

ALL PORTFOLIOS

Child & Youth Risk Management Strategy



Brisbane Girls Debating Association

Child & Youth Risk Management Strategy

A Strategy to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and to protect children from harm.

Adopted by the Brisbane Girls Debating Association Executive 2026

This Strategy and its implementation must be reviewed annually under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening Act 2000 (the Act)* and the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020*.

Document Control

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1 Statement of Commitment

The Brisbane Girls Debating Association (BGDA) is committed to providing debating opportunities for female students in Brisbane and bridging the gender gap that currently exists in Queensland debating. The BGDA is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people and will provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people by abiding by governing legislature, implementing appropriate safeguarding procedures, and ensuring all members are aware and hold the capabilities to safeguard children and young people. This risk management strategy seeks to provide the tangible steps and procedures required to safeguard all children and young people engaging with our programs.

2 Code of Conduct

Everyone involved with the BGDA must abide by the Code of Conduct in Appendix 1.

3 Recruitment, Selection, Training and Management Procedure

Our volunteers are primarily comprised of adjudicators and workshop trainers for our Monday competition and Development Days. Adjudicators are required to be accredited to be involved in competitions.

Accreditation involves:

- Training conducted by accredited adjudicators, including covering selected child safety risks;
- Formal assessment of adjudication ability, incorporating key child safety components; and
- Satisfaction of Blue Card and related requirements.

Once accredited, we promote continuous learning, involving:

- Re-training and re-accreditation processes;
- Updates and refreshers;
- Feedback and response processes; and
- In some cases, discipline or de-accreditation.

Certain BGDA programs also involve the provision of coaches or other persons. The BGDA ensures that selection, training, and management for these programs implement the same reasonable recruitment, selection, training, and management procedures as adjudicators.

4 Policy and Procedure for Disclosures and Reporting

The BGDA acknowledges that volunteer adjudicators are not considered mandatory reporters but child protection is everybody's responsibility and every person SHOULD report to Child Safety if that person forms a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at

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an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm AND does not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm. The BGDA will ensure that all members of the community are aware of the direct reporting process (Appendix Two) and are fully supported in making reports to child safety or emergency services.

The BGDA accepts and adapts the definition of harm established within s9 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

Harm is defined as '*any detrimental effect of a **significant nature** on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing*'. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect; or sexual abuse or exploitation (s9 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*). Considerations when forming a reasonable suspicion about harm to a child include (s13C of the *Child Protection Act 1999*):

- whether there are detrimental effects on the child's body or the psychological state or emotional state;
 - that are evident to the person; or
 - that the person considers are likely to become evident in the future; and
- in relation to any detrimental effects mentioned above;
 - their nature and severity; and
 - the likelihood that they will continue; and
- the child's age.

Examples of abuse and resulting harm (as defined by BlueCard Services) are as follows:

TYPES OF ABUSE <i>Actions/behaviours by perpetrator</i>	RESULTING HARM <i>Impact experienced by the child</i>
<p>Physical abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting; • Shaking / throwing; • Burning / scalding; • Biting; • Causing bruising or fractures by excessive discipline; • Poisoning; • Giving children alcohol, illegal drugs or inappropriate medication; • Domestic and family violence. 	<p>Physical</p> <p><i>Refers to the body</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruising; • Fractures; • Internal injuries; • Burns.

<p>Psychological or Emotional abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scapegoating; • Persistent rejection or hostility; • Constant yelling, insults or criticism; • Cultural affronts; • Teasing / bullying / cyberbullying; • Exposure to domestic and family violence. 	<p>Psychological</p> <p><i>Refers to the mind and cognitive processes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and developmental delays; • Impaired self-image.
<p>Neglect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not giving a child sufficient food, housing, clothing, enough sleep, hygienic living; conditions, health care and adequate supervision; • Leaving children unattended; • Children missing school. 	<p>Emotional</p> <p><i>Refers to the ability to express emotions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression; • Hypervigilance; • Poor self esteem; • Self-harm; • Fear / anxiety.
<p>Sexual abuse or exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner; • Exposing a sexual body part to a child; • Talking in a sexually explicit way that is not age or developmentally appropriate; • Exposing children to sexual acts or pornography; • Making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child; • Having sexual relations with a child or young person under 16 years of age. 	<p>This is not a complete list of the types of abuse and resulting harm that may be experienced by children and young people, however it is to be used as a predictive tool for potential signs of harm.</p> <p>Each child's experience is different and depends on a range of factors, including the child or young person's age, the nature of harm, how long the abuse has been occurring, their relationship to the abuser, and their support networks.</p>

What is a 'disclosure' of harm (adopted from BlueCard services)?

