Child Safe and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Framework

October, 2025

Leadership
We are committed to keeping our participants safe.

People
Our people are trained in and committed to working safely with our participants.

BB1

BB2

BB3

BB4

Environments
Our environments are safe and welcoming for our participants.

Response
If something does go wrong, we all know what to do about it.

Child Safe and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Framework

Micah Projects, October 2025

Chair/CEO Foreword

For thirty years, Micah Projects has upheld deeply rooted commitment to social justice, working with individuals and families who are experiencing vulnerability, marginalisation, and disadvantage to promote equity, equality, safety and inclusion.

Given the potential vulnerabilities of those we support, we carry a heightened responsibility to ensure their safety when accessing our services.

That is why, in 2023, we introduced our Child Safe and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Framework. This document provides a cultural foundation for our safeguarding approach and its principles are reflected in relevant organisational policies and procedures, risk management documents, practice frameworks and the way we interact with participants every day.

Along with our annual review, the introduction of the Child Safe Standards in Queensland commencing from 1 October 2025 has prompted us to revisit our safeguarding approach and, as part of this process of reflection and improvement, we have reviewed and updated this Framework.

As always, we remain committed to complying with relevant quality frameworks, legislative provisions, regulatory and accreditation requirements and contractual obligations.

But we continue to strive to do better than mere compliance.

Our message to all volunteers and staff is that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It's not an optional extra, but something that must be at the heart of everything we do, from decisions in the boardroom to everyday interactions.

We expect all staff and volunteers to uphold high standards of professionalism, to recognise and respond to signs of grooming and abuse, and to act on concerns, no matter how minor.

We also encourage staff, participants and community members to speak up in the knowledge that every concern will be taken seriously and met with compassion and care.

This framework is a living document that supports our approach to continuous improvement.

I commend this document to all staff, volunteers, and participants as a reflection of our shared commitment to safety, respect, and inclusion.

I look forward to seeing the positive changes it will continue to inspire across our organisation, as we work together to uphold the highest standards of safeguarding for every participant.

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Our Statement of Commitment

Micah Projects works to give people a voice and to break down barriers that exclude people from housing, healthcare, employment, meaningful connections,. The needs of individuals and families are met in a supportive, informed and respectful manner.

Micah Projects is committed to the safety and wellbeing of child and adult participants in their interactions with us. We are committed to providing safe and supportive environments and a culture that respects and upholds people's rights and prioritises safety and wellbeing.

We work with people who are experiencing complex issues in their lives. Our obligations under this framework sit alongside our 'common sense' approach to supporting people to manage this complexity. Fundamental to our approach is listening and responding to what participants are saying to us.

We are deeply committed to the prevention of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation of our participants in their contact with our services. We know that there are risks of "institutional harm" to our participants and we take steps to manage these risks. We strive to prevent harm and always respond if it does occur.

A note on "institutional harm"

Institutional harm or abuse refers to situations where individuals experience neglect, mistreatment, or abuse within an organisation or system that is responsible for their care or support. This can occur in settings such as schools, hospitals, aged care facilities, disability services, or community organisations. It often results from failures in policies, practices, culture, or oversight, rather than the actions of a single individual.

Recent Royal Commissions (child abuse, aged care, disability services) have given us many examples of where children and vulnerable adults were not safe in their interactions with staff and volunteers and with other participants of service providers.

Although many staff, volunteers, and participants are familiar with situations where a child or adult shares that they are experiencing harm, whether at home, school, or elsewhere, they may be less likely to think about the risk of harm to participants occurring in their own work environment.

This framework deals with this "institutional harm" and it is important that all staff and volunteers are aware of their obligations to prevent and respond to harm within the organisational context.

About our participants

While Micah recognises the strengths of the people that we work with, we also recognise that some of their life experiences may make them more vulnerable to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

We particularly recognise the potential vulnerabilities of the following groups that we work with:

» Children

» Young mothers

» People with disabilities and mental illness

» Women and children experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence

» People experiencing or at risk of homelessness

» People who were in the care of the state as children who experienced abuse as children

» People who experienced abuse as children

» People experiencing social and economic disadvantage

» People who have experienced historic childhood abuse

We also acknowledge that systemic discrimination, intergenerational trauma, social disadvantage, and mistrust of institutions can make it harder for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access support, report harm, or feel safe in mainstream services. This may make them more vulnerable to abuse or exploitation. Ongoing structural inequalities and lack of cultural safety can compound this vulnerability.

Introduction of the Child Safe Standards

The introduction of the Child Safe Standards in Queensland has prompted us to revisit our safeguarding approach, providing further guidance on embedding safeguarding more deeply across all aspects of our work.

