

# Child Safe Standards Strategy

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2023-2026



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*The City of Kingston proudly acknowledges the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land, and we pay our respect to their Elders, past and present and emerging.*

*Council acknowledges the Bunurong's continuing relationship to the land and waterways and respects that their connection and spiritual identity is maintained through ancient ceremonies, songlines, dance, art and living culture.*

*Council pays tribute to the invaluable contributions of the Bunurong and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island elders who have guided and continue to guide the work we do*

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## 1. Introduction

Welcome to the Kingston City Council's Child Safe Strategy.

At the Kingston City Council we have a strong commitment to keeping children safe within our services and facilities.

The Child Safe Strategy (Strategy) will help guide us to continue to embed a culture of child safety within our organisation.

The Strategy is grounded in the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme as well as other current government legislation. It closely aligns with the Council Plan, the Family and Children's Strategy and the Youth Strategy.

The Strategy will operate for the next three years. An implementation and change management plan has also been developed to guide us in the implementation of the Strategy.

The Strategy outlines how Kingston City Council will strengthen its approach to embedding a culture of child safety and has developed the following five goals and objectives to help achieve this:

Goals:

1. To demonstrate a commitment to child safety that is championed from the top down, there is a strong emphasis on child safety and wellbeing and every staff member, volunteer and student in the organisation is aware of their responsibilities to children and young people.
2. To handle complaints and reports effectively and sensitively and ensure that everyone in Kingston understands the importance of child safety and the Kingston City Council's reporting procedure.
3. To actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion of children with diverse needs, from different cultures and diverse communities.
4. To empower children and young people to participate and to engage families and the wider community in decisions that affect their children.
5. To identify and prevent risks to child safety in both online and physical environments

Objectives:

1. Commitment to Child Safety
2. Reporting and Responding
3. Valuing Diversity
4. Involving Children, Families and Community
5. Maintaining Child Safe Environments

## 2. Our Families and Children

According to the 2021 census data here are 32,501 children and young people aged 0-17 years living in the City of Kingston, or 21.5 per cent of the total population. There are 11,139 couples with young children under the age of 15, and 1,959 single parent households with children under the age of 15.

The City of Kingston is a culturally diverse municipality with residents from over 150 countries who speak over 120 languages. In 2021 31.9 per cent of Kingston's population was born overseas, with 26 per cent of residents who speak a language other than English at home. Around 0.5 per cent of the people living in Kingston identify as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Age	Number in 2021
0 to 4	8,611 (5.4%)
5 to 9	9,279 (5.9%)
10 to 14	9,316 (5.9%)
15 to 19	8,594 (5.4%)
Total	35,800

Household Type	Number in 2021
Couples with children under the age of 15	11,139
Single parents with children under the age of 15	1,959
Total families with children under the age of 15	13,098

### 3. Services and Facilities Provided to Children and Young People in The City Of Kingston

#### 3.1 SERVICES AND FACILITIES PROVIDED BY THE KINGSTON CITY COOUNCIL

Services provided by the Kingston City Council include the following:

##### Early Years Education and Care

The Kingston City Council provides a range of education and care services that are available for children aged 0-5 years. This includes:

- Three and four-year-old sessional kindergarten is operated by volunteer committees, early years managers and Kingston City Council.
- Long day education and care provides a foundation for children to learn, develop and socialise in a safe and nurturing environment and can also assist parents seeking to return to work and is delivered by private providers, community and Kingston City Council.
- Kingston City Council's operated Family and Children's Centres deliver high quality early years education and care services at Parkdale, Edithvale, Carrum.
- Family Day Care is an education and care service that is provided in the homes of registered and professional Early Childhood Educators.

##### Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation

- Maternal and Child Health service are staffed by Maternal and Child Health Nurses who are registered nurses with Midwifery and Maternal and Child Health qualifications and includes:
  - Key ages and stages visits
  - First time parents' groups
  - The breastfeeding support

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- Immunisation Services.

### **Supported Playgroups**

- Supported Playgroups are facilitated by early years professionals to support families experiencing vulnerabilities and includes Playgroup at Home where parents can tune into videos for parenting strategies and activities via Council's website.

### **School Aged Care**

- Before and After School Programs for primary school age children between the ages of 4 and 13 years are held at various locations across the municipality.
- School Holiday Programs operate in the school holidays.

