	Child Safe Policy and Procedure
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Responsible Officer	Child Safe Lead
Policy Owner	Chief Executive Officer

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to set out Melton City Council’s (Council) commitment to child safety. This includes the ways in which Council will provide and respond to child safety concerns and as well as outlining the codes of standards of behaviours for those in scope of this policy and procedure. Everyone is responsible for child safety, and this document details the responsibilities and processes that apply to Councillors, staff, volunteers, and labour hire contractors.

Council is committed to meeting the eleven (11) Victorian Child Safe Standards set out in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (The Act)* as well as the National Child Safe Principles. Council aims to ensure that the organisation is a child safe organisation which provides a safe place which is free from harm and abuse for all children and young people. This includes protecting and promoting the cultural safety of all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQA+ children and young people, as well as children with disability and those children who are unable to live at home.

2. Scope

Melton City Council is committed to and required to abide by the Victorian Child Safe Standards and is committed to alignment with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. This policy explains Council’s commitment to meet the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

This policy is compatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, in particular the principle of *Protection of Families and Children*.

All Councillors, staff, volunteers, and labour hire contractors are bound by both the Child Safe Policy and Procedure, and Employee Code of Conduct. Furthermore, Council will take reasonable steps to ensure third party providers are committed to child safety.

Individual Departments, business units, and/or staff within Council may have additional mandatory and/or operational requirements to ensure a child safe organisation. These are outside the scope of this policy.

3. Definitions

Word/ Key Term	Definition
Aboriginal Child	A child or young person up to the age of 18 years who is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.
Child / Young Person	A person under eighteen (18) years of age
Child Abuse	<p>Is defined in the <i>Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005</i> as follows:</p> <p>Child abuse includes -</p> <p>(a) any act committed against a child involving -</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(i) a sexual offence; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(ii) an offence under section 49M (1) of the Crimes Act 1958; and</p> <p>(b) the infliction, on a child, of -</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(i) physical violence; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(ii) serious emotional or psychological harm; and</p> <p>(c) the serious neglect of a child.</p> <p>Please see other definitions of sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, grooming offence, neglect, and physical abuse.</p>
Child Related Work	<p>Specific definition as per section 7 of the Worker Screening Act 2020.</p> <p>Child-related work is work at or for a service, body, or place, or that involves an activity and that usually involves direct contact with a child. For the purposes of this Act, work is not child-related work by reason only of occasional direct contact with children that is incidental to the work.</p>
Child Safety Culture	Melton City Council takes deliberate steps to directly and indirectly create a culture in which everyone – Councillors, staff, volunteers, and labour hire contractors – feels confident, enabled, and supported to provide a safe place for children and to effectively and safely disclose and address child safety concerns.
Child Safe Organisation	An organisation that takes deliberate steps to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse, and neglect.
Child Safe Standards Code of Conduct	Council’s Child Safe Code of Conduct outlines the standards of behaviour expected when engaging with children and is outlined in section 7 of this policy.

Children from Culturally and/or Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	A child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language, or language spoken at home, or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.
Children with Disability	Use of the term 'disability' is consistent with that in <i>the Disability Act 2006</i> . In relation to a child, the use of the word 'disability' incorporates any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or developmental delay that affects a child's ability to undertake everyday activities. A disability can occur at any time in life. Children can be born with disability or acquire a disability suddenly through an injury or illness. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are hidden
Commission for Children and Young People	<p>The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) is an independent statutory body that promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people. The CCYP focuses on vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>The CCYP has various functions and powers in relation to the oversight and enforcement of the Child Safe Standards. The CCYP also administers and oversees the reportable conduct scheme.</p>
Cultural Safety of Aboriginal Children	Cultural safety for an Aboriginal child means they experience a safe, nurturing, and positive environment, where their unique identity is respected without attack, challenge, or denial. In this environment, their voice is heard and valued, and they are free to explore and express themselves, their culture, views and needs.
Cultural Safety for Children from Culturally and/or Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	An environment which is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children. The environment is free from discrimination, challenge, or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are and what they need.
Duty of Care	The obligation of Council employees, contractors, and volunteers to take reasonable steps to protect children in their care from the risks of injury that are reasonably foreseeable.
Emotional and Psychological Abuse	Occurs when a child does not receive the appropriate love, affection, or attention they need for healthy, emotional, psychological, and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated threats to a child, constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejections or continual coldness. These behaviours continue to an extent that it results in significant damage to the child's physical, intellectual, or emotional wellbeing and development.

