

**LIFE
WITHOUT
BARRIERS**

Safeguarding Framework





Acknowledgement of Country

Life Without Barriers acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and their connection to land, water and community.

We pay our respect to them, their cultures and customs and to their Elders past, present and emerging. We believe that reconciliation must live in the hearts and minds of all Australians.

We are committed to an ongoing journey towards truth telling and reconciliation. We recognise and value the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, carers, people we support, peak bodies, organisations, their leaders, and communities across Australia as we continue our reconciliation journey together.

'Empowered Voices' cultural artwork created by Keisha Leon, Lisa Sorbie Martin and Gilimbaa.

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A message from Claire Robbs, Chief Executive

The relationships we have with the people we support and their families are based on trust – a trust that enables us to partner with people to change lives for the better. When people choose our services, they do so because there is an expectation that we behave in line with our values and that we will uphold our commitment of great service in every engagement, every day.

The Life Without Barriers Safeguarding Framework is fundamental to guiding our practice and everyday commitment to protecting, promoting and responding to the rights of the people we support. Every person across our organisation – from corporate services to direct care should have an understanding of our approach to safeguarding.

This framework strengthens our understanding of accepting responsibility when we do not meet the standards people expect from us, enacting our Apology Framework to apologise sincerely, and working with people to make it right in the best way possible.

We remain absolutely committed to continuous learning. This means we listen to and are influenced by the direct lived experience of people we support. We have and will continue to make improvements that make our services better. It is our role as members of the Life Without Barriers community to achieve this.

Claire Robbs
Chief Executive

Life Without Barriers Values

At Life Without Barriers, we all share responsibility for safeguarding. We are all responsible for making sure the people we support are safe and supported to live the life they choose.

Every day, Life Without Barriers supports people around Australia. Everyone has the right to be respected and safe, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or age.

We have a role to empower those we support to understand their rights and to partner with them to ensure they are protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Safeguarding people's rights enables them to grow, develop and thrive.

Through a safeguarding lens, Life Without Barriers' values can be upheld as follows:



Relationships: We prioritise fostering safe and trusted connections with the people we support, their families, colleagues and stakeholders, ensuring their well-being and safeguarding their rights.



Imagination: We encourage innovative thinking and creative problem-solving to develop robust safeguarding measures and strategies that adapt to changing circumstances.



Courage: We empower people to speak up and take action when they witness or suspect harm, abuse, or misconduct, fostering a culture of accountability and protection. We adopt a culture that values integrity and putting people first in addressing potential safeguarding issues, taking necessary actions to protect people from harm.



Respect: We uphold a culture of dignity, valuing each person's rights, boundaries, and privacy, and promoting an environment free from discrimination, harassment, or exploitation.



Responsiveness: We promptly address and investigate safeguarding concerns, swiftly taking appropriate measures to protect individuals and prevent harm, while ensuring confidentiality and due process.

Life Without Barriers' Commitment to Safeguarding

In November 2020, Life Without Barriers established the National Safeguarding Unit (NSU) by bringing together different functions from across the organisation for the purpose of strengthening our approach to safeguarding.

Although the expectation of safeguarding the rights of all people we support rests with all staff, the NSU has dedicated oversight and monitoring of all safeguarding systems and practices by providing nationally consistent functions for notifiable incidents, restrictive practices, complaints, Official Community Visitor reports, safeguarding initiatives and requests for information from external bodies.

The NSU focuses on creating a safeguarding culture and practices, based on the fundamental human rights of equality, safety and dignity for all the people we support, whilst recognising the unique rights of people with a disability and children.

Purpose of the Framework

‘Safeguarding is protecting the welfare and human rights of people that interact with, or are affected by, our services, particularly people that may be at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.’

(The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission)

‘Abuse, neglect or exploitation’ means all types of physical and mental abuse, financial abuse, exploitation, coercion, or ill-treatment. This might include:

- sexual harassment, bullying or abuse
- sexual criminal offences
- threats of, or actual violence, or verbal, emotional or social abuse
- cultural or identity abuse, such as racial, sexual or gender-based discrimination or hate crimes
- coercion and exploitation
- abuse of power.

While all people must be protected from harm, there are also legal and ethical considerations for protecting people most at risk.

People who are most at risk can include:

- children and seniors
- people with impaired intellectual or physical functioning
- people from a low socio-economic background
- people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders
- people who are not native speakers of the local language
- people with low levels of literacy or education

- people subject to modern slavery, such as forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking, and child labour
- people who experience intersectionality – meaning people who may be marginalised for multiple reasons.

