



# **Glen Innes Severn Council Child Safe Policy**

**DOCUMENT AUTHORISATION**

<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>		MANAGER OF COMMUNITY SERVICES			
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1	25/05/2023	11.05/23	Original Document	Manager of Community Services	Council

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 General Manager

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 25/7/23  
 Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Glen Innes Severn Council acknowledges and pays respect to the Ngorabul people as the traditional custodians of this land, their elders past, present and emerging and to Torres Strait Islander people and all First Nations people.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Council is implementing best practice approaches to child protection and adherence to the Child Safe Standards by responding in an organisational appropriate manner to the recommendations from the **Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse 2017 (the Commission)**, that affect local government.

The policy will also guide Council staff (paid and volunteer) on how to behave if/when interacting and engaging with children in the workplace.

## APPLICABILITY

Safeguarding children is everyone's business, including elected members, Council staff, contractors and sub-contractors, work experience participants, consultants, Section 355 Committee members, volunteers and all other persons who enter a Council premise or worksite.

## OUTCOMES

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse shone a spotlight on thousands of cases where organisations in Australia failed to protect children in their care from abuse. It highlighted that abuse occurs within an organisational context and continues today.

Council is committed to:

- Fulfilling its duty of care by ensuring that all Councillors, contractors and sub-contractors, work experience participants, consultants, Section 355 Committee members, volunteers and all other persons who enter a Council premise or worksite, act in the best interest of a child and take all reasonable steps to ensure a child's safety;
  - The ongoing education of children, young people and families, staff, volunteers, contractors and key stakeholders about their rights, responsibilities and reporting processes relating to child protection; and
  - Establishing a culture of child safety awareness by means of a procedural framework that is relevant to the size, structure, and operational objectives of Council and includes policy adherence, education, risk, recruitment, communications and how Council responds to issues and complaints.
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## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Creating and maintaining a child safe organisation is not all about Policies and Procedures, it requires strong leadership. It is an ongoing process where all staff need to learn, monitor, and review. Whilst strong governance is key, the delivery of a child safe institution is the responsibility of everyone in the workplace.

Having a leadership team that is committed to providing safe environments means that children are less likely to be exposed to harm and abuse. A child safe culture is a set of values and practices that guide the attitudes and behaviour of all staff. Good leaders champion these values and embed them in organisational governance.

Council supports the active participation of children in the programs, activities, and services that Council offers. Council engages children through several mechanisms including:

- Children, Youth and Family Services;
- Library Services;
- Community facilities such as the Skate Park;
- Recreation and Leisure Centres such as Aquatic Centres and the Indoor Sports Centre; and
- Positions with Councils workforce such as apprenticeships and traineeships.

Council will commit to a training program for the Management Executive and other appropriate staff that is commensurate with the recommendations of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*, *The Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021* and Council's resourcing capacity. The training will include information regarding mandatory reporting obligations with a subsequent training program developed for other Council staff.

## DEFINITIONS

**Abuse:** a term that is used to describe different types of harm or maltreatment. In this document it refers to types of harm or maltreatment that children and young people experience;

**Child:** refers to a person who is under the age of 16 years;

**Child Safe Organisation:** An organisation in which child safety is embedded in planning, policy and practices and where the voices of children and young people are valued and actioned.

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**Mandatory Reporters:** Persons to which section 27 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW) applies. Mandatory Reporters are persons who, in the course of their professional work or other paid employment deliver health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children. It also includes people who hold a management position in an organisation, the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children.

**Royal Commission:** Means the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse (2017). In 2012, Australian Government announced the establishment of the Royal Commission. The report made several recommendations to government and non-government organisations to keep children safe.

**Young Person:** A young person can be defined in a variety of ways depending on the context. For the purpose of this Policy a young person will also be considered in any reference to a child.

## POLICY STATEMENT

Council will actively promote the health, safety and welfare for all children and young people by ensuring the provision of a safe environment for children and young people whilst using Council services or on Council premises.