### **Family Support**

Family Support program provides a free and confidential service committed to providing support, information and referrals to families.

### **Youth Services**

Youth Services offers a range of activities for young people in the local area including information and referral, and a range of events, programs and counselling services.

### **Community Road Safety**

Secondary, Primary and Pre-school Road Safety Education programs encourage road safety awareness for all students.

### **School crossing supervisors**

Kingston City Council crossing supervisors assist children to cross roads safely at some Secondary and Primary schools throughout Kingston.

### **Playgrounds**

The City of Kingston is home to 114 unique playgrounds.

### **Libraries**

Libraries run a number of regular programs throughout the year for children and families including Tiny Tots Rhyme Time, Pre-school Storytime and after-school programs that are suitable for a variety of different ages.

### **Kingston Active**

Waves Leisure Centre offers children's parties and school holiday programs; creche and occasional care; swimming lessons and water-based activities for children.

### **Kingston Arts**

Kingston Arts offers a range of events and activities throughout the year for children and young people, including programmed events during school holidays, theatre shows & creative workshops.

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## Facilities and maintenance

Kingston operates a range of other services to support the function of The City of Kingston and to maintain community amenities. These include corporate services and parks and maintenance.

Kingston City Council's also owns, controls and maintains over 200 community facilities that provide a range of services and programs for children and their families.

### 3.2 COMMUNITY SERVICES

There are many services offered in each local area through community centres, early learning centres, occasional care centres, child-care centres, kindergartens, playgroups, toy libraries and others. These services are delivered by a mix of community and private providers.

Kingston City Council's supports a range of opportunities for local community members that include learning, skill development, health and fitness, social connections, interest groups and much more. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses located throughout the council.
- Men's Sheds
- Events run by the Kingston City Council: Kingston Seniors Festival, Chelsea Twilights, Mordialloc Food, Wine and Music Festival, Outdoor Cinema, Spring Fair, Pet Expo, carols by Kingston, Citizenship Ceremonies.

## 4. Child Safeguarding in Context

### 4.1 CHILD ABUSE AND HARM

Child abuse is the mistreatment of a child or young person by an adult that has harmed, is harming or is likely to harm that child or young person's physical or emotional health, development or wellbeing.

Child abuse can be committed by the child's parent, carer or another child.

Child abuse can also be committed by a person who has contact with children through their work or volunteer activities.

Kingston City Council takes active steps to reduce the risk of child abuse and harm to children occurring in our organisation and facilities.

### 4.2 CHILD SAFEGUARDING LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found that child abuse is not a problem from the past but continues to occur in contemporary society.

The Victorian Government has introduced a suite of legislative reforms that aim to improve child safety in organisations.

In late 2015, the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safety Standards) Act 2015*, was passed in the Victorian Parliament, which introduced the Child Safe Standards to create and maintain child safe environments for organisations that provide services and facilities for children (or have regular and direct contact with children).



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The Child Safe Standards are compulsory minimum standards designed to create safe environments for children, ensure that the safety of children is promoted and ensure that allegations of child abuse are properly responded to and investigated.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme became law in Victoria in 2017 through amendments to the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)*. The Reportable Conduct Scheme requires in scope organisations to report allegations of reportable conduct to the Commission for Children and Young People.

On 19 February 2019, the Council of Australian Governments, including the Victorian Government, endorsed National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

In 2019 the Victorian Government conducted a review of the Child Safe Standards. Following the review, and the endorsement of the National Principles by Victoria, the Victorian Child Safe Standards have been updated.

On 1 July 2021 the new Victorian Child Safe Standards were published in the Government Gazette. The new Standards will come into effect on 1 July 2022.

There are eleven new Standards with corresponding actions areas. In line with recommendations of the Review, the new Standards broadly align with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, while retaining Victoria's focus on Aboriginal Cultural Safety and empowerment of children and young people.

The Victorian Child Safe Standards as of 1 July 2022:

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued
2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
4. Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused
8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

The Victorian Government has also strengthened enforcement and monitoring of the Child Safe Standards in organisations through the Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021.

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There are a number of criminal laws which also apply, including the failure to protect offence, the failure to disclose offence and the offence of grooming. In addition, amendments to the civil law now mean that there is a positive duty of care on organisations to prevent the abuse of children.