Being able to recognise people most at risk is an important step in safeguarding.



- 4.3 million Australians live with a disability.
- They are twice as likely to experience abuse as people without a disability¹.
- 1 in 3 Aboriginal women with disability experienced sexual abuse in childhood².



- 3 in 4 children aged 2–4 years regularly suffer physical punishment or psychological violence.
- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 13 men report having been sexually abused as a child². This number is 1 in 3 for Aboriginal women with disability³.



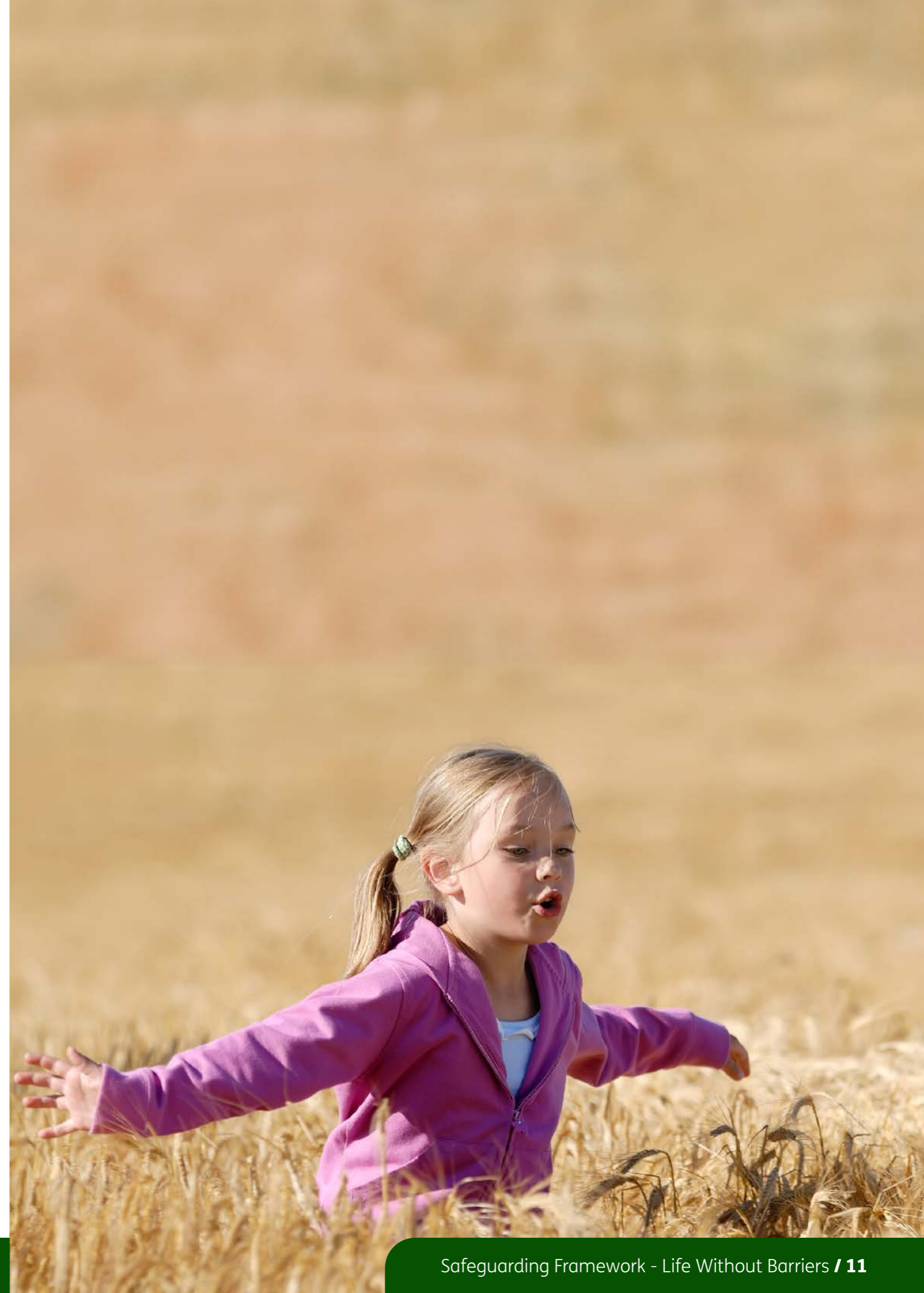
- 3.8 million Australians are aged 65 and over – that’s 15% of the total population.
- 1 in 6 older Australians experience some form of abuse⁴.

