RAWCS Communication and Transparency Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Who we are

1.1.1 Rotary Australia World Community Service Ltd (RAWCS) is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). We back doing good by supporting and facilitating a broad range of humanitarian and development projects, both in Australia and in developing countries. RAWCS administers three Tax Deductible funds:

1 **Rotary Australia Overseas Aid Fund (RAOAF):** This fund supports efforts by Rotary Clubs, Rotary Districts and other partners to deliver humanitarian assistance in developing countries. RAOAF focuses on both sustained development and immediate disaster response, working collaboratively with communities to deliver impactful, sustainable projects to meet identified needs.

2 **Rotary Australia Benevolent Society (RABS):** RABS supports Rotary Clubs, Rotary Districts and other partners to respond to specific community challenges within Australia. It offers an avenue for wider community involvement through tax-deductible donations. The Rotary Australia Compassionate Grants Projects within RABS uses matching funds from donations, such as those provided by Dick Smith's Trust, to assist Australians facing hardship.

3 **Rotary Australia Relief Fund (RARF):** This fund is dedicated to responding to national appeals and efficiently disbursing funds to appropriate aid projects. RARF's focus is on mobilising rapid support during national crises, such as natural disasters, providing a structured channel for public generosity to be transformed into effective aid. This fund acts as a hub for contributions from both Rotary and non-Rotary sources, ensuring swift and effective aid delivery to disaster-affected areas.

1.2 Purpose

1.2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that RAWCS employs ethical, honest, and sensitive practices in collecting and sharing stories and images about the communities we serve and the impact of our work. By respecting people's dignity and culture, we aim to maintain the trust of those we represent and reflect our values in all our communications. This policy outlines our commitment to these principles, guiding our communication practices to ensure they are conducted responsibly and ethically.

1.2.3 We adhere to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct which outlines essential communication and transparency requirements.

1.3 Scope and Governance

1.3.1 This policy applies to RAWCS and all of its administered funds and subsidiaries – referred inclusively within this policy as RAWCS.

1.3.2 This policy applies to all RAWCS staff, volunteers, Board members, committee members, suppliers and contractors. Within this policy all of these are represented by the term: "**our people**".

1.3.3 This policy covers all communications, activities and materials produced or shared by RAWCS.

1.3.4 This policy directs all our communications with donors, supporters, partners, funders and Australian and international communities.

1.4   Policy References

1.4.1   This policy was developed with references to the following documents:
- ACFID Code of Conduct
- RAWCS Code of Conduct
- RAWCS Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct
- RAWCS Fundraising Policy
- RAWCS Volunteer Policy
- RAWCS Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure
- RAWCS Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure
- RAWCS Communication Plan

1.5   Definitions

Term	Definition
Communications	The act of sharing information, stories and content with other parties.
Communication Materials	Includes material, advertisements, brochures, reports, images and all other print and digital media produced for public audiences.
Communication Channels	Methods of content distribution to varying audiences and using different mediums: for example, social media, direct mail or publications.
Activities	Includes speaking engagements, training, and conferences, liaising with media, representatives networking in the sector, personal social media, and email communications.

2. Principles

2.1   Guiding Principles

2.1.1   **Two-way:** We will foster open and two-way communication. We will encourage feedback, questions, and dialogue from our stakeholders. We are committed to listening actively and using the feedback to refine our messages and strategies.

2.1.2   **Feedback appreciation:** We will establish mechanisms for receiving and integrating feedback. We will actively seek input from stakeholders with a view to promote a culture of continuous improvement.

2.1.3   **Audience-centric:** We will tailor our messages to the needs, interests, and preferences of our stakeholders. Understand the demographics and psychographics of our stakeholders to communicate effectively.

2.1.4   **Transparent:** We will always be transparent and honest in our communication. We will build trust with our stakeholders by providing accurate information and addressing issues openly. At RAWCS, we believe transparency is crucial for maintaining credibility.

2.1.5   **Consistent:** We will maintain consistency in messaging across all communication channels. Consistent messaging helps build a cohesive and recognisable brand identity for RAWCS.

