

ROMA RURAL STUDENT HOSTEL

CHILD SAFETY RISK

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2020

(16/03/2020)

References:

<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/2018-10-29/act-1999-010>

<https://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/publications/categories/reports/assets/gov-response-royal-commission-child-abuse.pdf>

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/WhatIsBullying/DefinitionOfBullying>

<https://childsafesafe.humanrights.gov.au/about/what-child-safe-organisation>

<https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card/system/review>

<https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/practice-manual/pg-assess-risk-of-harm.pdf>

<http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/education/management/Procedure%20Attachments/School%20Excursions/school-excursions-and-international-school-study-tours.pdf>

PURPOSE

Roma Rural Student Hostel (RRSH) is committed to providing safe environments for those who may be vulnerable to the risk of harm, injury or abuse. We value the participation of young people and seek to ensure they are protected, respected and cared for appropriately whilst participating in our various activities. Current legislation ([Child Protection Act 1999](#)) also espouses a duty of care for young people.

SCOPE

Roma Rural Student Hostel interacts with children in a variety of hostel contexts. These provisions apply to employees and volunteers who are responsible for securing a safe environment for children in the care of the Roma Rural Student Hostel.

DEFINITIONS

Young Person: an individual under 18 year of age

Volunteer: an individual who has been assigned or given a role or responsibility of any kind within the hostel while not being paid for the service they provide.

Breach: is any action or inaction by any member of the organisation, including children and young people that fails to comply with any part of the strategy.

Harm: The Child Protection Act 1999 section 9 defines harm to a child as: any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:

- a) Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or
- b) Sexual abuse or exploitation
- c) A single act, omission or circumstance of
- d) A series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

Physical Harm: may include beating, shaking, burning, biting or grabbing hard enough to leave a mark, throwing a child or strangulation, to the extent that that are lasting physical effects.

Emotional Harm: includes constant criticism, belittling, teasing of a young person, withholding praise and affection, or constant yelling. Emotional harm can also be caused by a failure to provide the psychological nurturing necessary for a young person's physical and emotional growth and development.

Child Abuse: is anything which individuals, institutions or processes do (or fail to do) which directly or indirectly harms children in the here and now and/or damages their prospects of a safe and healthy development into adulthood.

Neglect: includes the ongoing failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life and adequate supervision needed for optimal growth and development.

Sexual Harm: may take many forms, from sexual jokes, innuendo in conversation and showing pornographic images to a child, to sexual touching and invasive sexual acts.

Suspicion of harm: concern by significant changes in behaviour or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries.

Disclosure of harm: a disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Roma Rural Student Hostel is committed to ensuring that its employees and volunteers provide a safe and caring environment to all children and young people. The employees and volunteers will treat them with respect and understanding and address their concerns at all times. Roma Rural Student Hostel will endeavour to provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people through:

Awareness: ensure that all employees and volunteers are aware of the problem of child abuse and the potential risks to children.

Prevention: ensure, through increased awareness and risk management strategies that the risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is eliminated or minimised.

Responding: ensure that action is taken to support and protect children and young people where concerns arise regarding suspected abuse or neglect.

Reporting: ensure that employees and volunteers have clearly defined processes to implement when concerns arise regarding the safety of children and young people.

OBJECTIVES AND AIMS

- Demonstrate a commitment to promote the wellbeing of children and to protect them from harm by taking reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable risk of harm or abuse to a child.
- Reaffirm on an annual basis the commitment to promote the wellbeing of children and to protect them from harm.
- Communicate the Child Safety Risk Management Strategy to employees, volunteers, parents, young people and visitors.
- Where there is risk of harm to a child who is either a client, volunteer or participant, ensure legislative responsibilities are followed through to protect the child. For example:
 - Carry out risk assessment processes and positive notice working with children check (Blue Card)
 - Co-operate with authorities (e.g. Queensland Police and Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services) in the investigation of suspected cases of harm and abuse.
 - Train and educate employees and volunteers who work with children and young people in child protection policies and procedures.
- When confronted with disclosures of harm to children and young people the Roma Rural Student Hostel will respond in the best interests of the child or young person subjected to the harm.
- An allegation or suspicion of harm that involves an offence against a child or young person will be taken seriously and responded to in an appropriate timely manner.

