

# Child Safety Code of Conduct



**Stonnington.**  
Work that matters.  
People who make  
a difference.

## 1. Statement of Commitment

City of Stonnington has a zero tolerance to child abuse. All Council officers, including employees, contractors, volunteers and Councillors have a legal and moral obligation to keep children safe and promote their best interests. All children regardless of their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious beliefs, ability and family background have the right to be protected from harm and to be treated with dignity, respect and integrity.

As a child safe organisation we are committed to providing welcoming, safe and accessible environments where children feel valued, listened to and considered in decisions that affect their lives. The need to remove or reduce the risk of child abuse informs our decision making concerning children in our care. We have specific policies, procedures and practices in place to support our people to achieve these commitments.

## 2. Purpose

The Child Safety Code of Conduct (the Code) aims to:

- Set clear expectations about behaviour towards and in the presence of children.
- Define the behaviours that are acceptable and unacceptable towards and in the presence of children, taking into account the diverse needs of children, the different environments in which we operate, and the various ways our people interact with children.
- Help our people to become aware of how their behaviour and the behaviour of other adults in our organisation and the broader community can affect the children we work with.
- Assist our people to identify and raise behavioural/conduct issues with confidence.

**Child or children** is inclusive of anyone under 18 years of age, including the unborn child.

## 3. Scope

The Policy applies to all Council officers, including employees, contractors, placement students and volunteers aged 16 years and over.

## 4. Related Legislation

- *Crimes Act 1958*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Children Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*

## 5. Related Policies & Procedures

- Child Safety and Child Protection Policy
- Child Safety and Child Protection Incident Report
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Equal Opportunity and Respect in the Workplace Policy

## 6. Principles

Stonnington is a place where all children and young people can actively participate in community life, feel safe and valued, and can reach their full potential. All Council officers, regardless of whether or not they are employed in child-related work, are bound to observe child safe principles and maintain the highest standards of professional conduct in their attitudes, behaviours and interactions with and in the presence of children while undertaking Council business.

### **Council officers will:**

- ✓ Be vigilant, proactive and take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- ✓ Treat all children with respect, equity and dignity.
- ✓ Listen to and treat the safety concerns of children seriously, particularly if they tell you that they or another child has been, or is at risk of being abused.
- ✓ Place the interests of any child being abused, or at risk of being abused, above the interests of the organisation or other individuals within it.
- ✓ Provide welcoming, safe and accessible environments that protect children from violence, bullying, teasing, threatening, and discriminatory remarks.
- ✓ Manage dual relationships (where a prior relationship exists with a child/family) appropriately.
- ✓ Uphold the rights and best interests of children in planning and decision-making.
- ✓ Promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and culturally and/or linguistically diverse children; and the safety of children with a disability.
- ✓ Be a positive role model, i.e. by supporting children to learn protective behaviours, empowering children to speak up if they have concerns for their safety or wellbeing, and ensuring children are aware of their rights and have access to this information.
- ✓ Provide opportunities that reflect the diverse needs of children and empower them to fully participate in the community, including our services and programs.
- ✓ Recognise children as active citizens, agents in their own lives and encourage them to 'have a say' on issues that directly affect them.
- ✓ Adhere to risk mitigation strategies and safe work practices (identified by and relevant to your work area) when interacting with children.
- ✓ Complete relevant training and other professional development activities as required.
- ✓ Treat all concerns or allegations of child abuse seriously and respond consistently with the procedures outlined in the *Child Safety and Child Protection Policy*.
- ✓ Ensure the immediate safety of a child if an allegation of abuse is made/abuse has occurred.
- ✓ Report any breach of the Code by a Council officer to your Supervisor (or next level Manager where the concern involves your Supervisor) immediately.
- ✓ Adhere to appropriate 'safe touch' that is considered appropriate to your role, or where otherwise necessary (i.e. comforting a child in distress, administering first aid).

### **Appropriate safe touch with a child should at all times:**

- ✓ Be appropriate to the developmental needs of the child.
- ✓ Be strictly in line with the types of child contact necessary to perform your duties.
- ✓ Be open, non-secretive and culturally sensitive.
- ✓ Be at the initiation or with the consent of the child.

It is important to be attuned to the child's cues and what they are comfortable with. Where possible or age appropriate, seek consent, i.e. ask a child in distress if it is ok to give them a hug; when performing first aid or duties of a personal nature tell the child where you need to touch them, why, and ask if it is ok.

### **Council officers will not:**

- X Develop a 'special' relationship with a child to the exclusion of others or show favouritism, i.e. by offering a child gifts or special treatment.
- X Exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical.
- X Hit, physically assault, or engage in inappropriately rough play with a child.
- X Speak to a child in an angry, intimidating or threatening manner.
- X Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature with or in the presence of children.
- X Condone or make self-disclosures about past or present participation in illegal or unsafe behaviours when speaking to or in the presence of a child.
- X Smoke, consume alcohol or illicit drugs, or be substance affected when working with children.
- X Touch intimate areas or have any other physical contact with a child (i.e. kiss, hold, cuddle) not deemed to be appropriate to your role, or necessary safe touch.

- X Do things of a personal nature (i.e. toileting or changing clothes) that you could not reasonably expect a child to do for themselves, unless performing personal care duties as part of your role, or in unavoidable situations (i.e. preventing an accident or administering first aid).
- X Use inappropriate, discriminatory, prejudicial, oppressive, harassing, abusive, sexually explicit, demeaning or culturally insensitive language when speaking to, or in the presence of a child.
- X Discriminate against any child on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, religion, disability, vulnerability, sexuality or other protected attributes, or express personal views on such attributes when speaking to or in the presence of a child.
- X Purposefully establish a relationship with a child and/or their family outside of work.
- X Solicit, conduct or accept requests from children and/or their families for private services (i.e. babysitting, non-authorised home visits, or private lessons) delivered outside of your work.
- X Provide personal contact details (i.e. phone number, home address, email/social media addresses) to children and the parents of children you interact with at work.
- X Use social media/online platforms to solicit or befriend a child, or have online contact with a child that is not transparent to Council and part of an approved program or activity.
- X Take, use or publish unauthorised images of children in Council's programs and activities.
- X Use personal devices to take images of children.
- X Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.
- X Put a child at risk of abuse or harm either through negligence or inaction.

### **BREACHES OF POLICY/ DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

1. Breaches of this Code will be investigated on a case by case basis in accordance with Council's *Disciplinary Procedure and Equal Opportunity and Respect in the Workplace Policy*.
2. Any behaviour that constitutes a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1958* will be treated as a criminal matter and reported to Victoria Police. This applies to all known criminal offences involving a child irrespective of whether or not it occurred while undertaking Council business.
3. Incidences of 'reportable conduct' will be investigated and reported to the Commission for Children and Young People. This includes: sexual offences, sexual misconduct, and physical violence against, with, or in the presence of a child. It also includes any behaviour that is likely to cause significant emotional or psychological harm to a child, and significant neglect.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. Council officers must review this Code during the induction period.
2. For relevant positions, or where contact with children is probable, the Code must be read before the officer commences any duties that involve direct contact with children.
3. Council officers should raise any queries about the Code with their Supervisor immediately.
4. Council officers should retain a copy of the Code for their personal reference and review.
5. Supervisors should consider reviewing compliance with the Code at the 3 and 6 month review.

### **REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Community Services and People and Culture Departments. This policy may be reviewed more frequently if there are significant changes to legislation and best practice, or in the event that a review of the management of a child safety concern identifies systemic failings or practice issues that need to be addressed.

<b>REVIEW No:</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	New Policy	23 Oct 2018