

	POLICY	Version:	7.1
	Safe Environments	Date Adopted:	24 Aug 2026
		Next Review Due:	Oct 2028

1. STATEMENT

This policy aims to ensure that Council as an organisation provides safe environments for children, young people, and other vulnerable people throughout its operations, facilities, and services.

Council is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and other vulnerable people who access its services. Council supports the rights of the child and vulnerable persons in the community and will act without hesitation to ensure a safe environment is always maintained. Council also supports the rights and wellbeing of its staff and volunteers and encourages their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all.

This policy complies with the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (CYPS Act), the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* (CSPP Act), and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles).

Council values and respects children, young people and vulnerable people, and welcomes them regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background. Bullying and harassment won't be tolerated.

2. DEFINITIONS

Central Assessment Unit: The Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services.

Child or Young Person: A person under 18 years old.

DCP: Department for Child Protection.

Harm: Any physical or psychological harm and includes, but is not limited to, harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

Mandated Reporter: A person who is legally required by Chapter 5, Part 1 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (CYPS Act) to report a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person may be at risk, to the Department for Child Protection as soon as practicable, via the **Child Abuse Report Line (CARL 13 48 78)**, or **000 in an emergency**.

Non-mandated Reporter: A person who is not in a prescribed position and reports a reasonable suspicion on moral or ethical grounds.

Prescribed Position: Defined by section 5 of the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* (CSPP Act) and means:

- a position in which a person works, or is likely to work, with children; or
- any other position, or a position of a class, prescribed by the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Regulations 2019 (CSPP Regs) for the purposes of this definition.

Vulnerable Person/Group: A person/group who may be at risk of harm or exploitation due to their dependency on others or through an experience of disadvantage.

Work with Children and Child-related Work: Defined by section 6 of the CSPP Act and regulation 7 of the CSPP Regs.

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Working with Children Check (WWCC): A working with children check under the CSPP Act.

3. PRINCIPLES

3.1 Scope

This policy applies to Council members, employees, volunteers, contractors and consultants and any other person involved in the delivery of Council services and programs.

3.2 Legal obligations

3.2.1 Children and young people

It is the duty of every person to safeguard and promote the following outcomes for children and young people:¹

- (a) to be safe from harm
- (b) to do well at all levels of learning and to have skills for life
- (c) to enjoy a healthy lifestyle
- (d) to be active citizens who have a voice and influence.

Council is required to prepare and adopt policies and procedures that: ²

- ensure reporting of a suspicion that a child or young person may be at risk are made in accordance with the CYPS Act; and
- ensure safe environments for children and young people are established and maintained in respect to Council's services and activities; and
- comply with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Section 30 of the CYPS Act requires certain persons (mandated reporters) to report suspicions that a child or young person may be at risk. This encompasses employees and volunteers of Council who provide health, welfare, education, sporting, recreational, child care or residential services wholly or partly for children and young people. It includes persons who:

- provide such services directly to children and young people; or
- hold a management position, the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children and young people (whether or not those duties constitute child-related work under the CSPP Act).

Mandated reporters are legally obligated to report to the Department for Child Protection (SA) through the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL), either by telephone or online, if they suspect, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person may be at risk, e.g. has

¹ Sections 4,5 CYPS Act

² Section 114 CYPS Act

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suffered or is likely to suffer harm, and the suspicion is formed in the course of their work (paid or voluntary) or in carrying out official duties.

Failure to comply with mandatory reporting obligations is a serious breach of the law and gives rise to an offence under the CYPS Act.

3.2.2 *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*

Council must not employ or continue to employ a person in a prescribed position unless a WWCC has been conducted in relation to the person within the preceding five years and the person is not prohibited from working with children. Council must verify the accuracy of a WWCC with the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services and must ensure it is renewed every 5 years.

The Chief Executive Officer (or their delegate) must advise the Central Assessment Unit of the Department of Human Services as soon as reasonably practicable if they become aware of:³

- any assessable information in relation to a person employed in a prescribed position
- a person who is or becomes prohibited from working with children (in any State or Territory)
- a person who is or becomes a registrable offender under the *Child Sex Offenders Registrations Act 2006*, or
- a person who makes a disclosure to their employer under section 66 of the *Child Sex Offenders Registration Act 2006*.⁴

Work with children and child-related work includes the following services or activities that are relevant to Council:⁵

- childcare services
- commercial services provided directly to children (e.g., face painting, photography of children, services such as a play gym, etc.)
- coaching or tuition services for children in 1 or more of the following areas:
 - education
 - sports
 - recreational activities
 - cultural awareness or cultural activities
 - arts and crafts
- providing a service or undertaking an activity that is child-related work in the course of employment.