As we implement the child safe standards, we embrace this opportunity to strengthen our commitment to demonstrate our leadership in this space; ensure safeguarding responsibilities are clearly understood and consistently applied across the organisation; consider how we can maintain safe environments; and enhance how we respond to incidents, complaints and feedback.

We have assessed that we have solid foundations as a Child Safe Organisation. However, there is always room for improvement and we have developed an action plan which ensures the Standards are embedded in our organisation. Under each of the Building Blocks, this looks like:

BB1 Leadership:

- Ongoing communications about safeguarding across our organisation
- Reviewing the accessibility of information about safeguarding for all children, including First Nations children

BB2 People:

- Ensuring annual training for all staff, volunteers and the Board, building on our solid induction processes
- Enhancing intentionality of supervision and reflective practice for staff

BB3 Environments:

- More intentionally building safeguarding risk assessment into our risk assessment processes

BB4 Response:

- Ensuring information about raising a safeguarding concern is accessible for children and that our responses are child focused.

The Universal Principle sits across all the Building Blocks and requires us to think deeply about how we ensure cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

We have strong First Nations community connections, seek to empower participant voices (including those of children receiving services and those attending with adult participants) in our work, and will support warm referrals if we are not best placed to provide support. However, we also recognise that some First Nations participants seek out Micah Projects because of the arm's length from community. We will examine what further we need to do to ensure environments where First Nations peoples feel respected, understood, and safe, not only physically, but culturally and emotionally.

We are committed to keeping our participants safe and here is how we will show it…

- Our board, managers and staff regularly talk about the safety of our participants and what it means for us and the people we work with.
- You will see evidence of our commitment in our service sites, on our website, in our policies and procedures.
- We focus on physical, psychological and spiritual safety.
- We celebrate and respect our participants, their cultures, and their individual identities, and make safe spaces for them.

BB1
Leadership

Our people are trained in and committed to working safely with our participants, including children and here is how we make sure of it…

- The people joining our organisation know the safety of our participants, including children is our priority.
- When we recruit people, we ask why they want to work with our participants and check their full employment history and references.
- Everyone working with our participants will have valid screening undertaken as required (e.g., working with children checks, criminal history, disability worker screening).
- People who work with us sign up to a Code of Conduct so everyone knows what's in, what's out and where our professional boundaries sit.
- People who work with us get training, support and supervision to work safely with our participants including children.
- Our team are trained in knowing the signs of grooming and abuse, neglect and exploitation and speak up and act on concerns.

BB2
People

Our environments are safe and welcoming for our participants and here is how we go about it…

- We know what the safety risks are in the environments we work in and for the people we work with and we eliminate them as much as possible.
- We make our physical spaces safe for our participants.
- We make our online spaces safe for our participants.
- Our spaces are safe, respectful and welcoming for our participants from all backgrounds and cultures.

BB3
Environments

Our Building Blocks of Safety

If something does go wrong, we all know what to do about it because…

- If you have a concern we have a clear process for people to come forward to talk about any concerns and will report to and cooperate with authorities to protect anyone being harmed or at risk of harm.
- Our staff raise concerns about participant (including children) safety with their managers and in accordance with our processes.
- We learn from feedback, complaints, reports, concerns and incidents to keep safety as a priority.
- We respond compassionately to anyone who has experienced harm in our service and in a way meaningful to that person.

BB4
Response

BB1 –Leadership

We are committed to keeping our participants and children safe
and here is how we will show it…

» We are committed to the safety of our
participants and children – this is our priority

» Our board, managers and staff regularly talk
about the safety of our participants and children
and what it means for us and the people we work
with

» You will see evidence of our commitment in our
service sites, on our website, in our policies and
procedures

» We focus on physical, psychological and
spiritual safety

» We celebrate and respect our participants and
children, their cultures, and their individual
identities, and make safe spaces for them.

BB1 –Leadership

1.1 Our commitment to safety

We commit to being open and transparent and are clear that the safety of our participants and children is our highest priority. The safety of any participant that we work with will always come first.

1.2 Our leaders know about and talk about safety

Safety is regularly discussed at the highest levels of our organisation, including our Board, Leadership and Team Leaders. Through induction and ongoing education, leadership understands safeguarding and cultural safety and knows what to ask to check in on how these things are going across the organisation.

Our Board gets regular reports on safety concerns and has high expectations that concerns will be thoroughly looked into.

Information provided to the Board is relevant and easy to understand. We optimise how we use our databases and systems to record information, and ensure we data is used to tell meaningful stories and to identify patterns and issues early.

Our Board, Leadership and Team Leaders know their legal obligations and make sure the organisation is meeting its requirements.

We have a committee dedicated to the safety of participants and children in our organisation. Cluster leaders are safety champions; and leaders know practice; and understand risks to participants in our organisation and how to reduce them.