Failure to Disclose Offence	Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 years of age has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.
Failure to Protect Offence	This offence applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk but did not act to protect the child.
Grooming Offence	<p>A term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship and rapport with a child with a view to abusing them at some stage in the future.</p> <p>As defined in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), the act of communication, including online communication, with a child under the age of 16 or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse. This includes predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual abuse at a later time with the groomer (aged 18 years old or over) or another adult.</p> <p>Grooming can occur over any length of time, in a variety of settings where a relationship can be formed, such as leisure facilities, childcare, music, religious and sporting activities, Internet chat rooms and social media or by SMS.</p>
Incident	Any disclosure or harm to a child or young person; allegation, suspicion or observation of abuse or harm to a child or young person; or a breach of this Policy.
Labour Hire Contractor	A person employed through an external agency to work at Council to provide specific labour services, typically for a finite period of time. Labour Hire Contractors are bound by this policy in the same way as staff.
LGBTIQA+ child or Young Person	<p>The acronym LGBTIQA+ represents the gender diverse community consisting of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Questioning, Asexual and all other gender diverse identities.</p> <p>Lesbian: is a woman who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women.</p> <p>Gay: is a person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender as themselves.</p> <p>Bisexual: is a person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of their own gender and other genders.</p> <p>Asexual: is a person who does not experience sexual attraction but may experience romantic attraction towards others.</p> <p>Queer: is often used as an umbrella term for diverse genders or sexualities.</p> <p>Transgender: a person whose gender does not exclusively align with the one they were assigned at birth.</p>

Mandatory Reporting	<p>The legal obligation under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 of certain professionals to report when a child is in need of protection. Mandatory reporters include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Medical Practitioners, e.g., General Practice Doctors • Nurses and Maternal and Child Health Nurses (Midwives) • Registered Teachers and Early Childhood Teachers • Early Childhood Workers • School Principals and School Counsellors • Police Officers • Registered Psychologists • Youth Justice Workers • Out of Home Care Workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers) • A person in religious ministry
Neglect	<p>Is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide with the basic necessities of life such neglect includes failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision, water, medical attention, or supervision for the appropriate physical or psychological development.</p>
Physical Abuse	<p>Occurs when a person subjects another to non-accidental acts of physical aggression. The abuse may inflict injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or aggressive treatment. Physically abusive behaviour includes (but not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, and kicking. It also includes the provision of harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol, or poison.</p>
Reasonable Belief	<p>A reasonable belief that a child or young person is in need of protection, or their safety and wellbeing is at risk, is formed:</p> <p>If a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. It does not require proof.</p> <p>A ‘reasonable belief’ may be formed through disclosures, observations, or other information of which a person has become aware.</p>
Reportable Conduct	<p>Reportable Conduct is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a sexual offence, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child • behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child • significant neglect of a child, or misconduct involving any of the above
Sexual Abuse	<p>A child is sexually abused when any person uses their authority over the child to involve the child in sexual activity. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity including fondling genitals, masturbation, vaginal or anal penetration by a finger, penis or any other object, voyeurism, and exhibitionism.</p>

4. Policy

Melton City Council is dedicated to the safety of children by ensuring:

- Compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Compliance under the Information Sharing Schemes (ISS) - which includes Child Information Sharing (CIS), Family Violence Information Sharing (FVIS) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework. The Information Sharing Schemes provide prescribed Information Sharing Entities, such as Maternal Child Health and Family services, with an expanded ability to share confidential information with other Information Sharing Entities to promote the wellbeing or safety of children or to assess or manage family violence risk.
- Compliance with the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme

4.1 Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Melton City Council is committed to child safety, in that it:

