

1. Policy Statement

This Policy outlines Hinchinbrook Shire Council's procedures for identifying, assessing, and managing risks associated with delivering services to children and young people. It establishes clear expectations for staff, volunteers, and contractors to maintain safe, supportive, and protective environments across all Council-led activities.

Council adopts a best practice approach aligned with the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*, ensuring that child safety measures are embedded into service design, delivery, and review processes. This includes proactive risk assessments, staff training, and continuous monitoring of child-related programs.

Child safety is a shared operational responsibility. All Council leaders, employees, volunteers, and service partners are required to implement child protection protocols, report concerns, and contribute to a culture of safety and accountability.

2. Scope

All relevant staff and volunteers must comply with the procedures outlined in this Policy and participate in regular reviews to ensure continuous improvement in child protection practices.

3. Responsibility

Council's Child Protection Risk Management Policy will be the responsibility of Corporate Community and Development Services, however the responsibilities for compliance with Council's Child Protection Risk Management Policy are incumbent upon all employees, Councillors, contractors, service providers and volunteers.

4. Definitions

Authorised Council Officer: A Council officer who has the authority to make a decision regarding the outcome of a complaint. The authorised officer will always be at a level higher than the subject of the complaint. Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer are managed in accordance with the Complaints about the Public Official (CEO) Policy, as required under the Crime and Corruption Act 2001 (Qld), under which the Mayor is the responsible officer.

CEO refers to the Chief Executive Officer of the Council appointed in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009*.

Council refers to the Hinchinbrook Shire Council.

Employee Applies to all individuals engaged by the Council, including employees, contractors, volunteers, and other representatives.

Child abuse includes all forms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, or neglect, that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. It also includes exposure to domestic and family violence.

Harm to a child is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on their physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing, irrespective of how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect, or sexual abuse or exploitation.



Personal information means information or an opinion, including information or an opinion forming part of a database, about an identified individual or an individual who is reasonably identifiable from the information or opinion, whether the information or opinion is true or not, and whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.

Risk is the likelihood of harm occurring without Intervention.

Risk management means adequately assessing and managing risk is essential to protect children from harm and hazard. Risk assessment and management is an essential part of the systems of control that help to prevent incidents from occurring. It is a crucial activity that helps prevent harm and protect children from hazards

Services encompass any program, activity, event, or initiative delivered or facilitated by Council.

5. Policy

Code of Conduct and Work, Health and Safety Management

Council employees must act legally and ethically in their role. They must comply with the code of conduct and the local government principles outlined in the *Local Government Act 2009*.

Council considers the following behaviours as essential to maintaining child-safe practices:

- **Zero Tolerance for Abuse:** Individuals must not physically or verbally abuse children or young people, nor expose them to any abusive behaviour.
- **Prohibited Substance Use:** The consumption of alcohol or illicit drugs while on duty in the presence of children or young people is strictly prohibited.
- **Restricted Personal Transactions:** Staff and volunteers must not accept gifts from, purchase items from, or provide gifts to children or young people except within approved Council recognition programs or fundraising activities.
- **No Inappropriate Relationships:** Sexual relationships with children or young people, or bringing them into private residences, are strictly forbidden.
- **Respectful Communication:** All interactions with children and young people must be conducted with courtesy, respect, and consideration.
- **Complaint Handling:** Individuals must act on complaints responsibly and to the best of their ability, in accordance with Council procedures.
- **Mandatory Reporting:** Any suspicions or disclosures of harm must be addressed professionally and reported to the appropriate authorities without delay.
- **Professional Presentation:** Attire must be neat, respectful, and suitable for the scheduled activity avoiding anything potentially offensive to children or young people.
- **Positive Role Modelling:** All individuals are expected to demonstrate behaviours consistent with being a positive influence.
- **Compliance Monitoring:** Adherence to this policy is required. Breaches may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or engagement, and may be referred to external authorities where applicable.

Compliance with the Requirements of the Blue Card System

In accordance with the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*, all individuals engaged in child-related services must hold a valid Blue Card prior to commencing work, as per the "No Card, No Start" policy.

Human Resources is responsible for verifying and recording Blue Card details for paid employees, while managers oversee compliance for volunteers. Renewal applications must be lodged at least 30 days before expiry to maintain continuous eligibility.



The organisation must also maintain a central register of Blue Cards, implement expiry tracking systems, and ensure confidentiality and data protection in accordance with privacy obligations under the *Information Privacy Act 2009* and the *Information Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023*.

To uphold compliance with child protection legislation, the Council is committed to developing and documenting appropriate procedures and forms, while maintaining accurate records that demonstrate the organisation's adherence to its duty of care and the implementation of child-safe standards.

These procedures, forms, and registers will undergo regular review to ensure they effectively address existing risks and that any emerging risks are promptly identified and integrated into the organisation's risk management protocols and practices.

