







Snowy Valleys Council Child Safe Organisation Framework

Child Safe Standard		What it looks like
	<p>Leadership, governance and culture</p> <p><i>Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Commitment • Shared Responsibility • Risk Management • Compliance • Accountability
	<p>Children's participation and empowerment</p> <p><i>Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have a voice • Listening • Acknowledging • Accessible & Supportive Programs and Information • Trained Staff
	<p>Families and community involvement</p> <p><i>Families and communities are informed and involved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family participation in decision making • Open, two-way communication with families and communities about Council child safety approach • Families and communities contribute to policies and practice • Families and communities are informed about the organisation's operations and governance
	<p>Equity and diverse needs</p> <p><i>Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to diversity • Accessible and understandable information, support and complaint processes • Focus for diversity groups
	<p>Human resource management</p> <p><i>People working with children are suitable and supported.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment, including advertising and screening, emphasises child safety • Probity checks • All staff receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their child safety responsibilities, including reporting obligation • Supervision and people management have a child safety focus


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Child Safe Standard		What it looks like
	<p>Child focused complaints process</p> <p><i>Processes to respond to child sexual abuse are child focused.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understandable child focused complaint handling system • Effective complaint handling policy • Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly. • The organisation meets reporting, privacy and employment obligations.
	<p>Staff education and training</p> <p><i>Staff are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of ongoing education and training for staff • Staff have the knowledge, skills and confidence to prevent and identify abuse, and to respond to complaints. • Child safe teams • Ongoing safety culture training
	<p>Physical and online environments</p> <p><i>Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected behaviours for staff interacting with children in physical and online environments are articulated. • Physical environments are altered to increase natural lines of sight while respecting a child's right to privacy. • Higher-risk areas such as change rooms, cars, boarding facilities and offsite locations are managed using specific safety measures, such as spot checks and logbooks • Children are provided information about online safety and regularly encouraged to tell staff about negative experiences • Staff and parents are provided information about risks in the online environment, such as online grooming, cyber bullying and sexting.
	<p>Review and continuous improvement</p> <p><i>Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of continuous improvement • Child safe policies and practices are regularly reviewed. • Staff refer to the Standards when creating, reviewing or evaluating child safe policies and procedures • Leaders and staff review critical incidents to identify the root cause of the problem, identify risks to the safety of children and make improvements • Children are supported to provide feedback and this information is acted on

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Child Safe Standard		What it looks like
	<p>Child safe policies and procedures</p> <p><i>Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and procedures are accessible and easy to understand. • Best practice models and stakeholder consultation inform the development of policies and procedures • Leader's champion and model compliance with policies and procedures • Staff understand and implement the policies and procedures • Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards

DRAFT



Policy Title	DRAFT Snowy Valleys Council Child Safe Organisation Policy
Policy Category	Operational
Number & Version	DRAFT v6
Policy Owner	Community Services
Approval by	TBA
Effective date	TBA
Date for review	April 2022

1. STRATEGIC PURPOSE

Snowy Valleys Council (Council) upholds the ten Child Safe Standards, which are compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children and young people (or are used by children and young people), to help protect them from harm.

The purpose of the Child Safe Organisation Policy is to ensure that all employees, Councillors, consultants, contractors or volunteers engaged by Council are aware of our commitment and obligation to creating a child safe organisation.

The policy aims to communicate the Council's commitment to child safety, in a way that can be understood by all, including children and young people, and it explains key features of our approach to meeting the standards.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Council supports children and young people having safe and happy experiences in 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.

All staff, Councillors, volunteers, students and persons undertaking work experience, contractors and suppliers must uphold and promote safety and wellbeing for children and young people and respond appropriately where concerns are identified. Council is committed to the ongoing education of children, young people and families, staff,

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volunteers, contractors and key stakeholders about their rights, responsibilities and reporting processes relating to child protection.

3. DEFINITIONS

Child Safe Standards	Ten standards based on the findings, research and consultations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
Child(ren)	A young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority.
Contractors & Suppliers	Individuals, organisations or businesses, other than Council Officials, that provides goods or services to Council.
Council	Snowy Valleys Council.
Councillors	Any person elected or appointed to civic office, including the mayor and includes members and chairpersons of county councils and voting representatives of the boards of joint organisations and chairpersons of joint organisations.
FaCS	Family and Community Services (State Government Department).
HR	Human Resources.
Mandatory reporters	Mandatory reporters are people who deliver the following services, wholly or partly, to children as part of their paid or professional work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health care (e.g. registered medical practitioners, nurses etc.) - Welfare (e.g. psychologists, social workers, caseworkers etc.) - Education (e.g. teachers, principals etc.) - Children's services (e.g. childcare workers, family day carers etc.) - Residential services (e.g. refuge workers) - Law enforcement (e.g. police)
MRG	Mandatory Reporting Guide https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/mandatory-reporters/what-when-to-report/chapters/mandatory-reporter-guide
Police Record Checks	Document that lists an individual's disclosable court outcomes and pending

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	charges sourced from state or national police jurisdictions.
Reportable conduct	Suspected allegations, reportable convictions of child harm by staff, Councillors, volunteers, suppliers, contractors who provide services to children.
Significant Harm	The circumstances that cause concern for the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person are present to a significant extent. This means the concern is sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority (such as NSW Police Force or Family and Community Services) irrespective of family's consent.
Staff	A person employed by Snowy Valleys Council (Council) and whose conditions of employment are covered by the Local Government (State) Award and includes persons employed on a permanent, temporary or casual basis.
Volunteers	A person who is registered and inducted to partake in approved volunteer programs conducted by Council.
WWCC	Working with Children's Check
Young People	A person who is 12 years old or older, but not yet an adult.

