



Safe environment for children policy

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| Classification | Policy |
| Strategic reference | Goal 1 Community : Actively contributing communities |
| Relevant legislation | Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 Children and Young People (Safety) Regulations 2017 Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Regulations 2019 |
| Relevant documents | Employee conduct policy LGA Child Safe Environment Guidelines November 2020 |
| Responsible officer | Chief Executive Officer |
| Date adopted | January 2021 |
| Next review date | January 2024 |

1. Introduction and rationale

Council is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and other vulnerable people who access our services. We support the rights of the child and vulnerable persons in the community and will act without hesitation to ensure a safe environment is maintained at all times. We also support the rights and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers and encourage their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all children, young people and other vulnerable people.

In addition to the moral obligation to address any harm to children, amendments to the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (the Safety Act) places a legal obligation on councils (and all other organisations providing a service wholly or partly to children) to ensure all children are safe from harm.

This policy aims to ensure the council organisation and facilities are safe environments for children, young people and other vulnerable people and that they are protected from abuse and neglect. This policy also aims to ensure that all relevant council managers, employees, volunteers, contractors and consultants are aware of their duty of care responsibilities for the protection, safety and wellbeing of children at all times.

2. Legal obligations

- **Child Safe Environments**

Section 114(1) of the Safety Act requires councils and subsidiaries to have in place policies and procedures for ensuring:

- child safe environments for children and young people are established and maintained within the organisation; and
- mandatory reporting obligations (as set out in Chapter 5, Part 1 of the Act) are complied with.

The policies and procedures must comply with the Principles of Good Practice issued by the Chief Executive of Department of Human Services as varied from time to time.

- **Mandatory Reporting**

Section 31(1) of the Safety Act prescribes mandated notifiers as any council employee, contractor, volunteer or person undertaking educational or vocational training that provides health, welfare,

education, sporting or recreational, child care or residential services wholly or partly for children and young people, being a person who:

- provides such services directly to children and young people; or
- holds a management position in the organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children and young people; and

Mandated notifiers also include an officer or employee of a council or subsidiary who holds a management position, the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of services to children.

Mandated notifiers must report any suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child to the Child Abuse Report Line (telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 13 14 78) or online at <https://my.families.sa.gov.au/IDMProv/landing.html>

3. Definitions

Child or young person means a person under the age of 18.

Harm includes physical and psychological harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse caused by neglect.

Prescribed position is a position in which a person works with children or a position in which it is reasonably foreseeable that the person will work with children, including people who:

- provide a service or undertake an activity that is child-related work in the course of their employment;
- carry on a business in which an employee works with children (whether or not the person works with children); or
- are employed to provide preschool, primary or secondary education to a child (whether or not the person is a registered teacher).

Prescribed positions may be held by employees, volunteers, contractors, persons undertaking educational / vocational training or elected members.

4. Application of the policy

The policy will apply from the date of endorsement, to all employees, volunteers, elected members, students on placement, work experience students, contractors and consultants providing services wholly or partly to children, or who work with or near children.

The policy will be communicated to all relevant audiences to ensure awareness and understanding of Council's commitment to ensuring a safe environment. This will include Council Members, staff, volunteers, contractors, consultants, parents, carers, and children where relevant.

5. Policy

Council is committed to ensuring the organisation and Council facilities are safe environments for children and vulnerable people.

In particular, the following standards reflect the guidance provided by DHS on appropriate standards of conduct for adults in dealing with children.

5.1 Risk management strategy

Council will identify and assess potential sources of harm and take steps to decrease the likelihood that harm will occur to children, young people and other vulnerable people who use our services. Areas of risk assessment will include human resources, activities and programs, record keeping, physical spaces, and organisational culture.

5.2 Codes of conduct

All employees, volunteers, contractors, elected members and consultants will be required to comply with any code of conduct endorsed by Council which sets out standards of conduct when providing services to children.

5.3 Recruitment, selection and enhancing performance

Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with, and provide services to, children and young people.

Applicants for prescribed positions will be screened for their suitability to provide services. Screening will involve working with children checks, interviews, referee reports, checking qualifications and previous employment history in working with children.

Council will ensure that all staff and volunteers who work with children or who have access to their personal records have ongoing support and training to develop, enhance and maintain a child safe environment.

5.4 Involvement in decision-making

Council will promote the involvement of children and young people in service development planning where relevant, and inform them of their rights and how to access grievance procedures where relevant.

5.5 Responding to suspected abuse and neglect

Council will ensure that staff, volunteers, contractors and consultants providing services to and/or working with children are aware of and are trained, and appropriately supported to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect on reasonable grounds.

6. Policy review

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed every three years or as necessary.

7. Further information

This document is available on Council's website www.southernmallee.sa.gov.au and at the principal office of the Southern Mallee District Council at Day Street, Pinnaroo SA 5304.