

1. Policy Statement

Hinchinbrook Shire Council is dedicated to fostering a child-safe community built on the principles of integrity, respect, accountability, and transparency. We are unwavering in our commitment to ensuring that all children and young people feel safe, valued, and empowered in every interaction with Council services and representatives.

Aligned with the Council's Code of Conduct, this policy affirms our responsibility to create inclusive, culturally respectful environments where children are protected from harm, encouraged to participate in decisions that affect them, and always treated with dignity.

We embed a holistic and strengths-based approach to safety and wellbeing, ensuring that both physical and online environments support children's physical, social, spiritual, cultural, and emotional wellbeing.

This policy reflects our adherence to the Queensland Child Safe Standards, the Universal Principle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the Information Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act (IPOLA), and the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). We recognise the critical importance of cultural safety—particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and exploring opportunities to co-design services that may better honour their connection to kin, community, and culture.

Hinchinbrook Shire Council values diversity and strives to support the unique needs of all children. This includes children with disability, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children who are refugees or asylum seekers, children unable to live at home, and young people who identify within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Through inclusive practices and meaningful engagement, we strive to uphold the rights and wellbeing of every child in our community.

Hinchinbrook Shire Council will conduct regular audits of its child safety policies, procedures, and practices to evaluate effectiveness across governance, leadership, and organisational culture. These audits will include input from children, families, staff, and community partners, and findings will inform continuous improvement efforts.

Hinchinbrook Shire Council also complies with the Queensland Reportable Conduct Scheme, ensuring that allegations or convictions of child abuse or child-related misconduct involving Council employees, volunteers, or contractors are reported, investigated, and managed transparently and lawfully.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Hinchinbrook Shire Council employees, elected members, volunteers, contractors, and consultants. It governs all Council-operated venues, events, programs, and services that involve direct or indirect engagement with children and young people, including digital platforms, online services, and third-party partnerships.

The policy is relevant across all areas of Council operations where children may interact with staff, access services, or participate in community activities. It ensures that child safety principles are embedded in decision-making, service delivery, and organisational cultures supporting safe, inclusive, and culturally respectful environments for all children, especially those from diverse backgrounds and vulnerable circumstances.

This policy also encompasses obligations under the Queensland Reportable Conduct Scheme, which applies to all Council employees, elected members, volunteers, contractors, and consultants engaged in child-related work or services on behalf of Hinchinbrook Shire Council



3. Responsibility

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) ensures strategic alignment, resource allocation, and oversight of child safety initiatives.

Managers and Supervisors implement child safety practices, monitor compliance, and support staff development. Facilitate reflective practice and feedback sessions to assess staff understanding and reinforce child safety principles.

Staff and Volunteers demonstrate ethical conduct, uphold child safety principles, and report concerns in accordance with Council policies.

Children and Families are encouraged to participate in shaping safe environments, provide feedback to improve services, and share their experiences to help the Council evaluate the effectiveness of child safety practices.

The Director Corporate, Community and Developments Services is the **Designated Child Safety Officer** and is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Queensland Reportable Conduct Scheme, including reporting, investigation coordination, and liaison with the Queensland Ombudsman.

4. Definitions

Child is a person under the age of 18.

Child Abuse is any act that harms or threatens a child's physical, emotional, or psychological wellbeing.

Cultural Safety is an environment that is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Child Safe Standards is a set of ten (10) standards mandated by the Queensland Government to promote child safety across institutions.

Universal Principle is a foundational requirement to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Reportable Conduct is any allegation or conviction involving child abuse, sexual misconduct, or inappropriate behaviour toward children by a Council worker or volunteer, as defined under the Queensland Reportable Conduct Scheme.

5. Policy

Hinchinbrook Shire Council is committed to fostering a child-safe culture across all areas of its operations. In alignment with the Queensland Child Safe Standards and the Universal Principle, the Council will:

Embed child safety into leadership, governance, and culture

Child safety will be integrated into strategic planning, policy development, and organisational culture. Leaders will model ethical behaviour and promote child-safe values.

Promote child participation and empowerment

Children will be supported to express their views and contribute meaningfully to decisions that affect them.

Engage families and communities in child safety initiatives

The Council will collaborate with families, carers, and community organisations to foster shared responsibility for child wellbeing.

Uphold equity and respect for diverse needs



All children will be treated with dignity and respect, with proactive measures to ensure inclusion and accessibility.

Provide ongoing training and supervision for staff and volunteers

Personnel will receive regular training on child safety, ethical conduct, and cultural awareness. Supervisors will monitor performance and support continuous improvement.

Maintain child-focused complaint and reporting mechanisms

Accessible and transparent processes will be in place for reporting concerns, with a focus on child-friendly communication and confidentiality.

Ensure physical and online environments are safe

Risk assessments will be conducted to identify and mitigate hazards in all environments where children engage with Council services.

Review and improve child safety practices regularly

Policies and procedures will be evaluated biennially and after any incidents, incorporating feedback from children, families, and staff.

Document all child safety procedures and commitments

Clear documentation will support accountability, transparency, and consistency in child safety practices.

Gather and respond to feedback from children, families, and communities

Council will actively seek feedback through surveys, forums, and informal conversations to assess community confidence in child safety policies and procedures. This feedback will inform continuous improvement and help ensure that children and families are aware of and trust the Council's commitment to child safety.

Assess staff and leadership understanding through feedback and reflection

Council will regularly seek feedback from board members, executives, staff, and volunteers to evaluate their understanding of child safety policies, procedures, and practice requirements. This feedback will inform training needs, policy updates, and continuous improvement efforts.

Embed a holistic and strengths-based approach to safety and wellbeing

Council will ensure that all environments—physical and online—are designed to support children's physical, social, spiritual, cultural, and emotional wellbeing. This includes fostering positive relationships, promoting resilience, and recognising the strengths and identities of each child.

Comply with the Queensland Reportable Conduct Scheme

Council will ensure that all reportable conduct allegations are promptly reported to the Queensland Ombudsman, investigated appropriately, and managed in accordance with legislative requirements. Staff will be trained to understand their obligations under the scheme.

Uphold equity and respect for diverse needs

All children will be treated with dignity and respect, with proactive measures to ensure inclusion and accessibility. The Council supports the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children who are refugees or asylum seekers, those who are unable to live at home, and young people who identify as LGBTQIA+. Tailored strategies will be implemented to ensure these children feel safe, valued, and empowered.



6. Legal Parameters

- *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld);*
- Queensland Child Safe Standards and Universal Principle;
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld);*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld);*
- *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld);*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld);* and
- Queensland Reportable Conduct Scheme (Child Safe Organisations Act 2024).

7. Associated Documents

- Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Risk Management Policy
- CEO Performance Appraisal Policy
- Privacy and Confidential Information Management Policy
- Administrative Action Complaints Management Policy
- Volunteer Management Policy
- Advertising Spend Policy
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Policy
- Hinchinbrook Shire Council Code of Conduct
- Risk Management Policy
- Complaints Handling Procedure
- Venue Hire Information form.
- Community Grants Program
- Reportable Conduct Scheme Procedure
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Reportable Conduct Management Procedure
- Queensland Ombudsman Reporting Guidelines
- Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld) – Implementation Toolkit

DOCUMENT HISTORY AND STATUS						
Action	Name			Position	Signed	Date
Approved by Council	Mary Anne Uren			CEO		16/12/2025
Policy Version	1	Initial Version Adopted	16/12/2025	Current Version Adopted		16/12/2025
Maintained By	Governance			Next Review Date		16/12/2025