³ Section 19 CSPP Act

⁴ Section 19 CSPP Act

⁵ Section 6 CSPP Act, regulation 7 CSPP Regs

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3.2.3 National Early Childhood Worker Register

As of 27 March 2026, approved providers of education and care services under the National Quality Framework (NQF) must record and maintain workforce information for all workers, volunteers and students engaged at the education and care services in the National Early Childhood Worker Register. Information is required to be updated within 14 days of any changes. This register improves regulatory oversight and supports child safety across the sector.

3.3 Application of National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Council is committed to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations:

3.3.1 Identify and analyse risk of harm

Council will undertake risk assessments in accordance with its Risk Management Policy (and any associated documents, e.g. the Safe Environments Risk Management Plan) and consider the risks posed to children and young people in the provision of its services and activities. The National Principles provides examples of risks in relation to children and young people, which include accidental harm, vicarious trauma, re-traumatisation in the workplace, physical harm, psychological harm, emotional harm, neglect, sexual abuse, cultural abuse, grooming and sexual exploitation.

3.3.2 Code of conduct

This policy is supported by the Safe Environments Code of Conduct. All employees, Council members, volunteers, contractors and consultants are required to comply with the code of conduct.

3.3.3 Choosing suitable employees and volunteers

The Chief Executive Officer will ensure that policies or procedures are developed and maintained regarding recruitment and selection processes, which include:

- responsibility for verifying the accuracy of a WWCC for relevant persons upon appointment and at least once every 5 years
- applicant screening processes, which may include, but are not limited to criminal history checks, interviews, referee reports, qualification verification, and employment history verification.

Working with children checks are required for:

- all members of the Executive Leadership Team
- all persons working at the Millicent Library
- all persons working at the Gladys Smith Early Learning Centre
- all persons working at the Visitor Information Centres (Beachport, Millicent & Penola)

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- any persons regularly contributing to the Youth Advisory Council
- Community Development Officer
- Community Development Manager
- Assets and Environmental Services Manager
- Senior and General Inspectors
- Communications Officer
- Environmental Services Officer
- Executive Support Development Services
- Technical Officer
- Parks and Gardens Team Leader
- Building Services Officers
- all persons carrying out regular maintenance or inspection activities at Council playgrounds
- all persons undertaking regular building and or garden ground maintenance at the Gladys Smith Early Learning Centre

The Chief Executive Officer (or their delegate) may require other employees, volunteers, contractors, consultants or Council members to obtain a WWCC at any time that they believe it necessary or desirable for the purpose of maintaining a child safe environment.

3.3.4 Support, train, supervise and enhance performance

The Safe Environments Policy and Code of Conduct will be included in Council induction programs provided to employees, volunteers, and council members, including contractors and consultants.

The Director of the Gladys Smith Early Learning Centre will develop and maintain policies and procedures that support employees working at the centre to provide child safe environments.

Mandated reporters will be provided with training on their reporting obligations. The training will be the Safe Environments: 'Through Their Eyes' course facilitated by public training providers approved by the Department of Human Services.

National child safety training is mandatory for everybody working or volunteering in an early childhood education and care (ECEC) service regulated under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

Council maintains a staff training register to ensure that staff complete relevant training requirements and meet refresher course timelines.

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3.3.5 Empower and promote the participation of children in decision-making and service development

Council will promote the involvement of children, young people, and other vulnerable people in service development planning. The process of empowering children, young people, vulnerable parties will be guided by safety, education, training and through the Gladys Smith Early Learning Centre's philosophy and policies listed in the references section of this policy.

3.3.6 Report and respond appropriately to children and young people suspected to be at risk

The Chief Executive Officer (or their delegate) will, if required, support staff through the process of reporting of a suspicion that a child or young person may be at risk. These processes are outlined in the Appendices to this policy.

