



# Frequently Asked Questions – Child Safe Awareness Policy template

## Policy background and intent

### 1. Why was the Child Safe Awareness Policy template developed?

The Child Safe Awareness Policy (the Policy) template was developed in response to Recommendation 6.12 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission)<sup>1</sup>.

The Policy template aims to support local governments to introduce and integrate child safe functions into existing local government roles. While grounded in the Royal Commission's recognition of the role local governments play in keeping children and young people safe, the functions of Recommendation 6.12 have been revised to reflect the diversity of local government contexts and circumstances.

The active role local governments take in community development and community safety, particularly roles that impact child safety, was recognised by the Royal Commission. Making local governments well placed to support smaller organisations within their communities to create child safe environments.

### 2. Who is the Policy template for?

The Policy template is for all local governments across Western Australia (WA).

### 3. What is the purpose of the Policy?

The Policy aims to provide a framework for local governments to support community organisations to create safe environments for children and young people by ensuring child safe messages, information and resources are accessible to them.

### 4. Does implementing the Policy mean a local government is 'child safe'?

The Policy is focused on the external facing role of local government to support organisations in their community to be child safe. Implementing this Policy alone does not make a local government 'child safe'.

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<sup>1</sup> The State Government 'accepted in principle' Recommendation 6.12 ('accepted in principle' means the intent of the recommendation is accepted).

A child safe and friendly organisation embeds a child safe culture across all activities and services. Implementing the ten National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) is essential to establishing and sustaining a child safe and friendly organisation. An ongoing cycle of assessment, action and review is required to effectively implement the National Principles.

Adopting the Policy can contribute towards local governments beginning to implement elements of

- *National Principle 1*: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture,
- *National Principle 3*: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing and
- *National Principle 10*: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

## **5. Why are the Policy Principles different to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations?**

The National Principles are designed to build capacity in organisations to address the social, cultural, operational, and environmental factors that can affect the likelihood of children being abused in an organisation. The adoption and application of the National Principles in an organisation, in which children are involved, is a significant step in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

The Policy Principles respond to a single recommendation of the Royal Commission (Recommendation 6.12) focused on the external facing role of local government to deliver child safe messages to organisations in their communities and as such do not include every aspect of the National Principles.

The State Government is currently considering options for requiring relevant organisations to comply with the National Principles, and for an existing independent body to oversee compliance.

## **Policy development**

### **6. How was the Policy developed?**

The Policy was developed through an extensive consultation and co-design process led by Department of Communities (Communities), as the lead agency responsible for implementing the Recommendation 6.12 of the Royal Commission, in partnership with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC). The process included:

- A state-wide consultation with local governments to inform the development of an approach to meet Recommendation 6.12 and implement the child safety officer functions. The consultation was conducted through a discussion paper and feedback process in 2020/2021.
- A comprehensive co-design process including three workshops with over 35 representatives from local governments and the WA Local Government Association (WALGA) in 2022. Submissions were received from stakeholders including 26 local governments and the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. The outcomes from the co-design process were used to inform the development of the draft

Policy template to support local governments' role in responding to Recommendation 6.12.

- The draft Policy template was circulated to WA local governments and key stakeholders, including the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA. Many local governments acknowledged the importance of child safety, and the role local governments have in promoting safety in their communities.

## Policy Implementation

### **7. Is it mandatory for local governments to apply the Policy?**

Each local government is strongly encouraged to have a Child Safe Awareness Policy in response to the Royal Commission's recommendation 6.12 and as part of the broader work to implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. All Local Governments are encouraged to fully implement the Policy, and fulfil the Policy Functions, to demonstrate their leadership, commitment, and as first step towards building child safe environments in their local community.

### **8. What flexibility is provided to amend the Policy template?**

Some parts of the Policy template have been designed with the intention that local governments can adapt them to suit their local contexts and circumstances.

Other sections have been agreed broadly by local governments and should remain unchanged to provide a state-wide approach and consistency with the recommendation of the Royal Commission. This is the minimum requirement to guide implementation.

Instructions are provided in the Policy template to guide local governments in adapting the template.

### **9. Who has oversight of the Policy?**

Local governments are responsible for their own policy implementation including any governance requirements. This recognises the need for locally based and tailored response to implementing the Policy.

### **10. What does the Policy mean for contractors?**

The Policy scope includes anyone who undertakes work on behalf of a local government, this includes visitors, contractors, and suppliers.

### **11. What are Child Safe messages?**

The Child Safe messages developed for local governments are informed by the findings from the Royal Commission and the National Principles. They will promote child safe practices for community and contracted organisations to provide environments that keep children safe from harm.

The messages are aimed at providing child safe information for organisations that use local government venues and facilities with messages aimed at other groups (including children and young people) to be developed in consultation with local governments after the Policy is implemented.

**12. Who developed the Child Safe messages?**

The messages were developed by the Department in consultation with Communities, the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, local governments, and local government youth advisory groups.

**13. Is there a guideline on how to deliver or display the messages?**

Guidelines for promoting the Child Safe messages in local government venues and facilities have been developed.

**14. What support and resources are available for local governments to support implementation?**

An implementation toolkit to assist local governments in implementing the Policy includes:

- An implementation checklist.
- A list of online child safety resources that local government staff can direct organisations to use.
- Information on referral pathways for local government staff if they receive complaints, concerns, or disclosures of child abuse.
- Communications tools including website material and social media tiles to promote a local government's implementation of the Policy.

Advice, support, and guidance to implement the Policy is available through contacting the Local Government Child Safeguarding Project team ([csproject@lgirs.wa.gov.au](mailto:csproject@lgirs.wa.gov.au))

**15. Does implementing the policy make the Local Government responsible/liable in any way for the actions/behaviour of local community groups or organisations?**

The Policy states that local governments should 'take all reasonable steps to engage with persons who utilise local government facilities to operate in alignment with' the Policy' (i.e. in line with the Policy Principles). The intent of the policy is not to make local governments liable for the actions or behaviour of community or contracted organisations.

**16. What is the role of LGIRS in supporting local governments to be child safe?**

The Local Government Child Safeguarding Project team is engaging with the sector and key stakeholders around capability development to embed child safe practices and prepare organisations for implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

**17. What is the role of local government in reporting and responding to allegations of harm to children or child sexual abuse?**

One of the practical things an organisation can do is to have robust processes in place to identify and report child abuse to appropriate authorities and identify people who may not be safe to work with children. The referral pathways resource included in the implementation toolkit is designed to assist local government staff in referring complaints and concerns about child wellbeing as well as disclosures of abuse.

Where it is believed that a child is in immediate danger or life-threatening situation, the Western Australia Police Force should be contacted immediately by dialling **000**.

If there are concerns about a child's wellbeing (and it doesn't require immediate Police attention), Communities should be contacted on **1800 273 889**. Communities has responsibility for administering the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* and providing child protection services to the community. Further information about responding to the concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person can be found on the [Department of Communities](#) website.

**18. What is the role of State Government in creating and supporting child safe communities?**

The WA Government is working with our partner organisations, peak bodies, the Australian Government, and other jurisdictions to drive the coordinated implementation of the National Principles through administrative and legislative levers, and existing regulatory mechanisms, to build the capacity of WA organisations to become child safe.