The outcomes/records of youth protection performance monitoring and measurement must be periodically analysed by safety-related working groups, committees, councils and/or boards as appropriate, to:

- a. identify and address adverse trends, new hazards, deficient risk controls and/or systemic issues
- b. identify and implement initiatives to improve youth protection performance.

169. **Scheduling.** Youth protection performance analysis and review should be integrated into broader Defence and group/service WHS or other governance arrangements where practicable and scheduled to support youth protection performance review (see Section 4, Chapter 1).

Youth protection reporting and performance review

170. **Group/Service councils/boards.** Group heads and service chiefs must ensure youth protection performance is biannually reviewed in accordance with service/group WHS governance policy. Groups and Services must also report biannually to the Cadet and Youth Executive Committee in accordance with the Committee Terms of Reference.

171. **Cadet and Youth Executive Committee.** The Cadet and Youth Executive Committee (CYEC) is the forum for presenting and reviewing enterprise level youth protection reporting. The CYEC is to be conducted ¹⁶biannually in accordance with the Terms of Reference for approved by HRCSD. HRCSD must provide secretariat support to the committee.

172. HRCSD is to submit twice yearly an Enterprise Youth Protection Report to CPERS.

173. **Defence People Committee.** CPERS shall report Defence youth protection performance to the Defence People Committee as necessary.

¹⁶ The CYEC is conducted biannually, normally in June and November.

Privacy

174. All information collected in relation to youth protection performance management policy must be managed in accordance with the privacy requirements outlined in Section 1, Chapter 2.

Section 5: Defence youth safe promotion

Chapter 1: Youth protection education and training

175. All Defence and non-Defence personnel, including contractors and volunteers, have an obligation to protect youth. Personnel must complete appropriate training depending on their interaction with youth.

176. The Defence youth protection training suite of courses educate Defence members on appropriate behaviour, communication, and conduct when interacting with youth, as well as recognising and preventing abuse and misconduct.

177. Commanders, managers and supervisors must ensure training completions are recorded appropriately and stored in accordance with the requirements defined in Section 1 Chap 2, Records Management.

178. To find out more about training requirements for ADF, APS, contractors and volunteers personnel, see Guide 3: Defence Youth Protection Training Guide.

Chapter 2: Youth protection communication

179. Defence is committed to ensuring that youth who engage with Defence are informed about their rights and feel comfortable in communicating their views and concerns in a youth safe environment.

180. Effective communication of Defence's youth related procedures and training requirements to all Defence and non-Defence personnel, including volunteers and contractors, is critical to ensuring their obligations and the rights of youth engaging with Defence are understood and promoted.

181. Defence must ensure that the families of youth engaging with Defence can access information, provide feedback and have the opportunity to be involved in promoting Defence's youth safe culture. The intent is to articulate the minimum level of internal and external communication required to meet Defence's obligations as a youth safe organisation.

Communication channels

182. Defence must ensure accurate and relevant information about its youth protection management system is accessible to all Defence and non-Defence personnel engaging with youth, to youths engaging with Defence and to the broader community through a variety of avenues.

183. **Defence News Publications.** RCSD is responsible to ensure key messages, stories and/or factsheets on youth protection matters are available to

Defence personnel and the broader community. These will be distributed through existing Defence publications, YouthHQ and social media platforms.

184. **YouthHQ.** The YouthHQ website is Defence's repository for all current youth protection policy, procedures and guidance. RCSD must ensure YouthHQ content is accessible and current and that the dedicated Youth Confidential Complaint Process -YOUTH ConCERN. and feedback submissions are responded to promptly.

185. **Social Media.** Social media may be useful to:

- a. raise community awareness of Defence Youth Programs (DYP) and demonstrate Defence's commitment to promote the wellbeing of youth and protect young people from abuse
- b. engage with and receive feedback from the community on Defence youth engagement activities.

Communication requirements

186. RCSD must ensure communication with the broader community reflects the diversity of youth and community members and reflects diversity in society in an inclusive manner.

187. Communication should not contain:

- a. gender, sexual, or cultural stereotyping
- b. negative depictions of people in relation to race, ethnic origin, disability, age, gender or sexual orientation.

188. RCSD must ensure youth protection communication activities and avenues are reviewed to maintain currency, reflect lessons learned and ensure policy and processes relating to youth are effective in promoting a youth safe environment.

189. RCSD should engage with other agencies that have youth protection responsibilities to:

- a. share Defence's experiences and gain best practice youth protection knowledge and learning relating to youth protection and implementation of the Commonwealth Child Safety Framework and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- b. showcase best practice government examples where applicable on YouthHQ
- c. actively contribute to a whole of government approach to youth protection.

Section 6: Youth engagement operational guidance

Chapter 1: Duty of care, supervision and consent

190. Duty of care is a legal duty to take reasonable care to prevent harm to another person that could be reasonably foreseen. Defence recognises its legal duty of care to participants of Defence youth engagement activities.

191. To fulfil this legal obligation, all personnel engaging with youth participants must be aware of and consider the specific needs of youth when planning and delivering a youth engagement activity.

