

# Child Safe Policy

Corangamite Shire

May 2022



**CORANGAMITE  
SHIRE**

# Council Policy



## Child Safe Policy

### Introduction

Corangamite Shire Council is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. Reducing and removing the risk of child abuse is at the center of decision-making concerning children in Council. Council as a Child Safe organisation has zero tolerance for child abuse.

- Council will actively listen to children, ensuring their voices are heard and considered in decisions that affect their lives.
- All disclosed, observed or suspected instances of child abuse and/or neglect must be reported

New standards come into effect on 1 July 2022 to align State and Commonwealth Child Safe Standards. All Victorian organisations that provide services or facilities to children are required by law to comply with the Child Safe Standards. *See appendix 1 for standards with elements.*

### Purpose

This policy provides an organisational approach to ensure compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards, which are consistent with Standards in the rest of Australia and aim to keep children and young people safe when they access services or activities provided by organisations.

### Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, employees, volunteers, students, contractors and specialists working in Corangamite Shire Council programs and services.

### Definitions

#### **Key Terminology**

Child Safe Standards: Victorian organisations that provide services or facilities for children are required by law to implement Child Safe Standards to protect children from harm

Culturally safe environment                      an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need.

Children    Children are defined in the standards as anyone under 18 years old. In this document we refer to 'children and young people' on the understanding that this refers to all people under the age of 18 years old.

### References

*Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*  
Child Safe Standards, 1 July 2022

## Policy Detail

Corangamite Shire Council [Council] is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people and has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Council is committed to providing an environment where children and young people feel safe, protected and valued and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Council recognises that the wellbeing and cultural safety of all children is paramount and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect regardless of gender identity, ethnicity, abilities, cultural and socio-economic background.

Council is committed to the Victorian Child Safe Standards:

- Standard 1: Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
- Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
- Standard 3: Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- Standard 4: Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Standard 5: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
- Standard 6: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Standard 7: Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
- Standard 8: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Standard 9: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Standard 10: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- Standard 11: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

To comply with the Standards, Council must reflect and embed the following principles as described within this policy:

- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety of children with a disability.

These three overarching principles require Council to pay particular attention to children at increased risk of abuse and must be considered when applying each standard.

Every person has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play, individually and collectively, to promote the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people participating in, or in contact with Council programs and activities. Council is committed to providing child safe education and training within the organisation, as well as robust policies and procedures for responding to all forms of abuse and neglect.

### ***Diversity and cultural difference***

Council respects cultural differences and variations in child rearing practices due to a family's personal, cultural or religious beliefs. We acknowledge that some children are more vulnerable to abuse namely:

- Aboriginal children
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Children with a disability.

Council will pay particular attention to the diverse needs of all children and young people

**Children and young people and their families** will be encouraged and supported to participate in responsive programs and initiatives that will:

- actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion within it by Aboriginal children, young people and their families; promote, encourage and support expression and enjoyment of their culture.
- inform and support knowledge of, and the ability to exercise their rights including to safety, participation, inclusive decision making, and friendship.

### **Governance**

All Council policies, procedures, systems and processes including the Code of Conduct will support and facilitate obligations and strategies to acknowledge and embed a culture of responsive incorporation of Child Safe Standards

Council will ensure that transparency, open communication, access to relevant knowledge and inclusion of the voice of the whole community is embedded in the organisation's policies, procedures, systems and processes.

Council is committed to ensuring that recruitment, induction, supervision and people management including procurement of facilities and services is focused on child safety and wellbeing.

**Organisational education** shall focus on ensuring personnel are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training that covers:

- acknowledgement and understanding the importance of aboriginal culture to the safety, well-being of Aboriginal children and young people and future of our community
- building culturally safe environments.
- Child Safe Standards and behaviours.
- Protection of children and young people through training, record keeping and information sharing.

- Benefits, risks and mitigation strategies for environments both physical and online and organisational settings.

**Risk Management within the organisation** will include a focus on identification, prevention and mitigation of risk as it relates to the children and young people. This includes physical and online environments and organisational settings

***Roles and responsibilities***

Every person employed with or acting on behalf of Council has a responsibility to ensure, champion and model the wellbeing and safety of all children. *See Appendix 2 for table of roles and responsibility.*

**Reference to linked Procedure or Guidelines, if applicable**

- Child Safe Guidelines
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Family and Children’s Services Policy and Procedure Manual
- Ed Gym Manual
- Aged & Disability Services Manual
- HR Recruitment Policy Manual
- Working With Children Check Policy - Organisational
- Criminal History Check Policy - Organisational
- Complaint Handling Policy
- Procurement Policy - Organisational
- Equal Opportunity Policy - Organisational
- Electronic Communications Policy - Organisational
- Social Media Policy
- Social Media Policy – Organisational
- Council Volunteers – Organisational

**Review Date**

September 2026.

It is considered that this Policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

## Appendix 1 – Child Safe Standards and elements

Child Safe Standard 1 – Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued

In complying with Child Safe Standard 1, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 1.1 A child's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported.
- 1.2 Strategies are embedded within the organisation which equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people.
- 1.3 Measures are adopted by the organisation to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences.
- 1.4 The organisation actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within it by Aboriginal children, young people and their families.
- 1.5 All of the organisation's policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

Child Safe Standard 2 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

In complying with Child Safe Standard 2, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

- 2.1 The organisation makes a public commitment to child safety.
- 2.2 A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation from the top down and bottom up.
- 2.3 Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the child safety and wellbeing policy at all levels.
- 2.4 A Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.
- 2.5 Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.

