



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

## **A Statement from the Board of the Australian Council for International Development**

### **Final Report of the Independent Review to Improve Practice and Response of ACFID**

#### **Members in the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct**

*“The thing that survivors need most is remarkably simple in theory, though difficult in execution. We need to be heard. Not just have our stories listened to, but to have those experiences be heard, acknowledged, and integrated into efforts moving forward. Without this, any efforts to address sexual violence in the aid sector will be for naught.”*

Review contributor, VIFM Independent Review Report

In a formal statement, the Board of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) has responded to the publication of the final report of the independent review to improve practice and response of ACFID’s members in the prevention of sexual misconduct:

On behalf of ACFID and its membership, we would like to acknowledge and apologise to the victim/survivors of sexual misconduct who have been harmed – both those we work alongside and those we exist to protect and support.

We are not able to undo that harm, but as leaders we can act in unity to listen and prevent harm in the future. We are crystal-clear that the path of resolution, redress and change will be formed by your experiences.

We pledge to shed light on and harness our failings; unceasingly assess how we can improve practice; and challenge gendered power relations where they exist.

Our goal has always been to reduce cases of sexual misconduct to zero, where one case is one too many. In striving for that goal, we must ensure our organisations are places where victims/survivors feel safe to report without fear; are empowered to tell their stories; and justice is a cast-iron certainty.

In commissioning this review, we hope to have demonstrated the gravity with which we consider this issue and our resolve to improve.

We have not shied away from asking the hardest questions; have opened-up the sector to far-reaching scrutiny; and have aired our failings to instigate a transformation in how we work.

Consistently, we are very clear that we are accepting all of the recommendation that have been made by the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine in this independent review and have already set to work on implementing them.

**Pertaining to all of the recommendations**, we will meet in early December to agree an implementation plan for the membership which responds to each recommendation line-by-line. We will publicly report annually on our progress against the recommendations. This reporting will commence in June 2019.

**Pertaining to recommendations for ACFID**, we have made significant changes to our Code of Conduct to raise safeguarding to the highest level. This is binding upon ACFID's members. We will improve practice through standard-setting, training, driving discussion of complex issues and sharing good practice.

**Pertaining to recommendations for DFAT and the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC)** – while they will need to make their own assessments – we will work with them in good faith to make the recommendations a reality and will advocate for their adoption.

Like much of our society, our sector is not immune from incidences of sexual misconduct. But because of the people we work with and the environments in which we work, our responsibility extends to eliminating risk and harm at every turn.

Removing people from risk and harm at all times is the ambitious and immutable task that we set ourselves. We are determined that this independent review and the actions we take will reshape how we protect people.

The community expectation of the sector is that we hold the highest standards in line with our values. We – along with the vast majority of aid and humanitarian workers who obey the law and uphold values of integrity, accountability and respect – will rebuild the trust that has been lost and demonstrate that we remain true to our values.

The end of the review is not the end of the process but will form the basis of driving the prevention of sexual misconduct in this sector.

**The members of the ACFID Board are:**

President: Susan Pascoe, AM

Vice President (Finance): Jane Edge – CEO CBM Australia

Vice President: Matthew Maury – National Director, TEAR Australia

Vice President: Helen Szoke – CEO, Oxfam Australia

Sashenka Worsman – CEO, Oaktree

Paul O'Callaghan – CEO, Caritas Australia

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Christian Nielsen – Executive Director, Live & Learn

Claire Rogers - CEO, World Vision Australia

Susanne Legena - CEO, Plan Australia International

Dermot O'Gorman - CEO, WWF

Sally Moyle - Chief Executive, CARE Australia