- places the welfare of children, who Council directly and indirectly engages with, as its highest priority and has zero tolerance to child abuse
- creates a culture of child safety and recognising that protecting children and promoting their safety and wellbeing is a Council wide responsibility
- actively implements strategies which recognise children and young people have the right to safety, participation, and empowerment.
- has systems to protect children from abuse and will take all allegations and concerns of child safety very seriously. Council will respond to these concerns consistently and in line with the organisation's policies and procedures and relevant legislations.
- aims to prevent child abuse and identifies risks early and removes and reduces these risks.
- maintains recruitment practices that consistently select staff, volunteers and labour hire contractors who do not pose a risk to children's safety.
- trains and educates staff and volunteers about child safety and child abuse so that employees are aware of their obligations.
- treats allegations of child safety concerns seriously and responds appropriately.
- contacts authorities when there are reasonable concerns about a child's safety.
- ensures the cultural safety of all children, including Aboriginal children, children from a culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQ+ children and young people, children who are unable to live at home, as well as children with disability.
- puts in place and adheres to specific policies and procedures to deliver on these commitments.

Council has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when concerns for a child/ren's safety and wellbeing have been identified, and all necessary steps will be actioned.

4.2 The Child Safe Standards

The Standards were introduced as part of the response to the 2013 Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations (the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry). These Standards were introduced via amendments to the *Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005* (Vic), and from January 2017, all Victorian organisation which provide services for children, including Council, were required to comply with the Standards.

On July 1, 2022, new Child Safe Standards were legislated. The Standards now consist of 11 Standards. The 11 Standards cover four principal areas:

1. Children and Families
2. Leadership, governance, and culture
3. Staff, contractors, and volunteers
4. Risk Management. processes, policies, and complaints

These Standards are as follows:

Child Safe 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

Child Safe Standard 2 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

Child Safe Standard 3 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Child Safe Standard 4 – Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

Child Safe Standard 5 – Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

Child Safe Standard 6 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

Child Safe Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused

Child Safe 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

Child Safe Standard 9 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

Child Safe Standard 10 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

Child Safe Standard 11 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

4.3 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The National Principles reflect ten child safe standards which were recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The new Victorian Child Safe standards are now aligned with the National Principles to create continuity between state and federal guidance for child safe organisations. However, the National Principles have a broader scope than the standards, as they go beyond child sexual abuse to cover other forms of potential harm to children and young people.

The National Principles are:

- Underpinned by children’s rights and are strengths-based in their approach.
- Designed to allow for flexibility in implementation across all sectors engaging with children and young people, and in organisations of various sizes.
- Aligned with existing child safe approaches at the state and territory level

4.4 Diversity, Inclusion, and Cultural Safety

Council is committed to creating accessible, equitable, inclusive, and culturally safe facilities and services for children. Diversity and inclusion recognise and appreciate the differences between people and how they identify themselves. This includes a commitment that all children and young people feel valued, respected, and have equitable access to opportunities and resources, as well as the ability to contribute to their community. An inclusive approach recognises that children and young people have diverse needs, characteristics, and life experiences. No one child’s experience is the same, and therefore stereotypes are to be avoided.

Melton City Council recognises the increased vulnerabilities of particular groups of children and/or young people. We pay particular attention to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds as well as the safety of children with disability, children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex, and children who are unable to live at home.

Council is committed to:

- having zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and taking action when discrimination and/or exclusion is identified
- providing avenues for children or their families to identify their individual needs and making reasonable changes to support participation by all children
- providing children with access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible, and easy to understand
- commit to ensuring our facilities promote inclusion of children of all abilities
- empowering all children to have their voices heard and taken seriously

4.5 Children’s Empowerment and Participation

Melton City Council is a child-centred organisation. We actively seek to include children’s view and ideas in our organisational planning, delivery of services, and engagement with the community.

Council does not tolerate bullying, abusive or discriminatory behaviour towards children. Council respects the rights of children and commits to helping children feel

safe within the organisation. Council values the voice of children and young people, and will act on safety concerns raised by children, their families, and the community.

