

CENTRE FOR ECOLOGICAL LEARNING (CEL) VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION POLICY 2018

1. Introduction

1.1 Preamble

The Centre for Ecological Learning (CEL) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its Employees, Participants, Visitors, Volunteers and, particularly to, Vulnerable People.

The CEL Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy aims to reduce the risk of Abuse occurring and ensure a caring and appropriate response that meets CEL's legal responsibilities should Abuse occur.

1.2 Scope

This Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy applies to:

- All service organisations or subsidiary bodies authorised by or under the control of CEL,
- All Employees, Participants, Volunteers, Contractors and Visitors within CEL or engaged by CEL.

1.3 Authority

This Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy was adopted for use by CEL on 18 February 2018.

CEL is committed to implementing the Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy and to training our Employees, Participants, Contractors and Volunteers in its content and application.

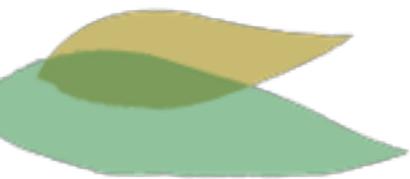
1.4 Definitions

Vulnerable Person; any person, including Young People, who attends or participates in the activities, objectives, or strategic planning of CEL and/or its Projects. Vulnerable Persons include children, or any person who is, or may be in need of, community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness.

Abuse, can consist of one or more of (but is not restricted to) the following:

- Elder Abuse, a single or repeated act, occurring in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.
- Physical Abuse, any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as; hitting, punching, kicking, shaking, burning, biting, pulling out hair, alcohol and/or other drug administration.
- Sexual Abuse, any assault or abuse of a sexual nature, sexual molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation.
- Emotional Abuse, the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a person's self-esteem and social confidence over time.
Behaviours may include; Insulting, bullying, devaluing,





ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or other extreme acts in the Vulnerable Person's presence.

- Financial abuse, where a person takes advantage of an older person who has already lost (or is losing) capacity.
- Neglect, characterised by the failure to provide for basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's health or development.

Child, any person under the age of 18.

Leader, any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of Vulnerable Persons placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a named Organisation.

Organisation, The Centre for Ecological Learning (CEL).

Projects, member projects of The Centre for Ecological Learning (CEL).

Volunteer, any unpaid person over the age of 16 who is invited to assist in the Organisation's activities.

2. Policy Review

This Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy will be reviewed prior to the anniversary of its adoption and/or review at the CEL Board Meeting preceding that date, or as required.

3. Obligations

3.1 Responsibility

The core expectations of any responsible organisation require us to treat all people with fairness and dignity, and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

3.2 Legal

All relevant organisations within Australia are bound by Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law. CEL is committed to adhering to all relevant legislation.

3.3 Ethical

Some actions may not be regarded as Abuse, but are unacceptable behaviour for CEL. These include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature.
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature.
- Suggestive gestures or remarks.
- Jokes of a sexual nature.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Inappropriate literature
- Recording or filming without prior consent.
- Acts of violence committed by a Worker, Leader or





Volunteer in the course of an activity.

The CEL Board will ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times through its policies such as selection and screening of employees, training and provision of a safe environment.

4. Selection & Screening

4.1 Employees, Agency Staff, Contractors and Volunteers involved in activities or programs with Vulnerable Persons must be carefully selected and screened.

Prior to commencing employment or volunteer services, the following precautions will be taken:

- All employees should, and/or volunteers must, be financial members of CEL.
- A minimum of two (2) referees will be checked and spoken to. Questions will seek to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position, and the conversation will be documented and retained on file.
- All short-listed candidates must undertake a face to face formal interview which includes an analysis of past experience and attitudes to working with Vulnerable People.
- A Working With Children check, which complies with NSW legislative requirements, will be requested and received prior to the Employee or Volunteer commencing their proposed role. The check must show that the individual is not precluded from working in childcare or aged care.
- Where the Organisation has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence, the onus will be on the applicant to explain the circumstances in which the event occurred and satisfy CEL that their employment would not present a risk to Vulnerable Persons.

5. Training

All new Workers/Employees, including Agency Staff, Contractors and Volunteers will be issued with a copy of this policy and receive training in;

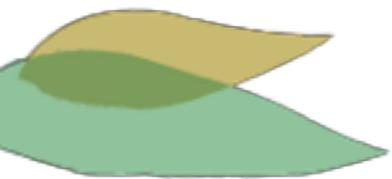
- The content and application of the Organisation's Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy,
- Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements.

Refresher training courses based on current "best practice" and changes to legislation will be provided as required.