The forms and registers to be maintained by each relevant section in accordance with this policy include:

- Blue Card will be copied and retained in Council's document system;
- Incident Report Form can be entered directly into SkyTrust;
- Incident Report Register;
- Media and Communications Explanatory Information and Consent Form; and
- Risk Management Plans (for general operations, high risk activities and special events).

Recruiting, Training and Managing Employees

Guidelines for the recruitment, selection, training and management of all employees and volunteers involved in the delivery of services or activities to children and young people, including specific screening requirements, are an essential component of Council's Child Protection Risk Management Policy. Council acknowledges that organisations can be held liable for selecting and retaining an employee or volunteer who is unsuitable or incompetent for the position.

Recruitment, Selection, Screening

All recruitment and screening processes for roles involving contact with children or young people, whether paid or Voluntary – must comply with Council Child Safe Standards and relevant legislation. Key considerations include:

- **Role Assessment:** Evaluate the position requirements, including skills, experience, qualifications, and knowledge, as well as key responsibilities, with consideration of any child safety risks inherent in the role;
- **Position Description:** Develop a clear position description for paid roles and, where appropriate, for volunteer roles. Include objectives, responsibilities, organisational relationships, accountability, and performance standards;
- **Interview Process:** Ensure interviews include questions about an applicant's work history, background, and attitudes towards child safety, are conducted respectfully and in compliance with the Queensland Privacy Principles.
- **Referee Checks:** Conduct referee checks lawfully and fairly, securing informed consent and respecting privacy. Avoid disclosure of sensitive information unless permitted under the QPP's or with explicit consent;
- **Blue Card Compliance:**
 - All employees and volunteers engaged in child-related duties must hold a valid Blue Card before commencing work.
 - Volunteers cannot start until a Positive Notice is received. Employees cannot start until their Blue Card application is approved.
 - Council will maintain a Blue Card register and ensure renewal applications are submitted

- at least 30 days before expiry.
- HR is responsible for sighting, copying and securely storing Blue Cards and Positive Notices, along with qualifications and licenses in Council's compliance system (SkyTrust).

Council acknowledges that organisations can be held liable for selecting or retaining an unsuitable or incompetent person. Therefore, all recruitment and screening processes must be documented and retained for HR for transparency and compliance.

Training

Before commencing duties involving contact with children or young people, all employees, contractors, and volunteers must complete an induction that covers:

- Role responsibilities and expectations
- Child protection policies, risk management procedures, and codes of conduct.
- Cultural safety principles, including respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- How to raise concerns or seek support.

Further training will be provided internally or through external providers to strengthen the capacity to meet child safety obligations and maintain compliance with the Child Safe Standards.

Management

Council will ensure ongoing supervision and performance management of employees and volunteers engaged in child-related work:

- Regular performance reviews to confirm suitability and competence;
- Appropriate levels of supervision consistent with role responsibilities;
- Engagement with families and communities to promote child safety and wellbeing;
- Consultation with children and young people to assess their experience of services;
- HR and Governance will manage Blue Card compliance for employees; managers will ensure volunteers maintain current Positive Notices;
- Renewal applications must be lodged at least 30 days before expiry;
- Employees must notify Blue Card Services of any changes in contact details, name, or lost/stolen cards.

Council will also implement continuous improvement processes to review child safety practices and prepare for compliance with the upcoming Reportable Conduct Scheme (effective July 2026).

Handling Suspicions or Disclosures of Harm

To provide for the safety and wellbeing of young people, the Council requires that suspicions or disclosures of harm must be acted on, irrespective of the source of the harm and places onus on the person receiving the information to respond professionally and in the best interests of the child or young person subjected to the alleged harm.

Reporting Requirements – Harm or Risk of Harm

Before lodging any formal report, employees are required to raise concerns or complaints with their supervisor, who will consult with the Executive Manager People, Culture and Safety to ensure appropriate procedural compliance and governance oversight.

In situations involving an emergency or an offence in progress, the matter must be reported immediately to Police via 000, without delay.

Council requires that any suspicion or disclosure of harm be reported by an authorised Council Officer to the appropriate authorities. Where there is no immediate risk, reports must be made to:



- Queensland Police Service, via a local police station, PoliceLink on 131 444, or through an online report;
- The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs via the Reporting Intake Service on 1300 706 147 or online; or
- Hinchinbrook Child Safety Service Centre - (07) 4796 6502., **After Hours Crisis Line: 1800 177 135**

Risk Management Plans for Special Events and High-Risk Activities

To fulfil the requirements of its Child Protection Risk Management Policy either when holding an event or activity for children, and young people, or facilitating the participation of children and young people in an event or activity held by another organisation or individual, Council will conduct a risk assessment and if necessary, develop a risk management plan. These events/activities may include, but are not limited to, school holiday activities, Youth Week activities, conferences/forums, and child and youth related diversionary activities.