4. REVIEW

This policy must be reviewed at least once every five (5) years.⁶

If Council expands the services offered to children and young people, the services undergo a substantial change, or if Council experiences an event or incident where a child or young person was or could have been at risk, a review of this policy will occur.

This policy is required under section 114 of the CYPS Act. A statement of compliance must be lodged with the Department of Human Services as soon as reasonably practical after varying or substituting this policy.

5. AVAILABILITY

This policy is publicly available on the Council website: www.wattlerange.sa.gov.au.

A printed copy of the policy may be obtained from the Principal Council Office upon payment of a prescribed fee in accordance with Council's Fees and Charges Schedule.

6. REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

References	- SA Department of Human Services – Child Safe Environments https://dhs.sa.gov.au/how-we-help/child-and-family-support-system-cfss/child-safe-environments - SA Department of Human Services – Child Safe Environments Resources https://dhs.sa.gov.au/how-we-help/child-and-family-support-system-cfss/child-safe-environments/resources - Department for Child Protection Notifications Checklist - National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
Relevant Legislation:	<i>Children & Young People (Safety) Act 2017</i> - Children & Young People (Safety) Regulations 2017 <i>Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016</i> - Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Regulations 2019

⁶ Section 115 CYPS Act

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Relevant Policies / Procedures / Guidelines	This Policy should be read in conjunction with: • Safe Environments Code of Conduct • Risk Management Policy • Gladys Smith Early Learning Centre policies for Education, Leadership & Management (ELM) • Gladys Smith Early Learning Centre Child Safe Environments Policy • Gladys Smith Early Learning Centre Code of Conduct • Community Engagement Policy • Human Resources Policy • Disability Access and Inclusion Management Plan
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7. ADOPTION & AMENDMENT HISTORY

The table below sets out the adoption, review and amendment history of this policy.

Version No:	Issue Date:	Authorised by:	Description of Change:	Minutes Reference:
1	14 June 2011	Council	Adopted	Folio 4573; Item 11.1.16
2	10 July 2012	Council	Reviewed	Folio 4788; Item 11.1.5
3	12 November 2013	Council	Reviewed	Folio 5244; Item 12.2.5
4	9 November 2021	Council	Legislative changes reflected. Formerly Child Safe Environments. Incorporated Vulnerable Groups Policy. New format.	Folio 9775; Item; 15.2.2
5	13 July 2023	Council	Amended based on feedback from DHS in relation to legislative compliance. Consultation with staff, ELT and Audit and Risk Committee.	Folios 10687-10688; Item 8.1.1.2
6	12 September 2024	ELT	Minor changes based on new DHS guideline.	Item 11.2
7	10 October 2024	ELT	Additional changes requested by DHS. Further details regarding the information required when reporting a suspicion.	Item 11.1
7.1	24 Aug 2026	CEO	Added references to National Early Childhood Worker Register and National Child Safety Training requirements.	Approval ID 727

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

List of mandated reporters

The following positions are identified as mandated reporters that are obligated under the CYPS Act to report to DCP any reasonable suspicions that a child or young person may be at risk:

- Chief Executive Officer
- all members of the Executive Leadership Team
- all persons working at the Millicent Library
- all persons working at the Gladys Smith Early Learning Centre
- all persons working at the Visitor Information Centres (Beachport, Millicent & Penola)
- any persons regularly contributing to the Youth Advisory Council
- Community Development Officer
- Community Development Manager
- Assets and Environmental Services Manager
- Senior and General Inspectors
- Communications Officer
- Environmental Services Officer
- Executive Support Development Services

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Appendix 2:

Process to report a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person may be at risk

Section 31 of the CYPS Act requires mandated reporters to report to DCP if they form a suspicion on reasonable grounds, during their employment, that a child or young person may be at risk, e.g. has suffered or is likely to suffer harm.

Even if not a mandated reporter, any person can report a suspicion of harm or risk of harm to a child or young person. A non-mandated reporter who identifies harm or risk of harm is encouraged to make the report to authorities and can request the support of another worker to do so if required.