Victoria has implemented the Family Violence and Child Information Sharing Schemes. All local governments across Victoria must comply with these schemes to promote the safety and wellbeing of children.

#### 4.3 CHILD SAFEGUARDING IN THE KINGSTON CITY COUNCIL

At the Kingston City Council, we have a demonstrated commitment to child safety. We have implemented a Child Safe Policy and a Child Safe Behaviours Code of Conduct. All staff, volunteers and students are expected to comply with these policies.

##### **Kingston City Council Statement of Commitment to Child Safety**

The Kingston City Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and ensuring that no children are harmed by staff, volunteers or students. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

We have developed specific policies, procedures and training to support employees, volunteers and students to achieve these commitments. We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected, and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

We are committed to promoting children's right to safety and protection by:

- Recognising children as active citizens and advocating for their rights as valued members of the community;
- Fostering the engagement, participation and empowerment of children;
- Preventing child abuse occurring within our services, programs and facilities;
- Creating an organisational culture of child safety;
- Setting clear expectations of employees, volunteers and students as to what is required to keep children safe;
- Ensuring employees, volunteers and students are clear about their responsibilities when they are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child; and
- Ensuring all suspected abuse is reported and investigated as appropriate.

It is important that our community knows what to do if they are concerned about the behaviour of a staff member, volunteer, contractor or child who is working or using Kingston City Council's services or facilities. We have a very clear Child Safe Reporting Procedure that must be followed if there is a child safety concern.

The Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Schemes are focused on organisational harms to children. Our Child Safe Reporting Procedure is clear that all concerns regarding the safety of children in our organisation must be reported and acted on.

# 5. Consultation With Children

Kingston City Council consulted with children throughout the development of this Child Safe Strategy. In total 31 early and middle years education and care services were invited to participate in the consultation, which resulted in 86 submissions being received from children aged three to eleven years.

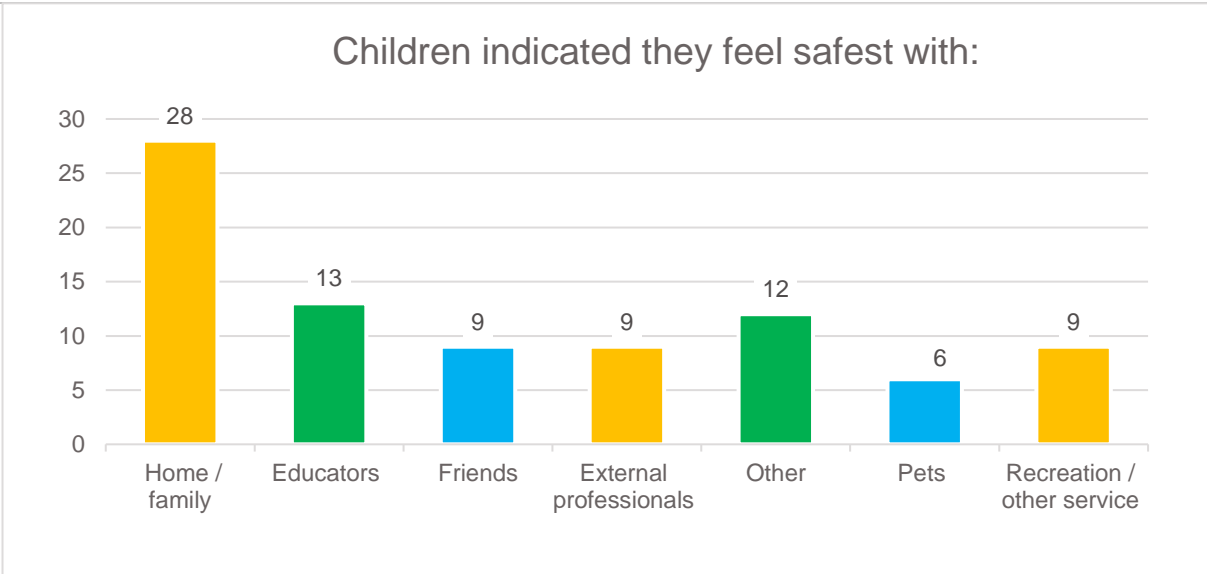
The consultation was undertaken during a COVID-19 lockdown period, which may have been a barrier and prevented some children from participating in the consultation.

The consultation was delivered in a developmentally appropriate format in person by program educators within the service environment. The question “What makes you feel safe in the community or a centre?” was asked and children were asked to draw and provide a description of their response.

