



<b>W.E.C. International Ltd.</b>	<b>Effective: September 2020</b>
<b>Safeguarding Vulnerable Individuals Policy</b>	<b>Replaces: Child Protection 2014</b>
<b>Policy Number 202009-PVI</b>	<b>Accepted by the Board 10 Sept 2020</b>

## 1. Preamble - A Theology of Safeguarding

Each and every person is fearfully and wonderfully made, knitted together in their mother's womb, and loved by God who knows everything about them (Psalm 139). Every person is precious and has worth to God. Jesus tells us that we are all called to love others and to treat them with the respect, dignity and love that we would want to receive ourselves (Matthew 22:39). Because of this, we want to be a place of welcome and care for all – whatever a person's age, abilities, health or history. Our safeguarding is based on Biblical values where we need to give truth in a loving family and Christian community to the children and vulnerable adults we care for. (Eph 6:4, Matt 19:13-15, Mark 9:37, Col 3:21, 1 Tim 5:8-10 etc). Doing whatever we can to protect them from all forms of harm is a minimum part of this.

Jesus was not afraid to challenge injustice, ignorance and arrogance. He spent time with vulnerable people and he spoke out for those who had no voice (Matthew 23). Because of this we want to be a place of righteousness and justice to protect from abuse, and where we deal effectively with any concerns that arise – however costly that may be. There are very serious warnings about anyone who misleads children (Luke 17:2) and few things have done more damage to lead child victims away from God than abuse. The Bible also has clear commands to protect and care for vulnerable adults (e.g. Deut 10:18-19, Jeremiah 22:3-5, Psalm 146:9 etc).

Safeguarding is the protection of vulnerable adults and children from harm, abuse or neglect. As Christians we are to follow the example of Jesus in His love and care for others. Churches and missions need to be places of safety and peace where safeguarding is a normal part of our practice. We are to work to protect all people from abuse and to love, care and support all who have been affected by abuse.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 All people, regardless of their age, gender, race, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation or family or social background have a right to feel safe, to be safe and to be protected from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

- 2.2 W.E.C. International Ltd. (WEC International) is committed to promoting and protecting the welfare and human rights of people that come into contact with WEC International, particularly vulnerable persons who may be at risk, this includes those we work with as well as our own children and members.
- 2.3 WEC International is committed to be a family-friendly and member-friendly organisation where our people feel safe and loved.
- 2.4 WEC International had a Safeguarding Officer (SO) who is the designated person responsible for the implementation of this policy and is the first point of contact in the case of any allegations of suspicions of abuse or other inappropriate conduct towards vulnerable individuals. If you need to contact our Safeguarding Officer please email us: [safeguarding@wec.com.au](mailto:safeguarding@wec.com.au)

### 3. Purpose

- 3.1 The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that safe environments are created by WEC International which promote and enhance the safety and welfare of all people who come in contact with WEC International, including by:
- (a) setting out the roles and responsibilities of people working in and with WEC International;
  - (b) setting out how WEC International manages safeguarding risks;
  - (c) facilitating the safe management of incidents; and
  - (d) promoting a positive and effective internal culture toward safeguarding.

### 4. Scope

- 4.1 This Policy applies to all members, volunteers, partners, contractors and third parties of WEC International.

### 5. Regulatory context

- 5.1 All Australian jurisdictions have legal requirements around the prevention, protection and reporting of abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable individuals.
- 5.2 The responsible persons for WEC International are required to carry out their duties with due care and diligence, which includes taking care to protect vulnerable individuals. WEC International is also required by the ACNC External Conduct Standards to protect vulnerable individuals delivering or benefiting from overseas programs – including WEC International’s own overseas programs or programs on which WEC International collaborates with third parties.

