



Involvement in child and youth activities – advice for individuals

As an adult participant in a Rotary activity that involves contact with individuals under the age of 18 you have certain obligations at law. Rotary also has expectations of you, and you no doubt have expectations of Rotary. The purpose of this short document is to summarise those obligations and expectations, at least from Rotary's side. It is NOT an exhaustive statement of the law and does not cover every situation.

Your obligations at law

The Working with Children Act 2005 established a screening process for persons engaging or intending to engage in child related work that involves direct contact with children. It is NOT an assessment of suitability.

Work undertaken as a volunteer in a Rotary activity that involves the provision of services for or directed at children; and usually involves direct contact with a child or children WILL be child related work for which a WWC is required.

If you:-

- a. Do not have a current WWC; and
- b. Engage in child-related work, knowing that it is child-related work; and
- c. Know that you do not have a current Working with Children check, or don't care about whether you have or do not have a Working with Children Check

then you are committing an offence where the maximum penalty is a fine of \$37,920.00, or up to two years imprisonment.

Crimes Act Section 327: An adult who has information that leads the person to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child under the age of 16 years by an adult must disclose that information to a police officer as soon as it is practicable to do so, unless the person has a reasonable excuse for not doing so (or other exemptions in the Act apply).

Penalty: Up to 3 years imprisonment

Rotary's expectations of you:

1. You have and maintain a Working with Children check, even if an exemption under the Act applies to you.
2. You link that WWC to your Rotary Club, so that any change to your WWC status is reported to the Club.
3. You comply with the Code of Conduct that is reproduced on the next page
4. You complete and lodge with us a Form 3, recognising that the referees you advise will be contacted.
5. You advise us if any of the information supplied by you on a Form 3 is no longer true.

Your expectations of Rotary

You are entitled to expect:

1. Rotary will impose the same standards and requirements on each volunteer, so that you can be satisfied that every volunteer meets the standards expected of you.
2. That Rotary holds and maintains insurances that protect you against claims that might be made against you and those with whom you volunteer.
3. That Rotary meets its obligations at law under the Working with Children Act and the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act and other relevant legislation.

The Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct in these terms adopted by Rotary as a result of the obligations imposed on it as an organisation by the Child Safety and Wellbeing Act:

Positive Obligations:

Each of us are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.

- treating everyone with respect.

- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another.

- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with Aboriginal, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination), in addition to the safety of children with a disability

- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child.

- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Club or District Protection Officer and ensure that any allegation is reported to the police.

- reporting any child safety concerns to the Club or District Protection Officer.

- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child is safe.

- encouraging children to "have a say" and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

Prohibitions:

Each of us must not:

- develop a relationship with children that could be interpreted as favouritism.

- exhibit behaviour with children which may be construed as unnecessary physical contact.

- put children at risk of abuse.

- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children.

- use inappropriate language in the presence of children.

- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children.

- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability.

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

What to do when an allegation of child abuse is made

Any adult to whom a student reports an allegation of sexual abuse or harassment must follow the reporting guidelines at Appendix 1 of the Rotary District 9800 Youth Abuse and Harassment Prevention Policy (Sexual Abuse and Harassment Allegation Reporting Guidelines).

The Form 3

Is a document devised by Rotary in Australia that is intended to form part of a positive vetting process for volunteers in youth activities. If we all comply with it, Rotary will meet its obligations to Rotary International under the Code of Policies, to the State of Victoria under the Child Safety and Wellbeing Act (particularly the Child Safe Standards) and to our insurers. In a broader sense it is evidence of our commitment to improving the safety of young people in our community.