

## Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

<b>Policy Owner: Manager Community Life</b>	
<b>Date Last Adopted/Amended: 18 October 2022</b>	<b>Review Date: 18 October 2024</b>

### 1. Policy Statement/Objective(s)

Shellharbour City Council is committed to being a child safe organisation that values the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in our community. This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy will support a culture that creates, maintains and improves child safe practices across all areas of Council's operation and ensures adherence to the NSW Child Safe Standards. It will provide strategic and operational direction to councillors, council staff, volunteers and other stakeholders engaged to deliver council services.

Our commitment to child safety upholds a zero tolerance of child abuse. Our organisation will promote and support the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people where abuse is prevented, responded to and reported.

As a Council, we endeavour to inform, listen to and empower children and young people to voice opinions about decisions that directly affect them. We value children and young people as meaningful and beneficial members of our community and we are committed to an organisation where our staff and our practices hold child safety as a paramount objective.

We seek to ensure equity for all children and young people interacting with our services and seek to continually improve how we maintain safety in our organisation.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all people who conduct work for Shellharbour City Council in a paid or unpaid capacity. This may include Councillors, Council staff, volunteers, contractors, consultants, interns, trainees, cadets, work experience and other stakeholders engaged to deliver council services.

This policy applies to all activities in the organisation which involve, result in or relate to contact with children and young people.

Including but not limited to:

- Aquatics and recreation
- Community engagement
- Community events
- Community facilities including parks and reserves
- Community programs
- Council's commercial entities such as links, min-golf, tavern
- Customer service

- Information management
- Internship, traineeship, cadetship, work experience and volunteer
- Library and museum services
- Rangers
- Staff participation at external activities such as activities at schools and child care centres
- Visiting private residences
- Youth Services

### 3. References

Shellharbour City Council has a responsibility to consider social impacts under the following legislations:

<a href="#">Advocate for children and young people</a>	Act 2014 NSW
<a href="#">Child protection (offenders prohibition orders)</a>	Act 2004
<a href="#">Child protection (offenders registration)</a>	Act 2000
<a href="#">Child protection (Working with children)</a>	Act 2012
<a href="#">Child protection (working with children)</a>	Regulation 2013
<a href="#">Children and young persons (care and protection)</a>	Act 1998
<a href="#">Children and young persons (care and protection)</a>	Regulation 2021
<a href="#">Children's guardian</a>	Act 2019
<a href="#">Children's guardian amendment (Child Safe Scheme)</a>	Bill 2021
<a href="#">Children legislation amendment (Wood enquiry recommendations)</a>	Act 2009
<a href="#">Civil Liability Amendment (organisational Child abuse liability)</a>	Act 2018
<a href="#">Crimes</a>	Act 1900
<a href="#">Environmental planning and assessment (EPA)</a>	Act 1979
<a href="#">Government information (public access) (GIPA)</a>	Act 2009
<a href="#">Local government</a>	Act 1993
<a href="#">Local government (state)</a>	Award 2020 (amended)
<a href="#">National redress scheme for institutional child sexual abuse</a>	Act 2018
<a href="#">Ombudsman</a>	Act 1974
<a href="#">Privacy and personal information protection</a>	Act 1998
<a href="#">NSW Child Safe Standards</a>	
<a href="#">NSW Children (education and care services National law application)</a>	Act 2010
<a href="#">State records</a>	Act 1998
<a href="#">United Nations convention on the rights of the child</a>	1990
<a href="#">Young offenders</a>	Act 1997

### 4. External/Internal Consultations

To prepare this policy, consultations took place with the following:

#### Internal:

Acting Manager Risk  
 Aquatics and Recreation Coordinator  
 Group Manager Human Resources  
 Manager Community Engagement and Activation  
 Manager Community Life  
 Manager Libraries and Museums  
 Team Leader Children and Youth

