

Safeguarding Children Policy

A policy is the guiding principle that helps the organisation to take logical decisions. It is a set of common rules to inform decisions and behaviors and commonly has supporting procedures and guidelines.

Purpose

Darebin City Council is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where protecting children and preventing and responding to child abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of all employees, contractors, volunteers and Councillors.

This Policy reflects Council's intention to be aspirational – not just compliant – in meeting the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards. The purpose of this Policy is to provide direction and clear responsibilities to enable the organisation to meet current and future challenges.

Scope

This Policy applies to all those performing work for, at or on behalf of the Council, including:

- All employees (permanent, agency, temporary and casual employees);
- Contractors;
- Agency staff and agency work placements working for Council;
- Staff on secondment to or from other organisations;
- Council controlled volunteers; and
- Graduate, intern, trainees and work experience placements.

This policy should be read and implemented in conjunction with Council's Code of Conduct, and other associated policies, practices and procedures to guide Council representatives conduct, both generally and in relation to children and young people.

Definitions and Abbreviations

Health and Safety Representatives (HSR) – A worker elected by members of their work group to represent them in health and safety matters

Council – Darebin City Council, referred to as Council throughout this document.

Employee - Full-time, part-time, casual and contracted staff employed by the CEO. For further information please refer to Scope.

Chief Executive Officer - The person appointed by Council to be its Chief Executive Officer or any person acting in that position.

Leader – includes anyone with supervisory responsibility for staff, this included team leaders, supervisors, coordinators, managers and general managers.

Agency staff - Agency staff are employed by the labour-hire business to perform work in and as part of the council for agreed hours or a set period.

Volunteers- A person who without payment or reward, voluntarily engages in work or agreed activities on behalf of Council.

Contractor- a person or organisation that undertakes a contract or pre-arranged service on behalf of Council.

Students or work placements- a person who, for a limited period of time works for a Council in order to get work experience.

	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child- A person under the age of 18 who identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person</p> <p>Child- A person who is under the age of 18</p> <p>Child Safe Standards</p> <p>The Child Safe Standards are designed to drive cultural change in organisations, so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, employees and volunteers; provide a minimum standard of child safety across all organisations; and highlight the role all organisations have in keeping children safe from abuse.</p> <p>Child abuse- For the purposes of the Child Safe Standards, abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child) • sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child) • physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child) • behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm • significant neglect. <p>Further explanation of these types of abuse is provided in the section ‘What is child abuse?’</p> <p>Child safety- n the context of the Child Safe Standards, child safety means measures to protect a child from abuse.</p> <p>Child Safe Organisation- An organisation that meets the child safe standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse.</p> <p>Reasonable belief- If an adult has reasonable grounds to believe that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident.</p>
<p>Policy Statement(s)</p>	<p>Statement</p> <p>Darebin City Council has zero tolerance for child abuse. Darebin Council’s Safeguarding Children Policy has been developed in response to the Victorian Government’s introduction of compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide programs and services for children and young people to help protect them from abuse. For more information on the child safe standards please see (Appendix A).</p> <p>There are five key principles which underpin this policy:</p> <p>Principle 1: We are committed to supporting child wellbeing and safety and protecting children in our work and have zero tolerance for any form of child abuse, neglect or exploitation.</p> <p>Principle 2: The best interests and the views of children are central to our decision making and actions.</p> <p>Principle 3: We will ensure that there is a comprehensive system of risk mitigation strategies in place to support the wellbeing and safety of all children who interact with Council services.</p> <p>Principle 4: We act in accordance with Australian legal standards and obligations, in the context of international legal conventions, declarations and agreements relating to children’s rights and protection .</p> <p>Principle 5: Council will promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and culturally and/or linguistically diverse children, and the safety of children with a disability. We will provide an</p>

environment that is safe for children of all backgrounds, where there is no challenge to, or denial of, who they are or what they need.

To achieve this, we support:

- The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families;
- The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/ or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families;
- Children with disability and their families and act to promote their participation;
- Same-sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse children and families and act to promote their participation.

