

Date adopted September 2017
Last review June 2021
Next review November 2024
Responsible Officer Family Youth and Children's Services Manager

Fully compliant with Victorian
Charter of Human Rights and
Responsibilities Act 2006



POLICY TITLE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS POLICY
POLICY NUMBER CPOL/STAFF143

1. PURPOSE

The Victorian child safe standards are a compulsory framework that support organisations to promote the safety of children by requiring them to implement policies and procedures to prevent, respond to and report allegations of child abuse.

The standards exist to prevent abuse, to drive cultural change and embed a focus on child safety by placing children's rights and wellbeing at the forefront of the organisation's mind.

Importantly, the standards not only protect children from abuse and harm, but nurture their wellbeing and support their voices in speaking out and being heard on the issues affecting them.

New child safe standards commenced in Victoria on 1 July 2022 to better protect children. Eleven new standards have replaced the original seven standards and principles.

Key changes include new requirements:

- to involve families and communities in organisations efforts to keep children and young people safe
- for a greater focus on safety for Aboriginal children and young people
- to manage the risk of child abuse in online environments
- for greater clarity on the governance, systems and processes to keep children and young people safe.

These changes have been made to support greater national consistency, reflecting the *National Principles for a Child Safe Organisation* developed following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Swan Hill Rural City Council (Council) Councillors, staff, volunteers, contractors, work experience students, and industry placement students.

3. POLICY

This policy demonstrates Council's commitment to child safety. Council aims to provide children with an environment that is safe and welcoming and encourages participation. The objectives of this policy include:

- To reflect Council's commitment to provide a safe environment where every person has the right to be treated with respect and is safe and protected from harm.
- To provide Councillors, staff, volunteers and contractors with guidance on their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing

controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.

- To ensure decisions and actions are consistent with the new Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Council is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

All children who come to Swan Hill Rural City Council facilities have a right to feel and be safe. Council is committed to the safety and well-being of all children participating in our programs and visiting our libraries. We aim to create a safe and friendly environment where children feel safe and valued and where the views of children are encouraged and respected. Council is committed to promoting and protecting, at all times, the best interests of children involved in its programs.

All children, regardless of their gender, gender identity, sex/intersex status, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

A child safe organisation is one that understands if we accept behaviour that is concerning to us without speaking up, we are condoning it. The essence of the Child Safe Standards is a widely understood commitment to saying something, if you see something. While it takes many components to build a child safe organisation, the standards primary focus is fostering a common attitude shift from “that behaviour is worrying but it isn’t my concern” to “it is my concern”.

4. THE STANDARDS

The child safe standards apply to organisations providing services or facilities or employing children or young people in Victoria.

The standards support child safety by changing the way in which organisations and their staff, volunteers and members work so that protecting children is always considered, taken seriously and acted on.

There are eleven Child Safe Standards:

Child Safe Standard 1 – Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued

Child Safe Standard 2 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

Child Safe Standard 3 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Child Safe Standard 4 – Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

Child Safe Standard 5 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

Child Safe Standard 6 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

Child Safe Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused

Child Safe Standard 8 – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

Child Safe Standard 10 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

Child Safe Standard 11 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

Each Standard is expressed as an expected outcome. For each Standard, there is a number of compliance indicators designed to provide guidance on what organisations must do to meet minimum requirements and achieve outcomes.

The Child Safe Standards have been in operation for over five years. The updated Standards will require organisations to review and adjust practices.

Council, as a whole organisation, is legally required to comply with the Child Safe Standards. The Child Safe Standards are broad-ranging and have significant legal obligations across council, including new compliance laws due to come into effect in January 2023.

5. RELATED POLICIES/PROCEDURES/DOCUMENTS

POL/HUMAN604 Reporting Concern about Children or Young People

PRO/STAFF141 Police Checks

PRO/STAFF142 Working with Children Check

POL/STAFF127 Staff Code of Conduct

POL/CORP211 Privacy Policy

POL/STAFF105 Equal Opportunity Employment

POL/GOV018 Public Interest Disclosures

POL/STAFF123 Serious Misconduct Negligence and Fraud

CPOL/OHS901 Occupational Health and Safety

POL/STAFF104 Disciplinary Policy

POL/STAFF130 Termination of Employment

POL/CORP214 Records Management Policy

PRO/STAFF143 Reportable Conduct Scheme Procedure

PRO/STAFF149 Key Roles and Responsibilities of Employees Under Child Safe Standards Procedure

6. RELATED LEGISLATION

Education and Care Services National Law 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Commonwealth Family Assistance Law:

Equal Opportunity Act 2010

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
 Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
 Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
 Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
 Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012
 Crimes Act 1958
 Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
 Public Records Act 1973
 Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)
 Limitations of Actions Act 1958
 Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)
 Crimes Amendment Act 2014 (Vic)
 Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014
 Child Wellbeing and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)
 Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2021 (Vic)
 Child Wellbeing and Safety (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018
 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
 Local Government Act 2020

7. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version Number	Issue Date	Description of Change
1.0	September 2017	Initial release
1.1	June 2019	Review
1.2	September 2021	Review
2.0	November 2022	Review

Signed: Les McPhee

Mayor

Date: 17/11/2022