

POLICY STATEMENT

Melba Support Services (Melba) recognises that all people are equal and have the same rights by virtue of being human. Melba is committed to respecting and safeguarding the human rights of the people we support and it is expected that everyone associated with the organisation will, at all times, respect and uphold the right of the people who access our services to be treated with dignity and respect, including their right to be safe, well and free from abuse, neglect and violence.

Melba has a zero tolerance to abuse, neglect and violence exhibited toward any person supported. Melba's zero tolerance approach is underpinned by human rights legislation, including but not limited to the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2006) and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), National and Victorian State Disability Strategy, and best practice frameworks.

Abuse, neglect, and, violence, are all violations of a person's human rights. Abuse, neglect or violence can occur through deliberate acts, neglect, accidental behaviour and/or as a result of systemic issues at an organisational level. The impact of abuse, neglect, and violence can have a significant effect on an individual's identity, emotional health, physical health, their relationships, sense of ownership and economic position, social status and education.

Melba's commitment is to:

- recognise, raise and respond to any contravention of the human rights of people purchasing services from Melba Support Services. It is everyone's responsibility to be aware of abuse, neglect and violence and take action on any behaviour that contravenes the human rights of any person supported. This includes **immediate reporting** of any allegation of abuse, neglect or violence of people supported;
- recognise and be better informed about the known risks and prevalence of abuse for people with a disability;
- have knowledge of the barriers and challenges to the disclosure of abuse;
- recognise and address cultural and religious insensitivity, bias and ignorance;
- recognise assault as a criminal act, and a supported person's right to effective access to justice, while understanding the barriers to justice experienced by people with a disability. All allegations of neglect, physical or sexual assault and abuse involving people supported by Melba must be reported to the police, whether or not the alleged victim has consented to the matter being reported;
- Melba will investigate all allegations of abuse of a supported person by employees or volunteers or other persons associated with, or acting on behalf of, Melba
- understanding the specialist approaches required for investigation and support into allegations of abuse, neglect and violence, particularly for people with cognitive impairment and/or communication support needs.

Melba is further committed to promoting practices and safeguards which:

- prevent abuse (primary prevention);
- identify and address particular risk factors (targeted prevention);
- Respond to incidents and allegations of abuse (secondary prevention); and

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- Identify and address underlying causes and systemic issues (tertiary prevention).

Together these key features represent a rights-based, culturally sensitive, and person-centred framework for safeguarding people's right to be free from abuse in Melba's services. These approaches are important not only for developing effective abuse prevention and intervention strategies, but also for promoting a quality culture, where people with a disability are heard, their rights upheld, and better service outcomes are delivered.

Melba stands by its philosophy and culture which is built on a human rights framework, and recognises that abuse, neglect and violence is a human rights issue, not a disability issue, and any breach of a person's human rights by a Melba employee or an employee acting on behalf of Melba may be seen variously as:

- Serious misconduct;
- A criminal offence

SCOPE

This policy applies to all people supported in Melba services (regardless of service funding type). It also applies to Melba stakeholders, including permanent and temporary staff, agency staff, casuals, contractors, consultants, students, and persons working in a voluntary capacity (referred to as 'staff' in this policy).

DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Abuse	is the violation of an individual's human rights resulting from the act or actions of any other person or persons.
Neglect	includes intentionally or negligently failing to take care of a person's physical, psychological or financial wellbeing in breach of a duty of care.
Violence	is behaviour towards a person that is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive. It also includes behaviours that are threatening or coercive, or in any other way control or dominate the person and cause that person to feel fear for themselves or another person.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect people supported from abuse, neglect and violence; and to raise awareness about abuse, neglect and violence amongst people supported by Melba, family members, friends and advocates, and staff members at all levels of the organisation.

The purpose of this policy is further to articulate Melba's commitment to recognise, raise and respond to any contravention of the human rights of people purchasing services from Melba Support Services. It is everyone's responsibility to be aware of abuse, neglect and violence and take action on any behaviour that contravenes the human rights of any person supported.





If staff are at any time suspicious of a person's actions or behaviour, or witness interactions that they believe may constitute mistreatment or abuse of a person supported by Melba, it is their duty and responsibility to make an immediate report to their line manager and complete a critical incident

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report. Any breach of a supported person’s human rights may be seen as serious misconduct. Failure to report a suspected breach or abuse may also constitute serious misconduct.

REFERENCES

- Disability Act 2006 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth.)
- NDIS Act 2013 (Cth.)
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- DHHS Guidelines for Service Providers – Responding to allegations of abuse involving people with disabilities

	Related Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Rights Policy • Child and Young Person Safety Policy • Code of Conduct Policy • Recruitment Policy • Positive Behaviour Support and Restrictive Interventions Policy • Protected Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy • Incident Reporting – Supported Persons Policy
	Related Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Safe Mandatory Reporting Procedure • Child & Young Person Safety Practice Guidelines • Protected Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Procedure • Recruitment Procedure -DSEAV • Recruitment, Pre-employment and Safety Screening • Reporting Allegations of Assault, Abuse or Neglect Procedure • Incident Reporting – Supported Persons Procedure
	Related Supporting Documents or Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Assurances Checklist • Human Rights Checklist • Melba Employee Handbook • NDS Zero Tolerance Framework - https://www.nds.org.au/resources/zero-tolerance • NDS Empowerment Circle - https://www.nds.org.au/images/resources/resource-files/EMPOWERMENT-CIRCLE-UPDATED.pdf • NDIS National Disability Insurance Scheme (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018
	Relevant Standard/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS), 2013 – National Standard 1. Rights • Human Service Standards - 1.2; 3.5 • National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 • NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators January 2020

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