To achieve and maintain this culture and standard of excellence within Child Safety, Council will:

- Council and Council representatives will adhere and understand their obligations under the Child Safe Standards
- Promote a culture of child safety by increasing understanding, awareness through the provision of information and training.
- Implement processes that assist Council to recruit the best applicants to work with children Promoting practice that is preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
- Have processes and practices in place which aim to empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
- Providing guidance on reporting child safety concerns, suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment of children promptly both internally within council and to the appropriate authorities
- Consulting with, valuing the input of, and regularly communicating with families and carers
- Communicating via Council's Code of Conduct that appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children is expected at all times
- Ensure that all existing and new activities and facilities must be assessed for risks of child abuse including environmental risks (e.g. areas that might obscure a line of sight) and vulnerability risks (such as activities that may foster personal relationships with children who have an increased risk of being exploited, such as children who are highly vulnerable and dependent on others for their personal care needs);
- All identified risks of child abuse are actively reduced by designing and implementing appropriate preventative measures.
- Ensure that all information disclosed and gathered in the reporting and investigation process will be kept securely and confidentially in accordance with privacy requirements under the Public Records Act 1973, Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and Council's Information Privacy Policy.

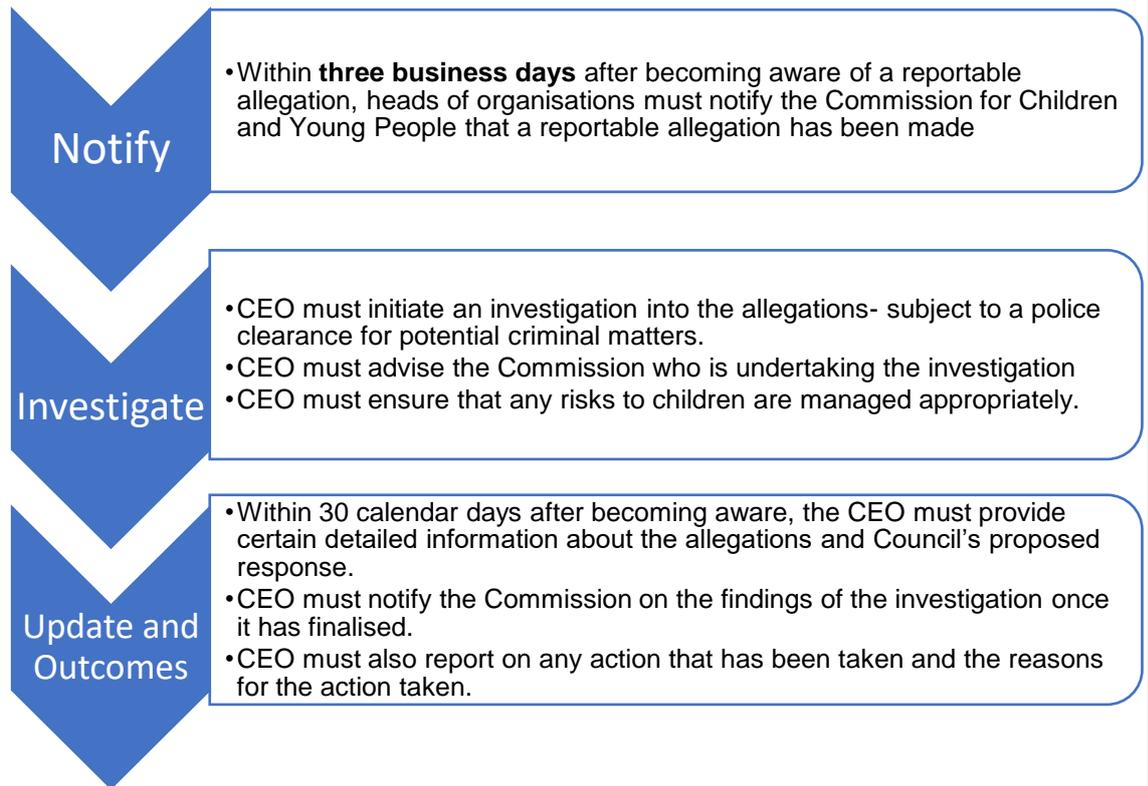
For information on how Council will fulfill its obligations under the reportable conduct scheme please see below.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Victorian Government has also introduced the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Scheme) administered by the Commission for Children and Young People.

The Scheme requires organisations to respond to allegations of child-related misconduct made against all individuals within the scope of this policy and report those allegations to the Commission for Children and Young People.

Under the Scheme, a head of organisation is required to adhere to the following steps. At Darebin Council, this applies to the Chief Executive Officer.



What types of conduct are reportable?

There are five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005:

- sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm
- significant neglect.

Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint

All Council representatives in the scope of this policy must immediately report (that is, immediately following an occurrence, or on the same day):

- Any allegations of child abuse that a representative becomes aware of
- Any concern for the safety of a child or young person in Council's programs or services
- Any practice or behaviour demonstrated by a Council representative which is contrary to the expectations of behaviour set out in this Safeguarding Children Policy and Code of Conduct

Council has developed a diagram to easily understand how to report a child safety concern or complaint (see Appendix B).