Council will do this by:

- holding regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe
- ensuring children understand their rights and how to make a complaint
- consult with children about any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, services, and programs. Children's views are collected and used in the decision-making process.
- information provided to children and their families are suitable for all age groups and diversity of children whilst being child friendly.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The Child Safe Oversight Committee

The purpose of the Child Safe Oversight Committee (CSOC) is to provide guidance to the Child Safe Working Group (CSWG) to lead the organisation with matters related to leading practice child safety as well as performance and compliance with Victorian and National Child Safe Standards.

This group will also provide strategic oversight of any Reportable Conduct matters (allowing for all privacy and confidentiality requirements), oversight of the implementation for the Risk Audit Roadmap and Implementation Plan.

The Committee will oversee the Child Safe Risk Management Plan in partnership with Council's Risk Management Committee, supported by the Risk Officer.

The Committee seeks to drive change and establish a child-safety-aware culture that enables the organisation to deliver high-quality services safely for children. The Committee is scheduled to meet quarterly for 1.5 hours.

Committee members consist of high-level leadership roles which include representatives from the Executive team, as well as Business Unit Managers.

5.2 The Child Safe Working Group

The role of the Child Safe Working Group (CSWG) is to provide cross organisational feedback, input and implementation of the Child Safe Implementation Roadmap, the Child Safe Improvement plan, and the identified tasks from the CSOC. These highlighted tasks and actions will identify ways to strengthen child safety in the organisation and ensure Council's leadership remain aware of the implementation of the Standards and Principles. The CSWG will feedback to the CSOC regularly.

The CSWG members consist of Coordinators and key identified roles from Business Units across Council to ensure the consistent implementation of key child safety tasks.

5.3 The Child Safe Lead

The Child Safe Lead role is to ensure that Council is compliant with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme. The Child Safe Lead position will work to improve the child safe practices at Council developing, implementing, and continually improving child safe practices and continue to embed the principles of child safety into the Council's culture and business practices.

The Child Safe Lead will contribute to the effective management of child safe incidents, as well as coordinating Council's external-facing child safe initiatives and communications, and ensuring Council has an effective presence in child safe networks and community initiatives and manage the internal Child Safe Governance arrangements. The Child Safe Lead will help guide and support incident reporters as well as liaise with regulatory bodies and external agencies in the reporting process.

6. Reporting a Child Safety Concern

Council takes all allegations of child abuse seriously and will investigate all allegations in a procedurally fair way complying with natural justice principles. Council will ensure confidentiality in the reporting process and will manage sensitive information in accordance to Council's policies and procedures.

6.1 Duty of Care and Legal Responsibilities

All Councillors, staff, volunteers, and labour hire contractors have a responsibility and obligation to report concerns about child abuse. Concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children can range from an uncomfortable feeling through to a direct observation of abuse. Anyone who has concerns about a child's safety or has concerns about child abuse should speak to the Child Safe Lead or their supervisor immediately.

Examples of child safety concerns include (but not limited to):

- inappropriate or special relationships developing between staff or volunteers and children
- inadequate staff–child supervision ratios
- breaches of the Code of Conduct, particularly if they are persistent
- feelings of discomfort about interactions between a staff member or volunteer and a child
- suspicions or beliefs that children are at risk of harm
- observations of concerning changes in behaviour
- concerns about a physical environment that may pose a risk to children (this includes health and hygiene issues)
- children's disclosures of abuse or harm, which must be reported to the police, DFFH and CCYP

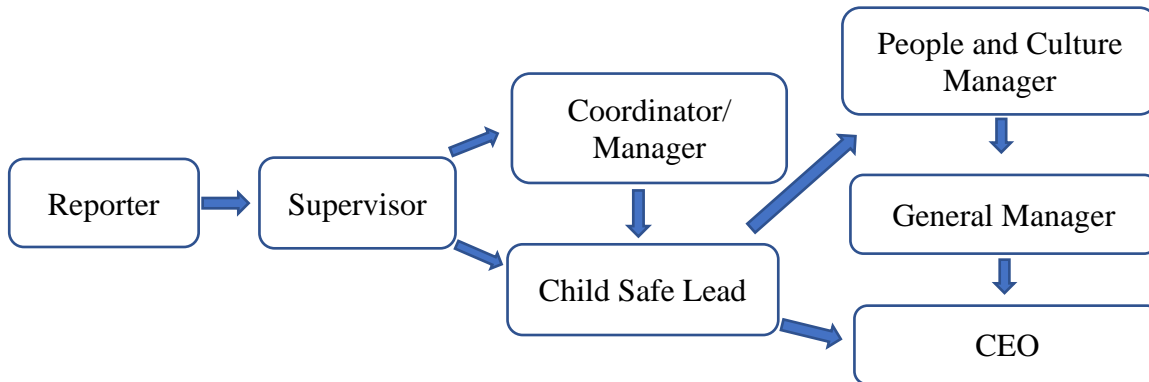
6.2 Child Safety Concerns Reporting Process