## 5.1 CONSULTATION FINDINGS

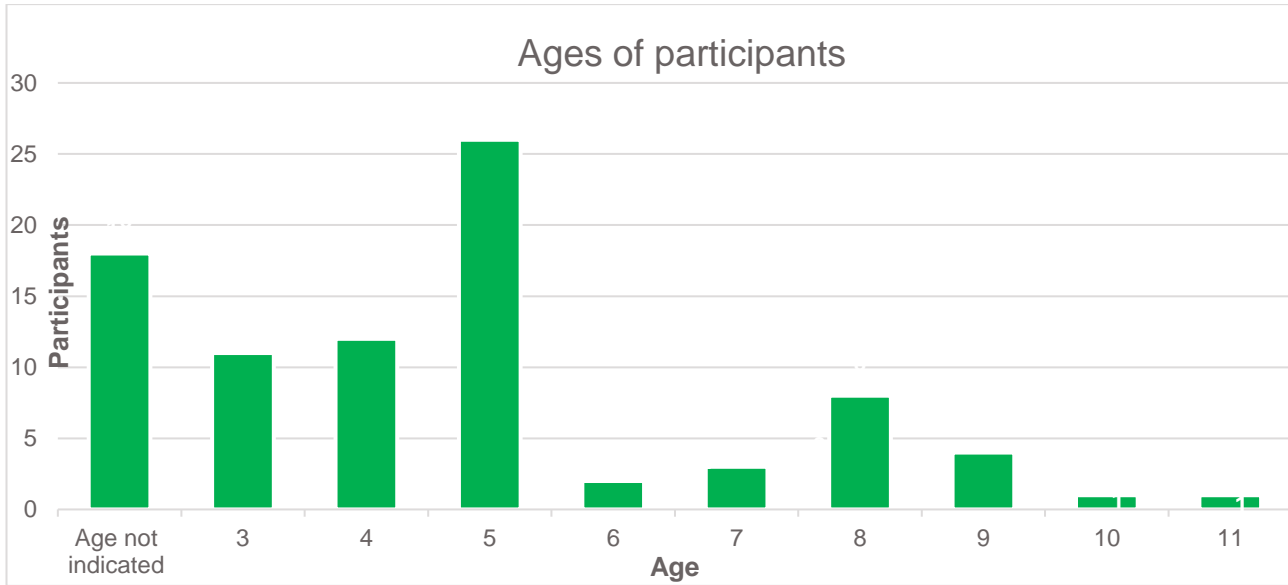
The children’s drawings indicated they feel safest in their home or with their parents/guardians, followed by educators from their service.

Table 1 – What makes you feel safe in the community or a centre?



Children aged three to eleven participated in the consultation, with five-year old’s providing the most responses followed by nearly a quarter not indicating their age.

Table 2 – Age of participants



## 6. Methodology

The development of the Child Safe Strategy has been guided by the new Victorian Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Schemes and other relevant legislation. It has been informed by the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) have produced a range of resources to assist organisations to embed child safe processes within organisations. These resources will inform the continual implementation of the strategy. The CCYP is an independent statutory body who is responsible for educating, supporting and regulating organisations that work with children & young people and to prevent child abuse.

The Kingston City Council's internal audit committee conducted an assessment of its policies, procedures and process to implement and manage the Child Safe Standards. This audit was undertaken by an independent external auditor. The assessment found that whilst there are initiatives already in place to help address the Child Safe Standards, further work is required to help mature and embed the practices across the organisation. Opportunities were identified to facilitate continuous and improved implementation which includes the development of this Strategy.

The Kingston City Council engaged an independent external consultant, who are sector leaders and subject experts regarding child safety, to undertake a review and assist with the development of the Child Safe Strategy. This consultative approach involved a thorough gaps analysis which identified Kingston City Council's achievements, and future actions and priorities required to strengthen the Kingston City Council's implementation of the new Child Safe Standards.

The Methodology has also included input and guidance from the internal Child Safe Steering Group which is a cross departmental group comprising of Managers whose teams or services have direct or regular contact with children. The role of the steering group is to provide oversight, accountability and guidance regarding the implementation of the Child Safe Standards.