3. Policy Commitments

3.1 Collecting, storing and using data, stories and images

3.1.1   We treat partners, program participants and others with respect and dignity when collecting and sharing stories.

3.1.2   Before collecting material, we must get informed prior consent. This means we obtain permission before taking a photo or video, and that the person(s) involved understands:
- Why their image story or personal details are being collected.
- Where and how they will be used and over what period of time.
- That their participation is entirely voluntary.
- That they do not have to be identified if they don't want to be.
- The potential risks and consequences of their image, name and words being published.
- That they may withdraw consent at any time, and that we will make all reasonable efforts to give effect to this request.

3.1.3   This permission needs to be culturally appropriate and sensitive to context. When possible, consent should be requested in advance, allowing the person sufficient time to consider their decision.

3.1.4   In the case of children, consent must be provided by an adult guardian. Children will not be identified in any publication or use of material.

3.1.5   Written consent is preferable but not always possible or appropriate. Verbal consent must be documented, and preferably recorded via video.

3.1.6   We are careful when we collect or use material so that it is not detrimental to the people or community involved.

3.1.7   We safeguard children when photographing, filming or interviewing a child, or when using children's images. Children are portrayed in a context relevant to our work, adequately clothed, and not in a vulnerable, submissive or sexually suggestive manner.

3.1.8   We respect First Nations people's unique history, diverse cultures and customs and their right to protect their heritage. We will honour sensitivities around taking and reproducing names, information and images.

3.1.9   Advice is sought from schools and other relevant organisations to ensure permissions apply to each person.

3.1.10   Our project partners are consulted about obtaining appropriate permissions and on any potential risks related to using images and case studies.

3.1.11   We ensure that established quality and accuracy checks are provided and approval processes are followed to ensure that all public materials are accurate and reflective of the dignity and the values of the people profiled.

3.1.12   All materials reflect the strengths-based approach to our work.

3.1.13   Records are maintained including:
- the origins of images and case studies;
- permissions and copyright releases; and
- key details including name, age, location, date, program association and form of consent.

3.1.14   Photo data (such as file labels, meta data or text descriptions) do not reveal information about a child that could identify them, such as their name or location. GPS tracking is turned off before taking photos.

3.2   Representing RAWCS in the media

3.2.1   The CEO and Chair of the Board are able to speak to the media on behalf of RAWCS. They are the only pre-nominated media spokespeople for RAWCS. Other people may be delegated to speak on behalf of RAWCS in specific circumstances only.

3.2.2   We seek to establish and maintain a positive and open relationship with the media. To do so, all media queries should be directed to the CEO in the first instance.

3.2.3   RAWCS has a social media presence to promote the work of the organisation, encourage donations and engage with different audiences and communities. All use of social media will be responsive, engaging and respectful.

3.2.4   Our people have a particular role in being aware of how they represent RAWCS in public. This includes the need to exercise good judgement and common sense in publishing on social media and always taking care not to purport to be representing the views of RAWCS. Our people are accountable for what they communicate.

3.3   Creation, approval, and distribution of press releases

3.3.1   To ensure our press releases align with our values and promote transparency, the following process must be followed by all our people and partners:

3.3.2   **Authorisation and Approval:**
- Only designated representatives (CEO, Board Chair, Communications Manager, or spokesperson) can create and approve press releases.
- Press releases must be reviewed by relevant managers or project leaders before final approval.

3.3.3   **Accuracy and Integrity:**
- Ensure all information is accurate, up-to-date, and aligns with RAWCS's mission and values.
- Avoid misleading statements or unsupported claims.

3.3.4   **Timeliness:**
- Ensure press releases are timely and relevant to current organizational objectives.

3.3.5   **Consistency:**
- Maintain consistent messaging and branding across all press releases.

3.3.6   **Target Audience:**
- Tailor press releases to the intended audience, such as the public, donors, partners, or media.

3.3.7   **Respect for Privacy:**
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals and organizations involved in RAWCS projects. Obtain consent before including personal information.

