

1. Policy Statement

Charters Towers Regional Council (the Council) is committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and protection of all children and young people who engage with Council services, programs, facilities, and events. This Policy establishes Council's expectations for identifying, assessing, and managing risks associated with child-related activities.

Council adopts a best-practice approach aligned with the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children and the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld). Child safety measures are embedded into service design, delivery, and review processes, including proactive risk assessments, staff and volunteer training, and ongoing monitoring of child-related programs.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. All Councillors, employees, volunteers, contractors, and service partners must implement child protection protocols, report concerns, and contribute to a culture of safety, accountability, and continuous improvement.

2. Purpose & Scope

This Policy outlines Council's framework for preventing harm to children and young people and ensuring compliance with relevant legislation, including the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (Qld).

This Policy applies to:

- All Council employees
- Councillors
- Contractors and service providers
- Volunteers
- Any individual engaged in delivering or supporting Council activities involving children or young people

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

3. Commencement of Policy

This Policy will commence from 1 July 2026.

4. Application Of Policy

This Policy applies across all Council workplaces, facilities, programs, and community settings where children and young people may be present. It must be applied during:

- Service planning and delivery
- Recruitment and onboarding
- Event and activity coordination
- Risk assessments
- Complaint handling
- Engagement with families, carers, and community partners

Managers are responsible for ensuring the Policy is integrated into operational procedures and staff practices.

5. Responsibility

Office of the Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the overall administration of this Policy. However, compliance is required from all Councillors, Executive Leadership Team, employees, contractors, service providers, and volunteers. Child safety is everyone's responsibility.

6. Definitions

Term	Definition
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 S0064 – Dealing with a Complaint Involving a Public Official (CEO) Policy, as required under the <i>Crime and Corruption Act 2001 (Qld)</i> , under which the Mayor is the responsible officer. <i>CEO</i> refers to the Chief Executive Officer of the Council appointed in accordance with the <i>Local Government Act 2009</i> .
Council	Charters Towers Regional Council
Employee	applies to all individuals engaged by the Council, including employees, contractors, volunteers, and other representatives.
Child abuse	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.
Child	is a person under the age of 18.
Harm	Any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's 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 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	The likelihood of harm occurring without intervention.
Risk Management	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	Any program, activity, event, or initiative delivered or facilitated by Council.

7. Policy Provisions

7.1 Code of Conduct and Work, Health and Safety Management

All Council representatives must act legally, ethically, and in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009*, Council's Code of Conduct, and WHS obligations.

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

- Zero tolerance for abuse
- No alcohol or illicit drug use while supervising or interacting with children
- No inappropriate personal relationships or private contact with children
- Respectful, age-appropriate communication
- Mandatory reporting of suspected harm
- Professional presentation and conduct
- Positive role modelling
- Compliance with complaint handling procedures

Breaches may result in disciplinary action, termination, and/or referral to external authorities.

7.2 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.

People and Culture is responsible for verifying and recording Blue Card details for paid employees, while Managers oversee compliance for volunteers and Office of the OCEO oversees compliance for Councillors. 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 *Right to Information Act 2009*.

To uphold compliance with child protection legislation, 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 electronic document system;
- Incident Report Form can be entered directly into SafetyCulture;
- Incident Report Register will be maintained by Council's Executive Services Manager;
- Media and Communications Explanatory Information and Consent Form; and
- Risk Management Plans (for general operations, high risk activities and special events).

7.3 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.

7.4 Recruitment, Selection, Screening

All recruitment and screening processes for roles involving contact with children or young people, whether paid or voluntary – must comply with the Child Safe Standards, this Policy 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 QPPs or with explicit consent;
- **Contract Managers:** Contract Managers must ensure that Contractors (such as facility management or event management contract), have appropriate mechanisms built into the contract to ensure the safety of children and that they must also ensure that they are meeting both this Policy and the Child Safety Standards.
- **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.
 - People and Culture is responsible for sighting, copying and securely storing Blue Cards and Positive Notices, along with qualifications and licenses in Council's record management system.

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 by People and Culture for transparency and compliance.

7.5 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.

7.6 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;
- People and Culture and Office of the CEO 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 implement continuous improvement processes to review and strengthen child safety practices. These processes may include regular policy reviews, staff and volunteer training, compliance audits, incident and complaint monitoring, stakeholder feedback, and periodic risk assessments. Council will also develop and maintain procedures, reporting mechanisms and governance arrangements necessary to comply with the Queensland Reportable Conduct Scheme and any associated legislative requirements.

7.7 Handling Suspicions or Disclosures of Harm

To provide for the safety and wellbeing of young people, 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.

7.8 Reporting Requirements – Harm or Risk of Harm

Before lodging any formal report, employees are required to raise concerns or complaints with their supervisor. The supervisor will consult with the Executive Manager People and Culture regarding employee management and workplace matters and the Governance and Compliance Officer regarding legislative compliance, reporting obligations and governance requirements. 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
- Charters Towers Regional Council on 07 4761 5300

7.9 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, Council's Youth Council, work experience, child and youth related diversionary activities, Towers Rush, Australia Day at the Pool, Easter activities, Library activities, and Careers Day.

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.

7.10 Privacy

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

7.11 Imagery for Promotions and Advertising

In accordance with Council's communication policies, 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.

7.12 Consent and Privacy

Media consent must be obtained from a parent or legal guardian before capturing, using, publishing or distributing any image, likeness or recording of a child where the child is the primary focus of the image or recording.

For general community events held in public places, where children may be incidentally captured as part of a crowd or public gathering, Council may use images without obtaining individual consent where permitted by law and where the image does not identify a child by name, location or other personal information.

Images, recordings and associated consent records must be managed in accordance with Council's records management and privacy requirements. Where consent is withdrawn, Council will take reasonable steps to identify and cease future use of relevant images or recordings where practicable.

7.13 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 or exploitative. All use of Council images will be maintained in Council's official image gallery platform only and maintained by the Office of the CEO.

7.14 Channel-Specific Considerations

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

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

7.15 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.

7.16 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.

7.17 Breaches of the Council Child Protection Risk Management Policy

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 with oversight by Council's Executive Services Manager.

All substantiated breaches 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 to external agencies must be made by an Authorised Council Officer, as defined in this Policy, to ensure compliance with Council's governance and reporting requirements. 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.

8 Variations

8.1 Council reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this Policy from time to time.

Associated Documents

- *Child Protection Act 1999*
- *Human Rights Act 2019*
- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019*
- *Work, Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009*
- *Public Records Act 2023*
- *Right to Information Act 2009*
- *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024*
- S0014 Complaint Management Policy and Procedural Guideline;
- D0035 Recruitment and Selection Directive;
- S0072 Workplace Health and Safety Policy Statement

Document Review			
Date Adopted by Council	22 July 2026	Council Resolution	4794
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ECM No.	5173365	Document Contact	Executive Services Manager