

YOUTH POLICY MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

1. Defence's engagement with youth encompasses a wide spectrum that ranges from dedicated youth development programs, such as ADF Cadets, through to the employment of youth within Defence's workforce. Engagement with youth is an important component of Defence's engagement with communities and Defence's recruitment initiatives. This engagement is central to maintaining Defence's reputation within the community it serves.
2. In the Defence context, the term youth is generally used to refer to anyone under the age of 18, which encompasses child, children, young person, young people, adolescent, minor and any other equivalent term. Youth special care provisions extend to persons over 18 participating in ADF youth programs.
3. Defence engages with youth across a wide range of activities and age groups. Expectations of youth must be considerate of age, stage of development and maturity.
4. Engagement with youth requires an understanding of the behavioural nature of youth. Youth think, act and learn differently to adults. Commanders, managers and supervisors are responsible for the supervision, health, protection and wellbeing of youth under their care.

VISION

5. Defence's engagement with youth is conducted in an environment that ensures the health, protection and wellbeing of youth and in a manner that delivers a positive experience.

PURPOSE

6. The purpose of the Youth Policy Manual (YOUTHPOLMAN) is to provide a reference for Defence personnel involved in Defence's engagement with youth which includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Workplaces
 - b. Defence Youth programs¹
 - c. Community activities²

STRUCTURE

7. YOUTHPOLMAN is divided into the following parts:

¹ Defence Youth Programs include but are not limited to Defence Work Experience, Young Endeavour Youth Scheme and Indigenous Youth Programs.

² For example, Open Days.

- a. **YOUTHPOLMAN Introduction.** Provides a broad overview of Defence's engagement with youth, why it is important to Defence and why youth require additional consideration and policy provisions
- b. **YOUTHPOLMAN Part 1.** Describes the Defence Youth Protection Management System which enables Defence to meet the requirements of the Commonwealth Child Safety Framework (CCSF) and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (NPCSO). Part 1 also contains common policy and considerations relevant to Defence's engagement with Youth
- c. **YOUTHPOLMAN Part 2.** Operationalises and contextualises the overarching policy intent of Part 1 into youth program specific policies for the ADF Cadets program
- d. **YOUTHPOLMAN Part 3.** Operationalises and contextualises the overarching policy intent of Part 1 into youth program specific policies for the Defence Work Experience Program. Part 3 also includes comprehensive program specific guidance resources for supervisors, Educational Institutions and participants.

DEFINITIONS

8. The definitions used in the YOUTHPOLMAN are listed in the [Glossary](#).
9. **Youth Protection.** Encompasses matters related to protecting all youth from child abuse³, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a youth at risk of child abuse and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.
10. **Youth Safety.** The application of the Defence Youth Safety Framework to youth.

BACKGROUND

11. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse of 2015 examined what makes an organisation child safe. The Royal Commission highlighted the need to provide an environment in which children and young people are safe, protected and respected, and where staff have the skills, confidence and knowledge to safeguard children.

12. In response to the Royal Commission, the Australian Government introduced the CCSF, a whole-of-government policy that sets minimum standards for creating and embedding a child safe culture and practice in Commonwealth entities.

³ Child abuse includes sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, neglect and exposure to domestic/family violence. Child abuse is termed Misconduct/Unacceptable Behaviour in wider Defence (refer YOUTHPOLMAN Part 1 Section 2, Chapter 2, Annex C)

13. The CCSF comprises four core requirements which together set out the minimum standards for Commonwealth entities to protect children. Under the CCSF, Commonwealth entities are required to:

- a. Undertake risk assessments annually in relation to the activities of each entity, to identify the level of responsibility for, and contact with, children and young people, evaluate the risk of harm or abuse and put in place appropriate strategies to manage identified risks
- b. Establish and maintain a system of training and compliance to make staff aware of and compliant with the CCSF and relevant legislation, including working with children/vulnerable people checks and mandatory reporting requirements
- c. Adopt and implement the ten NPSCO
- d. Publish an annual statement of compliance with the CCSF including an overview of the entity's child safety risk assessment (conducted under sub paragraph 13.a).

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS

14. The [NPCSO⁴](#) give effect to the Royal Commission's recommendations relating to child safe standards and provide guidance on key actions and performance measures in implementing the standards. They provide a nationally consistent approach to cultivating organisational cultures and practices that foster child health, protection and wellbeing across all sectors in Australia.

15. The ten NPCSO, derived from the CCSF, are as follows:

- a. **Principle 1.** Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
- b. **Principle 2.** Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- c. **Principle 3.** Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
- d. **Principle 4.** Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
- e. **Principle 5.** People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
- f. **Principle 6.** Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused

⁴ The NPCSO were endorsed by members of the Council of Australian Governments in February 2019.

