

## Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

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### Acknowledgment of Country

Greater Dandenong City Council acknowledges the Traditional custodians of this land, the Bunurong People, and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We recognise and respect their continuing connections to climate, Culture, Country, and waters.

## 1. POLICY OBJECTIVE (OR PURPOSE)

Council has zero tolerance for abuse, harm and neglect of children and young people. Council is committed to being a Child Safe organisation in which children and young people feel safe and are safe while participating in Council activities, services, and programs.

### **Being a child safe organisation is everyone's business.**

The purpose of this policy is to provide key elements of Council's approach to being a Child Safe organisation. It is designed to assist Council to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and set out the steps for doing so, by preventing and responding to any alleged child abuse or child safety concerns that may occur within Council or which are reported to Council. It sets out Council's expectations about child safe practices by staff, Councillors, volunteers, contractors, and Council's broader community.

This policy aims to:

- embed an organisational culture of child safety, for all children and young people including children or young people with a disability; and
- respect, value and promote the cultural safety of children and young people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders and/or from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

Finally, the policy informs Council employees, Councillors, students, trainees, apprentices, volunteers, and contractors, of their legal and duty of care obligations in reporting alleged child abuse and neglect. This policy is intended to operate in conjunction with the mandatory reporting requirements which apply to some groups of employees at Council, including the Chief Executive Officer under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

**If you believe a child or young person is at immediate risk of child abuse, phone 000.**

## 2. BACKGROUND

The Victorian Government introduced Child Safe Standards to improve the way organisations provide services for children and young people to prevent and respond to any child abuse which may occur within their organisation. These Child Safe Standards are a central feature of the Victorian Government's response to the Family and Community Development Committee of the Victorian Parliament's *Betrayal of Trust: Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations*.

In July 2021, a new set of Standards were legislated to commence from July 2022. Key changes in July 2022 include the following new requirements:

- to involve families and communities in organisations' efforts to keep children and young people safe.
- to provide a greater focus on safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
- to manage the risk of child abuse in online environments; and
- for greater clarity on the governance, systems, and processes to keep children and young people safe.

The Child Safe Standards are as follows:

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

In addition, three criminal offences have also been introduced in Victoria to protect children and young people from child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, as follows:

### Failure to disclose

- **All adults, not just those working with children and young people, have a legal duty to report information about alleged child sexual abuse to Victoria Police.**
- The offence applies to any adult (being a person over 18 years) who forms a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 years of age and who fails to disclose that information to Victoria Police. However, a person will not be guilty of this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information to the Police, including:
  - a fear for their own safety, the safety of the victim or other person as a result of the disclosure.
  - having already made a report to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection, including under the mandatory reporting system.
  - the victim is 16 years old or over and requests confidentiality, unless the victim has an intellectual disability and does not have the capacity to make informed consent about the disclosure and the person is, or should be, aware of those facts; or
  - the information is in the public domain, or the belief is formed solely from information in the public domain such as television or radio reports.

## Failure to protect

Any person who:

- by reason of the position they occupy within Council, has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a relevant child will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by a person who is 18 or older who is associated with Council; and
- knows there is a substantial risk that that person will commit a sexual offence against a relevant child, must not negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk.

## Grooming offence

This offence targets predatory conduct by an adult with the intent of committing child sex abuse. Conduct may include communication, including online communication, with a child under the age of 16 or their parents.

## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Council employees, Councillors, students, trainees, apprentices, volunteers, and contractors.

It applies to all activities at Council which involve, result in or relate to contact with children.

Throughout this policy, 'children' includes young people up to the age of 18

This policy is intended to be read in conjunction with any department or business unit policy, procedure or requirements covering child safety, which will prevail over this policy to the extent of any inconsistency.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Child Safety Procedure (Appendix Two).

## 4. DEFINITIONS

The following words and phrases are defined in Appendix One:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child/young person.
- Child Abuse.
- Children/young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Child/Young Person.
- Child Safe Standards.
- Child Safety.
- Child Safe organisation.
- Cultural Safety for Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander children.
- Cultural Safety for children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Children or young people with a disability.
- LGBTIQ+ children and young people.
- Reasonable belief of child sexual abuse; and
- Reportable Conduct Scheme.

## 5. POLICY

### **Council's commitment to child safety**

Council is committed to child safety.

Council wants children and young people to be safe, happy, and empowered. Council supports and respects all children and young people, as well as its own staff and volunteers.

Council has zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated extremely seriously and consistently in line with Council's policies and procedures, and all relevant legislation.

Council has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when it is concerned about a child or young person's safety, which Council endeavours to follow rigorously.

Council is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and where possible, to remove and reduce these risks, particularly in higher risk activities.

Council has robust Human Resources and Recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Council is committed to training and educating its employees, Councillors, students, trainees, apprentices and volunteers, contractors on child abuse risks.

Council is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, the cultural safety of children and young people from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, and to providing a safe environment for children and young people with a disability, those who are unable to live at home and LGBTIQ+ children and young people.