All incidents or breaches of child safety must be recorded on Council's Safeguarding Children Incident Reporting form and be submitted to Council's Child Safety Officer

It is important to note that a Council representative does not need to be absolutely certain that abuse has occurred: if there is reasonable belief that a child is at risk of harm, this must be reported immediately.

How Council will ensure we deliver on this policy and our legislative obligations

Council will focus on 7 key areas to ensure its continued delivery on its commitment to being a child safe organisation. These are:

1. Training
2. Recruitment, Onboarding and Induction
3. Record Keeping
4. Equity, Diversity and Cultural Safety
5. Risk Management
6. Contractors and Service Providers
7. Ongoing Monitoring and Review

Council will review and monitor its organisational policies, practices and procedures annually to ensure success in maintaining a child safe organisation.

Training

Ongoing training and education is important to ensure all Council representatives understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. All Council representatives will be made aware of their obligations and expectations in working for a Child Safe Organisation via this policy, the Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct, new employee induction, online and face-to face training sessions.

Recruitment, Onboarding and Induction

Council's commitment to child safety will be further demonstrated in Council's recruitment and selection policies and processes. Council will be actively promoted as an organisation committed to child safety in position descriptions and position advertising. The engagement of employees will be subject to:

- robust reference checking
- interviews and where appropriate psychometric testing,
- working with children where identified in legislation or deemed appropriate through risk controls.
- criminal history checks.

Additionally, all individuals within the scope of this policy will receive as a part of their induction the following key information regarding their obligations under this policy as well as resources to ensure appropriate management of risks within the workplace:

- Safeguarding Children Policy and relevant organisational procedures;
- Safeguarding Children and Young People (SCYP) Staff Behaviour Protocols

- Darebin City Council's Staff Code of Conduct

Record Keeping

All information disclosed and gathered in the reporting and investigation process will be kept securely and confidentially in accordance with privacy requirements under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and Council's Information Privacy Policy.

All records will be retained in accordance with Council's record keeping requirements under the Public Records Act 1973 and privacy requirements under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and Council's Privacy Policy.

Equity, Diversity and Cultural Safety

Council representatives must ensure that their approach and interactions with children and young people are sensitive, respectful and inclusive of all backgrounds and abilities

Council will promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and culturally and/or linguistically diverse children, and the safety of children with a disability. We will provide an environment that is safe for children of all backgrounds, where there is no challenge to, or denial of, who they are or what they need. This environment promotes shared respect, shared meaning and shared knowledge and experience; learning, living and working together with dignity; and truly listening.

To achieve this, we support:

- The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families;
- The cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/ or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families;
- Children with disability and their families and act to promote their participation;
- Same-sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse children and families and act to promote their participation.

Risk Management

Council recognises the importance of a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur and use this to inform our policies, procedures and activity planning. Council has a Risk Management Policy and Framework under which it undertakes a systematic approach to identifying events that could prevent, delay or enhance the achievement of strategic and operational objectives.

Child safety risks will be considered in the context of this Framework, including that:

- All existing and new activities and facilities must be assessed for risks of child abuse including environmental risks (e.g. areas that might obscure a line of sight) and vulnerability risks (such as activities that may foster personal relationships with children who have an increased risk of being exploited, such as children who are highly vulnerable and dependent on others for their personal care needs);
- All identified risks of child abuse are actively reduced by designing and implementing appropriate preventative measures;
- All individuals within the scope of this policy are made aware of their responsibility for identifying risks of child abuse and their obligation to work with management on reducing those risks;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families and children are made aware of how to report identified risks of child abuse or concerns about child safety; • Compliance with this policy and the Child Safe Standards will be routinely monitored and continuously improved, including through internal and external auditing and review. Individual breaches will be treated seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action; and <p>All of Councils risk management plans are living documents that are updated as required, referred to regularly and reviewed periodically.</p> <p>Contractors & Service Providers</p> <p>Council will ensure that the Safeguarding Children Policy, any associated relevant Child Safe procedures, the SCYP Staff Behaviour Protocols and any appropriate training is provided to contractors and service providers engaged to provide services to or on behalf of Council.</p> <p>Council will also ensure that Child Safe requirements are part of Council’s procurement processes when procuring services that either interact or have potential to interact with children or young people.</p> <p>Ongoing Monitoring and Review</p> <p>This policy will be reviewed every two years in consultation with key stakeholders. There may be circumstances which trigger an early review.</p> <p>This includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes, and other matters deemed appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer.</p> <p>Council retains records of each review undertaken. These records will include changes to policies and procedures which result from that review.</p>
<p>Responsibilities</p>	<p>All individuals within the scope of this policy need to consider their outlined responsibilities in conjunction with the Council’s Code of Conduct and other related documents.</p> <p>How is the CEO responsible for the success of the policy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that adequate training and resourcing is provided to enable the organisation to be aware of their legal obligations and can manage the risks present within Council services. • Ensure that Council fulfill’ s its legal obligations under the reportable conduct scheme and as outline by the child safe standards. <p>How are General Managers responsible for the success of the policy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion Child Safe Practices across Division • Ensuring the embedding of Child Safety in Annual Work Plans across the Divisions • Ensuring that Child Safety matters are addressed through Divisional Management Meetings and OHS Committees. • Act as a key point of contact for child safety concerns or allegations of abuse within council and provide support to other personnel

