



COUNCIL POLICY

Community

1.4.4

Title:	1.4.4 CHILD SAFE AWARENESS
Adopted:	18 October 2023
Reviewed:	NEW
Associated Legislation:	Local Government Act 1995 Child Care Services Act 2007 Children and Community Services Act 2004
Associated Documents:	Nil
Review Responsibility:	Community Development Officer
Delegation:	Nil

Previous Policy Number/s: Nil

Objective:

To set out Council's position and responsibilities in building child safety awareness within the community.

Policy Statement:

The Shire of Mingenew supports and values all children and young people. Shire of Mingenew makes a commitment to support the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, including protection from abuse. This Child Safe Awareness policy is one of the ways the Shire of Mingenew demonstrates its commitment to being child safe and a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse.

This policy aims to reduce the risk of harm and child sexual abuse in our communities by encouraging child safe environments to be created and maintained. The Shire of Mingenew is committed to encouraging local organisations to be child safe and ensure children are safe and empowered.

This Child Safe Awareness policy has been developed in response to recommendation 6.12 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and recognises that the Shire of Mingenew is uniquely placed within the local community to demonstrate leadership by supporting organisations to be child safe and to protect children and young people from harm and/or abuse. The Shire of Mingenew will promote the safety and wellbeing of children across the community.

Consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and Commonwealth Child Safe Framework, this policy provides a framework that outlines the role of Shire of Mingenew in supporting local organisations to be child safe through access to resources, awareness raising and sharing relevant information.

Scope:

The safety and wellbeing of children is everyone's responsibility. This Child Safe Awareness policy applies to all, employees, volunteers, trainees, work experience students, interns, and anyone else who undertakes work on behalf of the Shire of Mingenew, regardless of their work related to children or young people. It applies to occupants of Shire of Mingenew facilities and venues, including visitors, contractors and suppliers.

DEFINITIONS

Abuse: Abuse is an act, or a failure to act, towards or on behalf of a child that may result in harm. It can occur on one occasion or multiple occasions. Sometimes the impact of multiple events leads to harm that becomes cumulative in nature. Types of abuse include physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Child/Children: Means a person under 18 years of age, and in the absence of positive evidence as to age, means a person who appears to be under 18 years of age.

Child Safe Organisation: is defined in the Royal Commission Final Report as one that:

- creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing are at the centre of thought, values, and actions
- places emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children and young people
- creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people
- creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm, and
- responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations, or suspicions of harm.

Note: in the context of local governments, this would involve referring concerns to the Department of Communities or WA Police to respond as appropriate.

Implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations give effect to the above.

Child safe: For the purpose of this policy, child safe means protecting the rights of children and young people to be safe by taking actions that can help prevent harm and abuse.

Harm: Harm, in relation to a child, means any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's wellbeing, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance; or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

Wellbeing: Wellbeing of children and young people includes the care, development, education, health and safety of children and young people.

Policy Principles:

- The rights of children and young people are upheld.
- Children and young people are respected, listened to, and informed about their rights.
- Children and young people have the fundamental right to be safe and cared for.
- Children and young people have the right to speak up, be heard and taken seriously without the threat of negative consequences.
- The safety and best interests of children and young people are a primary consideration when making decisions that concern them.
- Access to trusted and reliable information, including the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, helps support organisations to understand what they must do to help reduce the risk of harm and abuse.
- Communities are informed and involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people including protection from harm.
- Collaboration with the community and our partners promotes the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people.

**Policy Functions:**

The Shire of Mingenew will ensure the following functions of this policy are resourced and assigned to the relevant officers for implementation.

- Developing a process to deliver child safe messages (for example at Shire of Mingenew venues, grounds and facilities or events).
- Connecting and supporting local community groups, organisations, and stakeholders to child safe resources (including culturally safe and inclusive resources).

Responsibilities:

The Shire of Mingenew has a leadership role in our community to support relevant organisations to be child safe and promote child safe practices.

Although Shire of Mingenew is not legally responsible for providing oversight of compliance with child safe practices, it will take any reasonable steps to engage with persons who utilise Shire of Mingenew facilities to operate in alignment with the Child Safe Awareness policy.

The Shire of Mingenew will determine which roles across the organisation will directly support the implementation of the Child Safe Awareness policy.