

Safe Environment Screening Guideline

Alexandrina Council will conduct appropriate screening of persons who are, or will be engaged in identified or prescribed positions, providing services to or working with children and young people or other vulnerable people (Attachment A).

The Department of Human Services Screening Unit performs the functions and exercises the powers of the central assessment unit for the purposes of the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*, and with the Council's *Information Management Policy* will be used to guide Alexandrina Council's management of information gathered.

Principles that govern assessment of suitable persons are as follows:

- Paramount consideration is given to the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable people, and their protection from harm.
- Assessment of suitable persons will be:
 - Undertaken following a check via the Department of Human Services central assessment unit (working with children/vulnerable people check)
 - Conducted by staff members who are appropriately trained
 - Recognised as one of a range of strategies to protect children and vulnerable people
 - Evidenced based, where evidence exists, and will be ethical, defensible, efficient and timely
 - Based on principles of natural justice and procedural fairness
 - Will be transparent, documented and consistently applied
 - Accompanied by provisions for review and appeal against a decision.
- The privacy of people will be strictly protected, and sensitive, personal information will be protected from inappropriate disclosure by secure records management systems and the enforcement of Council's *Information Management, Privacy and Safe Environment Policies*.

Standard 1: Identifying affected prescribed positions

- Prescribed position as those defined in Part 3, section 5(1) of the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* in which a person works, or is likely to work, with children or in a position of a class prescribed by the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Regulations 2019*.
- Council will also identify all position paid (staff, contractors, consultants etc) and unpaid (volunteer, trainee or other) that it believes to be prescribed positions. This applies to all paid/unpaid workers over the age of 14 years.
- No exemptions will apply unless listed under section 9 of the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*.

Standard 2: Developing policies and procedures for obtaining screening checks

Council will:

- Acquire informed written consent before obtaining the relevant screening check

- State that appointment is subject to a suitable outcome from a screening check being obtained, and satisfactory screening results obtained when advertising for relevant positions
- Ensure procedural fairness and assess which records will be maintained in accordance with the relevant policies and guidelines
- Communicate relevant *Safe Environment* policies, procedures and *Code of Conduct* to all Council Members, staff and volunteers.

Standard 3: Conducting assessments in a timely manner

Council will:

- Obtain screening check prior to commencement of employment..
- Conduct screening checks every 5 years for current employees or volunteers
- Ensure re-validation and those turning 14 are identified in a timely manner
- Individuals MUST notify their line manager, General Manager or Human Resources if there is a change in criminal history or screening status.

Standard 4: Adverse screening check for existing staff

All staff, volunteers, contractors engaged by Council to undertake work with children and young people and vulnerable persons as described in the *Safe Environment Policy*, are required to have a *Working with Children* Check renewed every 5 years. Suggested timeframe is 6 weeks prior to expiry.

Where a staff member, volunteer or contractor returns a Prohibited *Working with Children* Check as a result of a renewal application, their continued engagement with children and young people will be terminated.

Standard 5: Records Management

Council will:

- Ensure procedures are in place to protect privacy (to the extent possible) and ensure confidentiality of *Working with Children* Checks.
- Safeguard to protect against loss, unauthorised access, modification, disclosure or other misuse
- Obtain appropriate screening/clearances once a decision has been made regarding the person's suitability to work with children or vulnerable people, and information will not be retained for a period exceeding three months
- Retain the following information regarding their decision:
 - That a screening check was obtained
 - How the information affected decision making
 - Statutory declarations where applicable.