The development of this Strategy has included the input and guidance from state legislation, CCYP, industry experts, internal stakeholders and the voices of children. Findings and feedback from all these groups have informed the development of the Strategy and subsequent action plan.

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## 7. Child Safe Priority Actions

Kingston City Council has a strong commitment to child safety which is supported through its policies and procedures. This Child Safe Standards strategy for 2023 – 2026 outlines the goals and actions for Kingston City Council in embedding a culture of child safety. This strategy aligns with the new Child Safe Standards which come into effect 1 July 2022.

Kingston City Council conducted an audit of its policies, procedures, and processes to implement and manage the Child Safe Standards. One of the recommendations of the audit was to develop and document a child safe strategy to outline how the Child Safe Standards will be implemented.

In addition to developing goals and objectives, we have identified key priority action areas for Kingston to continue to embed an organisational and community culture of child safety as follow:

### **Objective 1 Commitment to Child Safety**

**Goal** To demonstrate a commitment to child safety that is championed from the top down, there is a strong emphasis on child safety and wellbeing and every staff member, volunteer and student in the organisation is aware of their responsibilities to children and young people.

A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation from the top down and bottom up. There is a strong practice of continually improving our organisational responses to child safety.

Kingston City Council has developed Child Safe working and steering groups made up from Managers and Team Leaders from teams that have a high degree of interaction with children. The Child Safe Champions model will also be considered for implementation across all operational areas.

The Family and Children's Strategy Action Plan (2020 – 2024) outlines the Council's plan to

- position the most vulnerable children and families at the heart of service delivery by identifying opportunities to meet community needs, and
- continuously improve systems, processes, and staff capability through training, managing complex families, improving software, and increasing and improving support.

Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasise child safety and wellbeing. The Kingston City Council's position description and Job ads template have been updated to include a commitment to the Child Safe Standards. The document "Kingston Interview Question Guide" includes values-based questions for interviews and a section on Mandatory Child Safe Standards. The Kingston City Council's Recruitment Policy includes a reference check policy and screening procedures.

Policies and procedures are currently being developed regarding the recruitment, induction, and management of new and existing volunteers. There is compulsory online Child Safe training and volunteers database.

New employees are required to complete a compulsory online training module prior to commencing. Also provided are targeted Child Safe training and communication tools for staff and volunteers who are not able to easily engage in online training.

There is mandatory training on the Child Safe Standards and staff have access to face-to-face training when available. There is also bespoke training delivered to staff.

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At Kingston we regularly review our policies and procedures to make sure they reflect best practice and changes to legislation.

Priority Actions:

- Review all child safe policies, procedures and processes to align with the new Victorian Child Safe Standards and the child information sharing schemes
- Conduct a training needs analysis for the whole of Kingston, including staff, students, volunteers and Councillors
- Implement a child safe framework that lists all relevant policies, procedures and other documents that apply to the Child Safe Standards and provide guidance for keeping children safe at Kingston City Council.
- Develop an ongoing communication plan to regularly promote the Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Procedure across the organisation.

## **Objective 2 Reporting and Responding**

**Goal** To handle complaints and reports effectively and sensitively and ensure that everyone in Kingston understands the importance of child safety and the Kingston City Council's reporting procedure.

A robust culture of reporting and responding to child safety concerns is an important element in embedding an organisational culture of child safety. Kingston City Council has an accessible Child Safe Reporting Procedure which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of staff, students and volunteers; approaches to dealing with different types of child safe concerns; breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report. It is made clear that all staff, volunteers and students must be aware of their legal responsibilities to report and the duty of care they have to children.

The new Child Safe Standards asks organisations to implement reporting and complaints processes for children and young people. Kingston City Council will review the existing complaints processes to make sure that all children, young people and families are able to raise concerns and make complaints.

Record keeping and information sharing are important elements in responding to child safety concerns. Relevant Kingston City Council staff have attended child information and MARAM (family violence) information sharing training.

Priority Actions:

- Update the online complaints handling process and the Reporting flowchart to include details of how children can make a complaint.
- Develop a child focused complaints handling policy.
- Review and update child safe record keeping practices across Kingston City Council including the development of a process to track trends of child safe reports and complaints over time.
- Develop a Child Safe Standards Investigation Procedure
- Develop an engagement strategy to inform the community and children about the Child Safe Reporting and Complaints processes at the Kingston City Council including the development of collateral that is directed at children.