A **disclosure of harm** occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen to a child.

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Disclosures of harm may start with:

- 'I think I saw...';
- 'Somebody told me that...';
- 'Just think you should know...';
- 'I'm not sure what I want you to do, but...'

It is important to act quickly and in the best interests of the child or young person after a disclosure of harm is received, irrespective of the alleged source of harm.

The BGDA mandates that all disclosures must be reported to the BGDA Welfare Vice-President or President, per the procedures stated in this document.

What is a suspicion of harm (adopted from BlueCard services)?

A **suspicion of harm** is when someone has a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm. A child who has been, or may be experiencing, abuse may show behavioural, emotional or physical signs of stress and abuse. There may also be other circumstances where there is concern for a child's welfare, but it does not reach the threshold to be considered a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

BGDA mandates that all members have a duty of care to follow up any suspicions of harm or potential risk of harm to children and young people they engage with. This can be done by observing and recording the actions of children who might be at risk, and reporting concerns to the BGDA Welfare Vice-President or President.

Members can suspect harm if:

- a child or young person tells/states that they have been harmed;
- someone else, for example, another child, a parent, or an employee, states that harm has occurred or is likely to occur;
- a child or young person states that they know someone who has been harmed (it is possible that they may be referring to themselves); and/or if
- members are concerned about significant changes in the behaviour of a child or young person, or the presence of new, unexplained and suspicious injuries, or observe harm happening.

The BGDA minimises the risk of harm by:

- ensuring students are in a safe environment;
- taking students seriously and following up any concerns; and
- listening to students and letting them know there are staff available to help with concerns.

If a member suspects harm or wishes to make a disclosure of harm, all reports are to be made to the disclosing officers. The disclosing officers are the BGDA Welfare Vice-President and the BGDA President. Escalation of concerns is to abide by the reporting flow chart (Appendix Two). The BGDA acknowledges the limited capacity of the organisation to act and intervene

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and, where safe to do so, will refer all matters of concern to the appropriate school officer. If immediate harm is suspected or immediate, a Child Services report will be completed or emergency services will be contacted by the nominated officers. The BGDA will offer support to any person who reports a disclosure or suspicion of harm and will work with schools to ensure students are supported and counselled.

5 Breach Management Plan

An act or omission of any person involved in BGDA competitions or programs contrary to any part of this Strategy (including the Code of Conduct) constitutes a breach. Potential breaches will be investigated and managed in a fair, unbiased, and supportive way, including:

- advising all parties of the process;
- hearing from all parties involved and keeping records of their accounts;
- ensuring appropriate confidentiality; and
- reaching an outcome appropriate in the circumstances, which may include:
 - re-training;
 - supervision;
 - mediating between involved parties;
 - termination, de-accreditation or expulsion; or
 - reviewing this Strategy to ensure it achieves its aims.

While the BGDA will generally follow this process, where immediate action is required to address a potential risk to child safety, this action may require some expedition or adjustment of the process.

6 Compliance with the Requirements of the Blue Card System.

The BGDA has identified that student involvement in weekend debating workshops can be classified as a high-risk activity. The BGDA will review any new activities for potential risks and implement the appropriate planning.

The BGDA will implement a *BlueCard High Risk Activity Risk Management Plan* for the above events and ensure that the plans:

1. Describe the activity;
2. Identify the risks;
3. Analyse the risks;
4. Evaluate the risks;
5. Manage the risks and reassess; and
6. Review.

7 Compliance with the Requirements of the Blue Card System.

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Compliance with the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (Qld) is an essential aspect of the BGDA's child protection strategy. A standing agenda item for the first Management Committee meeting of each year is the implementation and review of this Strategy.

The BGDA maintains an updated Blue Card Register for all persons involved in our competitions and programs.