1.3 Safety in action

Our policies and procedures reflect our commitment to excellent safety practice. They are up to date and reviewed regularly.

Information about our commitment to safety is easy to find on (e.g., our website) and it's clear what this means for the participants we work with.

1.4 Psychological safety

We know that it can be difficult for concerns to be raised by participants and staff. We strive for an environment where complaints and feedback are welcomed. We aim to resolve low level concerns as quickly as possible, and to ensure higher level concerns are taken seriously. We listen to staff and participants when they raise concerns.

We see feedback and complaints as an opportunity to learn; improve services; and strengthen relationships.

We make sure our people understand the specific barriers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may face when reporting concerns and take steps to improve cultural safety.

We make it easy for children and young people to raise concerns by understanding potential barriers for them and providing age-appropriate ways for them to engage.

1.5 Celebrating, valuing and making safe spaces our participants

We celebrate our participants and let them know we want to hear their voices.

We know that every participant is different. We will celebrate them as individuals, and respect their culture, their identity, their ability, their background and their hopes for the future.

We know that some people find it difficult to talk about their concerns which is why we facilitate safe environments for participants to raise issues with us.

We engage participants, families and stakeholders, providing accessible information about safeguarding rights and responsibilities and seeking input on our services, policies and practices.

BB2–People

Our people are trained in and committed to working safely with our participants and ensuring children's safety and here is how we make sure of it...

» The people joining our organisation know that the safety of our participants is our priority.

» When we recruit people - staff and volunteers – who will work with our participants, we ask them why they want to work with us and our participants and check their full employment history. Everyone working with vulnerable people will have valid screening and background checks

» People who work with us sign up to a Code of Conduct so everyone knows what's in and what's out and where our professional boundaries sit

» People who work with us get training, support and supervision to work with our participants and the needs of children in a safe way

» Our team are trained in knowing the signs of grooming and abuse, neglect and exploitation and speak up and act on concerns.

BB2 – People

2.1 Recruitment and screening

From the moment a person starts to think about working or volunteering with us, they see our commitment to safety. It is on our website and written into job ads, position descriptions and application material.

In any interview for a role working with vulnerable people, we ask people why they want to work with our participants and listen carefully to the answers. We explore employment history, including any gaps or time working overseas. We undertake detailed reference checks. We look for red flags.

Every person making decisions that affect or who is working directly with participants must have a current clearance as required by the position (e.g. working with children check; criminal history clearance, disability worker screening). These checks do not guarantee the ongoing suitability of a person to work with our participants and that's why we do all the other things set out in this framework. We ensure that clearances remain up to date e.g. through audits and random checks.

2.2 Code of Conduct

People who work with us understand and agree to follow a Code of Conduct, which includes requirements for working safely with our participants. This sets out behavioural expectations of our team and our people are required to restate their commitment to the Code of Conduct annually. It makes clear that there are professional boundaries we must observe.

Professional boundaries are important because we know that abuse can occur where there are trusting relationships between staff and participants. We want to foster trust so that people can receive the support they need - so we need to make sure that these relationships are appropriate to the service we deliver. When there is blurring of the lines, there can be confusion and this can be the type of situation where grooming and ultimately abuse and/ or exploitation might occur. This is why, for example, we don't let our staff babysit for the children and families we work with outside the service context. We will make sure that sub-contractors and third parties who work with our participants are also aware of obligations under our Code of Conduct.

2.3 Training, support and supervision

People who work with us get training, support and supervision to be good at their jobs and work with our participants in a safe way. We make sure staff know how much they are valued, and this supports them do a great job with the participants they work with. We make sure people working with our participants and children get regular training on safeguarding and cultural safety. Our people are supported to speak up about concerns.

Supervision includes working as part of a team but also, opportunities to debrief and reflect on their own work practice. Training on safeguarding and cultural safety is part of the induction each person undergoes when they join the organisation and is regularly refreshed.

We also regularly talk about cultural safety and take steps to improve our everyday practice to increase cultural safety. We support everyone to take a trauma informed approach to their work. We think about the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants when planning and delivering services, and record this on systems where relevant.

2.4 Support to recognise and act

We ensure our team have at least annual training on the signs of grooming and abuse. This means that they know what to look for and are aware of the risks, and possibilities for harm to our participants.

We create an environment where our people are supported to - and expected to - speak up and act on concerns. Safeguarding is regularly discussed in team meetings, performance reviews, manager gatherings and at the executive and board level.

Where there are breaches of Codes of Conduct, this framework, or the law, there are consequences for the person who has committed the breach. This depends on the nature of the breach and could include termination of employment. Any disclosures of sexually inappropriate behaviour and abuse are reported to police.

BB3–Environments

Our environments are safe and welcoming for our participants including children and here is how we go about it...

