





Murrumbidgee
COUNCIL

Child Safe Policy (Revision 1)

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1. Policy Objective

This policy outlines Council's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation. Council supports children and young people having safe and happy experiences in our community, accessing our facilities and in the care of our services.

The policy applies to all officers of Council, including all employees, Councillors, contractors, volunteers and outlines their obligations in keeping children safe.

The policy will inform other Council policies, strategies and actions that align with the continual enhancement of child safety in all Council activities.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Murrumbidgee Council believe children and young people have the right to be respected, empowered and safe. Council is committed to our responsibilities in keeping them safe and listening to their views.

2.2 Child Safe Standards

The NSW Office of the Children's Guardian introduced the Child Safe Standards to improve the way organisations provide services for children and young people to prevent and respond to child abuse that may occur within organisations.

Council is committed to the Child Safe Standards which are:

- Standard 1: Child safety is embedded in organisations leadership, governance and culture
- Standard 2: Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved
- Standard 4: Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken into account
- Standard 5: People working with children are suitable and supported
- Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused
- Standard 7: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe, through continual education and training
- Standard 8: Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
- Standard 9: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
- Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

2.3 Involving families, children and young people in decision-making

Council supports the active participation of families and children in our services, programs and events. Council will provide accessible opportunities and encourage children to take part in decisions that affect them now and in the future. This is to:

- help us better meet their needs and interests
- involve them in their community

- encourage them to share their ideas and opinions
- teach them a new skill

Wherever applicable, we inform children and young people about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

2.4 Recruitment and selection

Council employs a fit for purpose recruitment and selection process for all direct contact work with a child or young person where contact is a usual part of, and more than incidental to, the work as defined by the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012*. Council must assess whether a position constitutes child-related employment prior to undertaking recruitment and appointment. A current Working with Children Check (WWCC) is required for all child-related work.

2.5 Training and induction

Council will meet its training and induction obligations by ensuring that all Council, employees, Councillors, volunteers and contractors are inducted in child safety. Council employees, Councillors, volunteers and contractors will be provided with training to support their understanding of Council's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in safeguarding children. Staff training required will be determined according to the level of interaction staff have with children in their day to day activities.

2.6 Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

All Council employees, Councillors, volunteers and contractors must comply with legal requirements and report known, suspected or alleged child abuse, misconduct or inappropriate behaviour.

Council must immediately take the appropriate steps to assess and minimise any further risk of harm, as well as report the matter to the relevant oversight agencies and/or Police. Council will support relevant authorities' investigations into allegations of abuse or risk of harm to children and young people.

Council will meet its mandatory reporting obligations and will take action to protect children and young people at risk of significant harm. A reportable allegation is made where a child, young person, or adult makes an allegation, based on a reasonable belief that a Councillor, employee, contractor, or volunteer of Murrumbidgee Council has been, or allegedly been, involved in the harm or abuse of a child or young person.

For the purposes of this policy, a child is a person who is under the age of 16 years, and a young person is one who is over the age of 16 years but under the age of 18 years.

2.7 Privacy and confidentiality

Council is committed to protecting an individual's right to privacy. All personal information considered during the process of reporting or investigation will be collected and managed in accordance with Council's Privacy Management Policy. Personal

information will only be disclosed to another party if there is a legislative requirement for such disclosure.

2.8 Risk management

Council recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur, and this informs all associated policies, strategies and actions.

To ensure Council maintains a child safe culture, all Council employees, Councillors, volunteers and contractors will be informed, resourced and supported to understand their role in providing a child safe environment.

Identifying risks to children and young people and implementing controls to mitigate these risks is an essential factor in keeping children safe. Child Safety Risk Management Plans will document how the safety and welfare of children and young people participating in events, programs and services delivered by Council are managed.

Child Safety Risk Management Plans are required for:

- Each Council facility where children and young people attend
- Events programs or services provided by Council employees delivered outside of a Council facility where children and young people are expected to attend.

2.9 Community Strategic Plan

Council's Community Strategic Plan outlines the community's main priorities for the future and includes strategies for achieving them. The Community Strategic Plan - Our Identity - People and Place Objective 4 "We encourage healthy, active and safe communities - Work together to enhance community safety" is supported by the Child Safe Policy.

2.10 Roles and Responsibilities

Council

Publicly commits to child safety and embeds a child safe culture.

General Manager

The General Manager is responsible for ensuring that Council fulfils its responding and reporting obligations and to notify the Office of the Children's Guardian (NSW) when an allegation of child abuse is made against a Council employee, Councillor, volunteer or contractor. The General Manager is responsible for ensuring that Councillors are informed and supported to understand their role in providing a child safe environment.

Directors and Managers

Directors and Managers are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy, and that all Council employees, contractors and volunteers are informed, resourced and supported to understand their role in providing a child safe environment.

Child Protection Officer

Council's Public Officer has been appointed as the Child Protection Officer and their responsibilities are:

- provide ongoing support and response to concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children while engaged in services, programs or events delivered by Council
- to notify the Office of the Children's Guardian (NSW) when an allegation (of which they are aware) of child abuse is made against a Councillor, employee, volunteer or contractor.

Council Employees, Councillors, Contractors and Volunteers

Council employees, Councillors, contractors and volunteers shall adhere to the requirements of this policy, reportable conduct and responding and reporting obligations, and be able to demonstrate their awareness of their child safety responsibilities.

Council employees, Councillors, contractors and volunteers are to be aware of their obligations outlined in Council's Codes of Conduct.

All Council staff should be aware that the appointment by Council of a Child Protection Officer does not remove mandatory reporting obligations that other officers of Council may have under s27 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

All staff shall adhere to their responding and reporting and reportable conduct obligations and take action when a child or young person is at risk of significant harm.

3. Definitions

Child	A person who is under the age of 16 years.
Young person	A person who is over the age of 16 years but under the age of 18 years.
Complaint	Any suggestion of abuse or harm that is disclosed, witnessed or demonstrated by a child.
Abuse	A term used to refer to different types of harm or maltreatment including physical harm, sexual assault, exposure to domestic violence, psychological harm and prenatal risks.
Working with Children Check	A requirement for anyone who works or volunteers in child-related work in NSW. The check provides either clearance to work with children for five years or a bar against working with children.

4. Legislation

This policy complies with, and supports implementation and compliance with, the following policies and instruments, but is not limited to:

- Children’s Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021
- Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014
- Child Protection (Offenders Prohibition Orders) Act 2004
- Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012
- Children’s Guardian Act 2019
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
- Ombudsman Act 1974
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
- State Records Act 1998
- Local Government Act 1993
- Young Offenders Act 1997
- The NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People – Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People.

5. Policy Review

This Policy:

- To be reviewed within the first year of the new Council term;
- May be reviewed and amended at any time at Council’s discretion (or if legislative or State Government policy changes occur).