

PREVENTION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Version	01	Scheduled review	22/08/2027
Staff Consultation:	16/04/2024		
Board Approval:	22/08/2024		

Palms Australia is committed to maintaining an organisational culture that promotes the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse & Harassment (PSEAH) in all its activities. This policy outlines our commitment to preventing and responding to instances of PSEAH involving our staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, and any other individuals we interact with during our operations.

SCOPE

The following must comply with this policy in the course of their duties and when representing Palms Australia:

- Palms Australia Board members, staff volunteers and contractors
- All program participants
- All other associated parties, including partner organisations

This policy applies at all times, including outside of office hours when travelling or in communities eg: field trips.

The policy covers incidents related to Palms Australia participants, community members, all personnel, accompanying dependents, and partner organisations related to Palms Australia's work or related activities.

DEFINITIONS

Child/children: in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'child' means every human being under the age of 18, unless earlier under the law applicable to the child. Palms Australia considers a child to be a person under the age of 18.

Fraternisation: any relationship that involves or appears to involve partiality, preferential treatment, or improper use of rank or position including but not limited to voluntary sexual behaviour. It could include sexual behaviour not amounting to intercourse, a close and emotional relationship involving public displays of affection or private intimacy and the public expression of intimate relations.

Sexual Exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another person.

Sexual Abuse: The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Sexual Harassment: Any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours, or other verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile or environment.

Transactional Sex: the exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including favour.

Victim/Survivor: a person who is, or has been, sexually exploited, harassed or abused.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Palms Australia upholds the right of all people to live a life free from sexual violence, exploitation, and harassment regardless of their gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion, nationality, or socio-economic-cultural status. Palms has zero-tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) of any kind. We recognise that some individuals within communities may be more vulnerable to SEAH, including children and vulnerable adults. We are committed to creating a safe and supportive environment that safeguards all the people we work with, and the communities we work for.

We recognise that our personnel (staff and volunteers) and organisation hold a privileged position in our work and that there are unequal power dynamics within the organisations and the communities we work with. We understand that we are trusted by project participants, communities, partner organisations, personnel, donors, and members of the public to take reasonable measures to prevent and manage the hazards involved in the delivery of our work and appropriately investigate and report incidents if they occur.

Safeguarding adults and children: Palms Australia recognise intersections between poverty, vulnerability, and discrimination. We also recognise the inequality between genders, between community development practitioners, volunteers and beneficiary communities, and the unequal power dynamics which may also exist within an organisation. We recognise that intersections between these factors may create a vulnerability to SEAH. Palms Australia expects personnel in all their interactions to respect diversity, promote gender equality, social inclusion, encourage accountability, and to take a strong "do no harm" approach.

Act to prevent and report SEAH: Palms Australia requires that all personnel and partner organisations take measures to prevent the occurrence of SEAH. All personnel and partner organisations are required to report any suspicions or SEAH concerns related to Palms Australia activities or work.

Expected behaviours: Given differing local contexts, Palms workers and program participants may be faced with a range of unfamiliar social, cultural, financial, or personal settings when working or volunteering overseas. Communities trust that the people representing Palms will always conduct themselves in a professional manner and not engage in behaviour contrary to the safety or wellbeing of the children and adults they encounter.

Shared responsibility and accountability at all levels of the organisation: All Palms Australia personnel at all levels of the organisation and our partner organisations, have a responsibility to contribute to a culture which prevents and encourages reporting of SEAH. The Board and Executive Director have overall accountability for the implementation of the policy.

Transparency and accountability: Palms Australia is committed to ensuring that participants, personnel, partner organisations and members of the public can access information on our policy and know how to report incidents or concerns related to Palms Australia's work. Information is made accessible through Palms Australia contacts and available on the website.

A survivor-centred approach: Palms Australia prioritises the rights, wishes, needs, and empowerment of survivors of SEAH in both the prevention of and response to SEAH incidents.

WORKING WITH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Palms Australia requires that all partner organisations working with Palms have an equivalent standard of and commitment to safeguarding practices to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. This may be confirmed by partner organisation adoption of the Palms PSEAH Policy as their own. Palms Australia's Partnership Agreements outline each party's responsibilities within the partnership. All Palms staff are responsible for ensuring projects and partnerships comply with Palms Australia's policies.