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide, in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should/must be reported to the police or Child Protection and make report as soon as possible if required. <p>How are Child Safety Officers responsible for the success of the policy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act as the first point of contact for child safety concerns or allegations of abuse within council and provide support to other personnel Oversee the implementation of Child Safe policy and procedures Engage the assistance of expert advice as required when the nature of the child safety issue is beyond experience, knowledge or qualifications. This expert advice might be provided by the Commission for Children and Young People, the Police or the Australian Childhood Foundation. Confirm relevant authorities have been notified. i.e. Department Health and Human Services (DHHS) child protection, Police for imminent risk and the Commission for Children and Young People of reports of allegations of child abuse and misconduct towards children. Advise, in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should/must be reported to the police or Child Protection and make report as soon as possible if required.
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	<p>How are Leaders responsible for the success of the policy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All people managers are expected to understand, effectively implement and both support and demonstrate a positive commitment to the policy. Ensure that all individuals within the scope of this policy are properly trained, instructed and supervised to work in a safe and healthy manner; Receive reports of child safety concerns or allegations of abuse within council Enable support to the child, the parents, the person who reports and the accused employee or volunteer Initiate internal processes to ensure the safety of the child, clarify the nature of the complaint and commence disciplinary process (if required) Participate in Child Safety training and education. Ensure there are adequate risk mitigation strategies in place to minimise any potential harm to children and young people. Conduct recruitment practices in line with Council's recruitment and selection guideline requirements for child related work, including verification of credentials and reference checks. <p>How are employees / agency staff responsible for the success of the policy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take reasonable care to ensure the safety of all children and young people. Work collaboratively with Council leadership to comply with Child Safety standard requirements and obligations under the reportable conduct scheme. Complete compulsory training and any other training required to fulfill the intent of this policy. Conduct work according to the requirements of this Safeguarding Children Policy, the Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct and other relevant policies and procedures Report all concerns regarding child safety or harm to their supervisor and the Child Safety Officer. Manage risks to children and young people
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How are contractors responsible for the success of the policy?

- Comply with all child safety requirements set out in Council contracts.
- Where applicable undertake works in accordance with relevant child safe policies and the child safe standard when operating in a Council owned property.
- Seek supervision and guidance from Council for all new or modified work procedures which may impact child safety.
- Where applicable ensure that contractors have relevant policies and procedures in place to manage child safety obligations.
- All external contractors engaged to perform works or services on behalf of Council will ensure that their staff have appropriate training, qualifications and understand their responsibilities under this policy and other applicable procedures.
- Third party contractors will also ensure that Child Safety is considered, and adequate risk mitigation strategies are in place when the procuring services either interact with or have potential to interact with children or young people.
- Ensure that any incident relating to children and young people is reported to Council and comprehensive updates are provided relating to the progress of investigations where legally permissible.

How are Council's contract managers responsible for the success of the policy?

- Contract managers will ensure that the Child Safe Policy, any associated relevant Child Safe procedures, the Child Safe Code and any appropriate training is provided to contractors and service providers engaged to provide services to or on behalf of Council.
- Contract managers will also ensure that Child Safe requirements are part of procurement processes when procuring services that either interact or have potential to interact with children or young people.
- Contract managers will recognise that depending on the nature of a contractor's or service provider's engagement, they may fall under our responsibility with respect to the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- Contract managers will work with third parties to ensure that adequate risk mitigation strategies are in place and fall in line with Council's Safeguarding Children policies and procedures.

How are Volunteers responsible for the success of the policy?

