

	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Preventing and responding to abuse, neglect and harm of elders and/or people with disabilities ('Safeguarding')</h2>
--	---

Connect: Inner West Community Transport Group is committed to taking all steps possible to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, violence and discrimination of its clients, particularly toward people with a disability and older people.

Connect will promote and adhere to the human rights of all clients and empower them to exercise their rights. Connect is committed to creating a culture where client safety is essential to service delivery, and clients and workers feel empowered to speak up and report abuse.

Connect will outline the processes to:

- Assess the risks of abuse
- Prevent abuse from occurring
- Respond to abuse

Record of policy development		
Version	Date approved	Date for review
1	3 October 2025	2 October 2028

Responsibilities and delegations	
This policy applies to	Directors and staff
Specific responsibilities	General Manager
Policy approval	Board

Policy context – this policy relates to:	
Standards	
Legislation	Aged Care Act 2025
Contractual obligations	
Organisation policies	
Forms, record keeping, other documents	

Definitions

Exploitation: is taking advantage of someone's vulnerabilities for your personal gain, to steal, use or profit. Exploitation often occurs with vulnerable groups such as people with a disability and older people. Exploitation is a form of abuse.

Abuse: is any form of violence, coercion, exploitation, discrimination, harm or neglect which causes another person psychological or physical pain or suffering. Abuse can be emotional, physical, financial, chemical or sexual.

Procedures

Assessing risks of abuse:

Workers will be trained to identify and respond to factors which may heighten the risk of clients being a victim of abuse. Workers will consider, for each client, the factors that can contribute to client vulnerability, such as social and geographical isolation, insecure accommodation, dependency on carers, not having the means or capacity to advocate for themselves, fragility and dysfunctional family lives.

Preventing abuse Connect

Organisational commitment to prevention

Connect will foster a culture where all workers are committed to preventing abuse. All workers will undertake training in abuse prevention and client rights. Connect will ensure the staff recruitment screening process is thorough.

Connect will take a holistic and system wide approach to preventing abuse in all services and activities. **Connect** will ensure that staff feel supported and their wellbeing is looked after.

Culture of reporting and transparency

Connect will create a culture where workers and clients feel supported to speak up when they witness or become aware of information about an alleged abuse, and that they feel they can do so without fear of punishment or retribution. Barriers to both client and worker disclosure of incidents of abuse will be addressed and mitigated.

Feedback

Connect will ensure there are adequate feedback and complaints mechanisms in place and all clients are aware of how to lodge a complaint or provide feedback.

Official feedback processes will not act as the sole mechanism for clients to raise issues around abuse, exploitation, violence, neglect and discrimination.

Restrictive practices

Connect will ensure policies and processes are in place to minimise and work towards eliminating the use of restrictive practices and understands that misuse of restrictive practices can constitute a form of abuse. Connect will adhere to relevant guidelines and reporting requirements when using restrictive practices.

Responsibilities

The General Manager will:

- Ensure clients understand their rights and are aware of how they can exercise them
- Listen to and validate a client's experience when they report a suspected abuse;
- Talk to the client about what is most important to them when responding to the abuse;
- Involve the client as much as they would like in the investigation and decision-making processes;
- Ensure the client and their family, where appropriate, are informed on all measures being taken;
- Give regular updates on the progress of the investigation;
- Arrange access to counselling or support for both the client and workers who may be suffering as

a result of the incident;

- Analyse and identify what went wrong to allow the abuse to occur, and what changes can be made in organisational policies and procedures to combat abuse; and
- Ensure that all workers sign a Code of Conduct, which requires workers to respect and maintain the dignity of clients.

Responding to abuse

Connect will apply the following principles when responding to abuse:

- Client safety is paramount to all procedures
- Clients will be treated with dignity and respect
- Clients will have the right to self-determination
- Workers understand and enact their duty of care
- Workers have undertaken cultural competency training and are considerate of individual client cultural differences
- A holistic approach will be taken when responding to abuse
- All options (legal/police) are considered when responding to abuse
- Clients' confidentiality is respected, however will not be a barrier to action
- Every allegation of abuse, neglect, harm, discrimination and exploitation will be considered and taken seriously

Five step approach to responding to abuse

Connect will adopt the following five-step approach to responding to abuse.

This approach will include:

1. Identification of suspected, witnessed or disclosed abuse
2. Assessment of client safety
3. Providing client support
4. Informing the manager and documenting abuse and/or neglect
5. Responding and referring the abuse to management

1. Identification

Connect will ensure that all workers undertake training in identifying whether a client has or is suffering from abuse. Workers will be able to identify the signs of different types of abuse (physical, financial, neglect, psychological, sexual and chemical).

2. Assessing client safety

All workers will ensure that in the follow up of an abuse or alleged abuse, the client's safety and security is protected. This may involve seeking urgent medical assistance, providing counselling or seeking out the client's family or guardian. The worker on site will contact emergency services immediately if the client requires urgent medical assistance and if the worker on site suspects criminal activity was involved. Connect will not use client consent as a barrier to contacting emergency services.

3. Providing support

Connect will ensure workers are trained and aware of the processes for when an assault has occurred and will provide immediate client support.

Connect will ensure the client is given any aids they require to assist them when giving their account of the abuse. Connect will ensure clients are offered a translator if their proficiency in English is limited. The General Manager will make the client comfortable by:

- allowing them plenty of time to give their version of events of the abuse;
- actively listening;
- speaking clearly;
- eliminating background noise; and
- repeating the question if the client requests to hear it again.

4. Informing and documenting

The General Manager will ensure workers and clients make all attempts possible to maintain the scene of the alleged abuse.

The relevant worker on site will ask the client what they would like to do about their situation. If they don't have the capacity to be involved, a substitute decision-maker will be included in the conversation

Criminal acts and deaths will be reported to NSW Police.

Staff on site who witnessed or were disclosed the details of the assault, will report to supervisor immediately or as quickly as possible.

5. Responding and record keeping

Connect will conduct a thorough investigation into the alleged abuse, neglect, exploitation, violence and discrimination and identify, who was responsible and what organisational policies allowed the incident to happen. All possible measures will be taken to mitigate the risk of a similar incident from occurring. Connect will follow approved records management procedures. (

Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed and updated by the General Manager every year to ensure it is up to date with relevant legislation, standards and is responsive to feedback from clients and workers.

End of document
