

Child Safe Environments

Version: 5.2

Last Reviewed: 24 Aug 2026

Next Review: Jan 2027

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Gladys Smith Early Learning Centre (the Centre) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access its services.

The Centre recognises the importance of providing a safe and supportive environment where children and young people are protected from harm, respected, heard, supported, and encouraged to reach their individual potential.

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).

The Centre supports safeguarding and promoting the outcomes for children specified in section 4(2) of the CYPS Act and strives to promote a culture of safety and wellbeing where children and young people are protected from harm and feel valued and safe.

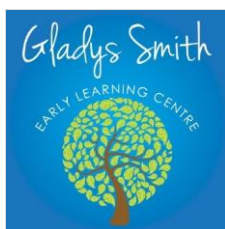
2. DEFINITIONS

- **Child or Young Person:** A person under 18 years of age.
- **Child Safe Environment:** An environment where children and young people are protected from harm, feel respected, heard, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.
- **CYPS Act:** *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (SA)
- **CSPP Act:** *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* (SA)
- **DHS:** Department of Human Services
- **Harm:** Section 17(1) of the CYPS Act defines harm to mean physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission) including 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 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**.

Mandated reporters include the following staff relevant to the Centre:

- employees of an organisation that provides childcare services where the person provides direct services to the children and young people or holds a management position that includes responsibility for the provision of services to children and young people.
- **Prescribed Organisation:** An organisation providing a service that constitutes child-related work, which includes the Wattle Range Council (Council).
- **Working with Children Check (WWCC):** A working with children check under the CSPP Act.

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100	Public	Corporate Services	Childcare Director	Annually
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3. PROCEDURE

Aim

- This policy is prepared in accordance with section 114 of the CYPS Act to ensure that safe environments for children and young people are established and maintained, and that everyone working at and accessing the Centre's services is aware of their obligations under child protection legislation, including being aware of their reporting obligations under Chapter 5, Part 1 of the CYPS Act.
- The Centre aims to ensure that matters concerning the safety of children and young people are responded to in an appropriate and timely manner.

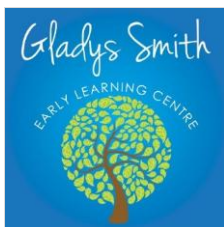
Scope

- This policy applies to Centre staff and employees of Wattle Range Council who have access to the Centre and employees who interact with or provide services to children and young people at the Centre.
- All such persons are required to abide by this policy.
- 'Employees' includes permanent and casual employees; volunteers; contractors and subcontractors; persons undertaking work experience placements, apprenticeships, or traineeships; or persons otherwise engaged by Council.

Participation of children and young people

- The Centre values and respects the views and voices of the children and young people who access its services. The Centre promotes their involvement in improving its services where appropriate.
- The Centre undertakes an induction process and provides a handbook to parents or carers when children and young people enrol in the centre, which informs children and young people and their families or carers about how they can provide feedback and make suggestions to the centre, how they can access help and advice, as well as the complaints and grievance procedures available to them.
- The handbook informs parents and carers about Centre policies and encourages them to discuss any queries or concerns about the policies with the Centre's director. It also welcomes parents and carers to participate in the review process for the policies. Policies are discussed at Parent Committee meetings and feedback and participation is encouraged.
- The Centre is committed to encouraging children and young people to express their views, make suggestions and provide feedback. Council values the input of children and young people and ensures that their feedback and suggestions in relation to matters that affect them are acknowledged and acted upon wherever possible.
- The Centre wishes for children and young people to feel empowered and able to discuss their views and let people know when they feel unsafe.

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Inclusion and diversity

- The Centre is committed to children and young people being valued and respected. The Centre promotes diversity and tolerance and does not tolerate bullying, harassment, or discriminatory practices.

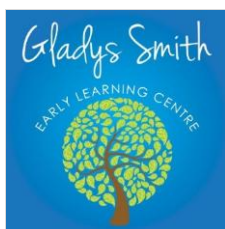
Code of conduct

- All Centre staff must adhere to the Centre's Code of Conduct, which specifies the behavioural standards required in relation to staff interactions with children, families, colleagues, the community, and social media.
- Any person can make a complaint to the Centre about a breach of the Code of Conduct and the Centre will investigate the complaint in accordance with the Centre's *Grievance Policy* or Council's *Compliments and Complaints Handling Procedure* as applicable. Breaching the *Code of Conduct* may result in disciplinary action being taken, and may include, but is not limited to, a formal warning, counselling, or termination of employment.

