

POLICY NO:	A - 004
POLICY:	RLSSA MEMBER PROTECTION
ORIGINAL POLICY:	OCTOBER 2002
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REVIEW DATE:	CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW

1. BACKGROUND

The Royal Life Saving Society Australia (RLSSA), Member Branches, Clubs and affiliates are committed to the health, safety and well-being of all its members and program participants and is dedicated to providing a safe environment for participating in lifesaving and water safety activities.

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

This Member Protection Policy conveys a message to all RLSSA members, and prospective members and program participants, responsible for lifesaving activities, particularly those involving members under 18 years of age, about minimising risk exposure of these members. All RLSSA members, being team managers, coaches, athletes, officials, instructors, trainers, staff and management personnel, have a responsibility to provide safeguards dedicated to the well-being of other members.

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

Where such a protective procedure does not exist RLSSA encourages the use of the RLSSA Grievance Policy (Ref: A002) for addressing reports, notification or accusations of improper behaviour by an RLSSA member. The RLSSA Equity Policy (Ref: A001) also should be referred to when addressing issues relating to harassment of a member by another member or outside source.

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

2. CODE OF CONDUCT

RLSSA endorses the following Code of Conduct for RLSSA members and employees, particularly those responsible for activities involving members under the age of 18, and/or similar statements as endorsed by RLSSA State Branches:

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

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

- 2.3 An RLSSA Team Manager will:
 - i. agree to abide by the code of conduct.
 - ii. be responsible for the overall welfare and well-being of team members and officials when travelling with a team.
 - iii. maintain a 'duty of care' towards team members and an accountability for the management of the team.
 - iv. have a sound knowledge of RLSSA policies, responsibilities and competition rules, and ensure that the conduct of the affairs of the team is in accordance with these policies and guidelines.
 - v. foster a collaborative approach to the management of the team.

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

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

3. PROTECTIVE MEASURES FOR RLSSA INSTRUCTORS, EXAMINERS AND TRAINERS

RLSSA Instructors, Examiners and Trainers are those members who undertake the delivery or supervision of lifesaving and water safety activities in their capacity as instructors, examiners, development officers, trainers, teachers, team managers, coaches, officials, administrators and like positions. These are responsible positions in the organisation and each person must adopt the following risk minimisation measures to protect themselves from any misconceptions about their behaviour in performing their designated roles.

3.1 Risk Minimisation Measures:

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

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

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

Instructors, Examiners and Trainers should maintain an open door policy when conducting briefings, meetings and assemblies of members. Invite all participants, parents, friends and other staff to participate, particularly when performing interviews, transporting youth members and conducting excursions.

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

Treat all participants with respect and dignity. Be mindful of your language, tone of voice and body language. Address the problem not the person. Let youth members know that when they are difficult it is their behaviour that is 'not OK' but that the person 'is OK'.

Foster teamwork and group cohesion between trainers and instructors allowing for the ability to point out inappropriate attitudes and behaviour by members of the team. Do not tolerate abusive or inappropriate behaviour - deal with it immediately.

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

Respect all participant's privacy. Expect them to respect yours.

Do not become involved in excessive attention seeking behaviour, physically or sexually, by a youth. Be mindful of the very needy youth and redirect their attention to lifesaving and water safety activities. Maintain your status as a ROLE MODEL to young people and other adults. Be friendly, courteous and kind. Don't abuse your position. Always set a good example in dress, behaviour, language etc.

Mixed teams of instructors or supervising personnel for lifesaving and water safety activities provides for a healthier environment for all involved.

Remember - one person's inappropriate behaviour reflects on all of RLSSA's personnel and teachings.

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

This list of risk minimisation strategies is not exhaustive but is designed to be a guide for RLSSA personnel to uphold the values and principles of Royal Life Saving.