» We know what the safety risks are in the environments we work in and for the participants we work with, and we eliminate them as much as possible

» We make our physical spaces safe

» We make our online spaces safe

» We make our spaces warm and welcoming for participants from all backgrounds and cultures

BB3–Environments

3.1 Understanding our risks

We know there are things that can make environments safer for our participants. Some of these are the way our people behave and treat each other and our participants (as we talk about in BB2). The relationships our team has with our participants and each other is critical to safety – these relationships must be appropriate to the context in which we provide services.

Micah Projects staff and volunteers understand that relationships of trust come with responsibility and possible risks. Even where trusting relationships have been built over time, we maintain professional boundaries and help participants understand why we must follow guidance on what we can and can't do.

We know that our people go 'above and beyond' for our participants (including children). In a circumstance where a team member engages with a participant outside of work hours, they always make sure their team leader knows about it and why, and they know that professional boundaries always need to be maintained.

We make sure that we use our data systems in a way that allows us to identify and mitigate risks. We make sure that risk policies and processes are consistently applied across the organisation.

3.2 Physical environments

We conduct safeguarding risk assessments on our physical spaces. We think about our spaces to ensure that there is natural surveillance wherever possible, that spaces are well lit, and that there is appropriate privacy and supervision of toilets and areas where natural surveillance is not possible. We think about transporting our participants where that is required and make sure that is done in a safe way. Where participants of mixed ages are together or where children are together, we ensure that they are appropriately supervised.

We are respectful in all interactions with our participants and each other. Where privacy is required for delivery of services, or we are working in someone's home, we have measures in place so that other team members know the plan and expectations about how the service is being delivered.

Sometimes our participants' living situations and where they congregate are complex. We adapt our practice and continually monitor safety to help spaces be safe for all. When we work with third party providers, we make sure they know about their safeguarding responsibilities and monitor compliance.

3.3 Online environments

In our online spaces, our relationships and communication must be appropriate to the service context. Any online communications with our participants must be through official channels, unless it is an emergency situation. This could include ensuring that organisational (not personal) devices/emails/ handles are used for communications. Where there is a need to communicate with children, this will be through parents and caregivers where appropriate, and will only be done as part of the service and part of the plan.

We will only photograph participants with written permission, using organisation owned devices, not the personal devices of staff. Staff know and respect the reasons behind these limitations.

3.4 Welcoming spaces

We are committed to ensuring our spaces are safe, respectful and welcoming for our participants. We honour and respect cultural diversity, welcome participants with disabilities and honour the individual identities of the participants we work with.

It is visible in our communications to our participants. Our participants know that if they need help or have concerns they can come to us.

BB4–Response

If something does go wrong, we all know what to do about it because…

» We have a clear process for people to come forward to talk about any concerns and will report to and cooperate with authorities to protect anyone being harmed or at risk of harm.

» Our staff raise concerns about participant safety with their managers and in accordance with our processes.

» We learn from feedback, complaints, reports, concerns and incidents to keep getting better at safe practice.

» We respond compassionately to anyone who has experienced harm in our service and in a way that is meaningful to that person.

conduct our own investigation.

Information is kept in line with confidentiality and record keeping provisions to maintain the privacy of the person who has been harmed and so as not to interfere with any investigation by authorities. We only share information as required by law or to progress an investigation. We proactively and sensitively work to identify others who may have been harmed or be at risk of harm.

4.3 Review and improvement

Wherever there is a report about a safety concern, an allegation or an incident, it is taken seriously, looked into and investigated and reported, including to our Board and authorities, as appropriate. We proactively enable any official investigations to take place and review what has happened so that we can consider whether our policies, procedures, practice and culture need to be improved in any way. The results of any reviews are reported to our Board. We learn from incidents because we want to continuously strengthen our organisation to be a safe place for the participants and communities we serve.

We systematically consider feedback and complaints to identify patterns, and report to the Board on this so there is strategic oversight of these issues. We review this framework and all related safety documents annually to ensure they remain best practice and relevant to our work and participants.

4.4 Responding to participants who have experienced harm at Micah Projects

We are committed to responding compassionately if people have experienced harm in their contact with our services. Micah:

- Supports people who have experienced harm to report to authorities

- Provides access to independent counselling to any participant who has experienced harm

- Provides access to information about legal remedies that might be available to a participant in relation to harm

- Supports the provision of meaningful redress and apology to a participant who has experienced harm.

4.2 Reporting process

We have a reporting process so that our participants and staff know who to talk to if they have concerns. We act on reports in a timely manner to follow up, check into what is going on and report to authorities as appropriate– which could be the police, child safety or other agency. We cooperate with authorities. Our priority is the safety of our participants. We meet any external reporting obligations. If it is appropriate, we will