COLLABORATION

ACCOUNTABILITY

INTEGRITY

RESPECT

SUSTAINABILITY

## 5. Definitions

Child Abuse / Abuse:	<p>Abuse is an act or acts which endanger a child or young person's health, wellbeing and/or development. This abuse and resulting harms can be from a single event or the cumulative effect of multiple traumatic events occurring over time. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical abuse</li> <li>• Sexual abuse</li> <li>• Emotional abuse</li> <li>• Exposure to family violence</li> <li>• Neglect</li> <li>• Grooming</li> <li>• Multi-dimensional harm</li> </ul>
Child Safe organisation	An organisation in which child safety is embedded in planning, policy and practices and where the voices of children are valued and actioned.
Child Safe Standards	The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission to make organisations across the country safe for children (also known as the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations).
Children and young people	A person aged under 18 years. Note: Under child protection legislation, a child is defined as aged under 16 years for Mandatory Reporting purposes and as aged under 18 years for Reportable Conduct (see below for more information).
Child-related positions	<p>Work (including voluntary work) is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing services for under 18s</li> <li>• Where the work normally involves being face-to-face with children</li> <li>• Where contact with children is more than incidental to the work.</li> </ul> <p>It may also include a worker who has access to confidential records or information about children.</p>
Council services	
Council staff	<p>Any person engaged in work for Council in any of the following capacities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full time, part time, casual, temporary, fixed-term, maximum term employees</li> <li>• Apprentices or trainees</li> <li>• Labour hire employees</li> <li>• Work experience students</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> </ul> <p>For the purposes of this policy, Councillors.</p>

Safeguarding children/ child safeguarding	The process through which an organisation sets out to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children.
Trauma informed	“Trauma-informed services do no harm i.e. they do not re-traumatise or blame victims for their efforts to manage their traumatic reactions, and they embrace a message of hope and optimism that recovery is possible. In trauma-informed services, trauma survivors are seen as unique individuals who have experienced extremely abnormal situations and have managed as best they could”. (Dr Cathy Kezelman)
Working With Children Check - WWCC	Working with Children Check clearance issued by the Children’s Guardian under the <i>Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012</i> (NSW). A WWCC is a requirement for anyone who works or volunteers in child-related work in NSW. The clearance check provides either clearance to work with children for 5 years, or prohibits people who pose an unacceptable risk from working with children.

## 6. Variation and Review

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy.

### Review History -

Date Policy first adopted – version 1	18 October 2022
Date amendment adopted – version 2	

## 7. Policy

This policy outlines Council’s commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation. The Child Safe & Wellbeing Policy reflects Council’s responsibility in meeting the requirements of the NSW Child Safe Standards. Council’s response and action to each standard is outlined below.

### 7.1 Child safety is embedded in organisations leadership, governance and culture

Shellharbour City Council is committed to embedding child safe practices into our organisations governance, leadership and culture. This is articulated and guided through the establishment of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

To ensure delivery of the NSW Child Safe Standards, Council will establish a Child Safety & Wellbeing Working Group to lead and oversee child safety practices in the organisation. Council will also create an identified role within the organisation, who will champion child safeguarding. Council will also identify fundamental staff to support and act as child safeguarding champions across diverse service delivery areas.

Councillors and the Executive Leadership Team will be regularly informed of child safeguarding initiatives that are happening across the organisation.

Council will develop and implement a communications strategy to ensure all relevant stakeholders are informed and aware of all child safe practices, procedures and responsibilities. This may include

COLLABORATION

ACCOUNTABILITY

INTEGRITY

RESPECT

SUSTAINABILITY

safety awareness training for all councillors, council staff, volunteers and other stakeholders engaged to deliver council services on how to ensure we are a child safe organisation.

## **7.2 Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously**

Shellharbour City Council is committed to fostering a culture where children and young people are informed and empowered to voice opinions about decisions that directly affect them. We value children and young people as meaningful and beneficial members of our community. We will commit to enhancing the way we engage with children and families direct in the planning and delivery of policies, programs and services.

We will ensure that all relevant information, including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, the rights of the child and complaints procedures, are developed in child friendly versions and are made readily available to children, young people and their families. This will also include ensuring all relevant information is made available on the Shellharbour City Council website and at key Council service delivery areas across the city.

We will commit to evaluating the experiences of children and young people who engage with our service programs and services and ensure that feedback is taken seriously and informs future service delivery.

## **7.3 Families and communities are informed and involved**

Shellharbour City Council is committed to strengthening communication and engagement with children, young people and families. To capture a representative opinion of children and young people in our city, we will use a family friendly approach to consultation and engagement that inspires children and young people to have a voice on decisions that affect them.

We will support children, young people and families with information that is easy to find and understand. Shellharbour City Council will promote information via appropriate channels and platforms that engage children, young people and families.

## **7.4 Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account**

Shellharbour City Council has a long history of ensuring equity is upheld and a diverse range of needs are respected and welcomed. We endeavour to ensure children and young people feel recognised and safe. Our organisation values inclusion and continual improvement in supporting and safeguarding children and young people who live with diverse circumstances and needs. This may include, but is not limited to, children and young people who live with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.

Council are proud to support our First Nations community through consultation and collaboration with Shellharbour City Council Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, Aboriginal Advisory Committee and local First Nations people, families and organisations. We are committed to promoting the cultural needs and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Shellharbour City Council provides policies on accessibility, anti-discrimination, cultural safety and diversity and inclusion. Our Community Strategic Plan outlines our commitment to build inclusive, accessible and safe spaces for our entire community.