All adult workers (even if not a mandated reporter) have a legal obligation to report child sexual abuse by another worker to the police and to protect a child from sexual abuse by another worker. Failure to meet these obligations may be considered a criminal offence.⁷

The table below sets out the methods for reporting a suspicion:

In an emergency , where a child or young person requires immediate medical or police help:	Call emergency services on 000
For all serious concerns , e.g. where it is suspected that a child or young person is in imminent or immediate danger of serious harm, serious injury, chronic neglect, or when a child is in the care of the Department for Child Protection and it is suspected they are at risk:	Call Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) 13 14 78
Only for less serious concerns that do not require immediate intervention: Not appropriate for the following scenarios: - The report concerns a child or children currently in the Department for Child Protection's care - The child is in imminent danger or at a very high risk of harm - The child has serious injuries because of abuse and/or neglect - The report is about an infant (under 12 months) with any injury that you suspect is a result of abuse and/or neglect - A child who is abandoned or currently unsupervised and is at risk - A plausible threat has been made to kill or seriously harm the child In these circumstances mandated reporters <u>must</u> call the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78	Make an online report via e-CARL at https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse/report-child-abuse-or-neglect (Response to online reports is not immediate)

⁷ Sections 64A, 65 *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935*

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Information required for report

The report should include all necessary information as set out below:

Identification details of reporter

- Full name
- Contact phone number
- Relationship to child or young person and frequency of contact
- If a mandated reporter – job title, agency and capacity in which you are working with the child, young person, or family

Identification details of child or young person

- Full name
- Date of birth and/or age or year level
- Sex
- Current address and/or contact phone numbers
- School or care setting
- Cultural identity - Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity (including Nation/Clan) or culturally and linguistically diverse (including if interpreter is required)

Concerns/allegations

- Details of concerns/allegations, who saw/heard what and when, description of any injuries
- Alleged perpetrator's name, age, address, and relationship to child or young person
- Current location of the child or young person and the alleged perpetrator
- When the child or young person is next to have contact with the alleged perpetrator
- Have the concerns been reported to other relevant government agencies (e.g. SA Police)?

Other information

- Has the child or young person been seen by a doctor? (include details)
- Concerns relating to the child or young person's family (e.g. drug/alcohol issues, mental health concerns, disability or other relevant health factors)
- Details of known supports and/or services involved with the child or young person?
- Relationship between child or young person and their family members and type of contact you have with the family

Additional details where a child or young person has disclosed an incident of harm

- What did the child or young person say?
- What was the emotional presentation?
- What were the behavioural concerns?

Confidentiality of the reporter's identity

The identity of a person who makes a report must be kept confidential and **must not** be disclosed to any other person unless an exception under section 163 of the CYPS Act applies.

Further actions after reporting a suspicion of harm

Council acknowledges that its duty of care does not cease after reporting a suspicion of harm. The person who made the report and/or their manager will consider any further support that may be required by the child or young person, and where possible, will refer the child or young person to an appropriate service in the community (e.g. a GP) for further support.

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Appendix 3:

Where the alleged perpetrator is a Council employee.

Where the alleged perpetrator of harm to a child or young person is a Council employee (or any other person within the scope of this policy), in addition to the above process, the person reporting the suspicion of harm will also:

- Report the suspicion of harm and alleged perpetrator to the Human Resources and Risk Manager and the Chief Executive Officer within 24 hours of becoming aware of the alleged behaviour.
- When an allegation of child sexual harm by an employee is received, immediate and practical steps will be taken to ensure the safety of the child.
- The next steps that will be taken by Council in relation to an investigation will be guided by advice from DCP or SA Police. The person/s alleged to have committed the harm will only be informed of the allegation if advised to do so by DCP or SA Police.
- Depending on the severity of the allegation and subject to advice from DCP or SA Police, the staff member will be either relocated to another location where they cannot have contact with children and young people or will be stood down pending the outcome of the investigation of the allegations.
- If advised by DCP or SA Police, an external investigator will be engaged to investigate the allegations. The investigator will be knowledgeable and experienced in undertaking workplace investigations relating to child harm allegations.
- The Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team, will consider the review findings and advice from DCP and/or SA Police, and determine the action to be taken with respect to the employee. This could include issuing a letter of reprimand or warning, suspension from employment or dismissal of the employee.

If the allegation involves the Human Resources and Risk Manager or the Chief Executive Officer, the reporter will instead make the report to one or more director(s) on the Executive Leadership Team.

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