



ELECTED MEMBER POLICY

Title	Child Safety		
Responsible Director	Corporate and Community Services		
Adoption Date	25/11/2019	Review Date	2021

1 Purpose

All children have the right to be safe and to reach their full potential. Alice Springs Town Council has a zero tolerance to child abuse and neglect and actively prioritises the safety and wellbeing of all children at all times.

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate Council's commitment towards child safety and wellbeing by providing a clear framework that prioritises the safety and well-being of children utilising Council facilities and programs through:

- ensuring Alice Springs Town Council is compliant with national child protection legislation including; mandatory reporting, recruitment and selection, and responding to allegations against staff involving children and young people.
- fostering a culture of child safety, health and wellbeing within Council by following the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*.
- ensuring Council is implementing best-practice approaches to child protection and in this regard is responding to recommendations from the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017)* of relevance to Local Government.

2 Policy Statement: Commitment to Child Safety

Alice Springs Town Council is committed to the safety of all children, and recognises its legal and moral obligations in ensuring that all children are safe in Council run programs and at Council facilities.

Council is committed to the cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children and young people with a disability.

Safety for children is supported through:

- Adherence to mandatory reporting requirements to contact relevant authorities when concerned about a child's safety.
- Council keeping the needs and safety of children in mind at all times regarding facility maintenance, community programs, facility rules, and conduct of Councillors, staff, contractors and volunteers.
- Creating a culture with appropriate systems, training and procedures to support child safe practices.

- Ensuring all people engaged in child-related work for Council, including volunteers and contractors, hold a valid Working with Children Clearance and to provide evidence of this.
- Aligning practices and procedures to support the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* that represent national 'best practice'.
- Demonstrating a commitment to hearing children's voices on issues that affect them

3 Responsibility and Organisational Context

The responsibility for mandating a child safe organisation sits with the Elected Members through delegation to the CEO.

All staff and volunteers are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children.

Council will ensure there is a suitable point of contact for child safety enquiries related to the organisation's facilities, programs and procedures, as well as formal and informal systems for staff and volunteers to raise concerns and complaints related to child safety and wellbeing.

Human Resources Unit will ensure that only people with a valid Working with Children Clearance are engaged in child related work and that new employees are made aware of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Officer/s.

Media Unit will ensure that proper permissions are obtained and child safe principles followed for any media containing images of children.

4 Mandatory Reporting

Section 26 of the *Care and Protection of Children Act* sets out the reporting obligations prescribed for all adults to safeguard the wellbeing of children in the Northern Territory. These reporting obligations are commonly referred to as 'mandatory reporting'.

Any adult with a reasonable belief that a child may be subjected to harm including child abuse, exploitation, neglect and/or domestic and family violence must report to the Northern Territory Police.

Mandatory reports can be made by contacting:

- Police Link 131 444
- Child Protection Hotline 1800 700 250
- Triple Zero 000 (emergencies only)

Confidential enquiries can also be made to:

- Families and Children Enquiry and Support Hotline 1800 999 900

Staff and volunteers should contact a designated Child Safety Officer if they have a concern but are unsure about whether to make a report, or need additional support to make a report.

5 Education and Training

Council staff, contractors and volunteers with roles that require regular interaction with children will be provided with ongoing training and education to ensure a child safe environment where children are safe and their wellbeing is prioritised. Training will support staff, contractors and volunteers to:

- minimise risks of child abuse
- follow appropriate child safe procedures
- report any concerns relating to child safety to the appropriate authority
- identify opportunities for improvement of Council practice, policies and procedures relating to child safety and wellbeing.

6 Recruitment

Council will take all reasonable steps to employ appropriate and skilled personnel to work with children and young people. All people engaged in child-related work for Council, including volunteers and contractors, are required to hold and provide evidence of a valid Working with Children Clearance and will be made aware of the Child Safe Policy during the recruitment process.

Council carries out criminal history checks for all permanent employees.

Appendix 1 – National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

- Standard 1: Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
- Standard 2: Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved
- Standard 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
- Standard 5: People working with children are suitable and supported
- Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused
- Standard 7: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
- Standard 8: Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
- Standard 9: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
- Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

Appendix 2: Definitions

Child: is defined in the Care and Protection of Children Act as:

- (a) a person less than 18 years of age; or
- (b) a person apparently less than 18 years of age if the person's age cannot be proved.

Child abuse: a term used to refer to different types of harm or maltreatment. In this document it refers to types of harm or maltreatment that children and young people experience, including; physical harm, sexual assault, exposure to domestic violence, psychological harm and prenatal risks.

Child-Safe Organisation: An organisation in which child safety is embedded in planning, policy and practices and where the voices of children and young people are valued and actioned.

Harm: is defined in section 15 of the Care and Protection of Children Act as:

- (1) Harm to a child is any significant detrimental effect caused by any act, omission or circumstance on:
 - (a) the physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing of the child; or
 - (b) the physical, psychological or emotional development of the child.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), harm can be caused by the following:
 - (a) physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect of the child

- (b) sexual abuse or other exploitation of the child
- (c) exposure of the child to physical violence.

Mandatory Reporting: In the Northern Territory, a report must be made if there is reasonable belief a child has been harmed or exploited, or that a child is likely to be harmed or exploited. This is a legal responsibility under the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*.

Neglect: a term used to refer to a pattern characterised when a parent or caregiver cannot regularly provide a child or young person the basic requirements for his or her growth and development such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care, adequate supervision and adequate parenting and care.

Reasonable grounds/belief is generally based on information that a person, with their training or knowledge, believes to be reliable and accurate.

Working with Children Clearance: The Ochre Card is a requirement for anyone who works or volunteers in child-related work in the Northern Territory.

Appendix 3: Related Legislation, Acts & Guidelines

- Australian Human Rights Commission, National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2018)
<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/national-principles-child-safe-organisations>
- Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (NT)
<https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/CARE-AND-PROTECTION-OF-CHILDREN-ACT-2007>
- Domestic and Family Violence Act 2017 (NT)
https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/463034/Domestic-and-Family-Violence-Act.pdf
- Mandatory Reporting of harm and exploitation of children guidelines (2019)
https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0008/642527/Mandatory-Reporting-of-harm-and-exploitation-of-children-guidelines-2019.DOCX
- Royal Commission Final Report Recommendations (2017)
https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_recommendations.pdf
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)
<https://www.unicef.org.au/Upload/UNICEF/Media/Our%20work/childfriendlycrc.pdf>
- Child Friendly Alice Community Profile (2019)
- Child Safe Organisations
<https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/>