4. CONTENT

This Policy reflects Council's commitment to:

4.1 The Office of the Children's Guardian's Principles for Child-Safe Organisations (2017)

- Principle 1: The organisation focuses on what is best for children.
- Principle 2: All children are respected and treated fairly.
- Principle 3: Children's families and communities are welcome and encouraged to participate in the organisation.
- Principle 4: Children receive services from skilled and caring adults.

4.2 The Child Safe Standards identified by the Royal Commission (2017)

1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account.

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5. People working with children are suitable and supported.
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused.
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

4.3 Requirements

4.3.1 Mandatory Reporting risk of significant harm

Where there are concerns that a child or young person is suspected to be at risk of significant harm, staff who are 'mandatory reporters' are required to report these concerns to the Family and Community Services (FaCS) Child Protection Helpline. *The Mandatory Reporter Guide* (MRG) is used to help determine when and what should be reported. Staff who are not mandatory reporters, as well as members of the community, can also report the suspected risk of significant harm to the FaCS Child Protection Helpline. The FaCS Child Protection Helpline receives reports via either telephone on PH: 132 111 or via eReporting. Mandatory reporting is outlined in the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

4.3.2 Recruitment and Selection

Council will meet legal requirements to ensure that only people with valid Working with Children Checks (WWCC) are engaged in child-related work. The WWCC is an essential part of Council's recruitment process to prevent people who pose a risk to the safety of a child or young person from being employed or engaged in child-related work. Human Resources (HR) manage all selection and recruitment related WWCC. This is in line with the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* and the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013*.

4.3.3 Allegations against staff (reportable conduct)

Complaints and allegations against staff, elected members, contractors and sub-contractors, work experience participants, volunteers, students on placement, facility hirers and leasees involving a child or young person will be handled in accordance with the relevant legislation, specifically *Part 3A of the Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW)*. This mandates a specific approach to the handling and reporting of complaints about staff involving a child or young person. All allegations in relation to staff involving an individual under the age of 18 years will be immediately reported to the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service, who will in turn investigate and report the matter to the relevant oversight agency in accordance with Council's reporting obligations.

4.3.4 Child-Safe Organisation

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Council upholds and promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in our community. This involves implementing best practice approaches to child protection. Council adopts the *Royal Commission Final Report Recommendations (2017)* relevant to Local Government including the Child Safe Standards. Council also supports the Office of the Children's Guardian's Principles of Child-Safe Organisations. Council's relevant departments will collaborate on the identification, implementation and creation of policies, procedures and actions that enables Council to meet its objectives as a Child-Safe Organisation.

5. COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO CHILD SAFETY

5.1 Child Safe Code of Conduct

All staff must always ensure that they display appropriate standards of behaviour towards children and young people, ensuring their rights are respected, they feel safe and protected and their concerns are taken seriously.

Council's Child Safe Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour by adults towards children and young people. It aims to protect children and young people and reduce opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. It also helps staff by providing them with guidance on how to best support children and young people and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations.

5.2 Training and Supervision

Council is committed to ensuring that staff have access to appropriate professional learning and training opportunities to develop and maintain an understanding of child safety and prevention of harm. To support staff, relevant training programs, including the Council induction program, should include appropriate content which outline the Council's expectations and commitment to child safety.

In addition to position specific training requirements, training will be available to staff who are likely to come into regular contact with children and young people. This training will include how to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

5.3 Recruitment

The recruitment and selection of staff aims to support Council's commitment to promoting an organisational culture of child safety. The department has robust recruitment and selection processes. Council carries out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that the right people are recruited.

For positions that involve contact with children and young people, recruitment should be based on selection criteria which clearly demonstrate commitment to child safety to assist the department in ensuring that the most appropriate staff are employed. Selection policies and guidelines, including pre-screening activities, are to reflect an understanding of, and commitment to, a child safe environment.

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Council's Criminal Record Check Guidelines and related policies details the requirement for all prospective / new staff members to the department to undertake a National Criminal History Record Check prior to commencement of employment.

All people engaged in child-related work as defined in the *Working with Children Act 2005*, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check (WWCC) and to provide evidence that the WWCC is always valid whilst employed by the department.

In addition, positions that may have contact with children and young people due to their working environment are to be assessed as to whether a WWCC is required to minimise the risk of harm to children and young people

6. ASSOCIATED LEGISLATION

- 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
- Commission for 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
- Young Offenders Act 1997

7. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)
Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) 2010
National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children (2009–2020)
Office of the Children's Guardian's Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2017)
Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017)
The Child Story Reporter Community
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)
Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Governance Charter

8. ASSOCIATED COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

SVC Children's Services – Gender Equity Policy
 SVC Internal Reporting Policy
 SVC Code of Conduct
 SVC Code of Conduct Procedures for the Administration
 SVC Complaints Management Policy
 SVC Complaints Management Procedures
 SVC Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Policy
 SVC Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Procedure
 SVC Volunteer Handbook
 SVC Volunteer Management Policy
 SVC Children's Services – Child Protection Policy
 SVC Children's Services – Child Safe Environment Policy
 SVC Children's Services – Provision of Children Services
 SVC Children's Services – Supervision Policy
 SVC Children's Services – Code of Conduct
 SVC Children's Services – Respect for Children
 SVC Children's Services – Student and Volunteer Policy

9. RESOURCES

10. HISTORY

Date	Action	Name	Policy Number	Resolution Date	Resolution Number
13.04.2021	New Policy	DRAFT Snowy Valleys Council Child Safe Organisation Policy	SVC-COR-PO-125-01		

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