## **7.5 People working with children are suitable and supported**

COLLABORATION

ACCOUNTABILITY

INTEGRITY

RESPECT

SUSTAINABILITY

Shellharbour City Council is committed to ensuring that children and young people are kept safe and free from harm when interacting with Council services and staff. We recognise that supporting Council staff is important and we will ensure that all staff are provided with adequate information, training and support to best play their part in ensuring Shellharbour City Council is child safe.

All staff working directly with children and young people will be assessed for their suitability for the role during the application process and are supported with ongoing training and development to ensure they can continue to deliver services in a way that prioritises child safety. We will implement ongoing Working With Children Checks (WWCC) to ensure the continued suitability of staff working directly with children & young people.

In the event that a Council staff member acts in a way that jeopardises child safety, Shellharbour City Council is committed to ensuring that appropriate reporting and disciplinary policy and procedures are adhered to. Appropriate behaviours and responsibilities for Council staff will be outlined in our Code Of Conduct policy.

## **7.6 Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused**

A child focused complaint process supports children and young people who are exposed to the risk of harm and encourages them to speak up. Shellharbour City Council will have adequate complaints and reporting policy and procedures that are clear and accessible. These will be available to a range of relevant stakeholders, and will adopt a trauma informed approach. Furthermore, all information will be available in child-friendly versions and promoted through platforms appropriate to children, young people and families.

Shellharbour City Council will also provide training to support the complaints and reporting policy and procedures for all relevant stakeholders and Council staff.

Policy, processes and practices will ensure that all relevant information is handled in a confidential manner that protects children and young people and controls who has access to information.

## **7.7 Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training**

Shellharbour City Council understand that education and professional development on child safe practices is a continual learning process. We are committed to ensuring that all staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and awareness to ensure children and young people are kept safe. This will be achieved through ongoing education and training throughout the term of their engagement with Council.

This will include Child Safe induction training during the on boarding process as well as ongoing training around our child safe policies and procedures. We will ensure that all staff working directly with children and young people participate in regular developmental training to stay informed of legislative requirements and best practice in enhancing child safety.

## **7.8 Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur**

Shellharbour City Council will develop a Child Safe risk management policy and procedure that will aim to identify and minimise risk. Guided by this framework, we will review and assess relevant Council services that children and young people frequently interact with. To further support this, we will develop a Child Safe risk register that will include strategies for responding to environmental and situational risk – including the digital and online environment.



Council staff will be supported with adequate training in understanding and implementing our risk management policies and procedures.

Children, young people and families will be supported with easy to read information about our complaints procedure and Council's commitment to risk management. We will ensure this information is easy to access by children, young people and families in our community.

### **7.9 Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved**

Shellharbour City Council has a commitment to regularly review all policies and procedures across the organisation. This includes a regular review of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and associated procedures.

During the review and improvement process, we are committed to including children and young people to define their vision of best practice and how it is applied.

### **7.10 Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe**

Shellharbour City Council will develop and promote a 'Statement of Commitment to Child Safety' and ensure this is available in child friendly versions.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and associated procedures will ensure child safety is embedded across the organisation in services, practices and other relevant policies. This will include, but is not limited to, the Code Of Conduct Policy and the Record Management Policy which outline acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and responsibilities in relation to Child Safety. All staff will be made aware of their child safety obligations as part of the on boarding process. Ongoing training and development will be provided as required.

The voices of children and young people will continue to inform our policies and procedures and inform Council decision making and initiatives.

## **8. Related Forms/Documents**

<a href="#">Child Protection Policy.pdf</a>	Child protection policy
<a href="#">Code of Conduct for Staff, Contractors and Volunteers.pdf</a>	Code of conduct
<a href="#">pro-0034-v03-internal-complaints.pdf</a>	Internal complaints
<a href="#">Code of Conduct for Councillors - Council Policy.pdf</a>	Code of conduct- Councillors
<a href="#">Pre-employment Checks Policy.pdf</a>	Pre-employment checks
<a href="#">Recruitment and Selection Policy.pdf</a>	Recruitment selection policy
<a href="#">ECM_10842329_v2_Records Management - Operational Policy.pdf</a>	Records management policy
<a href="#">Public Liability Claims Incident Reporting Procedure.pdf</a>	Public liability incident reporting

## **9. Attachments**

Nil

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ACCOUNTABILITY

INTEGRITY

RESPECT

SUSTAINABILITY

**Policy Authorised by:**

Name: Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

Date: 18 October 2022

COLLABORATION

ACCOUNTABILITY

INTEGRITY

RESPECT

SUSTAINABILITY