

*Working with Aboriginal and Torres*

*Strait Islander peoples*

2022

**Annual Statement of Compliance with the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework**

# Our commitment

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is committed to protecting and safeguarding children from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The Agency is committed to promoting a child safe culture and providing an environment where children and young people feel and are safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

Particular attention is paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. Every person involved in the Agency has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

# Our operations and interaction with children

Agency employees may have incidental and at times direct contact with children as part of their responsibility to implement the Australian Government’s policies and programs to improve the lives of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Direct contact with children is primarily in regional areas where employees may visit public places, communities and premises of funded Service Providers.

The Agency also funds service providers and Government Directed Activities that may have incidental or direct contact with children. This includes providers under the Remote School Attendance Strategy and early childhood services.

# NIAA’s child safety risk assessment

In 2021-22 the Agency conducted a risk assessment to determine the overall child safety risk rating. The rating for the Agency remains medium and is based on the residual likelihood that Agency employees, contract Service Providers and grant recipients may not comply with the existing requirements of the policy and controls.

This risk assessment identified both incidental and direct contact with children, primarily as part of the regional NIAA employees’ roles and responsibilities. The Agency aims to mitigate these risks under a revised Working with Children and Vulnerable People Policy and Guidance Framework.

The risk assessment also identified funded Service Providers as potentially having more contact with children in communities than NIAA employees. The most significant risk being a failure to comply with the policies and contractual requirements. Providers must complete a mandatory annual Statement of Compliance (SoC) to confirm compliance with their obligations for working with children and vulnerable people which will then be included in their funding agreement. Organisations who do not provide a SoC are subject to sanctions, including withholding payments and termination of their agreements.



The Agency understands that managing child safety risks is an ongoing process and will continue to regularly analyse and review the measures we have in place to mitigate risks.

# NIAA’s compliance with the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework

The NIAA is compliant with all four requirements of the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework (CCSF), the core requirements of which are:

* undertake annual risk assessments
* establish a system of training and compliance
* adopt the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and
* publish an annual statement of compliance.

The Agency has a Commonwealth Child Safe Framework eLearning course to make employees aware of, and compliant with, the Framework and relevant legislation. The Agency is working on an additional eModule that was developed by the National Office for Child Safety to provide managers and employees further guidance on working with Indigenous people, with a particular focus on Indigenous children. The eModule is expected to be implemented in 2023.

The Agency is also undertaking a review of its reporting and compliance mechanisms to increase reporting avenues for community members as well as review the Agency’s processes that capture and respond to concerns and complaints regarding child safety.

The Agency will release an updated Policy and guidance framework which will reflect the business operations of NIAA and adopt the 10 National Principles for child safe organisations.

# Child safe initiatives in the reporting year

The NIAA will continue to undertake the following child safety initiatives in the 2022-23 reporting year:

* complete an audit of the roles and responsibilities of all employees and develop an Agency-wide register which will record individual roles and responsibilities, the degree of contact with children, and the status and expiry of state and territory checks in accordance with State and Territory legislation; and
* release an updated *Working with Children and Vulnerable People Policy* and guidance material to reflect the unique business operations of NIAA and to provide employees and managers with guidance to assist with working with children and vulnerable people.