4. CHECKLIST FOR RLSSA PERSONNEL WHERE ABUSE IS SUSPECTED

- 4.1 Use the following guidelines should you or any other member suspect abuse:
- i. You have suspicion on reasonable grounds
 - ii. When a youth tells you they have been abused.
 - iii. When someone else tells you a youth has been abused.
 - iv. A youth tells you they know someone who has been abused (often they are referring to themselves).
 - v. You observe a young participant's behaviour and/or injuries etc, and your knowledge of youth members, leads you to suspect abuse.
 - vi. You observe a member's abuse of another member.

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

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

Make direct and confidential contact with the **Chief Executive** in your State Branch office. The **Chief Executive** in your State is tasked with advising you on such issues as parental involvement, police involvement, medical treatment, RLSSA's position, and the state authority's role. Remember, if in doubt, seek immediate advice.

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

5. PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING ACCUSATIONS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR BY RLSSA LEADERS/MEMBERS

Ensure all members are aware of the RLSSA Member Protection Policy, RLSSA Policies and RLSSA Code of Conduct when joining a lifesaving club or water safety program. Any person suspected of breaching any of the RLSSA Member Protection Policy and Code of Conduct is to be reported to the Chief Executive at your State Branch when all known facts and suspicions are to be confided in that officer.

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

5.1 If the issue involves suspected abuse then:

- i. The person reporting the suspected breach will advise the state Chief Executive immediately on being made suspicious and declare all available details.**
- ii. The Chief Executive shall notify the relevant state protection authority and receive advice about the ensuing course of action for addressing the reported breach of RLSSA's Member Protection Policy.**
- iii. The Chief Executive will notify the suspected member in writing counter-signed by the state president delivered to the suspected member, when it will be advised that an inquiry will be instigated.**
- iv. The suspected person shall be afforded rights of natural justice during the course of the investigation where the state Chief Executive shall enact appropriate monitoring and modification of the suspected member's activities in lifesaving and water safety.**
- v. The suspected person will be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint. This should be carried out at a meeting where two members, appointed by the state Chief Executive, will carry out an interview.**
- vi. The parents/guardians of any person identified as a suspected victim of abuse will be encouraged to contact the state Chief Executive for advice on professional support services.**

6. OPTIONS FOR ACTION IN EACH STATE

Individual State Branches are committed to investigating means for implementing member protection specific to their state operations. The tools for implementing member protection vary according to state legislation and guidelines set by government agencies and protection authorities. An example of a member protection strategy is police screening of RLSSA personnel as part of the recruitment process for a variety of lifesaving and water safety roles.

- 6.1 The following guidelines may be used as a measure by RLSSA State Branches for addressing member protection issues:
- i. Report the matter to the relevant state department of welfare services, children's services or child protection.
 - ii. Report the matter to the police and preferably the child protection unit as appropriate in your state.
 - iii. The suspected victim and other family members shall be asked to approach their local GP to obtain a referral to professional support services and medical specialists.
 - iv. The GP can contact the state Chief Executive for advice of the name of an appropriate specialist known to RLSSA
 - v. Raise the suspension and/or cancel the perpetrator's membership
 - vi. Inform all other states and Royal Life Saving of such action to guard against future application for membership.
 - vii. Check periodically to ensure the former member is having no further contact with members of RLSSA.
 - viii. Periodically follow up on the victim's progress after initial counselling and that they have access to available care.

7. ACTION ON ABUSE REPORTED DIRECTLY TO RLSSA

- 7.1 In the event that suspected abuse of an RLSSA participant is reported in the first instance to RLSSA then the following actions are to occur:
- i. The RLSSA Grievance Officer/ Harassment Contact Officer is to conduct a preliminary investigation and report confidentially to the RLSSA CEO as to whether abuse is suspected.
 - ii. If abuse is suspected the RLSSA CEO will report the matter immediately and confidentially to the respective State Branch responsible for investigating the matter in accordance with this policy and procedures.

8. RLSSA RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES MATRIX

Royal Life Saving members, participants, instructors, trainers and other personnel and the organisation itself reserve certain rights that carry with them certain responsibilities. These are reflected in the Right and Responsibilities Matrix shown below.

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

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