- Take reasonable care to ensure the safety of all children and young people.
- Work collaboratively with Council leadership to comply with Child Safety standard requirements and obligations under the reportable conduct scheme.
- Complete compulsory training and any other training required to fulfil the intent of this policy.
- Work according to the requirements of this Safeguarding Children Policy, the Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct and other relevant policies and procedures.
- Report all concerns regarding child safety or harm to their supervisor and the Child Safety Officer.
- Under the direction of Council employees manage risks to children and young people.

How are Students and work placements responsible for the success of the policy?

- Complete compulsory training and any other training required to fulfill the intent of this policy.

- Work according to the requirements of this Safeguarding Children Policy, the Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct and other relevant policies and procedures.
- Report all concerns regarding child safety or harm to their supervisor and the Child Safety Officer.

How is the People and Culture team responsible for the success of the policy?

- Develop & ensure the effective implementation of child safety practices in line with our framework, systems and processes.
- Behave in a manner that exemplifies this policy with a focus on leading by example.
- Ensure information about the policy and the applicable legislation is provided and easily accessible.
- Ensure that appropriate consultation with children, young people and their families occurs to ensure continually improvement of our child safety policies, procedures and practices.
- Ensure that we meet all child safety obligations in partnership with both the executive and broader leadership team.
- Ensure all individuals within the scope of this policy are provided with the opportunity to be properly trained.
- Apply relevant recruitment and pre-employment screening.
- Provide information (including Code of Conduct) relating to the Child Safe Standards and Policy via training / Induction material and make available to managers, team leaders and coordinators for dissemination.
- Manage Council's disciplinary procedures as they apply to the Child Safe Standards and Policy.
- Support employees to build resilience and cope with child abuse incidences (e.g. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) service).
- Reflect a culture of child safety in Learning and Development activities
- Ensure information is available online and updated.

<p>Organisational Values</p>	<p>Council's organisational values enable and support the effective design and application of this policy by guiding staff in the course of their work.</p>	
	<p>We Make a Difference: We are driven by our desire to make a difference for the people we serve. Our work is purposeful and creates a positive impact for the community. We are proud to work here. Our work matters.</p> <p>We are Accountable: We are empowered to own and take responsibility for our actions. We follow through on our commitments and deliver on our promises. We make it happen.</p>	<p>We have Integrity: We act with integrity and transparency in conversations and decision-making. Through open and clear communication, we build trust. We're honest. We walk the talk.</p> <p>We show Respect: We are diverse, inclusive, respectful and caring. We encourage everyone to have a voice and we listen to each other. We recognise one another's contributions and treat people fairly. We look after each other.</p> <p>We are Creative: We are bold, courageous and innovative. We try new things, experiment and</p>

	<p>We are Collaborative: We are united by a common purpose to serve the community. We work together, connecting within our teams and across the organisation. We are inclusive and collaborative. We are one.</p>	<p>continuously improve. We are open-minded, creative and forward-thinking. We are leaders.</p>
<p>Breach of Policy</p>	<p>Alleged breaches of this Code must be reported to People and Culture. Breaches of this Code will be handled in accordance with the reportable conduct scheme and Council's Disciplinary Procedure or as prescribed by the Local Government Act 2020.</p>	

GOVERNANCE

<p>Parent Strategy/ Plan</p>	<p>Not Applicable</p>
<p>Supporting Procedures and Guidelines</p>	<p>This policy should be read in conjunction with Council's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Code of Conduct • Councillor Code of Conduct • Enterprise Agreement • Disciplinary Procedure • Gender Equality Action Plan • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy • Volunteer Action Plan • Risk Management Policy and Framework • Toward Equality Framework • Recruitment and Selection Policy • Pre employment safety screening Procedure • Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities • Aboriginal Cultural Protocols Guide
<p>Related documents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting a Child Safety Complaint or Concern • Investigate a Child Safety Complaint or Concern <p>This Policy should be read in context with the relevant framework, procedures, systems and processes</p>
<p>Legislation/ Regulation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children Youth and Families Act (2005) • Working with Children Act (2005) • Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) • The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006) • The Commission for Children and Young People Act (2012) • Privacy and Data Protection Act (2014) • Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017 • Child Wellbeing and Safety Regulations 2017

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 <p>The criminal offences relevant to the obligations attached to the Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to protect a child from sexual abuse (2015) Failure to disclose child sexual abuse (2014) Grooming offence (2014)
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Date Effective	
Review Date	1/7/2025
Version Number	
Document ID	
Content enquiries	Coordinator Safety & Wellbeing

! All Darebin policies and procedures must be developed through the lens of key Darebin strategies, plans and related considerations. See the **Darebin Policy Review Lens** to inform and guide policy development and review.

Appendix A- The 11 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.

Appendix B- Report a child safety concern or complaint.