

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS (CONT.)

MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL

Council Meeting Attachment

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

18 JULY 2016

7.6

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

Attachment No: 1

Implementation Action Plan

Background

The *Betrayal of Trust* report was tabled on 13 November 2013. It found that while the majority of children are safe in organisations, there are inadequate and inconsistent approaches to child safety in organisations across Victoria. It provided 15 recommendations, including the introduction of child safe standards in Victoria to ensure child safe environments in organisations that work with children.

The Victorian Government has committed to implementing all of the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry. The Department of Health and Human Services (the department) is leading the development and implementation of the child safe standards.

Aim

The aim of the child safe standards is to drive continuous improvement so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff, volunteers and contractors.

The Victorian Government is introducing child safe standards to improve the way organisations that provide services for children prevent and respond to child abuse that may occur within their organisation.

The standards are compulsory for all organisations involved with children, providing services to children and/or activities which may result in contact with children. This is an organisation wide responsibility and these standards will assist organisations to:

- prevent child abuse
- encourage reporting of any abuse that does occur
- improve responses to any allegations of child abuse.

The scope of the standards

During consultation with the sector, it was determined that the standards would best achieve their objectives if they were compulsory for all organisations that provide services for children, this includes organisations which are funded and/or regulated by government and those which are not.

Category 1 Organisations

Organisations currently funded or regulated by government (*Council*) will be required to work towards compliance from **1 January 2016** (compliance by 1 January 2017).

Category 2 Organisations

Organisations that provide services for children that have limited or no funding or regulatory relationship with government, this includes religious organisations, sport and recreation groups, coaching and tuition services for children, entertainment and party services for children, and overnight camps for children, will be required to work towards compliance from **1 January 2017**

What is child abuse?

Under the Act, child abuse includes four categories of abuse as outlined below, while the standards apply specifically to child abuse, organisations should look to promote children's health and wellbeing in a broader sense.

1. Physical violence
2. Sexual offences
3. Serious emotional or psychological abuse
4. Serious neglect

The child safe standards require organisations that provide services for children to have strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements. Protecting children from abuse is everybody's business, and an organisation's leadership is essential to instilling a child safety culture.

All staff and volunteers in organisations providing services to children need to recognise the importance of keeping children safe. Under this standard, organisations need to establish new ways or build on existing systems to embed or improve on a culture of child safety throughout all levels of their organisation.

The seven child safe standards

The child safe standards are as follows:

Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements.

Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety.

Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse.

Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

In complying with the child safe standards an applicable entity to which the standards apply must include the following principles as part of their response to each standard:

- 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.

Implementation Action Plan

	Action	Responsibility	Indicative Timeframes	Comments
1.	Establish Working Group	Manager Community Strengthening (MCS) Coordinator Children's Services	March 2016	Working Group Membership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager Community Strengthening (Chair) • Coordinator Children's Services • Manager People & Culture • Community Development Officer (volunteers) • Youth Services • Active Communities • Risk Management • Customer Service & Libraries • Kindergarten Teachers representative
2.	Develop Action Plan	MCS & Working Group	April 2016	Completed and ongoing
3.	Establish monthly meetings of Working Group	Coord CS	April 2016	Completed plus addition meetings as required
4.	Statement of Commitment Develop a draft Statement of Commitment	Coord CS	May 2016	Discussed by WG and revised
	Action	Responsibility	Indicative Timeframes	Comments
5.	Rollout across Council 1. Council report – provide information about CCS to Council and seek Councils endorsement of Statement of Commitment	MCS	July 2016	

	2. Present CCS to SLT 3. Present final policy & procedures to all staff	Coord CS TBA	July 2016 TBA	
6.	Develop an Organisation Policy Overarching for all, to be referenced	Coord CS	June 2016 Final for consultation – August 2016	First draft discussed by WG in June. Further versions to be developed.
7.	Update the Code of Conduct	People and Culture	July – August 2016	Pending recruitment of key positions in People and Culture.
8.	Develop a Risk Management Strategy	People and Culture	August 2016	Include seeking advice on where the actual risk lies – eg what is the risk to individual Councillors?

	Action	Responsibility	Indicative Timeframes	Comments
9.	Ensure all existing policies and procedures comply with CCS Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer policy & procedures • Recruitment procedures • Child Safe Champion/Officer • Reporting and responding to child abuse (risk management strategy) • Strategies to promote participation and 	*Education of all staff re responsibilities		

	empowerment of children			
10.	<p>Communications strategy Develop a strategy to promote councils commitment and actions towards compliance with CCS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a formal Statement of Commitment document for signing by all Councillors • Messaging on council documents “MSC is a Child Safe organisation” 	<p>Working Group with Communications</p> <p>* Whole of council responsibility, particularly leadership and including councillors</p>	July – December 2016	Discuss with Comms re volume of statement requirements and direction on what statements appear on which council docs & when
11.	Phase two: Category 2 Organisations		November 2016	