1. **Who can report?** – a Child, Parent, Councillor, Staff, Volunteer, Contract labour hire, and/or Community member
2. **What to report?** – A child safety concern including a disclosure, an allegation, a breach of the child safe code of conduct or any physical or online environmental safety concerns.

3. **How to make a report** – There are a number of ways to make a report including in writing, face to face, over the phone with your supervisor
4. **What happens next?** – the Child Safe Lead will initiate internal processes (in line with legislation) to ensure the safety of the child and to follow due process
5. **The outcome** - relevant parties including the child and staff will be notified of the outcome. Any relevant policies, procedures and risk registers will be updated if necessary.

* Please see **Appendix 1** for the Child Safety Concerns reporting process.

6.3 Reporting Lines for Employees, Volunteers, and Labour Hire Contractors



6.4 Sexual Abuse, Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect

Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.

Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 years of age, has an obligation to report that information to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse not to or an exemption applies.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

The failure to protect offence applies to those who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk but did not act to protect that child.

6.5 Mandatory Reporting

Some professionals have additional obligations to report to Child Protection if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse and the child’s parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type. This is called mandatory reporting.

If a staff member is subject to mandatory reporting, they should also check with the Child Safe Lead as to whether the matter should also be reported CCYP. The Child Safe Lead will guide them through the reporting process and provide appropriate support.

6.6 The Reportable Conduct Scheme

Council is required to respond to and report allegations of child abuse and child-related misconduct by Council staff, volunteers, and labour hire contractors, through a process known as the Reportable Conduct Scheme (the Scheme). It requires the CEO or their delegate to report to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) any allegation that a member of staff, volunteer or labour hire contractor has committed child abuse or child-related misconduct. Allegations or incidents can be reported by anyone: a child, young person, parent, carer, Councillor, employee, volunteer, contractor, or others in the community.

A reportable conduct allegation is made where a child, young person or adult makes an allegation, based on a reasonable belief, that a Councillor, employee, contractor, or volunteer of Melton City Council has been involved in the harm or abuse of a child or young person.

Council's Child Safe Reporting Process outlines that if children, young people, families, Councillors, employees, contractors, or volunteers have concerns regarding the organisation's leadership in relation to child safety, they can report these concerns under the Scheme. Under the Scheme, reports can be made on the conduct of all in scope of this policy including Councillors, employees, contractors, or volunteers. Reports can be made to the Child Safe Lead or directly to their supervisor.

6.6.1 Reportable Conduct Scheme Process

1. **Report of allegation** - Anyone who has formed a reasonable belief that there is a child safety concern or suspected child abuse committed by a staff member, labour hire contractor or volunteer, they **must immediately notify the Child Safe Lead** or their direct supervisor.
2. **Initial Evaluation** - The Child Safe lead will determine whether the allegation or concern is Reportable Conduct. This may be in consultation with relevant parties such as the CCYP and/or the People and Culture Manager
3. **Report of Allegation** - Where an allegation is made, the organisation will carry out an investigation into the allegations and report its findings together with actions taken (if any) CCYP **within 3 working days**, therefore the staff member must immediately notify the Child Safe Lead for these timelines to be met.

The Child Safe Lead is responsible for overseeing all of these processes. The Reportable Conduct Scheme requires all allegations of criminal conduct to be reported to Victoria Police as the first priority.

