



Child Safe Policy

POLICY OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this policy is to outline Goulburn Mulwaree Council's (Council) commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation.

LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

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
Environmental Planning and Assessment (EPA) Act 1979
Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
Ombudsman Act 1974
Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
State Records Act 1998
Local Government Act 1993

POLICY STATEMENT

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

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

Commitment to child safety

Children and young people have the right to be respected, empowered and safe. We are dedicated to listening to their views and committed to our responsibilities in keeping them safe.

Background

In December 2017, The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended taking action to make organisations across Australia safe for children. The 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. Additionally, the development of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations is a key national reform.

The 10 National Principles have been endorsed by all Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. They provide a nationally consistent approach to embedding child safe cultures within organisations that engage children, and act as a vehicle to give effect to all Royal Commission recommendations related to child safe standards. The National Principles are:

- Principle 1: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisations leadership, governance and culture.
- Principle 2: Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- Principle 3: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Principle 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
- Principle 5: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Principle 6: Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused.
- Principle 7: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Principle 8: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Principle 9: Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
- Principle 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Involving children in decision-making

Council supports the active participation of 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.

Recruitment and screening

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*.

A valid Working with Children Check (WWCC) is required for all Council employees and volunteers engaged in child-related work, and for all Councillors.

Training and induction

Council will meet its training and induction obligations by ensuring that all Councillors, employees, volunteers and contractors are inducted in child safety and understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Councillors, employees, 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.

Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

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 Council has been, or allegedly been, involved in the harm or abuse of a child or young person.

All reportable allegations of child abuse must be reported to Council's Child Protection Officer (Business Manager Governance). Allegations can be reported by children or young people, families, Councillors, Council employees, contractors or volunteers. 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.

Concerns that a child or young person is suspected to be at risk of significant harm that does not involve Council must be reported to the relevant agency.

Council will meet its mandatory reporting obligations and will take action to protect children and young people at risk of significant harm.

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

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.

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 Councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers will be informed, resourced and supported to understand their role in providing a child safe environment.

REPORTING

The Child Protection Officer (Business Manager Governance) will report to the Chief Executive Officer and the relevant agencies in accordance with child protection reporting obligations.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Council

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

Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer as Head of Agency 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 Councillor, employee, volunteer or contractor. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and that all employees, Councillors, 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 is appointed as the Child Protection Officer and their responsibilities are:

- provide ongoing support and respond 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.

Child Safe Advocate

Child Safe Advocates have been appointed across the organisation, and their responsibilities are to:

- Assist and provide advice to all employees on the Child Safe Policy and Procedure
- Provide guidance on child safe practices across Council.

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.

All Council employees, Councillors, contractors and volunteers 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 Council employees, Councillors, contractors and volunteers shall adhere to their reportable conduct and responding and reporting obligations and take action when a child or young person is at risk of harm.



Version	Council Meeting Date	Resolution	Adoption Date	Effective From
1	21 June 2022	2022/230	21 June 2022	19 July 2022
2	17 October 2023	2023/255	17 October 2023	17 October 2023
All policies can be reviewed or revoked by resolution of Council at any time.				

DIRECTORATE: Executive Services

BUSINESS UNIT: Governance