THE CHILD SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The strategy consists of appropriate policies, procedures and practices that, once implemented, are intended to safeguard and minimise the risk to children while in the care of the Roma Rural Student Hostel. The strategy acknowledges that risk assessment processes are needed to identify risks; implement control measures minimising such risks; and respond in an appropriate manner to suspected and/or reported cases of harm in an efficient and timely manner.

Further, to create a child friendly environment collaboration must exist between the Hostel, its employees, volunteers and families in ensuring the interests of the children and young people is upheld

CODE OF CONDUCT: WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

All employees and volunteers working with children must ensure that they:

- At all times be committed to safety and promote an environment that nurtures the wellbeing of children and young people.
- Be a positive role model by ensuring appropriate actions and behaviours.
- Ensure, where practicable, another adult is present or close by when providing help to an individual child, young person or group and that the activity can be observed by others.
- Listen to children and young people to develop meaningful and respectful relationships which promote dignity of the child or young person.
- Demonstrate prudent judgement in initiating and responding to physical contact and in the expression of affection, to protect the wellbeing of the child or young person.
- Do not supply a child with any alcohol or illegal substances.
- Take prompt action to end any dangerous or potentially dangerous behaviour and or inappropriate actions.
- Familiarise oneself with the causes and signs of child abuse or neglect, the steps to be taken for the protection of children, and the procedures to follow if abuse or neglect is suspected or observed.
- Report concerns and/or incidents of inappropriate behaviour to the relevant authority.
- Maintain a current with positive notice letter and Blue Card and advise the relevant authority if your Blue Card is cancelled or cannot be renewed.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Board Members:

People in positions of authority and in supervisory roles play a key role in modelling expected behaviour and providing appropriate training for employees and volunteers. People holding these positions can minimise the risk to children and young people by:

- Holding a Blue Card and Positive Notice Letter
- Supporting and encouraging a safe and friendly environment;
- Adopting a positive and proactive response to inappropriate behaviour by employees and young people;
- Monitoring and supervising employees and volunteers performance;
- Ensuring employees and volunteers are trained appropriately in working with children and young people and know their obligations;
- Ensuring that complaints, suspicions and/or allegations are responded to in a prompt and professional manner;
- Ensuring that victimisation is not tolerated; and
- Ensuring that employees and volunteers who undertake activities with children and young people have clearly articulated and documented role descriptions.
- Ensure the Child Safety Risk Management Strategy is readopted on an annual basis.
- Ensure that relevant Risk Assessments for all activities involving the participation of children and young adults are undertaken and revised where necessary.

Employees and Volunteers working with Children and Young People

- Hold a Blue Card and Positive Notice Letter
- Abide by the Code of conduct: Working with Children and Young People
- Undertake any training or education in relation to child safety

Families

Families can support the Roma Rural Student Hostel's risk management and child friendly approach by:

- Reporting where a child may be experiencing bullying or harassment whilst participating in an activity; and
- Reporting where there is a suspicion that a child or young person is being harmed whilst at the Hostel or participating in an activity.

Children and Young People

Children and young people themselves contribute to their environment by:

- Showing respect towards other children, young people and adults;
- Not placing themselves at risk of harm and keeping themselves safe;
- Reporting where they may experience or observe inappropriate behaviour or unsafe situations.

Preparation of Employees and Volunteers Working with Children and Young People

Volunteers and Employees need to be screened, prepared, nurtured and supported to undertake work at the Hostel. There is an expectation that employees and volunteers who work with children and young people will:

- Report issues, activities, equipment and procedures that are unsafe and potential areas of risk;
- Not engage in inappropriate behaviour;
- Use appropriate language and interactions that empower children and young people;
- Provide the highest standard of service provision;
- Participate in professional training and development; and
- Understand the requirements of their role with children and young people.

