

# Safe Environment Code of Conduct

First Approved	January 2018
Review Frequency	4 yearly within twelve months of new term of Council or as required
Status	Statutory
Last Reviewed	April 2023 (Resolution Ref: C23124)
Next Review Due	April 2027
File Number	18.87.003 / PC2023147
Responsible Division	Community
Related Documents	Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure Safe Environment Reporting Procedure Safe Environment Policy Safe Environment Screening Guidelines Employee and Volunteers Code of Conducts Council Members Behavioural Management Policy
Applicable Legislation	Aged Care Act 1997 Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995 Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Regulations (SA) 2019 Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 Children and Young People (Safety) Regulations 2017 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations 2018 Disability Services Act 1993 WHS Act 2012

## 1. Introduction

Alexandrina Council is committed to ensuring that children, young and other vulnerable people are treated with respect, fairness and dignity within a welcoming and supportive environment, free from all types of abuse and inappropriate behaviour.

This Code of Conduct has been drafted in accordance with section 114 of the South Australian *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* and *Alexandrina Council Safe Environment Policy*. It has also taken into consideration the following legislation:

- Children and Young People (Safety) Regulations 2017 (SA),
- Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA)
- Disability Services Act 1993 and Disability Services (Assessment of Relevant History) Regulations 2014 (SA)
- Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (SA)
- Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995 (SA) and Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Regulations 2019 (SA)
- Aged Care Act 1997 (Cth)

Please also refer to Alexandrina Council's Safe Environment Reporting Procedure, Safe Environment Screening Guidelines, Complaints Policy and Complaints Handling Procedure.

This code applies to all Council Members, employees, volunteers, , , young people, parents and carers who access Council services. All employees, volunteers, contractors, consultants and any other persons engaged to provide any services

wholly or partly to children or vulnerable people on behalf of Council are required to comply with this Code of Conduct, as well as children, young people, parents, carers and vulnerable people who access Council services.

The standards in this Code of Conduct are consistent with those established by Department of Human Services and international human rights principles as enshrined with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in addition to:

- Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations 2018
- South Australian Adult Safeguarding Unit Code of Practice and South Australian Charter of the Rights and Freedoms of Vulnerable Adults
- Aged Care Accountability Principles 2014.

This Code of Conduct does not cover every situation – however, the values, ethics and standards it sets are a reference point to help make decisions relating to situations not referred to in this Code of Conduct. It sets out the minimum standards of behaviour expected during any interactions with children, young or vulnerable people in accessing Council services.

## **2. Supportive behaviours**

Employees, volunteers, contractors, consultants, Council Members and those who access Council services or facilities must at all times:

- Treat children, young and vulnerable people with respect, equity, sensitivity, fairness and dignity
- Ensure children, young and vulnerable people are protected from any form of harm, harassment or discrimination
- Ensure the environment is safe for children, young and vulnerable people, including protection from violence, bullying, teasing, threatening, sexist or racist remarks, or harassment
- Exhibit role model positive behaviours, for example:
  - Encourage children, young and vulnerable people to participate in decision making processes
  - Give constructive feedback to children, young and vulnerable people
  - Ensure children, young and vulnerable people are aware of their rights, including their rights to respect, fairness and safety.

Employees, contractors, consultants, Council Members and volunteers must be aware of their reporting responsibilities and:

- Inform the Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78) or report online at Reporting child abuse for Child Protection if they form any suspicion of harm or risk of harm
- Inform the Adult Safeguarding Unit Phone Line on 1800 372 310 or via email at [adultsafeguardingunit@sa.gov.au](mailto:adultsafeguardingunit@sa.gov.au) if they form a suspicion of abuse or neglect.
- Call 000 in any emergency situation
- Discuss their concern with their supervisor or manager
- Where relevant, explain the commitment to maintaining confidentiality, including situations that would require the sharing of information, for example reporting responsibilities.