¹ A Future Without Violence Australian Human Rights Commission (2018)

² Wangkiny Yirra “Speaking Up” Project: First Nations women and children with disability and their experiences of family and domestic violence. Research Report (2023)

³ Child Maltreatment World Health Organisations (2022)

⁴ Elder Abuse in Australia: Prevalence Australian Institute of Family Studies (2022)



Life Without Barriers Safeguarding Framework

Safeguards can be defined as actions meant to protect and promote the rights of people to be safe from the risk of harm, abuse and neglect, while giving them choice and control over their lives.

Overly protective measures that stop people taking risks are not safeguarding. These measures can deny a person the chance to learn how to make decisions, aspire to achieve their own goals, and enjoy the dignity of making their own choices, even if they are poor choices.

The Life Without Barriers Safeguarding Framework details the basic principles, elements, processes and systems that support quality safeguarding practices across the whole organisation.

People are better protected when they have informal and formal safeguards that are suited to them.

Informal safeguards include self-advocacy and building a network of trusted relationships, including being known in, and connected to, community.

Formal safeguards include paid supports, legal and administrative requirements, policies and practices, organisational culture, incident and complaint processes (including within organisations and to external bodies like the police) and regulatory oversight of services.

Our approach is focused on the people we support and their development.

While it is important to meet legal standards, the Life Without Barriers Safeguarding Framework is also consistent with the following key foundations:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- National Child Safe Standards
- Closing the Gap
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework (2016)
- NDIS Act 2013
- Relevant State and Territory Legislation.

The Life Without Barriers Safeguarding Framework also includes the principles of Life Without Barriers' current practice frameworks:

- CARE & Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI)
- Active Support.

The Life Without Barriers Safeguarding Framework uses three contemporary safeguarding approaches **Developmental, Preventative and Corrective.**

Page 18 shows how these three approaches fit together.

Developmental Safeguards – how we help people to keep themselves safe

‘Capacity building’ and ‘capability approaches’ are two ways to describe the developmental safeguarding approach. It is about building someone’s own natural safeguards to ensure they are safe, and creating a positive culture to strengthen these safeguards.

Informal developmental safeguards include:

- a network of family and community support, feeling valued, and surrounding the person with nurturing and loving relationships
- a positive sense of identity, enhancing wellbeing, culture, religion and spirituality
- supported decision-making and consent
- participation, independence and inclusion
- protective behaviours.

A person with access to these developmental and natural safeguards will always be better protected than they would be by any safety net built by regulators and governments.

Formal developmental safeguards at Life Without Barriers include:

- education initiatives to raise awareness and prevent abuse, that aim to create positive workplaces with better knowledge of human rights, and challenge discriminatory attitudes that can perpetuate and increase risk of abuse
- building the ability of direct care workers to deliver safe, high-quality services, supported by the Centres for Practice Excellence
- using evidence to build practice frameworks that educate and train staff to become highly skilled
- using data to see how services are provided, identify risks and review practices if necessary.

Preventative Safeguards – how we can help prevent harm happening to people

Preventative safeguards are focused on the prevention of abuse, neglect and exploitation, to ensure people most at risk are safe from harm. They address risks for individuals and are closely linked to service design and organisational culture.

Formal preventative safeguards at Life Without Barriers include:

- accountability – Client Engagement Strategy
- Racism and Discrimination Policy
- worker screening (probity)
- Life Without Barriers’ Code of Conduct
- staff induction, including training and procedures for the prevention of abuse
- processes focusing on high medical and health needs (e.g. HIDPA)
- positive behaviour support
- restrictive practice authorisation, reporting and monitoring processes
- practice assurance, including staff/carer training, development and support
- regulatory assurance, including maintaining current certification and accreditation against industry standards.

Preventative safeguards also include legislation, policies, and practice guides. They help to promote a language and culture of safety.

