



*This document outlines the Safeguarding Vulnerable Client Policy of the Can:Do Group.*

The **Can:Do Group**, in line with the Commonwealth Aged Care Quality Standards, aims to ensure that all clients are safe from harm and are cared for in a way that allows them to reach their full potential. In this document 'Client' means a person over the age of 18 years of age. See the Can:Do Group Child Safe Policy for clients under 18 years of age.

### Statement of Commitment

All people, regardless of their age, gender, race, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background have equal rights to protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The Can: Do Group is committed to promoting and protecting the welfare and human rights of people that interact with, or are affected by, our work – particularly those that may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. The Group:

- has no tolerance for abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- has a duty of care to clients, to take reasonable steps to keep them safe from harm and provide a safe environment.
- has a particular commitment to the safety of clients with a disability, and to the cultural safety of ageing and CALD clients.
- has a commitment to respecting different cultural traditions and lifestyle choices while keeping clients safe.
- will respect and support clients to make their own decisions regarding service delivery and adopt a co-design approach to service design.
- has an emphasis that it is everyone's responsibility to ensure a client safe environment, including staff, board, management, volunteers, contractors, and families/carers of clients.
- has values of participation of clients in the development of client policies and procedures, and how clients are to be consulted in the process of developing and updating policies and procedures relating to client safety.

- will take every concern and allegation seriously, in line with the principles of procedural fairness.
- will believe clients when they raise a concern or make an allegation.

### Culture of reporting and transparency

Can:Do Group will:

- Create a culture where staff and clients feel supported to speak up when they witness or become aware of information about an alleged abuse, and that they feel they can do so without fear of punishment or retribution.
- Address and mitigate barriers to both client and staff disclosure of incidents of abuse.
- Have clear Whistleblower protections to encourage transparency and prevent abuse from going unreported.

### Definitions

**Safeguarding:** is the protection of the welfare and human rights of people that interact with, or are affected by, Can:Do Group, particularly those that might be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. This refers to any responsibility or measure undertaken to protect a person from harm.

**Vulnerable Person:** Is an individual aged 18 years and above who is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves against abuse, neglect or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, literacy readiness, or any other reason.

**Abuse, Neglect, & Exploitation:** All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, coercion, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the client's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power

**Client protection:** Any measure taken to safeguard clients from abuse or harm.

**Grooming:** Any act with the aim of befriending, building rapport, and gaining the trust of a client for the purpose of subjecting them to abuse. Signs of



grooming include giving gifts or special attention, or inappropriate touching.

**Online grooming:** Establishing a relationship with a client online with the aim of meeting him/her in person for sexual activity. This can include online chat or sexting, and the abuser may lie about their age or identity.

**Harm:** Different states or territories may have differing definitions of harm in relation to client protection legislation, but in general it refers to any significant detrimental effect on a client's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing.

**Reasonable grounds for belief:** "A belief based on reasonable grounds (see below) that abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- the client is in need of protection,
- the client has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury," or
- the client is unable or unwilling to protect themselves.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds

**Sexual abuse:** Occurs when a person uses power and authority to involve the client in sexual activity, and can be physical, verbal or emotional.