4. **Investigation** - If CCYP, child protection service and/or the police decide to investigate, all staff, Councillors, volunteers, and labour hire contractors must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to investigate, the Child Safe Lead, as the CEO's delegate, will consult with relevant parties (including the Manager of People and Culture) and the authorities to determine whether Council will undertake its own investigation. It should be noted that if the police are investigating a criminal matter, Council must obtain police permission to undertake the investigation.

It should be noted that the person being investigated may be stood down from duties during the investigation. The investigation will be confidential. However, from time-to-time other members of staff may be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

5. **Response from CCYP** - Council is required to provide a report back to the CCYP at 30 days after the initial report, and then again upon finalisation of the matter, should this occur later than the 30-day report. The Child Safe Lead is responsible for completing and submitting these reports.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence or a breach of the organisation's policies or Child Safe Code of Conduct has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, which may include dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported by CCYP to any external body as required, such as the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) who manage Working with Children Checks (WWCC).

** Please see **Appendix 2** for a Reportable Conduct Scheme Process

7. Child Safety Code of Conduct

All employees, volunteers, and labour hire contractors of Council are responsible for ensuring the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children and young people whilst undertaking their roles. All employees, volunteers, and labour hire contractors must abide by Council's relevant Code of Conduct policies and are expected to uphold personal and professional boundaries towards and in the presence of children and young people.

All Melton City Council Councillors, staff, volunteers, and labour hire contractors are responsible for supporting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- always adhering to Council's Child Safe Policy and Procedure
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to all safety concerns of children including any disclosure of abuse
- promoting the cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQ+ children and young people, as well as children with disability and children who are unable to live at home
- reporting all allegations of child abuse to the Child Safe Lead
- encouraging and supporting children to have their voices heard, to engage and consult with them around issues that are important to them
- compliance with relevant legislations, the Council's policies and procedures, including record keeping and information sharing

8. Recruiting Staff and Volunteers

Council puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of its recruitment processes. Council has effective screening tools to assist the recruitment of suitable employees, volunteers,

and labour hire contractors, which aims to minimise the risk of engaging workforce members who commit child abuse or put children at risk.

Council's recruitment process includes a child safety commitment in all job advertisements as well as ensuring potential employees, volunteers and labour hire contractors hold a valid Working with Children Checks (WWCC) on commencement. Council complies with all relevant regulatory and legal requirements when recruiting to ensure child safety is paramount.

9. Training and Support for Ongoing Workforce Management

Council is responsible for ensuring that appropriate behaviour with children is clearly defined and expectations are accessible and understood by all employees, volunteers, and labour hire contractors. These expectations are detailed in the Council's Code of Conduct which all employees, Councillors, volunteers, and labour hire contractors are required to agree and adhere to. Breaches of Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases may involve termination of a person's involvement with Council.

Council will appropriately inform and educate Councillors, employees, labour hire contractors and volunteers on child safety.

All employees are assigned compulsory Child Safe Standards training using various delivery methods, to be completed as part of their induction to Council. Employees are required to undertake refresher education on child safe standards every two years.

Council will ensure that licences and checks, such as WWCC and criminal history checks, are maintained by relevant employees, volunteers and contractors in specific child facing roles.

10. Complaints and Reporting

Council is committed to hearing the voices of children and their families which also includes any feedback through the complaints process.

A person may lodge a complaint through any of the following channels:

<u>Email</u> : csu@melton.vic.gov.au	<u>Mail</u> : (Postal address): City of Melton PO Box 21, Melton Vic 3337
<u>Telephone</u> : 03 9747 7200	<u>In person</u> : Customer Service Counter, Melton Civic Centre, 232 High Street Melton

The complaint should detail the complainant's name, address, and contact phone number together with a description of the issue which contains enough detail to allow Council to identify the specifics of the complaint (what happened, who was involved, when it happened, etc).

All reports of concerns for the health, safety or wellbeing of a child will be treated seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly through Council's Child Safety Reporting Procedures (Please see appendix 8.1 and 8.2 for an overview of the Child Safety Reporting Procedure).

Council is committed to establishing and maintaining robust child safety report management processes to ensure child safety is priority. Council employees are supported in reporting any child safety concerns and adhering to legislated reporting obligations by their direct supervisors and the Child Safe Lead.

It should be noted that any response or report which, is deemed as criminal conduct, will be reported to the Victoria Police.