8 Communication and Support

This Strategy will be made available on the BGDA website at www.bgda.org.au.

The Code of Conduct in Appendix 1 is structured as a training document to help everyone identify risks of harm, handle disclosures or suspicions of harm and understand this Strategy.

The Code and Strategy are deliberately concise to ensure they are effective, clear and easily disseminated.

The Code of Conduct will be handed to all adjudicators and coaches at training seminars.

Appendix One

Code of Conduct

This Code applies to everyone involved with the BGDA, including coaches, parents, and students.

Paramount Duty

Your paramount duty is always the welfare of students.

Standards of Appropriate Behaviour

Category	Appropriate	Inappropriate
Language	Be respectful and encouraging with your words and non-verbal cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insults or name-calling • Bullying or yelling • Swearing or abusive language • Sexually suggestive comments/jokes
Relationships	Be a trusted and positive role model that helps empower students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favouritism • 'Grooming' students • Any contact outside debating (eg messaging)
Physical Contact	Only ever in a medical emergency or to protect from imminent physical harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violent or aggressive behaviour around students • Hitting, kicking or pushing • Kissing or touching of a sexual nature
Other	Communicate and project an appropriate image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photographing or filming at debates • Being under the influence of alcohol or illicit substances during engagement with the BGDA • Making inappropriate comments to others about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specific teams, students or other stakeholders

Handling Disclosures or Suspicions of Harm

If you have a suspicion or receive a disclosure of harm relating to the BGDA, report it immediately to the BGDA Welfare Vice-President and BGDA President (by telephone and follow up email) and relevant coordinators at your current location. 'Harm' includes physical, emotional, or psychological abuse and/or neglect and/or sexual abuse.

You might suspect harm based on unexplained injuries or significant changes in behaviour.

When receiving a disclosure (which may begin with, for example, "I think I saw...", "Someone told me..."):

- remain calm and find a private and safe place to talk, but don't promise to keep a secret;
- say they have done the right thing to tell you and you will need to tell someone who can help;
- only confirm the need to report: further questions may cause distress or affect later enquiry;
- do not attempt to conduct your own investigation.

One to One Contact with a Child

BGDA requires no member of the community to ever be alone with a child. If a member is engaging with a child within their governed duties and there is a foreseeable possibility of being alone with them, they must move to a location where other students or adults are present. It is the responsibility of any adult BGDA member to ensure they are never alone with a student.

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This Code is part of the BGDA's Child & Youth Risk Management Strategy, online at www.bgda.org.au.

Breaches of this Code or the Strategy are taken very seriously, and will be dealt with according to the Breach Management Plan in the Strategy.

Appendix Two – Escalation Procedure

If a BGDA member is concerned for a child's safety or wellbeing, the escalation procedure should be taken as follows:

1. Is the child in immediate danger?
 - a. If yes, notify the venue coordinator and BGDA President and call 000;
 - b. If no, proceed to next consideration;
2. Have you witnessed a physically violent act towards the child?
 - a. If yes, notify the venue coordinator and BGDA President immediately;
 - b. If no, proceed to next consideration;
3. Have you witnessed an inappropriate sexual act towards to the child?
 - a. If yes, notify the venue coordinator and BGDA President and contact 000;
 - b. If no, proceed to next consideration;
4. Has the child disclosed that they are experiencing harm?
 - a. If yes, complete the following steps:
 - i. Reassure the child;
 - ii. Immediately notify the venue coordinator and BGDA President;
 - iii. Stay with the child until a plan has been made;
 - iv. Complete an Incident Report as soon as possible;
 - b. If no, proceed to next consideration;
5. Does the child have physical and/or emotional traits that are concerning?
 - a. If yes, complete an Incident Report and notify the venue coordinator and BGDA President immediately;
 - b. If no, proceed to next consideration;
6. Are you concerned about the child's emotional wellbeing?
 - a. If yes, email the Vice-President of Welfare and BGDA President with your concerns;
 - b. If no, proceed to next consideration;
7. Do you have another concern about the child's safety or wellbeing?
 - a. If yes, email the Vice-President of Welfare and BGDA President with your concerns;
 - b. If no, please email BGDA President and the issue may be discussed.