### 6. Definitions

“**Abuse, neglect or exploitation**” means all forms of physical and mental abuse, exploitation, coercion or ill-treatment, including:

- sexual harassment, bullying or abuse;
- sexual criminal offences and serious sexual criminal offences;
- threats of, or actual violence, verbal abuse, emotional or social abuse;
- cultural or identity abuse such as racial, sexual or gender-based discrimination or hate crime; and
- abuse of power (including spiritual power).

“**at risk**” means at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

“**environment**” is any place that abuse, neglect or exploitation can take place and includes, but not limited to, parks, properties, places to gather, homes, work environments, Social Media, online chats or meeting rooms, video chats such as ‘zoom’, email etc.

“**external authority**” includes the police and any relevant authority.

“**Reasonable grounds to suspect**” means a belief, based on some information, that a person has experienced, is experiencing or may experience abuse, neglect or exploitation. Proof is not required, a suspicion based on information is sufficient.

Questions that may help a person to determine whether they have reasonable grounds to suspect include:

Could you explain to another person why you suspect something? This helps to make sure that your suspicion is based on information.

Would an objective other person, with the same information as you, come to the same conclusion? This helps to ensure the suspicion is as objective as possible.

“**Safeguard**” means protect the welfare and human rights of people that interact with, or are affected by WEC International, particularly those who are vulnerable or at risk.

“**Vulnerable**” means any person who is unable to take care or promote themselves (or their interest) against harm, abuse or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma, disability or any other reason. Vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

Examples may include, but is not limited to: Elderly people who depend on others for care, People with disabilities (including learning disabilities) who depend on others for care, Anyone receiving medical care or official counselling, Mentally ill people, Addicts and alcoholics, Homeless people, Refugees and asylum seekers, Migrants with limited language skills, Prisoners and those on parole or probation, Anyone with a close relative or friend who has recently died.

## 7. Responsibilities

7.1 All people working in or with WEC International must help to safeguard people by:

- (a) maintaining a safe environment for persons in the course of their work;

- (b) ensuring that, if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a person is at risk, they report the suspicions internally and (if required or appropriate) to an external authority; and
- (c) immediately contacting the police if they believe a person is at immediate risk.

7.2 The Board is ultimately responsible for the protection of people that interact with, or are affected by WEC International. It must ensure that:

- (a) WEC International has appropriate and effective policies and processes in place to protect people and that these policies and procedures are implemented;
- (b) WEC International complies with all relevant laws (both Australian and, where relevant, overseas laws) relating to safeguarding, including, in respect of children; and
- (c) WEC International takes a survivor–centric approach to safeguarding.

7.3 The Branch Leader of WEC International must:

- (a) take reasonable steps to protect people, including developing and implementing processes and policies;
- (b) manage safeguarding and legal compliance;
- (c) ensure that reports are made to external authorities when required or appropriate;
- (d) manage reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- (e) ensure that all members, volunteers, partners, contractors and third parties are aware of relevant laws, policies and procedures, including WEC International Code of Conduct;
- (f) ensure that all members, volunteers, partners, contractors and third parties are aware of their obligations to report suspected incidents of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- (g) provide support for all members, volunteers, partners, contractors and third parties in undertaking their responsibilities;
- (h) comply with the requirements under State and Territory Reportable Conduct Schemes.

7.4 All Supervisors/Team Leaders must:

- (a) promote a positive culture towards safeguarding;
- (b) implement this Policy in their area of responsibility;
- (c) ensure that there are appropriate controls in place to prevent, detect and respond to incidents;

- (d) facilitate the reporting process when someone has reasonable grounds to suspect; and
- (e) ensure potential incidents are handled with accountability and transparency and with a survivor-centric approach.

7.5 All members, partners and volunteers of WEC International must:

- (a) familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, policies and procedures for safeguarding;
- (b) report any incident to the Safeguarding Officer and (if required or appropriate) to an external authority when it is reasonable to suspect that a person's safety or welfare is at risk;
- (c) report any suspicion that a person's safety or welfare may be at risk internally or to an external party; and
- (d) provide an environment that is supportive of everyone's emotional and physical safety.