The partnership agreements outline the process for any breaches of the terms of the agreement, including failure to report any incidents or concerns regarding PSEAH or failure to take corrective action if SEAH has occurred, may result in termination of the agreement and partnership. All levels of staff are required to report any concerns or breaches of the agreement or Code of Conduct.

PREVENTION MEASURES

Palms Australia is committed to prevention through awareness-raising and building our safeguarding capacity. Palms Australia expects all personnel to uphold our values and standards of behaviour as representatives of our organisation.

Training and Awareness: all Palms Australia workers, volunteers and Board members will undergo training on PSEAH policies, procedures and best practices before engaging in any activities.

Code of Conduct

Palms Australia personnel must abide by the Code of Conduct and the organisations' policies related to the delivery or engagement of Palms Australia's work. The PSEAH standards of conduct listed below are articulated in the organisation's Code of Conduct. All personnel are provided with an induction and required to sign the documents acknowledging their understanding of the PSEAH Policy and Code of Conduct.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT:

- Palms Australia sets high expectations of all personnel and prohibits SEAH related behaviours.
- Palms Australia has zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment of any kind.
- Palms Australia prohibits transactional sex (the exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours) while engaged in the delivery or related to Palms Australia programs or activities.

- Palms Australia prohibits fraternisation (any relationship that involves, or appears to involve, partiality, preferential treatment or improper use of rank or position including but not limited to voluntary sexual behaviour) while engaged in the delivery of Palms Australia programs and activities. Palms Australia personnel or related parties must inform their Palms Australia contact or manager regarding existing or emerging relationships.
- Palms Australia requires personnel to disclose all charges or convictions related to Child Abuse or SEAH that occurred prior or occurs during engagement with Palms Australia.
- Palms Australia requires personnel to report any concerns, suspected or alleged incidents of Child Abuse or SEAH or breaches of Palms Australia policies or procedures related to Palms Australia's work or activities.
- Palms Australia requires all personnel and partner organisations to report any concerns. See Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct for SEAH related to children.

RECRUITMENT, SCREENING, AND TRAINING

Palms Australia is committed to undertaking robust recruitment, screening, and training processes to ensure the engagement of appropriate personnel for delivering Palms Australia's programs in Australia and overseas. Palms Australia's recruitment and screening processes include police checks, working with children checks as required for the role, verbal referee checks, reference checks, and behavioural interview questions.

Safe Programming and risk assessments

Palms Australia recognises that our work in communities both in Australia and overseas has a number of potential hazards to all project participants. Palms Australia personnel are required to consider and implement strategies in their programs, activities, and areas of work to prevent incidents of SEAH.

To achieve this, the relevant worker will:

- Assess the Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) risk in existing and emerging programs (and in the communities in which they are implemented). Risk considerations should be continuously monitored in existing program risk assessments.
- Manage SEAH risks identified in its programs through the implementation of PSEAH measures (outlined within this PSEAH policy), and take actions as required.
- Continually assess and actively minimise situations where individuals are exposed to the risk of SEAH.
- Conduct induction for new staff and visitors and provided regular training sessions for staff, volunteers and participants on Palms Australia's PSEAH policy and Code of Conduct.

Reporting Mechanisms: Confidential reporting mechanisms will be established to allow individuals to report instances of PSEAH without fear of reprisal.

Interaction with other policies and documents

- Child Protection Policy
- Palms Australia Code of Conduct
- Anti-Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying and Whistleblower Policy
- Complaints Management Policy
- Organisation Manual
- Risk Management Matrix

- Modern Slavery Policy

Alignment with international laws and conventions.

Palms Australia complies with the ACFID quality principles, Australian and local legislation, and continuously works to strengthen our safeguarding capacity across the organisation.

Related Laws: International Conventions; International Bill of Human Rights, The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australian and local legislations in the countries in which we operate.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed from time to time in light of current good practice and applicable regulatory advice.

VERSION CONTROL

Version	Purpose/ Change	Author	Date	Review	Date
01.1	Initial draft	Jen Wiggins	3 April 2024	Soraya Kassim	28 April 2024