SLSQ Procedure

Subject: Cyberbullying – Children and Young People Procedure	**Department:** Membership Services
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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to detail the process to be followed in response to an incidence of cyberbullying among children and young people involved in SLSQ. The procedure should be read in conjunction with the SLSQ Cyberbullying policy.

Children and young people have a right to participate in SLSQ without being subjected to instances of bullying and harassment from other members of SLSQ. SLSQ will not tolerate bullying and harassment in any form, including that which occurs via online platforms.

Scope

The procedure is intended to guide the response to instances of cyberbullying between children and young people at SLSQ.
The procedure is not intended for instances of cyberbullying involving adult members.

Definitions

- Cyberbullying: intentional and repeated cruel or hurtful behavior that is carried out using technology
- eSafety: The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is Australia's national independent regulator for online safety.
- Safeguarding: measures taken to protect children and young people from harm and abuse.
- SLSA: Surf Life Saving Australia
- SLSQ: Surf Life Saving Queensland

Background

This procedure seeks to guide the response to a complaint of cyberbullying between children and young people of SLSQ.

The procedure seeks to meet SLSQ's obligations under the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework, including the Principles for child safe organisations. Specifically, principle eight *"Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed".*

The policy has also been written in consideration of National Principle 6 *"Organisations should have processes to respond to complaints and concerns that are child focused and uphold the rights of children and young people"*.

Procedure

SLSQ seeks to address incidents of cyberbullying in a child-friendly way. The welfare of all children and young people involved should be paramount, regardless of any alleged wrong-doing.

Cyberbullying complaints affecting children and young people should be properly considered and taken seriously. The rights of all children and young people involved must be safeguarded throughout the investigation process. Children and young people have the same right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality as adult member. confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible, except where mandatory reporting obligations require disclosure to child protection authorities.

In the first instance, the parent or guardian of the involved young person/s should be notified of the allegation. SLSQ encourages members to resolve instances of cyberbullying early and informally where possible, through discussions with the other party or parties. Parties may utilise the guidance of an MPIO, if desired. The formal grievance process should be considered where informal attempts to resolve the issue, or where it is not appropriate given the nature, seriousness or complexity of the complaint.

Where content has been posted online, a parent or guardian should support the young person involved to report the bullying material to the relevant social media service. If the service fails to remove it, the young person should be supported to report the issue to eSafety.

The following steps should be considered as a guide when responding to an incident of cyberbullying between children and young people. However, each case will be unique and as such, the response should be tailored to the situation.

1. Reassure
- Remain calm and non-judgemental when talking with a child or young person about a cyberbullying incident.
- Reassure all parties that they will be supported fairly by SLSQ and will be offered the right to respond under the principles of natural justice.
- Avoid making unrealistic promises. Recognise that for children and young people it might be difficult to ask for help and let them know that they have done the right thing by coming to you.

2. Stay calm and listen
It will be easier to learn the specifics of the incident if you remain calm and listen. You might like to ask what you can do to make the conversation more comfortable. Let those involved know who else they can approach for support and advice through the process.

3. Ask the child or young person how they'd like to resolve the problem
- Where appropriate, ask the child or young person what steps they would like to see implemented to resolve the problem.
- Children and young people have a right to participate in decisions about their life. Being involved in the solution may give them a sense of empowerment in what may feel like a powerless situation.

4. Communicate with the child or young person and parents/carers

- Parents/guardians will be consulted before making an external report unless the matter requires urgent intervention from law enforcement or child protection agencies.

- It is important to work closely with the involved parents/carers as well as involved children and young people.
- Try to maintain clear communications with everyone involved, including keeping all parties updated with next steps.

5. Reporting

- Part of the process may involve reporting the incident to e-safety or the police should the complainant wish.
- Where cyberbullying involves threats, harassment, or potential criminal activity, SLSQ may liaise with law enforcement in accordance with Queensland and Commonwealth laws.
- E-safety can assist in getting serious cyberbullying material removed, and provide advice, support and assistance. https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/cyberbullying

6. Consider possible sources of support

- The aim of responding to an incident of cyberbullying should be to resolve the complaint and support children and young people to continue their participation through our organisaton.
- Consider involving other support people through the process, such as a trusted age manager or coach if children and young people so wish.

Related procedure instruments

- SLSQ Cyberbullying policy
- SLSA Member Protection Policy
- SLSA Safeguarding Children and Young People Guideline
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Commonwealth Child Safe Framework
- National Office for Child Safety – Complaint Handling guide; upholding the rights of children and young people
- Australian Human Rights Commission
- Working with Children Act (Risk Management and Screening) 2000
- Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015 (Cth)

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