2.6 Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.

Child Safe Standard 3 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

In complying with Child Safe Standard 3, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

3.1 Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation.

3.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.

3.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, children and young people are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age appropriate way.

3.4 Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.

3.5 Organisations have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.

3.6 Organisations provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

Child Safe Standard 4 – Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

In complying with Child Safe Standard 4, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

4.1 Families participate in decisions affecting their child.

4.2 The organisation engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible.

4.3 Families and communities have a say in the development and review of the organisation's policies and practices.

4.4 Families, carers and the community are informed about the organisation's operations and governance.

Child Safe Standard 5 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

In complying with Child Safe Standard 5, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

5.1 The organisation, including staff and volunteers, understands children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.

5.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.

5.3 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.

5.4 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and provides/promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

Child Safe Standard 6 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

In complying with Child Safe Standard 6, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

6.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasise child safety and wellbeing.

6.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent background checks.

6.3 All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.

6.4 Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.

Child Safe Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused



In complying with Child Safe Standard 7, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

7.1 The organisation has an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.

7.2 Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.

7.3 Complaints are taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

7.4 The organisation has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.

7.5 Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

Child Safe Standard 8 – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

In complying with Child Safe Standard 8, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

8.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy.

8.2 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people.

8.3 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.

8.4 Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

In complying with Child Safe Standard 9, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

9.1 Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

9.2 The online environment is used in accordance with the organisation's Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing policy and practices.

9.3 Risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities, and the physical environment.

9.4 Organisations that contract facilities and services from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 10 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

In complying with Child Safe Standard 10, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

10.1 The organisation regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child safe practices.

10.2 Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.

10.3 The organisation reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 11 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

In complying with Child Safe Standard 11, an organisation must, at a minimum, ensure:

11.1 Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.

11.2 Policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.

11.3 Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures.

11.4 Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.

11.5 Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.

Appendix 2 – Organisational Roles and Responsibilities

<p>All Employees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and acknowledge the child safe policy</li> <li>• Understand their unique responsibilities</li> <li>• Participate in child safe training and education programs.</li> <li>• Conduct work according to the requirements of the Council Child Safe Policy and Staff Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Ensure all relevant Police Checks, Working With Children Checks and details of professional development and training are maintained and available to the organisation.</li> <li>• Ensure any indictments/convictions that impact on employment are disclosed.</li> </ul>
<p>Councillors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee the development of strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.</li> <li>• Champion Child Safe Standards</li> </ul>
<p>Chief Executive Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the safety of children and young people is a focus in the organisation by demonstrating strong leadership in child safe practices.</li> <li>• Ensure the creation of a culturally safe environment.</li> <li>• Champion and model compliance with policies and procedures</li> </ul>
<p>Senior Officer Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure child safe policies and procedures are implemented and reviewed regularly.</li> <li>• Champion and model compliance with policies and procedures</li> </ul>
<p>Department Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure child safe policies and procedures are circulated and understood.</li> <li>• Ensure a workplace culture of respect in relation to child safety and cultural safety.</li> <li>• Champion and model compliance with policies and procedures</li> </ul>
<p>Human Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all employees have child safe training.</li> <li>• Ensure induction processes include clear guidelines for compliance with organisational child safe policies and Staff Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Maintain robust recruitment practices in line with child safe policies and related policies such as Police Checks and Working With Children Checks.</li> <li>• Ensure all inductees understand their responsibilities in relation to the child safe standards.</li> <li>• Ensure that all job descriptions contain statements about Council’s commitment to child safe standards, and make explicit reference to legislative checks.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that Staff Code of Conduct includes expected behaviours in relation to working with children and is signed by all employees, volunteers, and students.</li> <li>• Outline explicit guidelines for reporting and dealing with breaches of the Staff Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Provide advice and support to all employees who need to make a report regarding child abuse.</li> <li>• Offer support to the child, the parents, staff members, volunteers involved in an incident.</li> <li>• Ensure all enquiries and reports are made to the relevant authorities, and act as liaison between the organisation and the authorities.</li> <li>• Maintain records in accordance with organisational privacy policy.</li> <li>• Support any investigation of child abuse and notify child, parents, staff or volunteers involved of any investigative outcomes.</li> <li>• Maintain and review child safe policies, risk management plans, and allied processes.</li> </ul>
<p>Manager Community Services and Community Services Coordinator s</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain networks with relevant support agencies and specialist staff.</li> <li>• Maintain robust contractor recruitment practices in line with child safe policies and related policies such as Police Checks and Working With Children Checks.</li> <li>• Ensure all contracted Family Day Care educators participate in child safe training and education programs.</li> <li>• Ensure all contracted Family Day Care educators conduct their work according to the requirements of the Council Child Safe Policy and Staff Code of Conduct.</li> </ul>
<p>Employees and contractors who work directly with children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure curriculum development is based on the principles of empowering children to participate fully in their environment.</li> <li>• Create a culturally safe environment by creating opportunities for the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds to be heard.</li> <li>• Ensuring a safe environment and strong inclusive practices for children of all abilities, and specialist support for children with disabilities.</li> <li>• Ensure all staff understand and comply with the child safe policy.</li> <li>• Engage with relevant cultural and educational networks and support services.</li> <li>• Ensure all staff practice strong supervision of children at all times.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that visitors to the service are never alone with a child. This includes students, volunteers, members of Parent Advisory Groups and contractors.</li></ul>
Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must comply with the Child Safe Standards.</li></ul>