## **Objective 3 Valuing Diversity**

**Goal** To actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion of children with diverse needs, from different cultures and diverse communities.

Kingston City Council acknowledges the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understands its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people. Cultural safety is "an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what

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they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.”<sup>1</sup>

The Bunurong people are recognised as the rightful custodians of what is known as greater Melbourne including the Kingston area. The Bunurong people have occupied this area for over 30,000 years with 2000 generations living on this land.

The Bunurong people have adapted to a significant number of changes within their country. With stories of the bay flooding with water and asteroid impacts near Cranbourne. The Bunurong were amongst the first indigenous people in Victoria involved in cross-cultural entanglements with Europeans. Although, reduced to just a handful of individuals in the mid – 1800’s the Bunurong people continue to maintain their cultural obligations to care for people, the flora and fauna, the lands & the waters within the Bunurong cultural landscape, which is alive in their stories.

Creating a culturally safe environment is about relationships and actively creating opportunities for Aboriginal voices and presence in an organisation’s planning, policies and activities. Kingston City Council is committed to learning from our Aboriginal community. Kingston City Council participates in the Inter Council Aboriginal Consultative Committee (ICACC). ICACC was established in 1997 by Aboriginal people and eight committed local Councils with the vision to achieve and enhance respect, recognition, equity, and health. Kingston City Council has recently developed a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), working group and advisory group. The RAP includes a child safe statement and commitment to children. Kingston City Council has partnerships with Bunurong Aboriginal groups in the area and there is an Aboriginal portfolio officer.

Respect of Aboriginal cultures, values and practices is at the heart of creating a culturally safe organisation. Kingston City Council aims to create a physical environment that is respectful of Aboriginal culture. Our Family and Children’s Centres display images and artwork relevant to Aboriginal cultures and have RAP champions at each Centre. Our playgroups and school aged care services have dedicated culturally respectful areas and resources.

Aboriginal culturally sensitive training is provided to staff, and Kingston City Council continues to engage Aboriginal cultural educators, artists and presenters for cultural training, projects, events, and festivals.

Kingston City Council is committed to creating an inclusive community. With 30% of our residents born overseas and close to 30% speaking a language other than English at home, it is important that we recognise barriers children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may face in raising child safety concerns.

Kingston employs two diversity and inclusion officers who run a Diversity and Inclusion group. Their role is to head the diversity and inclusion committees, ensuring that all cultures are included. Kingston City Council encourages people from all cultures to apply for these roles and bring their whole selves to work.

Kingston City Council’s recruitment policy encourages diversity and the Kingston’s intranet contains information about inclusiveness and encourages diversity within the organisation.

We know from the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that children with disabilities are more susceptible to experiencing harm. Kingston City Council’s Access and Equity Advisory Committee has been established to provide advice to Council in relation to access

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<sup>1</sup> (Williams, R. 2008), quoted in CCYP, CCYP, Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children, <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-cultural-safety-aboriginal-children.pdf>

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and equity issues within the community. The Committee works towards a sustainable, equal, and more inclusive community. This includes a focus on four strategic areas within the City of Kingston: Indigenous people, people with disabilities, people from multicultural backgrounds and older people through the development of an Age Friendly Community.

The Victorian Child Safe Standards also require organisations to consider the safety needs of diverse children. This includes children who are not able to live at home and children who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Priority Actions:

- Translate policies and general information on child safety into community languages, where appropriate and into accessible methods for people with disability and for children
- Seek Rainbow Tick accreditation
- Work with the Kingston Koori Mob, ICACC local Aboriginal partnerships, Queer in Kingston and the Diversity and Inclusion Group and other community groups to strengthen child safeguarding approaches that meet the needs of diverse children and young people.

#### **Objective 4 Involving Children, Families and Community**

**Goal** To empower children and young people to participate and to engage families and the wider community in decisions that affect their children.

The Victorian Child Safe Standards require organisations working with children to have strategies in place that empower children and young people to meaningfully participate in decisions that impact them. This requirement is intended to enrich organisations' policies and processes; ensuring they best meet the needs of children they interact with. It is also intended to create a culture in which young people feel respected and valued and feel confident to report problems – particularly if they are harmed or feel unsafe.