To achieve the above outcomes volunteers and employees members will need to participate in:

- A recruitment and selection process;
- An induction into the organisation;
- Training in the role; and
- Performance feedback or an appraisal system (as required)

POSITIVE NOTICE TO WORK WITH CHILDREN LETTER AND BLUE CARD

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 requires the Roma Rural Student Hostel to develop and implement a procedure that takes into account screening requirements for volunteers and paid employees including those who:

- Have begun employment pending outcome of a Blue Card application
- Hold a Blue Card
- Are not required to hold a Blue Card
- Are having Blue Card reassessed.

The positive notice to work with children letter and the issuing of a Blue Card is a national check of a person's criminal history. Disciplinary information held by certain professional organisations or information from police investigations into allegations of serious child related sexual offences will also be considered.

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 prescribes child related regulated employment categories in which the positive notice to work with children letter and Blue Card is mandatory.

As part of the Roma Rural Student Hostel Risk Management Strategy, a Blue Card Register is to be kept and maintained by this organisation.

PAID EMPLOYEES

All paid employees working with children are required to hold a positive notice and Blue Card where they work:

- Eight consecutive days or more;
- Once a week or more, each week over four weeks;
- Once a fortnight or more, each fortnight over eight weeks; or
- Once a month or more, each month over six months.

An employee may not work whilst awaiting the outcome of a Blue Card and the Roma Rural Student Hostel must ensure safeguards are implemented to minimise any risk. Safeguards may include such things as:

- Regular supervision of the worker;
- The employee is rostered on shift only when there are other employees members on duty; and
- The employee must only work in a group scenario with children and young people.

The Roma Rural Student Hostel must warn all potential employees (paid employees, volunteers & students that it is an offence for a disqualified person to sign a Blue Card application. For example: *I am legally obliged to warn you that it is an offence for a disqualified person to sign a Blue Card application form*". The employee also must sign the declaration on the application form stating they have been warned that it is an offence for disqualified person to sign a Blue Card application. It is an offence for an employer not to provide the warning.

Where a person submits an application and it is approved, a positive notice (letter) and Blue Card will be issued. If an application is refused a negative notice is issued, prohibiting the person from working in regulated employment categories as defined by the Act. For more information and forms refer to <http://www.ccyipcq.qld.gov.au/empfoyment/index.html>.

The Roma Rural Student Hostel must submit an **Authorisation to confirm a valid Blue Card Application Form** if they employ someone who already holds a Blue Card. This is mandatory for all employers and ensures the Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian has current employment details for all Blue Card holders and that the Council, Commission or Ministry will be notified by the Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian of any relevant change in Blue Card holder's status.

A volunteer must hold a positive notice letter and a Blue Card before they can begin working with children and young people, regardless of how often they come into contact with them.

Blue Cards for volunteers are valid for three years and there is no application fee.

Exemptions

A positive notice letter and blue Card is not required if the person is a:

- Child under 18 years of age who are volunteers (except students required to work in regulated employment as part of their studies)
- Parent volunteering their services or conducting activities through the Hostel where their child/children is involved in the same or similar activity.
- Police officers and registered teachers (they will need to apply for an exemption) when providing child-related services which are outside of their professional duties (such as volunteering with a community organisation).
- The Roma Rural Student Hostel must submit an **Authorisation to confirm a valid Blue Card application form** If they engage a volunteer who already holds a Blue Card. This is mandatory for all employers and ensures the Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian has current employment details for all Blue Card holders and that the Roma Hostel will be notified by the Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian of any relevant change in Blue Card holder's status.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian have developed a framework for Risk Management that comprises three key elements:

1. Commitment for the Roma Rural Student Hostel to a child safe culture;
2. Capabilities of people, including employees, volunteers, families and children to prevent harm; and
3. Consistent procedures for ensuring those working with children hold a current positive notice check and for guiding activities including risk management.