3.4   Fundraising

3.4.1   Our identity including name, address and Australian Business Number will always be provided on materials.

3.4.2   Fundraising documentation will clearly state if there is a specific purpose for which funds are being raised, how money collected will be used, how money collected in excess of the required amount will be spent, and any other information as required by appropriate federal and state Legislation.

3.4.3   Appeals will be made on the basis of justice and common humanity and not guilt, presenting a message of potential change and ultimately contributing to a positive understanding of development.

3.5   Acknowledging grants and income

3.5.1   We meet our funding obligations and openly acknowledge the support provided through program funding and grants. This transparency shows where and how funds are being used, unless the donor has asked for privacy.

3.5.2   Acknowledgement may include but is not limited to:
- Publications, Annual Report, events, videos, websites, social media, media releases, speeches and interviews.
- Supporting in-country publicity through the local press.
- Ensuring program participants understand the source of the support.
- Focusing on project outcomes and impact when promoting Australia's aid programs.

3.6   Partners and Stakeholders

3.6.1   We support our program partners to ensure they understand and can comply with their obligations regarding transparency and communication. Program partners are also supported in the development of their own policies and procedures for the collection and use of images and stories.

3.6.2   Partners are required to:
- communicate to the public and the communities in which they work in an accurate and honest way;
- use images, videos, and stories in an ethical manner, maintaining the dignity of those featured in the stories, minimise any potential risks, especially in regards to children and vulnerable adults, with consent;
- obtain informed consent for images, videos, and stories and to share the consent form with us where appropriate; and
- acknowledge the support of funders where relevant, and follow any visual identify guidelines in public communications such as press releases, newsletters, annual reports, on websites and project signage.

3.6.3   We will ensure that program partners make a separation between development and nondevelopment activities in fundraising material, other public communications and in program reporting.

3.6.4 Our people will always communicate about other organisations with respect. Specifically, not making statements about other organisations, including other ACFID Members, with the intention of creating a reputational or other advantage to RAWCS.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
National Board of Directors	• Ultimate accountability for our organisation policies • Guiding governance and culture of RAWCS through strategic leadership • Approving this policy and holding the CEO accountable to how effectively this policy is implemented
CEO	• Ensuring this policy is upheld • Informing the Board of any concerns relating to communication and transparency that may present risk to RAWCS, its people, its reputation, operations or other activities, and in particular any concerns related to safeguarding of children and vulnerable people. • Ensuring all our people are accountable to this policy • Creating a culture that supports open and honest communications
National Communications Manager	• Ensuring this policy is upheld and all communication activities on behalf of RAWCS comply with this policy
National Manager Projects & Volunteers	• Ensuring all project participants are aware of, and comply with this policy.
All our people	• Understanding and following this policy and related procedures • Ensuring that your actions are in line with this policy, and that your work reflects the Guiding Principles and Policy Commitments above • Not encouraging others (directly or indirectly) to breach this policy • Reporting any breach to your manager/supervisor

5. Incorrect or inappropriate communications

5.1 If it comes to our attention that one of our people has made inappropriate and/or unauthorised comments about RAWCS, we may choose to take disciplinary action.

5.2 If we publish incorrect information via the official communication channels, we are required to immediately inform the relevant manager/supervisor and take the steps advised by those individuals to correct the mistake. Where there has been a significant error, a correction and/or clarification should be distributed to the original audience where this is possible.

6.   Policy Distribution

6.1   This policy will be available on our website and shared with our people.

6.2   We will ensure that all our people and partners are notified of and made aware that they are required to comply with the policy.

7.   Review

7.1.   We are committed to continuous improvement to our policy, procedures and practices. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years by the CEO and approved by the National Board of Directors to ensure it is working in practice and updated as required.

7.2   Feedback on this and other policies is openly encouraged from our people, partners, stakeholders and the communities we work with. Feedback, as well as emerging good practice and collaborative lessons learnt across the development sector, will be used to strengthen this and related policies and procedures.

8.   More information

9.1.   If you have a query about this policy or need more information, you can contact us via:
- email: info@rawcs.org.au
- phone: +61 2 8833 8306
- post: Rotary Australia World Community Service Ltd
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