7.6 All contractors and third parties of WEC International must:

- (a) implement the provisions of this Policy and WEC International's procedures in their dealings with WEC International; and
- (b) report any suspicion that an incident may have taken place, is taking place, or could take place to the Safeguarding Officer and (if required or appropriate) to an external authority.

## **8. Identifying vulnerable individuals**

8.1 Vulnerable individuals are people who are unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves against harm or exploitation in varying environments and includes:

- (a) Children (under 18 years of age); and
- (b) Adults who are unable to take care of or protect themselves by reason of:
  - (i) Age;
  - (ii) Illness;
  - (iii) Trauma; and/or
  - (iv) Disability.

8.2 WEC International will take steps to identify vulnerable persons who may be delivering or benefiting from WEC International's programs (including overseas programs).

- 8.3 Vulnerable individuals may be:
- (a) members; or
  - (b) beneficiaries; or
  - (c) volunteers; or
  - (d) third parties, their beneficiaries, staff or volunteers.

## 9. Managing safeguarding risk

9.1 WEC International will manage risks of safeguarding according to the following concepts:

- (a) Holistic - WEC International will regularly assess the risks to people in its operations and develop proportionate controls to mitigate those risks.
- (b) Survivor-centric - WEC International will put survivors at the heart of its approach to safeguarding.
- (c) Lawful - WEC International will ensure that it understands and complies with the law in everything it does, in all jurisdictions in which it works.

9.2 WEC International will manage the risk of safeguarding by:

- (a) having up-to-date and documented risk assessments;
- (b) maintaining a register of WEC International's legal obligations for safeguarding and workplace health and safety in all the jurisdictions in which it operates;
- (c) having an action plan that sets out how it will manage safeguarding;
- (d) having an incident response plan;
- (e) adhering to this Safeguarding Policy and its Code of Conduct;
- (f) doing all reasonable due diligence checks of members, volunteers, partners, contractors, and third parties, including interviews, qualification checks and (for people that come or will come into regular or ongoing contact with children in connection with WEC International's programs) have a valid Working with Children Check or overseas equivalent (if available);
- (g) implementing policies, procedures and systems that introduce controls to reduce the likelihood and consequence of incidents;
- (h) conducting awareness-raising for stakeholders on risks, expectations, individual responsibilities, this Policy and reporting procedures;
- (i) maintaining two reporting processes: a confidential reporting process and an overt reporting process;

- (j) monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness and proportionality of its safeguarding approach;
- (k) take steps to increase awareness within WEC International of the importance of a safe place for vulnerable persons;
- (l) maintain responsive procedures for fulfilling mandatory reporting obligations; and
- (m) maintain responsive procedures for dealing with complaints and issues as they arise.

## **10. Managing incidents**

10.1 Harassment, abuse, neglect and exploitation are all serious misconduct and WEC International reserves the right to:

- (a) take appropriate disciplinary action against those it believes are responsible, which may include dismissal;
- (b) take legal action; and
- (c) report the matter(s) to an external authority.

10.2 Reporting suspected incidents

- (a) All members, volunteers, partners, contractors and third parties must, as soon as practicable, report any suspicion that an incident has taken place, may be taking place, or could take place.
- (b) A person may report a suspected incident internally or to an external authority.
- (c) If a person believes that another person is at risk of immediate harm or the victim of a criminal offence, they must report directly to the police immediately.

10.3 Internal reporting

- (a) A person may report internally to any member of the Board, a Supervisor/Team Leader, the Safeguarding Officer or the Branch Leader.
- (b) A person may make an internal report of a suspected incident confidentially, including with anonymity to the Safeguarding Officer.