11. Privacy, Record Keeping and Incident Monitoring

Council is committed to protecting an individual's right to privacy. All personal information considered or recorded during the process of a report or investigation will be handled in accordance with Council's Privacy Policy. Council is committed to best practice when keeping and maintaining confidential records of child abuse allegations or reports. Records will be retained in keeping with the recommendations from the Public Records Office Victoria.

Risks to child safety that are identified in complaints, reports or allegations of abuse will be reviewed and incorporated into the relevant risk register.

12. Risk Management

Council recognises the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated and managed by Council. Council maintains a risk register including the identified risks of child safety and Council actively plans to help reduce these risks by designing and implementing appropriate preventative measures. Council conducts regular risk assessments and have a risk management system to address and balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of children and young people engaging in Council services.

Employees, contractors, and volunteers are made aware of their responsibility for identifying risks of child abuse and their obligation to work with management on reducing those risks. Risk assessment corrective action plans are living documents that are updated as required, referred to regularly, and reviewed periodically. For more information, please see Council's Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Enterprise Risk Management Framework.

13. Policy Non-Compliance

Council will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct, or any other child safety policies. Potential breaches, or non-compliance, by anyone within scope, will be investigated and may result in the restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement, or other possible corrective action. Please refer to Council's Disciplinary Policy for more information.

14. References and Links to Legislation and Other Documents

Name	Location
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Child Complaints Policy and Procedure	TBD
Child Safe Conduct of Conduct	Melton City Council
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Complaints Management Policy and Procedure	Melton City Council
Crimes Act 1958	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Disability Act 2006	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Employee Code of Conduct	Melton City Council
Enterprise Risk Management Policy	Melton City Council
Gender Equality Act 2020	Available via: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Family Violence Protection Act 2008	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Failure to Protect	Available via: www.justice.vic.gov.au
Information Sharing Schemes Policy	Melton City Council
Local Government Act 2020	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Managing Conduct Procedure	Melton City Council
Privacy Policy	Melton City Council
Protected Disclosure Act 2012	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Responding to Family Violence	Melton City Council
Sex Offenders Register Act 2004	Available via: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	Available via: www.humanrights.gov.au
Worker Screening Act 2020	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Worker Screening Regulations 2021	Available via www.legislation.vic.gov.au

8. Attachments

8.1 Appendix 1 - Child Safety Reporting Process

Who can report?

Child | Parent | Councillor | Staff | Volunteer | Contractor

Call 000 if a child is in immediate danger

What to Report?

Any child safety concerns, including:

- a disclosure of abuse or harm
- an allegation, suspicion and/or observation – this includes forming a reasonable belief
- a breach of Employee Code of Conduct or the Child Safe Code of Conduct
- an environmental safety concerns – this includes both physical and online environments

What will the Child Safe Lead do?

The supervisor/manager will determine if the matter needs to progress further. The manager will contact the Child Safe Lead who will oversee the appropriate course of action and if further information is required.

Reporting line for the Child Safe Lead is → Manager of People and Culture → Executive → CEO

How do you make a report?

You can make a face-to-face report to your supervisor/manager; or in writing (either in a letter or email); or via telephone call; or participating in a meeting.

Record the date, time, and details (if known) of the incident as well as the details of the child (if known). Provide these details to your direct supervisor who will then determine the next appropriate step.

What happens next?

The Child Safe Lead will:

- liaise with the Manager of People and Culture and all other appropriate professionals to determine the most appropriate plan of action
- initiate internal processes to ensure the safety of the child, clarify the nature of the complaint and commence disciplinary process (if required)
- 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

The Outcome.

Investigation outcome decided:

- relevant staff, volunteers, parents, and child notified of outcome of investigation.
- relevant policies, procedures, and risk registers will be updated where necessary

8.2 Appendix 2 - Reportable Conduct Reporting Process

Allegations of child abuse against a staff member, volunteer or labour hire contractor must be reported to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) **WITHIN 3 DAYS.**

If you are aware of an allegation of child abuse against a staff member, volunteer, or labour hire contractor, **you must raise this with the Child Safe Lead immediately.**