### 3. Safe and Protective Work Practices

Adopt safe and protective work practices, for example:

- Be aware of potential situations and actions when working with children, young and vulnerable people where they may be misinterpreted or misconstrued, for example:
  - Where possible, work in an open and visible environment when with children, young or vulnerable people
  - Dress in a professional manner that is appropriate for the situation. Staff and volunteers to wear uniform and/or Alexandrina Council badges at all times
- Adopt a calm and non-judgemental attitude that allows children, young or vulnerable people to feel safe to raise complaints or concerns
- If necessary, explain grievance procedures and avenues for complaints in simple and clear language that is appropriate to the age and ability of the child, young or vulnerable person.

### 4. Unacceptable Behaviours

Unacceptable behaviour may include (but not be limited to) the following:

- Any form of discrimination against a child, young or vulnerable person on the basis of ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexuality or on any other unlawful grounds
- Hitting or physically assaulting a child, young or vulnerable person
- Using language that is offensive, abusive or otherwise inappropriate
- Showing preferential treatment to one child, young or vulnerable person over others
- Shout, yell or speak to a child, young or vulnerable person in an angry, intimidating or threatening manner
- Engaging in rough physical play with the child, young or vulnerable person
- Unnecessary physical contact with child, young or vulnerable person. For example giving a hug may be culturally inappropriate, or it may be frightening or be offensive to the child, young or vulnerable person
- Condone or participate in illegal or unsafe behaviours when working with children, young or vulnerable persons
- Make inappropriate self-disclosures relating to any participation (past or present) in illegal or unsafe behaviours. For example past drug use should not be disclosed to or discussed with children or young people
- Initiating or engaging in 'friendship' relationships with a child, young or vulnerable person. For example, it is not OK to make arrangements to socialise outside the work environment.

- Taking children, young or vulnerable people to your home or on outings that do not fall within professional duties and/or when it has not been authorised by the Council, parents or guardians
- Acting in a manner that is sexually inappropriate – including verbal, physical and implied behaviours
- Initiating or developing a physical/sexual 'relationship' with a child, young or vulnerable person.
- Initiating or development any relationship that could be deemed as exploitative or abusive with a child, young or vulnerable person
- Failure to report disclosures of harm or risk of harm to the Department for Human Services Child Abuse Report Line.

## **5. Breaches of Policy / Disciplinary Action**

All employees, contractors, Council Members and volunteers have a responsibility for promoting and supporting these values and standards of behaviour.

Where an employee member or volunteer is found to have acted outside of this Safe Environment Code of Conduct, they will be subject to disciplinary action commensurate with the seriousness of their actions. This disciplinary action may take the form of a warning, counselling or termination of their employment and/or forwarding the matter to police.

Breaches of the Safe Environment Code of Conduct will be investigated on a case by case basis and in accordance with the Council's Complaints Handling Policy and the required reporting processes.

## **6. Employee Rights**

Employees are entitled to representation in the consideration of alleged non-compliance with this Code. The principles of fairness, equity and natural justice will apply to investigation and management of the matter. Investigations undertaken regarding compliance with the Code will be kept confidential, excluding any reporting requirements to external bodies, for example, South Australian Police.

Documentation associated with managing non-compliance will be retained in a secure and confidential location separate from the personnel files and managed in accordance with the State Records requirements.

## **7. Reporting**

All employees, volunteers, contractors and those accessing Council services have a role in supporting this Safe Environment Code of Conduct and the Safe Environment Policy by reporting any suspicion of harm or risk of harm to the Department for Child Protection reporting line (CARL) 131 478.

Any questions of compliance raised by Council Members, other employees or the community regarding the Code, will be considered by the relevant General Manager or the Chief Executive Officer.

If you have any difficulties or questions regarding this Safe Environment Code of Conduct, please discuss with the appropriate Team Leader, Manager, General Manager or Human Resources.

The Alexandrina Council Safe Environment Framework, including this Safe Environments Code of Conduct has been endorsed by the Council and will be reviewed 4 yearly or as required. It will be available on the Council website [www.alexandrina.sa.gov.au](http://www.alexandrina.sa.gov.au).