10.4 Internal Investigation

- (a) Unless any report is undergoing a police investigation or court hearings, WEC International will implement an internal investigation.
- (b) WEC International and its personnel will:

- (i) afforded Natural Justice to persons affected by the implementation of this policy.
  - (ii) the right to be heard fairly on any issue;
  - (iii) the right to be informed about any complaint made;
  - (iv) the opportunity to present a response to any allegation;
  - (v) the right to have decisions made by an unbiased or disinterested decision maker; and
  - (vi) the right to have any decision based on the evidence and any response presented.
- (c) Implement proceedings and actions under this policy promptly.
  - (d) Keep all Complainants and Respondents adequately informed of the progress of actions resulting from any complaint.
  - (e) Consequences of the internal investigation can be a revoking of WEC Membership, irrespective of any police/court judgments.

#### 10.5 Reporting to an external authority

- (a) any person may report directly to an external authority.
- (b) WEC International must:
  - (i) report any suspected criminal offence to the police;
  - (ii) comply with all donor of funding authority requirements regarding the reporting of incidents; and
  - (iii) report any incident that constitutes significant non-compliance with the Governance Standards or External Conduct Standards to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.
- (c) Where any police action is instituted, or is likely, the conduct of any internal disciplinary proceedings must be postponed until that police action is concluded.

#### 10.6 Responding to suspected incidents

All suspected, perceived, potential or actual incidents must be managed in accordance with WEC International Incident Response Plan.

#### 10.7 Confidentiality

- (a) Confidentiality will be observed with respect to information regarding harm or suspected harm.

- (b) Such confidentiality is subject to obligations under the law or in observing the law, including provisions in the Privacy Act 1988 that authorise disclosure.
- (c) The obligations of confidentiality are subject to the need to disclose, both internally and externally, any information regarding harm or suspected harm.
- (d) The law may require evidence to be given, and relevant documents provided, in relation to actions taken under this policy.

## 10.8 Defamation

- (a) The provision of factual information about harm or suspected harm, given in good faith, in compliance with the law or to a person who needs to know that information, is generally excused from liability for defamation. Fear of being accused of defamation should not be used as an excuse for failure to report harm to the appropriate authorities.

## 10.9 Support

- (a) A person who is the subject of harm caused by any WEC personnel will be provided with the necessary support by appropriate means, including professional counselling if it is requested, even if the allegation is still under investigation or is not proven.
- (b) WEC will also support the Respondent with professional counselling, if it is requested, for such time as WEC considers appropriate.

## 11. Privacy and data protection

- 11.1 All personal information considered or recorded must respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. WEC International will protect personal information obtained in connection with this Policy in accordance with its Privacy Policy.

## 12. Third Parties and protection of vulnerable individuals

- 12.1 WEC International is required to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of vulnerable individuals outside Australia that are benefitting from or delivering WEC International's programs or programs on which WEC International collaborates with third parties.
- 12.2 WEC International, in accordance the Governance Standards or External Conduct Standards of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, must review what reasonable steps are appropriate to ensure the safety of vulnerable individuals connected to programs delivered in collaboration with third parties, considering matters including:

- (a) whether the programs are likely to benefit or be delivered by vulnerable individuals;
- (b) the risk of harm to vulnerable individuals arising from the delivery of the programs;
- (c) the existing policies and processes the third party has in place to protect vulnerable individuals; and
- (d) the experience that the third party has in managing risks of harm to vulnerable individuals.

12.3 Reasonable steps to ensure a third party ensures the safety of vulnerable individuals may include:

- (a) imposing protection of vulnerable individual obligations on third parties through a Memorandum of Understanding or other agreement;
- (b) training third parties on the protection of vulnerable individuals; and/or
- (c) asking to third party to provide details of their protection of vulnerable individuals policy and processes, assisting the third party to develop them or providing them for the third party to consider and adopt.

### **13. Compliance with this policy**

13.1 The Board must comply with this policy and review compliance as part of its standard self-evaluation.

13.2 If the Branch Leader or Board have reason to believe that this policy has not been complied with, they must investigate.

### **14. Authorisation**

(Signed)

  
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Jim Lambie, Company Secretary.

On behalf of W.E.C. International Ltd.