Recruitment and working with children checks

- Council is committed to the National Principles, including ensuring that the people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Council complies with the CSPP Act to ensure that it minimises the risk to children posed by persons who work with Council. Council implements comprehensive strategies to ensure child safe environments and understands that undertaking WWCCs in relation to employees is not the only aspect of ensuring safe environments.
- To ensure that the most appropriately skilled and qualified people are employed at the Centre, Council implements the following recruitment strategies in accordance with the *Recruitment and Onboarding Procedure*:
 - Council's commitment to child safety and wellbeing is clearly specified in the position descriptions for Centre staff.
 - Interviews for roles involving child-related work include behavioural questions in relation to child safeguarding.
 - Council implements screening practices including at least two reference checks and qualification checks.
- In accordance with section 17 of the CSPP Act, Council ensures that prior to employing a person to work at the Centre, Council obtains that person's full name, address, date of birth, and unique identifier relating to the applicant's Working with Children Check (WWCC) application. Council ensures that Centre staff and volunteers have a current 'not prohibited' WWCC issued by the Department of Human Services Screening Unit, and Council does not employ prohibited persons as Centre staff.
- Council also provides to the central assessment unit of the Department of Human Services (DHS) the name, address, telephone number and email of Council, as well as the name and the contact details of the person who verified that the prospective employee has a WWCC and is not prohibited from working with children.

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- Council ensures the validity of WWCCs by following the verification process and links the WWCC to their registration via the Organisation Portal of the DHS Screening Unit. Council uses a notification system in Skytrust software to ensure that it is notified prior to the expiry of a WWCC, and Council verifies the WWCCs of existing employees every 5 years.
- Council will notify the DHS Screening Unit, in accordance with section 19 of the CSPP Act, if it becomes aware of any prescribed information relating to an employee who works with children (a prescribed position).

Supervision, training, development and support for employees

- The Centre has processes in place to supervise, support and train employees so that they understand their mandatory reporting obligations and their responsibilities to maintain child safe environments, including being able to identify and respond to harm or the risk of harm.

Staff induction program

- All Centre staff undergo a comprehensive induction process that includes receiving a copy of this policy and the Centre's code of conduct, which they are required to sign.
- New staff are also provided with a copy of the Mandatory Reporting Information Booklet prepared by DHS.
- Applicable policies, procedures and codes of conduct are discussed, and staff are taught about grievance processes, work health and safety requirements, safe environments obligations and identifying and responding to harm or the risk of harm.

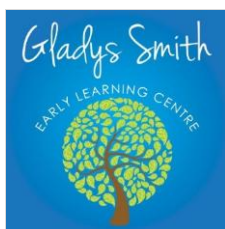
Training and development

- Council provides continuous training and development for Centre staff, including training and refresher courses in relation to child safety and mandatory reporting.
- Centre staff undertake an initial full-day Safe Environments for Children training course ('Safe Environments – Through Their Eyes') and are required to undertake a refresher course every 3 years.
- 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). The national child safety training is to be renewed every 2 years.
- In relation to the 'Flying Start' 3-year-old preschool program, all educators working with children, office staff and management are required to complete the 'Trauma-informed Practice training.
- Council maintains a staff training register to ensure that staff complete relevant training requirements and meet refresher course timelines.

Reporting and responding to harm or risk of harm

- The Centre is committed to acting quickly and comprehensively when a child or young person is or may be at risk of harm. The Centre responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations, or suspicions of harm.

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- Mandatory reporting legal obligations apply to all Centre staff under section 30(3)(h) and section 31 of the CYPS Act, and they have obligations to report a suspicion to the Department for Child Protection's Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on **13 14 78** as soon practicable if they form a reasonable suspicion during their employment that a child or young person may be at risk, e.g. has suffered or is likely to suffer harm. If there is an immediate risk, call SA Police on **000**.
- The Centre ensures that all staff are aware of their obligations.
- 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.
- The Centre recognises that its duty of care does not cease after reporting a suspicion. Staff will work with the child or young person and/or their family/carer to assist them to identify and access appropriate support services.
- If a staff member is reported for causing harm to a child refer to the Council's Safe Environments Policy.
- Failure by a mandatory reporter to report a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person is or may be at risk of harm is an offence under section 31 of the CYPS Act and may also result in disciplinary action being initiated against the employee in accordance with the *Safe Environments Code of Conduct*.