The [Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000](#) requires the Roma Rural Student Hostel to undertake risk assessments of activities and services provided. As part of the overall risk management strategy, assisting any potential risks is critical in minimising any harm to a child or young person.

A risk is anything that can cause harm or loss to a child or young person.

In assessing any activity or service provision within the Roma Hostel **it** is important to consider how harm might occur; why might harm occur and when harm could occur.

In the planning of Roma Rural Student Hostel based activities that involve children and young people those in management and planning roles must consider:

- What risks are involved?
- What risks could arise?
- How likely is it that these risks could occur?
- Are there policies; How well are these understood and implemented in practice?
- Are new policies required?
- Are there legislative requirements that change the way the service operates or activities are provided?

After risks have been identified for an activity or service provision, the level of risk, including the likelihood and subsequent consequences, must be determined using a risk calculator (see Risk Calculator).

Appendix 4 Risk Assessment Sheet is an example of a completed risk assessment of an activity. Once the level of risk is determined, the risks can be prioritised and options for treatment can be considered.

In examining how to treat the risk, **all** possible options must be identified, the cost effectiveness and feasibility determined. Then there is the process of developing and implementing strategies to minimise the risk.

Risk assessments must be conducted on all activities provided within the Roma Rural Student Hostel that involve children and young people. The completed risk assessments are to be listed in the Risk Management Plan.

Contractors and Visitors

There may be times in which visitors and contractors (such as a trade's person) come to the Roma Rural Student Hostel. It is expected that the Roma Rural Student Hostel be aware of the presence of these persons and the reason they are there.

In most cases it will be appropriate for a visitor/contractor to document their presence via a visitor's log. It is important that the visitor/contractor is made aware of our commitment to a child friendly environment and there are expectations that any visitor or contractor will act in an appropriate manner.

It is expected that visitors and/or contractors are appropriately supervised at all times.

Planning for Children and Young People's Activities

There are a number of basic principles that must be considered when planning activities for children, these include:

- Ensuring the activity supports the interest of children and young people;
- Ensuring children and young people are not left unattended and knowing where children and young people are at all times;
- Providing constant adult supervision;
- Ensuring children and young people are supervised appropriately and adequately by adults (depending on numbers, age of children and activity); and
- Ensuring children and young people do not willfully place the health and safety of others and/or themselves at risk.

Under the auspice of the Roma Rural Student Hostel there may be occasions where children and young people participate in activities with or conducted by other organisations. In these cases, additional risks may present that the Roma Rural Student Hostel will have little or no control over. Where risks are identified it is imperative that a risk assessment is undertaken and that a decision to proceed with the activity is based on the best interests and wellbeing of the children and young people involved.

Special Events Record Keeping

The Roma Rural Student Hostel must be able to account at all times for the whereabouts of a child or young person in their care. This is critical in high risk times such as where there is an emergency situation requiring the evacuation of a building or on an excursion where there is a high volume of children and young people. A sign in and sign out system is required.

Excursion or Activity Consent

Where children and young people access a one off excursion or activity, the Roma Rural Student Hostel requires written permission from their parents/guardians (e.g. participating in child therapy or camps). Such permissions need to be in writing and consistent with legislative requirements relating to the activity offered.

At times, a child or young person may have a special need (e.g. dietary requirement, medication and allergies). It is expected that this information is conveyed by the parent/guardian to activity coordinators in a documented form as part of the intake information required to participate in the activity or service.

Mobile Phone Usage

The following guidelines have been developed so students and parents/guardians understand the appropriate use of Mobile Phones within the Roma Rural Student Hostel. Students are made aware it is a privilege, not a right to have a Mobile Phone at the hostel, and the use of mobile phones should not impact fellow students with regard to privacy and noise disturbance.

