



# Child Safe Policy

14 June 2017

## 1. Purpose

### **Commitment to the safety of children and young people:**

Children and young people are entitled to live in a caring and nurturing environment and to be protected from harm and exploitation. Children and young people should be safe, feel safe and be respected wherever they are. The Commissioner for Children and Young People prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in all work of the office and in our work with other organisations.

### **Policy intent:**

This policy outlines the overarching principles that guide our approach to promoting child safety, actions we take to meet this responsibility, and how we minimise risk of any harm to children and young people.

This policy is also intended to empower the children and young people we are involved with, who are vital and active participants in the work we do. We listen to their views, respect what they have to say and involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them.

All relevant policies of the office will reflect the Commissioner's commitment to the safety of children and young people.

## 2. Definitions

### **Child Safe Organisation**

A child safe and friendly organisation values children, understands safety doesn't just happen and balances a safety focus with positive interactions and environments that contribute to the healthy development of children.<sup>1</sup>

It takes action to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and cultural abuse and from neglect. In a child safe organisation, this commitment to protecting children is embedded in the organisation's culture and responsibility for taking action is understood and accepted at all levels of the organisation.<sup>2</sup>

### **3. Position statements, relevant legislation and policies**

#### **Child Safe Organisations WA resources**

The Commissioner and staff utilise the Child Safe Organisations WA: Self-Assessment and Review Tool to identify, review and strengthen our strategies and practices across nine domains of child safety.

1. Leadership, governance and culture

Safety is prioritised and everyone across the organisation understands and enacts child safe principles. Everyone in the team feels confident to raise any concerns or worries and knows how they can do this.

2. Empowering children to participate

Children and young people have opportunities to actively participate in the Commissioner's work, to provide feedback and be involved in decision making.

3. Involving family and community

Families and communities are informed about and involved in the Commissioner's work which assists children and young people to feel respected and safe.

4. Child safe and friendly policies

All relevant policies outline a commitment to safety and how things should happen including attitudes, behaviours, responsibilities and procedures. Policies are understood, implemented and actioned every day to prevent harm.

5. Managing staff and volunteers

Suitable staff and volunteers are recruited and supported to work with children and young people.

6. Safe environments – physical and online

The office, off-site locations and online spaces we use are assessed for safety and practices or spaces adjusted to reduce risk whilst also supporting healthy development and positive interactions.

7. Child friendly complaint process and reporting

Children and young people of all ages and abilities feel empowered and supported to raise any concerns they have, and feel confident that our team will do something about their concerns. We review concerns and feedback from all stakeholders, analyse issues and undertake actions to address these.

8. Education and development

Staff and volunteers receive ongoing professional development or training to ensure they have the knowledge and information needed to perform all aspects of their roles effectively. We also provide resources about child safety to children and young people, parents and community members.

9. Continuous improvement

We have an ongoing cycle of assessment, action and reflection in place and regularly review, update and refine policies and practices to assess their effectiveness and strive for excellence. We involve children and young people and their families in developing and reviewing our work.

## **Childs rights to safety and participation**

### [Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19](#)

Children have the right to be properly cared for and to be protected from violence, abuse and neglect at all times and in all places.<sup>3</sup>

### [Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006](#)<sup>4</sup>

In performing a function under this Act the Commissioner or any other person must regard the best interests of children and young people as the paramount consideration. The Commissioner has many functions within the Act of particular relevance to this policy including:

- Advocating for all children and young people.
- Promoting the participation of children and young people.
- Promoting and monitoring laws, policies and practices that affect the wellbeing of children and young people.
- Consulting children and young people from a broad range of communities and age groups each year.
- Inquiring on behalf of children and young people about issues relating to their wellbeing.

Involvement of children and young people with the Commissioner and staff is voluntary. If a child or young person does not want to participate or to express a view on a particular issue, that choice is respected. We ask children and young people for their consent before we use their words, thoughts or images in our work.

## **Valuing diversity**

Within the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006* the Commissioner must have special regard for the interest and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged for any reason.

The Commissioner values diversity and meets with children and young people across Western Australia. In all our work we ensure that children are treated fairly, regardless of culture, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and abilities.

## **Involving parent, families and communities**

The Commissioner is guided by the principle within the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006* that states parents, families and communities have the primary role in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of their children and young people and should be supported in carrying out their role.

When we are engaging with children and young people, their parents and guardians are informed of the role of the Commissioner, the work we do, what we talk to children about, and we seek their consent for their child to participate and to have their child's words, thoughts or images used.

## **Recruiting and supporting staff and volunteers**

The Commissioner has robust practices to recruit and screen all staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made. Effective management, supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures are also in place.

We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks and to also providing leadership and resources to organisations within Western Australia about creating child safe organisations.

## **Reporting a safety concern about a child or a complaint**

The Commissioner has a zero tolerance of child abuse, and any safety concerns or allegations of harm will be treated very seriously and responded to straight away.

We have a moral obligation to contact the right authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, and we do so rigorously. We share concerns and information only with those who need to know and involve children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately.

We always seek feedback from the children and young people we work with. If they have any complaints or concerns we listen, take the concern seriously and make changes to address any problems.

## **Relevant work and policies**

This policy, the [Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines](#) and the [Child Safe Organisations WA: Self-Assessment and Review Tool](#) have been developed with input from the children and young people who have participated in our consultations on child safe organisations, on making complaints processes child-friendly and in line with the Commissioner's guidelines [Are you Listening?](#)

Internal policies provide detailed guidance for staff and volunteers in contributing to a child safe organisation.

## **4. Risk management**

We recognise the importance of a risk management approach to working in ways that best support children and young people to participate and to minimise the potential of harm. We use this to inform our policies, procedures and project and activity planning.

The Commissioner has in place a Corporate Governance Framework 2017 that outlines policies that collectively provide guidance for staff and volunteers about risk management strategies, staff behaviour, the participation of children and young people and their families and complaints processes.

## 5. Process

All relevant policy documents, publications and works of the Commissioner will reflect the principles and strategies of a child safe organisation, acknowledging children and young people should be safe, feel safe and be respected wherever they are, including when we work with them.

## 6. Responsibility / Accountability

This policy applies to the Commissioner, all staff and volunteers and to agencies or organisations we contract to conduct work on our behalf.

This policy is available on the Commissioner's website and information and specific [resources for children and young people and their families](#) have been developed and are used in consultations and activities with children and young people.

This policy and relevant policies within the corporate governance framework will be reviewed every two years by the Commissioner and his executive team.

## 7. Exemptions

No exemptions.

## 8. Flow Chart

Not applicable

## 9. References / Supporting documentation

- 1 Commissioner for Children and Young People 2016 Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines pg. 6
- 2 Child Safety Commissioner 2006, A Guide for Creating a Child-safe Organisation, Child Safety Commissioner, Melbourne, p. 1.
- 3 United Nations 1989, Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 5.
- 4 Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006  
[ccyp.wa.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do/](http://ccyp.wa.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do/)
- 5 Child Safe Organisations WA
  - *Guidelines*
  - *Self-Assessment and Review Tool*
  - *In Brief*
  - *Information for Children and Young People*
  - *Creating Child Safe Organisations: Report on consultation with children and young people*

All available at [ccyp.wa.gov.au/our-work/resources/child-safe-organisations/](http://ccyp.wa.gov.au/our-work/resources/child-safe-organisations/)