Responding to complaints and feedback

- Council takes all concerns and complaints seriously, and any concerns, complaints or feedback raised by children and young people, their families or carers will be listened to and followed up with in accordance with the *Grievance Policy*, *Safe Environments Code of Conduct*, *Customer Experience Policy*, and *Compliments and Complaints Handling Procedure*, as applicable.

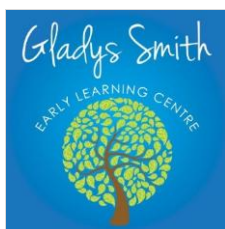
Risk management

- The Centre actively monitors, assesses, and works to identify all potential and actual sources of harm and takes steps to minimise the risk to children and young people who use its services.
- As of 27 March 2026, approved providers of an ECEC service must record and maintain workforce information for all workers, volunteers and students engaged at the ECEC service 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.
- Strategies to minimise risks to children and young people are implemented as part of Council's ongoing risk management processes including implementing the *Safe Environments Risk Management Plan*.

Communication and access to information

- The Centre will communicate this policy at staff meetings and at meetings of the Parent Committee. A printed copy will be given to parents/carers of children and young people

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attending the Centre and a link to it will be included in the Centre's regular electronic newsletter sent to parents/carers.

- This policy will be available on the Council website and in the Centre's reception area.
- The Centre values all feedback relating to this policy and welcomes all parents, families or carers of children and young people to discuss any concerns or provide feedback.

4. REVIEW

- The Centre will aim to review this policy annually with other Centre policies, and at least once every five years, as per section 115 of the CYPS Act.

This policy will also be reviewed when:

- new or additional risks are identified for children and young people that may require changes to this policy
- there is an occurrence of a critical incident where a child or young person experienced or was at risk of experiencing harm
- concerns are raised regarding the safety or welfare of children and young people attending the Centre.
- The Centre will ensure that families and carers can contribute to the review and will be notified about it through the communication methods outlined above.
- This policy is required under section 114 of the CYPS Act. Council must lodge a child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services as soon as reasonably practicable after varying or substituting this policy.

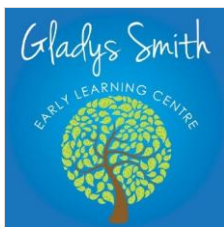
5. SOURCES

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- National Quality Standard (2018), QA2, QA3, QA5
- Keeping Safe Child Protection Curriculum 2021
- *Education and Care Services National Law (South Australia)*
- *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*
- *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*
- *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935*
- National Model Code and Guidelines - ACECQA

6. RELATED POLICIES

- ELM 1 - Children's Program Policy
- ELM 8 - Staff Training Policy
- ELM 13 - Staffing Arrangements Policy
- ELM 14 - Dealing with Complaints (Staff and Parents) Policy
- ELM 16 - Code of Conduct
- ELM 20 - Safe Use of Technologies and Online Environments
- WRC - Safe Environments Policy
- WRC - Safe Environments Code of Conduct
- WRC - Risk Management Policy

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- WRC - Risk Management Procedure
- WRC - Safe Environments Risk Management Plan
- WRC - Compliments and Complaints Handling Procedure
- WRC - Recruitment and Onboarding Procedure

7. AVAILABILITY

This policy is publicly available on the [Gladys Smith Early Learning Centre page](#) of Council's website: www.wattlerange.sa.gov.au.

A printed copy of this policy is viewable at the Centre and may be purchased from Council offices upon payment of the relevant fee in Council's Fees and Charges Schedule.

8. 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:	Reference:
1	13 July 2023	Council	Adopted Policy	Folios 10687-8; Item 8.1.1
2	June 2024	DCCS & CEO	Reviewed	EN2024/28687
3	12 Sep 2024	ELT	Minor changes based on new DHS Guideline	Item 11.2
4	10 Oct 2024	ELT	Additional changes requested by DHS	Item 11.1
5	27 Aug 2025	CD & CEO	Reviewed and amended	EN2025/29742
5.1	23 Feb 2026	CD	Amended review date to align across all GSELC policies.	Approval ID 728
5.2	24 Aug 2026	CD & CEO	Amended to include new mandatory requirements for national child safety training and national early childhood worker register.	Approval ID 727

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