The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Commission provide a framework for making organisations safer for children. They have been accepted by the NSW government and are enforceable. The **Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG)** have the responsibility for compliance enforcement from February 2023.

The ten (10) Child Safe Standards complement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and provide tangible guidance to create cultures and adopt strategies to place the interests of children first and to keep them safe from harm. Council is committed to adopting the Child Safe Standards and becoming a Child Safe Institution.

### **Standard 1 - Leadership and Culture**

Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance, and culture.

### **Standard 2 - Children's Participation**

Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

### **Standard 3 - Families and Communities**

Families and communities are informed and involved.

### **Standard 4 - Equity and Diversity**

Equity is upheld and diverse needs are considered.

### **Standard 5 - Suitability for workers**

People working with children are suitable and supported.

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**Standard 6 - Complaint Handling**

Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused.

**Standard 7 - Knowledge and Skills**

Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.

**Standard 8 - Physical and online Environments**

Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.

**Standard 9 - Continuous Improvement**

Implementation of the child safe standards is continuously reviewed and improved.

**Standard 10 - Policies and Procedures**

Policies and Procedures documents how the organisation is child safe.

This policy reflects Council's commitment to:

- The Child Safe Standards;
- The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations; and
- The Office of the Children's Guardian's *Principles for Child-Safe Organisations* (2017):
  1. The organisation focuses on what is best for children;
  2. All children are respected and treated fairly;
  3. Children's families and communities are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the organisation; and
  4. Children receive services from skilled and caring adults.

Council will adopt the following key values that prioritise children's safety:

- The best interests of children and their protection from harm is paramount;
- Child abuse is not tolerated and must not happen;
- Children's rights are understood and respected;
- Concerns about child safety raised by children and their parents and/or carers are acted upon; and
- Reporting of abuse is actively encouraged and never obstructed or prevented.

Council is committed to creating a **Local Government Area (LGA)** that is child safe and child friendly. Council values and supports the rights of children and is committed to support all children living in its jurisdiction to reach their full potential.

Council supports children and young people having safe and happy experiences within our community, accessing our facilities and in the care of our services. Council maintains the active participation of children and young people in the organisation by involving them in decision making, particularly in matters that directly impact them.

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Council will ensure all staff, volunteers and contractors engaged in a child related role have a valid **Working with Children Check (WWCC)** in accordance with the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*.

## LEGISLATION AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

### Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Industry Standards include:

- *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014;*
- *Child Protection (Offenders Prohibition Orders) Act 2004;*
- *Child Protection (Offender 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;*
- *Commission and Children and Young People Act 1998;*
- *Community Welfare Act 1987;*
- *Crimes Act 1900;*
- *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007;*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010;*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012;*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009;*
- *Ombudsman Act 1974; and*
- *Young Offenders Act 1997.*

### Relevant Council Policies and Procedures include:

- Children and Family Services Policies and Procedures;
  - Code of Conduct for Council Committee Members, Delegates of Council and Council Advisers;
  - Code of Conduct for Council Staff;
  - Code of Conduct for Councillors;
  - Code of Ethics Policy for Life Choices – Support Services;
  - Complaints Management Policy;
  - Human Resources Policy Statement Register;
  - Incident Management and Reportable Incidents Policy for Community Services;
  - Life Choices - Support Services National Police Certificate Criminal History Check;
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- Media Policy;
  - Social Media Policy;
  - Privacy Policy;
  - Library Users Code of Conduct Policy;
  - Glen Innes Library Young Peoples Policy;
  - Glen Innes Library Internet Policy;
  - Risk Management Policy;
  - Volunteer Policy;
  - Workplace Discrimination and Bullying Harassment Policy; and
  - The Youth Services Policy.

## **VARIATION AND REVIEW**

The Glen Innes Severn Council Child Safe Policy will be reviewed every three (3) years, or earlier if deemed necessary, to ensure that it meets the requirements of legislation and the needs of Council. The term of the Policy does not expire on the review date, but will continue in force until superseded, rescinded or varied either by legislation or a new resolution of Council.

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