As a practice, youth participation involves young people in activities, organisations, government and community structures, and engages them on issues that directly affect them. Fundamentally it is about meaningful opportunities for young people, valuing their contributions and empowering them to help shape our world. Kingston City Council supports young people's right to be involved in decisions that affect them. Young people have the right to represent their own interests in decision making. This includes individual care planning and goals, program design and evaluation and strategic planning. Youth participation benefits both young people and our organisation.

At Kingston City Council we are committed to child and youth participation. As part of the 2019-2022 Youth Strategy Kingston City Council developed a youth participation framework. We consulted with over 5,700 children and young people to develop the strategy.

#### **Youth Advisory Committee**

The Youth Advisory Committee has been established to provide advice to the Kingston City Council and organisations working with young people within the Kingston, in relation to youth issues. The Youth Advisory Committee is an advisory committee of Council with a Councillor or Councillors nominated on an annual basis.

The establishment of a Youth Advisory Committee provides an important forum for identifying municipal-wide issues and opportunities and advising Council about effective policy and service provision regarding young people within Kingston City Council.

The Youth Advisory Committee provides opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills and be part of the decision-making process. Further, the committee will provide the opportunities for



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young people to gain experience and knowledge of local government and the youth service system available to young people in the local and surrounding suburbs.

At Kingston City Council we embed child participation in our child focused service delivery. Staff are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns where relevant within Kingston City Council teams. Families are encouraged to be actively involved in our programs and are able to raise concerns and provide feedback.

Children and young people are informed about their rights, including to safety, information, and participation on a case-by-case basis.

Parents, caregivers, and the community are informed about the Council's operations and governance, Kingston City Council's child safe policies through the website and newsletter.

Priority Actions:

- Engage with children, young people, families and the community to develop a child friendly Child Safe Policy and Child and Youth Code of Conduct
- Engage with children, young people, families and the community to find out what being safe means to them and use the findings to inform planning and service design
- Relevant staff will receive professional development to help them implement strategies to foster the participation and engagement of children and young people in their services.

## **Objective 5    Maintaining Child Safe Environments**

**Goal**    To identify and prevent risks to child safety in both online and physical environments

A child safe organisation designs and adapts its physical and online environments and activities to minimise opportunities for abuse to occur. At Kingston City Council we take a proactive risk management approach to identify abuse risks to children.

Taking a preventative approach means identifying the potential risks in our organisation. These range from the impact of the physical and online environments, how they affect continual supervision of staff and children, the nature of the activities the organisation is engaged in, through to staff recruitment practices and the diverse needs of children and young people.

Findings of the Royal Commission demonstrate that opportunities to abuse are linked with the ability to be alone with a child and the ability to groom a child undetected over a period of time. With the impacts of COVID and the pivot to online service delivery it is also important to implement risk mitigation strategies for online as well as physical environments.

Kingston City Council has a risk management strategy and has identified teams who have developed localised child safe risk assessment, where staff have identified and mitigated risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

At Kingston City Council our Child Safe Coordinator is the central point for reporting child safe concerns. The Child Safe Coordinator reviews complaints and safety concerns to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.

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Relevant staff and volunteers are provided with training in identifying online child abuse risks, for example online grooming and safety practices. Each team has a different level of contact with children and training is delivered relevant to this level of contact.

At Kingston City Council we implement child safe recruitment procedures. Across the organisation, the Kingston has a strong working with children check and police check framework. We are reviewing our recruitment of volunteers, and our engagement processes for contractors, to identify child safety risks.

The Youth Services team has developed a policy of online safety, and the IT department has information on acceptable online behaviours. This information is available on the intranet for staff.

Priority Actions:

- Consider development of a whole of organisation risk assessment matrix for use across all services and teams
- Explore opportunities to include child safety, including risk identification and mitigation on the agenda for relevant teams across Kingston City Council.
- Include child safe risk in Kingston City Council's risk management register
- All child safe policies and procedures will be reviewed every three years
- Conduct a review of volunteer and contractor engagement to identify child safety risks
- Update Kingston City Council's Child Safe policy and include a section on online safety.

## 8. Action Planning

A child safe implementation and change management action plan has been developed alongside this the Child Safe Strategy. This plan will be reviewed regularly to strengthen our child safe approach across Kingston City Council.

The detailed action plan includes priority actions, sub actions, milestones, methodology and measures of success. It includes the five goals and objectives outlined in section 7 and will help us continue to improve our response to child safety and to embed a child safe culture across our organisation.



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