



Yarra Ranges Council

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy 2022

Third party Fact Sheet



Yarra Ranges Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse and harm. Staff members, volunteers, Councillors, contractors, and community groups/ organisations working with Council all play a part in creating a community where everyone feels confident, empowered and supported to speak up about child safety concerns.

Harm and abuse to children and young people has lifelong catastrophic impacts on health and wellbeing. There is an ethical and legal responsibility to prevent and respond to all child safe incidents.

The Victorian Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005, 2021) now have obligations including Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Schemes for many organisations and there are harsh penalties for adults and heads of organisations, for Failure to Protect and Failure to Report (Disclose) offences.

Background

Creating child safe organisations was a key recommendation both the Commonwealth and Victorian Government's response to parliamentary inquiries into Child Sexual Abuse and the handling of child abuse by religious and other non-government organisations (otherwise known as the 'Betrayal of Trust inquiry').

The Victorian Child Safe Standards (2021) and Reportable Conduct Scheme applies to a broad scope of organisations including Yarra Ranges Council, focuses on preventative systems, and while flexible in its application, has distinct responsibilities. Together, these schemes strengthen the capacity of organisations, who provide services/ programs/ activities for and with children, to prevent and properly respond to allegations of child abuse/harm.

More information on the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme can be found on the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) website www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards. More CCYP resources to help your organisation/ group comply with the standards can be found on www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/child-safe-standards.

Definitions

Child: a person under the age of 18.

Child Safe Standards – A set of 11 minimum standards to promote child safety, prevent child abuse and respond appropriately to suspected child abuse within organisations. Applies to a broad scope of organisations, focuses on preventative systems and is flexible in its application.

Reportable Conduct Scheme – A system to independently oversee responses to suspected child abuse by staff, volunteers, contractors and students over 18 at Yarra Ranges Council and their interaction, behaviour and conduct towards children.

Commission for Children and Young People – Responsible state government agency providing oversight of the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme regulations. Other regulators include the Department of Health, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Department of Education .

Child Abuse – Different types of abusive or harmful behaviours against a person under the age of 18, including sexual abuse, grooming, physical abuse, emotional abuse, significant neglect, racial, cultural or religious abuse and family violence. Includes face-to-face, physical, written, verbal or electronic contact, whether supervised or not.

Reasonable Belief – The process for forming a belief that abuse/harm has occurred . Includes more than a suspicion and must have some objective basis, but not necessarily certainty. For example, a person is likely to have a reasonable belief if they:

- observed the child safe incident themselves
- heard from a child that a child safe incident occurred
- received information from another source (including another person who witnessed the child safe incident, reportable conduct or misconduct).

What does it mean for Yarra Ranges Council?

To ensure compliance with the Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme, a range of initiatives have been established to respond and prevent child abuse and neglect. This includes to guide, support and encourage those who have concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing to 'Speak up'. Council's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and further information about services authorities and Council processes can be found on www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Community/Family/Children-and-Young-Peoples-Safety-Everyone%E2%80%99s-Business

What does it mean for you?

Contractors, organisations, and sole traders working with Council that have direct or incidental contact with children have an ethical and legal obligation to comply with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and prevent, respond and report suspected cases of child harm and abuse to appropriate authorities.

There are obligations under Council's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy for relevant third parties to be compliant with the child safe standards, as outlined in community grants, partnership agreements, procurement processes and leases / licenses.

Depending on how your project/ activity /service involves/ interacts with children/ young people, your organisation is required to undertake measures, that include (but are not limited to):-

- Child Safe Public Commitment and/ or Policy is available/ accessible.
- Child safe staff / volunteer recruitment, such as screening (Working with Children Checks) and position descriptions that include the safety and inclusion of all children as a priority,
- Child Safe Code of Conduct that outlines safe, appropriate and inclusive interactions with children under 18 years,
- Training/ resources to inform staff/ volunteers about their obligations to prevent, respond and report abuse or harm.
- Provide resources related to types of abuse and authorities / services to contact/ report.



Child Safe Reporting Process

Any person who suspects a child has been sexually abused or is in immediate danger, is legally required to report those concerns to Police, with severe penalties for failing to do so.

For those who work directly with children or in child related work areas, you play a vital role in protecting them from abuse and harm (defined above). You are well placed to identify signs or behaviours that may indicate child abuse and harm.

For those of you who have incidental contact with children through the course of your work, you also play an important role in protecting children. As part of your legal obligations, you are also required to be familiar and comply with Council's Child Safe third-party requirements and make timely reports regarding all child's safety and wellbeing concerns.

Find more information about Reporting Processes on www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Community/Family/Children-and-Young-Peoples-Safety-Everyone%E2%80%99s-Business.

Further support

If you have any questions about any issues/ concerns related to child safety, your obligations under the Child Safe Standards or Reportable Conduct scheme, please contact Council's Child Safe Business Partner or a Council Designated Child Safe Officers. Email: childsafeyarraranges.vic.gov.au

Child abuse can trigger strong emotions and memories for many people. If you or someone you know has been affected by abuse, we encourage you to reach out for support through your organization's employment assistance program or support services listed on the www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Corporate-documents/Policies-strategies/Child-Safety-and-Wellbeing-Policy.



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