To reinforce and support the consistent implementation of CEL Vulnerable Persons Policy and procedures, a CEL Vulnerable Persons Policy Sub-committee will be established to provide ongoing re-fresher training and counselling to CEL Staff and Volunteers. Should concern be raised regarding Staff or Volunteer implementation of CEL Vulnerable Persons Policy and procedures they will be referred to the sub-committee to discuss the purpose and importance of the policy and its implementation.

6. A Safe Environment

Incidents of Abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, working in pairs is mandatory – unless in the constant sight of other employees.



Adults and Young People are expected to respect each other's privacy during times that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Workers/Employees will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No Worker will be alone in a room with a Vulnerable Person while any/either is changing.

Secret Initiations and ceremonies are prohibited. All aspects of every program related to Vulnerable Persons will be open to observation by family, friends or guardians.

Workers/Employees have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at organisational or program activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

7. Disciplining Young People

It is not the responsibility of CEL or its Workers/Employees, Volunteers or Leaders to discipline Young People participating in CEL or member organisations programs. If a participant does not abide by the rules set down by the Organisation, or becomes an obstruction to the care of other Young People or Vulnerable Persons, and/or may cause harm, the participant will be removed under the care of an employee and referred back to their parent or guardian.

At no time will a Leader administer any form of physical, emotional, financial or mental discipline that involves cruelty or punishment. At all times, the right of participants to refuse or decline involvement in any activity is respected, providing that such a decision will not harm the group or another participant.

8. Reporting Procedures

All relevant legislative requirements must be adhered to in respect to the reporting of abuse.

CEL actively encourages the reporting of all abuse.

CEL is committed to building an environment where either a victim or employee/volunteer feels able to report such abuse.

Employees and/or volunteers must report reasonable suspicions of abuse to the senior management (which may include Board members) of CEL.

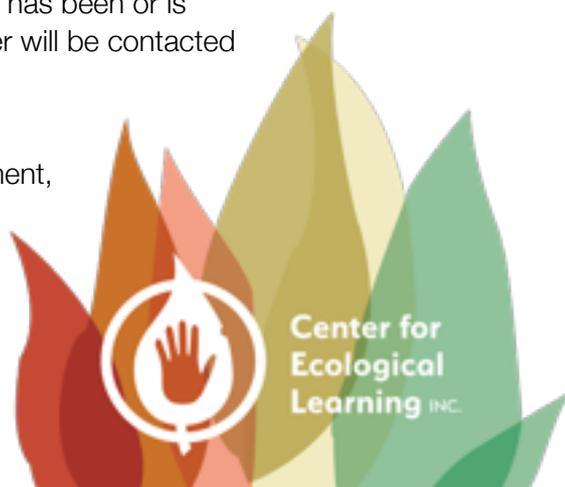
Reasonable Suspicion means fair and practical reason to believe an incident involving abuse has occurred based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumour or observation of behaviour.

The details of those reporting abuse will be kept private and confidential.

A documented reporting process with escalating procedures has been established by CEL for handling allegations of abuse.

The escalating procedures will be as follows:

- If there is reasonable suspicion that a Vulnerable Person has been or is suffering abuse, the Police and the Organisation's Insurer will be contacted immediately.
- If assistance is required to contact the Police and the Organisation's Insurer, or report to CEL senior management, the following Board Members can be contacted:
 - Tim Fry, Chairperson – 0435 542 698.





oAlexandra Balnaves, Board Member – 0413 447 293.

- The automatic suspension from all work or other duties within CEL of any person while under investigation by the police;
- The automatic termination of their employment, or involvement with CEL if found guilty of committing abuse, either by internal investigation or by a court.

CEL will ensure that those accused of perpetrating abuse are afforded respect and support until a final determination is made in the courts.

If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be swept under the carpet.
- Making the Vulnerable Person aware of the obligation to report.
- Not pushing the Vulnerable Person to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the Vulnerable Person that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Reporting the abuse to the appropriate authority.
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator. If the Employee or Volunteer is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it is required that another person assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation.
- Ensuring all physical evidence is safeguarded and made available to the Police as soon as practicable.
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Providing the Vulnerable Person with access to counselling.

Any disclosures by a Vulnerable Person, reports of suspected abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.

9. Alcohol & Drugs

The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on CEL grounds or during an activity is not to be allowed or condoned by any Employee or Volunteer. Any Vulnerable Person found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counselled and family contacted.

Any Vulnerable Person required to take prescription medication administered by an Employee or Volunteer, will provide a letter from their physician or guardian to the relevant CEL activity leader.

10. Further Information

If further information or clarification is required in respect to this policy, enquiries should be directed to CEL Board Chairperson