- g. **Principle 7.** Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
- h. **Principle 8.** Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
- i. **Principle 9.** Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved
- j. **Principle 10.** Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

16. In response to Government direction and to meet the requirements of the NPCSO, Defence has developed its own youth safe policies which have been incorporated into a Defence Youth Safety Framework.

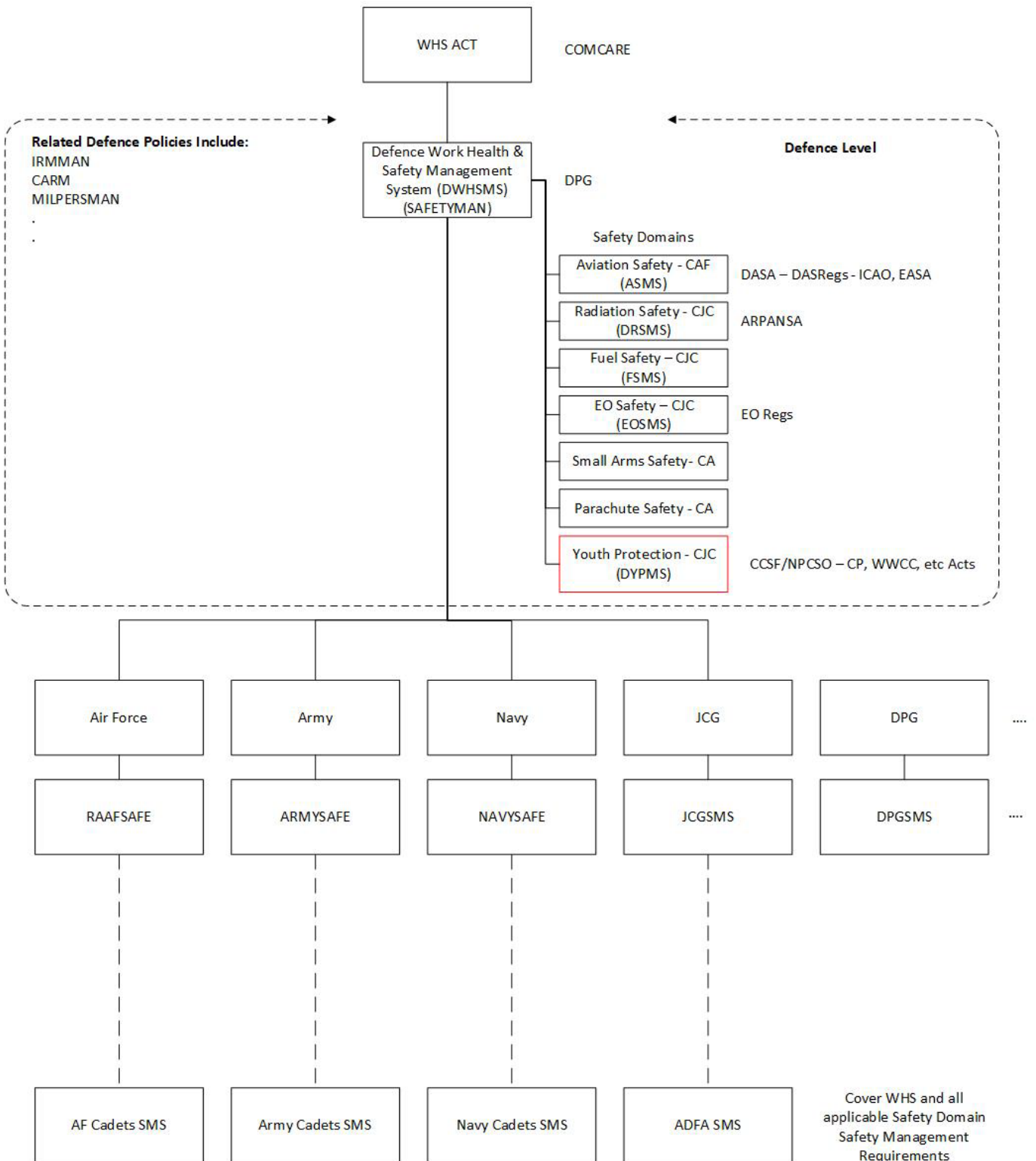
THE DEFENCE YOUTH SAFETY FRAMEWORK

17. The Defence Youth Safety Framework (DYSF) is broader than a pure safety framework. It includes components which are designed to ensure young people are safe, protected and respected and to ensure 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. **Protection of Youth from Child Abuse (Unacceptable Behaviour).** The Defence Youth Protection Management System is a component of the DYSF designed to capitalise on current Defence WHS risk management, governance and reporting processes to implement the CCSF and associated NPCSO
- 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.