1. All Mobile Phones must be registered with the Roma Rural Student Hostel Houseparents by completing a Mobile Phone Registration Form.
2. Mobile Phones with video, photographic or sound taking/recording and playing capabilities may be used or brought into the Hostel; however, if they are used in an inappropriate manner, they will be confiscated immediately by the Houseparent/s. It is not appropriate to record oneself or fellow students and post on social media, without written permission from parents.
3. At all times, care and consideration must be given to other people in the Hostel whilst using Mobile Phone. Mobile Phones may not be used during the following times:

During study times	7:30pm to 9:00pm
During meal times	7:00 am to 7:30 am -6:30pm to 7:00pm
During Bed times	9:30pm to 7:00am

4. Mobile Phones are to be handed to the Houseparents by 9:15pm each night. If phones are required outside of these times for the purposes of study or family emergencies, an extension on times may be approved by the houseparent. Phones will be returned to students the following morning at 7:30am and must be returned to the office by 8:00am unless special permission in extenuating circumstances. Please note: this rule is at the Houseparents discretion.
5. Houseparents are not responsible for the safety of, or monitoring the usage of a child's mobile phone. Any misuse, theft, damage, or loss of a student's mobile phone is not the responsibility of the Houseparents. The Hostel strongly advises that all Mobile phones are clearly named and locked with a PIN.
6. Parents are advised that it is preferable for a parental lock to be applied to their child's phone, and it is requested that phones be monitored by parents for installation of unsuitable apps, (a list of which is to be compiled).
7. Phones are not to be taken to school. During school hours, Mobile Phones are to be switched off and stored securely in the house parent's office. Dependent of behaviour, phones may be issued on return from school, at the discretion of the houseparent.
8. If a Mobile Phone is confiscated for any reason, it is not permissible to ask another student for the use of theirs, and it is not permissible for students to allow their fellow students use of their phones in any circumstance, other than an emergency.
9. Students are made aware that it is a criminal offence to use Mobile Phones to menace, harass or offend another person. Students who use their Mobile Phones to engage in personal attacks, harassing another person, posting of private information about another person using SMS messages, or social media, taking or sending photos of objectionable images, bully others, use vulgar, derogatory or obscene language while using a Mobile Phone will be referred to the Disciplinary Code and the Police may be notified.

Computer Usage

Children and young people may have mobile phones and access to computers and the internet through services provided by the Roma Rural Student Hostel. It is important to be aware that such children and young people may be at risk of potential abuse and harm though:

- Violent literature;
- Potential abusers;
- Websites containing information on inappropriate or illegal activity; and
- Inappropriate use of computers and the internet by employees and volunteers in the company of children and young people.

Times that involve computers and the internet demand clear protocols be implemented, including references to the hostel's expectations of:

- Use of computers by children and young people;
- Use of computers by employees and volunteers;
- Use of computers by employees in the company of children;
- Appropriate screen savers;
- Appropriate email usage;
- Types of sites not considered appropriate for children and young people to access;
- Types of sites employees and volunteers can access in the presence of children;
- The files stored on computers; and
- Privacy and security of personal information stored on computers.

Audio-Visual Material and/or Photography

Issues to consider when taking photographs of children and young people may include:

- Do you have permission to take and use images of children or young people?
- Have you asked the child or young person how they may feel about the use of their image?
- Will you put the child or young person at risk if you photograph them?
- Have you provided enough information about the image so the parent/guardian can give informed consent?
- How will others interpret the image?
- Does the use of the image exploit the child or young person in any way?
- Have you considered issues of confidentiality and privacy?

