



Child safety at Guides

At Girl Guides NSW & ACT, we are a child-safe and child-friendly organisation. We have:

1. a child protection policy
2. a code of conduct for youth and adult members
3. a process for selecting and screening our Leaders
4. a process for training Leaders in appropriate behaviour and procedures
5. a child-friendly program
6. rules to protect children while they do adventurous activities
7. procedures in place if you have concerns

1. The child protection policy at Guides

Girl Guides Australia has a clear Child Protection Policy: *'Girl Guides Australia recognises that all children should be protected from situations which would jeopardise their general welfare and safety.'*

These words come from *Guide Lines* (2007), the official policy for Girl Guides Australia Incorporated and its State organisations. If you want to consult *Guide Lines*, please ask your daughter's Leader. It will be made available to you on request.

2. Code of Conduct

Our code of conduct, to which all members are expected to adhere, is very explicit about children's safety and respect for their rights:

Girl Guides Australia requires that each adult member at all times will:

- *abide by the Guide Promise and Law, the Aims and Principles of Guiding and all other rules and policies of Guides Australia and the relevant State organisation;*
- *treat youth members with respect and accept responsibility for the physical and emotional safety of youth members, as required by duty of care;*
- *recognise the importance of and encourage the spiritual development of youth members according to Girl Guides Australia policy;*
- *not use Guiding to promote personal beliefs, behaviours or practices where these are not compatible with Guiding;*
- *adhere to the drugs, smoking and alcohol policies of the organisation;*
- *behave in such a way as to bring credit to Guiding and maintain the standards of Guiding;*
- *respect everyone's right to privacy;*
- *accept the need to avoid unaccompanied or unobserved activities, including discussions and interviews, with individual youth members; and*
- *recognise that physical, sexual or verbal abuse, bullying, tormenting or ridicule is unacceptable behaviour by any member and will take appropriate action to deal with such behaviour.*

3. Leader screening

Leader screening requirements depend on whether the prospective Leader resides in New South Wales or

the ACT. New South Wales residents must complete a Working with Children Check and a Prohibited Employment Declaration. The latter acknowledges the Leader's awareness that she is ineligible to apply for, undertake or remain in child related employment if she has been convicted of a 'serious sex offence' as defined in the *Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1988*. ACT residents must complete the Declaration and an Australian Federal Police Check.

These requirements conform with government regulations for any adults working with children as volunteers or paid workers, and help prevent unsuitable people from working with children. Each prospective Leader also requires two referees.

4. Training

Our Australian Adult Leadership Program covers child safety. All adults working in Guiding are made aware of what steps to take if they suspect abuse. This is covered in training and reiterated by Leaders of Adults. Leaders are aware that girls need to be under the supervision of at least two adults, and at least one must be a Leader.

5. Child-friendly program

Shared leadership is an integral part of the Australian Guide Program. Girls are an essential part of the decision making process. They contribute to the planning of their Unit's program. Their feedback is frequently invited. They are surveyed regularly, and their comments are used for planning activities.

6. Rules for adventurous activities

Guide Lines contains a policy on the responsible conduct of adult members to ensure girls enjoy adventurous activities in safety. This includes obtaining approval before undertaking adventurous activities, having a trained instructor where required, adhering to sun safe and safe transport policies, and ensuring girls are with at least one Leader and one other adult during activities.

7. Procedure if you have concerns

Guide Lines states that each State Guide office should be referred to for protection information relevant to that State. In New South Wales and the ACT, if you have a concern, please follow this procedure:

Contact your daughter's Region Leader (if you know who she is), or the State Commissioner direct.

Ring Guide House on (02) 9698 3322. Say:

'I want to speak to the State Commissioner about child abuse'. The person who takes your call will transfer you immediately to the State Commissioner, if she is available, or ensure she returns your call as soon as she possibly can.

If you report direct to another authority first, Girl Guides NSW & ACT will not receive any notification and will not be able to put an alert in place while the matter is being examined.