18. The DYSF includes existing Service/Group safety management systems and Defence's safety domains (see Figure 1). 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 owners⁵.



⁵ Other Defence WHSMS defined Safety Domains (Safety Domain Owners) include: Small Arms Safety (CA), Aviation Safety (CAF), Parachuting Safety (CA), Radiation Safety (CJC), Explosive Ordnance Safety (CJC) and Fuel Safety (CJC)

19. 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 CJC. 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.

Figure 1: Defence WHS Management System

20. Implementation of the DYSF is illustrated in Figure 2:
- 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 DYSMS 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 which 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.

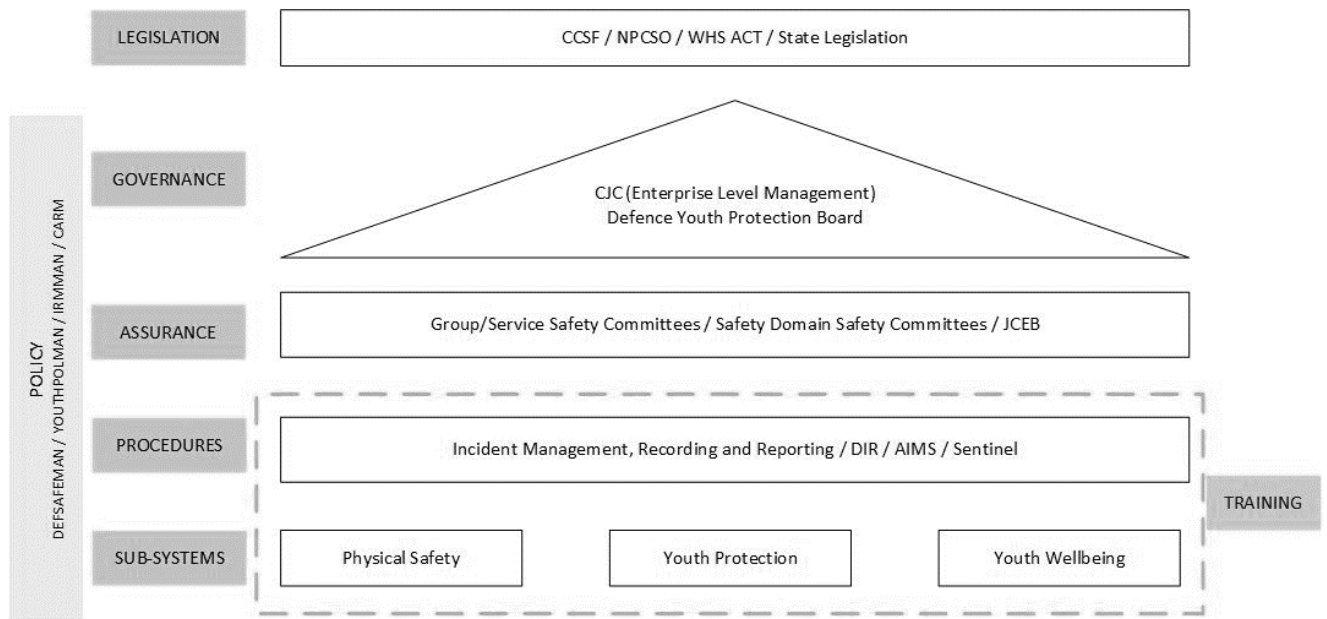


Figure 2: Implementation of the Defence Youth Safety Framework

THE DEFENCE YOUTH SAFETY COMMITMENT STATEMENT

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

22. The *Defence Youth Safety Commitment Statement* articulates Defence’s intent to promote the wellbeing of youth and protect young people from abuse by a focus on preventing, identifying and treating youth safety risks. In the context of ADF 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 or ADF Cadet 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. 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.

ACCOUNTABLE OFFICERS

23. Under the Administrative Policy Framework, the CJC is accountable to the Secretary and Chief of Defence Force for effectively implementing fit-for-purpose policy for the Military Joint Enabling Domain.

24. The CJC is appointed the Accountable Officer and is the Safety Domain Owner for youth protection.

25. Head Joint Support Services Division (HJSSD) is the youth policy owner for youth protection and is responsible to CJC for developing, maintaining and implementing the policies contained in YOUTHPOLMAN.

26. Group Heads and Service Chiefs are responsible for providing the resources required to enable the policies outlined in the YOUTHPOLMAN to be effectively implemented or otherwise seek additional resources through the Enterprise Business Committee.