The following guidelines provide direction to the assessment and management of risks relating to a program, activity or event for children and young people:

- Sourcing information to determine whether the event/activity/program will contribute positively to the wellbeing and development of children and young people.
- Provision of information to parents, guardians and carers to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their child's attendance at events/activities.
- Where appropriate, the issuing of permission forms, medical information forms, privacy statements, and media and communications consent forms relating to a child or youth's participation in an event/activity.
- Provision of adequate supervision involving people screened through the procedures outlined above.
- Promotion and enforcement through appropriate strategies, of all underage events/activities as drug and alcohol free.
- Determination of whether an event has a 'no pass outs' policy or an 'open door' policy and the promotion of this on publicity materials.

Privacy

In a commitment to children and young people's safety and privacy, Council will adopt and disseminate a privacy statement where applicable.

Imagery for Promotions and Advertising

~~When promoting activities, events or services, the Council will only use images, likenesses or recordings of children and young people if the following conditions have been met:~~

- ~~• Media Consent has been obtained by a parent or carer of the child or young person; and~~
- ~~• The image, likeness or recording does not portray the child or young person in a demeaning way, exploit them in any way, or identify them where they should not be identified.~~

In accordance with Hinchinbrook Shire Council's Media Strategy, all promotional use of images, likenesses, or recordings of children and young people must reflect the Council's commitment to community pride, inclusiveness, and respectful representation.

To ensure alignment with strategic pillars Inform, Involve, Inspire, and Reinforce, the following operational standards apply:

Consent and Privacy



Media Consent must be obtained from a parent or legal guardian before capturing or using any image, likeness, or recording of a child or young person.

Images must not identify children by name or location unless explicitly approved and appropriate for the context.

Respectful and Inclusive Representation

Imagery must portray children and young people in a positive, empowering, and culturally respectful manner.

Council will not use images that are demeaning, exploitative, or inconsistent with the values of Liveability 2035 and The Hinchinbrook Way.

Strategic Messaging Alignment

Promotional content should celebrate community milestones, local champions, and cultural identity, consistent with the Inspire and Reinforce pillars.

Imagery must support Council's objectives to foster pride, unity, and inclusive engagement across diverse communities.

Channel-Specific Considerations

Content shared via digital platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) and traditional media must be reviewed for suitability and strategic alignment.

Face-to-face and print collateral (e.g. flyers, brochures) must reflect local relevance and community values.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Use of child imagery will be periodically reviewed as part of Council's media audits, with feedback from families and community partners informing continuous improvement.

Communication and Support

All managers, and employees directly or indirectly involved in providing services to children and young people, are to ensure compliance with the Child Protection Risk Management Policy and related procedures. All Council employees will be informed of this policy in recognition of the role everyone plays in protecting children and young people within the community.

Responsibility for monitoring compliance with the Child Protection Risk Management Policy rests primarily with managers across all levels of departments that facilitate activities or deliver services to children and young people. It is expected that these managers will actively reinforce child protection standards and expectations as part of routine planning processes, including pre-event briefings and activity preparation.

Breaches of the Council Child Protection Risk Management Policy

The Council will treat seriously and respond appropriately to all breaches of its Child Protection Risk Management Policy.

Suspected breaches will be dealt with in accordance with Council's Complaints Management Framework, Policy and associated Procedures.

All substantiated breaches of the following type will be dealt with in line with Council's Workforce Performance, policies and codes:

All suspicions or disclosures of harm, irrespective of whether the source of harm is within or outside the organisation, are to be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Complaints Management Framework and by notifying the relevant authorities. This is further supported by guidelines provided by Blue Card Services, whereby under no circumstances will Council, the employee, Councillor, contractor, or volunteer to whom the disclosure is made:



- Conduct their own investigation;
- Hold an internal hearing; or
- Attempt to mediate a settlement of the matter instead of notifying relevant authorities.

All notifications will be made by 'authorised Council Officers only' and in accordance with strict protocols.

Types of harm covered under this policy may include physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional or psychological harm. It also includes situations where a child may pose a danger to themselves or others, as well as concerns related to a pregnant woman and the wellbeing of her unborn child or parenting capacity. These forms of harm are considered serious and require prompt attention and action in line with child protection responsibilities.

The relevant authorities are the Queensland Police and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs online reporting tools such as Police Link and the Queensland Government child safety Reporting Intake Service.

6. Legal Parameters

- *Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD)*
- *Human Rights Act 2019 (QLD);*
- *Local Government Act 2009 (QLD);*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (QLD);*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011(QLD)*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019 (QLD);*
- *Work, Health and Safety Act 2011(QLD);*
- *Information Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023 (IPOLA);*
- *Right to Information Act 2009 (Qld);*
- *Right to Information Regulation 2009; and*
- *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (QLD).*

7. Associated Documents

- Administrative Action Complaints Management Policy;
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy;
- Recruitment and Selection Policy;

Work, Health and Safety Policy Statement

DOCUMENT HISTORY AND STATUS				
Action	Name		Position	
Approved by Council	Mary-Anne Uren		CEO	
Policy Version	3	Initial Version Adopted	29/07/2022	Current Version Adopted 16/12/2025
Maintained By	Corporate and Community Services		Next Review Date	16/12/2025