192. Defence's duty of care for each participant commences when the participant arrives at the designated location and is met by the Person Conducting the Activity (PCA) or authorised personnel. That duty of care ceases when the participant departs the designated location at the conclusion of the activity.

193. Where Defence personnel pick-up or drop-off participants from an airport/bus/train station, Defence's duty of care commences when the participant arrives at the designated transfer location until the participant departs the designated transfer location.

194. Prior to allowing participants onto a Defence base, the person conducting the activity must collect and review all documentation required of the participant to allow entry onto the Defence unit/base. A Defence site-specific induction and safety briefing must also be delivered at the commencement of the activity and on other occasions as required.

195. Defence must seek specific parental consent for participants under 18 years for the following activities:

- a. Defence physical training activities
- b. travelling in Defence vehicles (including cars, trucks, aircraft and/or ships)
- c. supervised use of computer-based Defence weapons simulator systems
- d. handling unloaded firearms under supervision
- e. being photographed and videoed.

Chapter 2: Special care provisions and operational guidance

196. All youth have a right to a safe physical and emotional environment when engaged with Defence. Defence does not tolerate any sexual interaction between adults and youth in Defence youth engagement contexts; this does not include Defence ADF members and APS employees in legal relationships with non-Defence personnel.

197. All Defence adults must maintain the highest ethical standards when interacting with youth. All interactions and relationships between adults and youth

should be based on mutual respect, trust and an understanding of the boundaries for appropriate relationships.

198. The special care provision prohibits any person in a supervisory role from engaging sexually with a person who is considered a youth, irrespective of the legal age of consent.

199. Defence considers any person in a supervisory role as having special care for youth and, as such, sexual activities are prohibited. In addition to [Guide 9: Special Care Provisions: Zero Tolerance for Sexual Misconduct Between Adults and Youth](#), the special care provision is included in [Guide 2: Youth Safe Code of Conduct](#). Specific operational guidance to assist in the planning and execution of youth engagement activities can be found in the youth manual guides. The guides cover topics in relation to management of allergens and medical conditions, alcohol, tobacco and prohibited substances, use of social media, considerations for bathroom, toilet and shower facilities, diversity and inclusions and consideration for overnight Defence youth engagement activities.

Guides:

[Guide 6: Medical and Physical Conditions Management](#)

[Guide 10: Alcohol, Tobacco and Prohibited Substances](#)

[Guide 11: Youth and the Safe Use of Social Media](#)

[Guide 12: Planning for Youth Engagement Activities](#)

Special care principles

200. **Principle 1.** Commanders, managers, supervisors and the adult peers of youth engaging with Defence understand their responsibilities to provide youth special care provisions within Defence.

201. **Principle 2.** In the event that a sexual interaction between a youth and an adult becomes known, the youth must not be attributed with any blame.

Principles and measures

Principle 1

202. The legal age of consent varies across Australian state and territory jurisdictions. A young person may express their willingness to engage in sexual behaviours but are not considered to have the psychological capacity to give consent according to the law. All sexual interactions between an adult and a person under the age of consent are regarded as a criminal offence.

203. In addition to the age of consent laws for the applicable state or territory, Defence requires all adults in the Defence context to have special care for youth, known as the special care provision.

204. The special care provision prohibits any person in a supervisory role from engaging sexually with a person who is considered a youth, irrespective of the legal age of consent.

205. Defence considers any person in a supervisory role as having special care for youth and, as such, sexual activities are prohibited.

206. The special care provision is included in the [Youth Safe Code of Conduct \(Adult\)](#).

Principle 2

207. Defence considers any form of intimate relationship with a youth in the Defence youth engagement context ¹⁷to be abuse. Grooming is considered abuse (and a criminal offence) in any context. As a result, in the Defence context, the adult participant in any form of intimate relationship carries the blame entirely.

208. Individuals in Defence responding to, and managing allegations of a sexual relationship or child abuse between an adult and a youth, are to ensure the youth is made aware they are entirely without blame.

Reporting

209. To ensure appropriate management in the Defence context, any pre-existing personal relationships, such as a family relationship, close friendship, sexual relationship (where a youth is over the age of consent for the state or territory but is not in a Defence context) must be declared to the relevant supervisor.

210. Reporting physical and sexual abuse, including inappropriate relationships to the relevant authority is a moral and, in some cases, legal responsibility. Mandatory reporting refers to the legal requirement of certain groups of people to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities. Each state and territory has their own definitions of a mandatory reporter. The groups of people/occupations mandated to notify cases of suspected child abuse and neglect are defined by each jurisdiction. Occupations most commonly cited as mandated reporters are those individual who have frequent contact with children in the course of their work.

211. Reporting child abuse and neglect is a Defence-wide responsibility. An adult who suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of being abused and/or neglected, should report their suspicion to the appropriate reporting authority in their state or territory.

212. All reporting is managed in accordance with the youth protection complaint and event/incident management procedures (see Section 3, Chapter 3 - Youth protection complaint and event/incident management).

¹⁷ this does not include Defence ADF members and APS employees in legal relationships with non-Defence personnel

Operational guides

213. Further operational guidance is located in the youth engagement [guides](#) on [YouthHQ](#). These guides provide best practice guidance when planning and running youth engagement activities.