Corrective Safeguards – what we do if something goes wrong

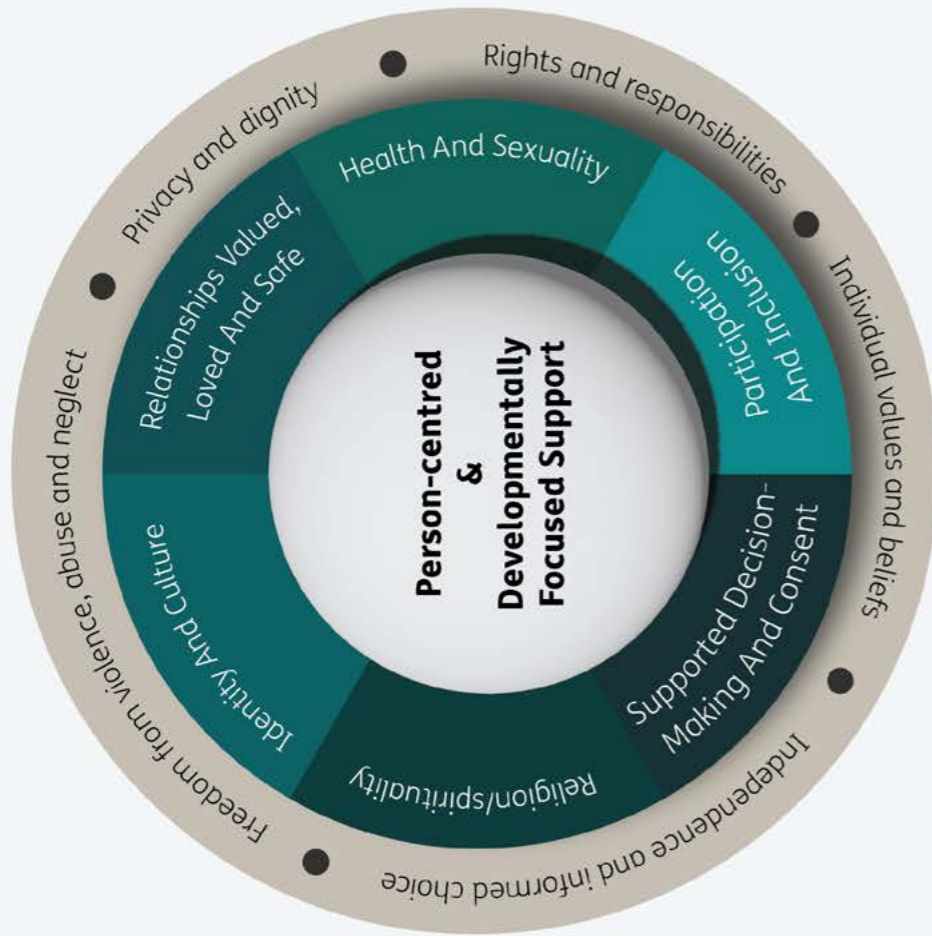
Corrective safeguards include actions that individuals, organisations and governments need to take to respond to incidents and complaints after they have occurred to prevent them happening again, and to enable improvements to systems and services.

Formal corrective safeguarding measures at Life Without Barriers include:

- responding to and keeping the person, their family and decision makers informed of our response (accountability)
- complaint management processes
- investigations and inspections
- incident management and response
- quality and performance improvement plans
- worker conduct and performance improvement plans
- enacting Life Without Barriers' Apology Framework
- the National Redress Scheme
- National Safeguarding Unit's role in managing safeguarding risks, activity and reporting across the business.



Developmental safeguards



Preventative safeguards



Corrective safeguards



Underpinning foundations

Life Without Barriers Values • Care/TCI • Active Support • Practice Governance Framework • Organisational Assurance Framework
 • Human Rights Legislation • NDIS Act 2013 • Closing The Gap • National Disability Service Standards • National Children Safe Standards • NDIS Q And S Framework

If you think someone is at risk







Listen
 Find a private place to talk and give the person your full attention. Be a listener not investigator.

Report
 Report the incident to your manager or email safeguarding@lwb.org.au. Then create a Client Event in i-Sight.

Check
 Check the incident is being managed in a way that meets our duty of care and mandatory reporting requirements.

Who else can I speak to?

If for any reason you are uncomfortable reporting the incident to your manager, you can:

-  Report the incident to the next line manager (or someone else at Life Without Barriers that you are comfortable talking to).
-  Email safeguarding@lwb.org.au.
-  Provide [anonymous feedback](#) or raise a complaint through the Life Without Barriers website or email complaints@lwb.org.au.
-  Follow the guidelines in the Life Without Barriers Whistle Blower National Procedure.

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