Transportation of children

It is important if children are transported as part of a Roma Rural Student Hostel activity their safety is of the highest consideration and the following guidelines are adhered to:

- Drivers need to have a roadworthy and insured vehicle and a current driver's open licence. The decision as to who should transport children should be at the discretion of the house parent. If a **parent** wishes their child to be transported with a family member or friend who does not hold an open licence, written permission to travel with that person must be provided on each occasion.
- If the vehicle does appear unsafe or unroadworthy and may place at risk the safety of a child, the house parent should deny the use of the vehicle.
- When children and young people are being transported in a private vehicle, the supervision of that child whilst travelling in the vehicle and during rest stops lies with the driver.
- During long trips drivers must ensure they take appropriate rest breaks.
- Drivers should take precautions to protect themselves from situations that may give rise to an allegation of inappropriate behaviour. It is recommended that there be more than one passenger in a vehicle. If a group of children are being transported home regularly it is
- Recommended that the child or young person who is dropped off last is varied among the group members.
- When travelling on public transport, activity coordinators should not abdicate their supervision responsibilities to the driver. Responsibility shall always remain with the house parent.
- When hiring transport such as taxi and coaches, there should be an appropriate ratio of adults to children for supervision and safety. The house parents must ensure that drivers act in an appropriate manner.

Incident Reporting

When a child experiences an incident that may result in an illness, injury and/or serious injury whilst participating at the Roma Rural Student Hostel an incident report must be completed. The completed form is then to be given to the responsible authority. It is expected that an incident investigation register is kept with information pertaining to the incident, and action taken to minimise the risk to others from a reoccurrence.

Legislative obligations apply to the Roma Rural Student Hostel when serious injury is experienced by a child or young person (e.g. where injury requires medical treatment or an overnight stay in hospital). It is expected that the Roma Hostel implements procedures encompassing these requirements to meet obligations under [Work Health and Safety Act](#) and [Regulation 2011 Qld](#).

HANDLING DISCLOSURES OR SUSPICION OF HARM

Procedures for receiving disclosure of harm

When receiving a disclosure of harm:

- Remain calm and find a private place to talk;
- Don't promise that you'll keep a secret; tell them they have done the right thing in telling you but that you'll need to tell someone who can help keep them safe;
- Only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter; probing questions could cause distress, confusion and interfere with any later enquiries, and
- Do not attempt to conduct your own investigation or mediate an outcome between the parties involved

Reporting Guidelines for Disclosures or Suspicions of Harm

The Roma Rural Student Hostel accepts that there may be times where a child or young person may disclose harm or abuse or there may be times where there is a suspicion of harm or abuse. It is critical that employees and volunteers know what is expected of them in these circumstances. All reporting of allegations is highly sensitive and should be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Following are the actions the Roma Rural Student Hostel will take immediately following a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Documenting a suspicion of harm

If you or others have concerns about the safety of a child, record your concerns in a non-judgmental and accurate manner as soon as possible. If a parent explains a noticeable mark on a child, record your own observations as well as accurate details of the conversation. If you see unsafe or harmful actions towards a child in your care, intervene immediately, provided it is safe to do so. If it is unsafe, call the police for assistance.

Documenting a disclosure of harm

Record the details as soon as possible so that they are accurately captured. Include:

- Time, date and place of the disclosure
- 'word for word'; what happened and what was said, including anything you said and any actions that have been taken, and
- Date of report and signature.

If notes are being taken whilst a disclosure is being made it is important to ensure that the child or young person is informed why the documentation is occurring and its importance. The explanation should be appropriate to the age and level of understanding of the child or young person.

Reporting the disclosure or suspicion of harm to authorities

The Roma Rural Student Hostel will not conduct its own enquiries in relation to the disclosure or suspicion of harm or try to come to an agreement between the parties involved. The person who receives a disclosure or suspects harm is to report it to the relevant authority to ensure information provided is comprehensive and accurate.

Report the matter to:

- Department of communities (Child safety Services) on free call 1800 811 819, or
- Queensland Police Service.

Management of Epidemic Outbreaks, Invasion or other Apocalyptic events

The Roma Rural Student Hostel would evaluate the circumstances of the event and would seek direction from the relevant Government Departments responsible for decision making in the circumstances.

For the current outbreak of COVID19 a separate document has been prepared.

https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-information-for-schools-and-early-childhood-centres-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-information-sheet-for-schools-and-early-childhood-centres_0.pdf