Council has specific policies, procedures and training in place which supports its leadership team, Councillors, staff, and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

### **Our children**

This policy is intended to empower children and young people. Council involves children, their families and our community when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. Council listens to their views and respects what they have to say. Council does this in a number of ways including through the Child Friendly Cities Initiative and Council's Children's Plan and the Youth and Family Strategy.

### **Cultural Safety, Inclusion and Diversity**

Council promotes diversity and tolerance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

Council will achieve its commitment to this by:

- welcoming and supporting participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ+ children and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and their families
- having zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and taking action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- striving to reflect the diversity of our community through representation in our workforce
- creating physical and online environments that actively celebrate diversity
- providing children with access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible, and easy to understand
- providing avenues for children or their families to identify their individual needs and making reasonable changes to support participation by all children
- aligning with the principles of universal design, access, equity, and inclusion which includes:
  - ensuring Council's future planning and decision making will deliver best practice for all of Council's built assets, services, activities, festivals, or events making them more accessible to children with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, and other characteristics
  - ensuring built assets and services are available to everyone who is entitled to use them and are free of any form of discrimination on the basis of a person's ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, English language skills, ability or age.
  - recognising children have different needs, characteristics, and life experiences and, although there are similarities within groups, no one child's experience is the same
- creating culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children by:
  - creating an environment that is safe for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children. This means there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity and experience
  - actively supporting and facilitating participation and inclusion within the organisation by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and their families
  - ensuring racism and discrimination are not tolerated and unconscious biases are challenged
  - acknowledging, appreciating, and celebrating the unique experiences, perspectives, and strengths of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, their families, and communities
  - seeking feedback from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, their families, and communities in relation to their experience with Council including their sense of safety in expressing their identity; and
  - integrating child safety work with Council's Reconciliation Action work.



## Codes of Conduct

All of Council's staff, Councillors, volunteers, students, trainees, apprentices, and contractors must agree to abide by the relevant Code of Conduct which applies to them, and which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

## Training and supervision

Training and education are important to ensure everyone at Council understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Council's culture aims for all employees, Councillors, students, trainees, apprentices, volunteers, and contractors (in addition to parents, guardians, carers, children, and young people) to feel confident and supported in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns.

Council educates its employees, Councillors, students, trainees, apprentices, and volunteers to identify, assess and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

Council also supports relevant employees, Councillors, students, trainees, apprentices, volunteers, including through ongoing supervision, to:

- develop their skills to protect children and young people from child abuse; and
- promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, the cultural safety of children and young people from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children and young people with a disability.

New employees, Councillors, students, trainees, apprentices, and volunteers will be supported to ensure they understand Council's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children and young people from child abuse. Appropriate work practices will be used to check that the behaviour of employees, students, trainees, apprentices and volunteers towards children and young people is safe and appropriate (please refer to the Codes of Conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further).

## Recruitment

Council takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children and young people. It develops selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate Council's commitment to child safety and an awareness of its social and legislative responsibilities. Council understands that when recruiting employees, students, trainees, apprentices, and volunteers that it has ethical as well as legislative obligations.

Council puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment processes and has effective screening tools to assist the recruitment of suitable employees, contractors, and volunteers to minimise the risk of engaging workforce members who commit child abuse or put children at risk. This includes the inclusion of child safe questions in interviews and referee checks.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a valid Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Council also carries out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that it is recruiting the right people, so children are not placed at risk.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Councillors**

Councillors are responsible for providing leadership for the good governance of Council by acting as a responsible partner in fostering and developing an organisational culture that has zero tolerance for child abuse. Councillors will advocate in the best interests of children to create and sustain a community in which children are safe and protected from child abuse.

### **CEO**

The CEO is responsible for driving cultural change and ensuring Council has zero tolerance for child abuse and a culture where protecting children from risks of child abuse or harm to a child is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of all staff across Council.

The CEO (or delegate) will ensure:

- all Councillors, employees, volunteers, and contractors are supported to undertake their roles and responsibilities in a way that focuses on child safety and transparency
- child safety is addressed at the strategic level, including the ongoing engagement of key stakeholders in the development, implementation, and review of child safe strategies
- governance level policies are appropriate, relevant, understood and regularly reviewed, in line with organisational processes and ensure they are implemented across Council
- effective leadership by championing Child Safe practices both internally and externally, that ensure Council is safe for all children
- employees, contractors, and volunteers understand their obligations to prevent, detect and report child abuse
- that all employees, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, Council policies and procedures and the Code(s) of Conduct
- that investigations are carried out into Reportable Allegations in accordance with the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*; and
- that the Commission for Children and Young People is notified and kept informed of Reportable Allegations, investigations and findings involving employees, contractors, or volunteers.

## Executive Team and Managers

The Executive Team and all Managers are responsible for supporting the CEO in creating a Child Safe Organisation and embedding a culture of zero tolerance for child abuse. This will be achieved by ensuring:

- Council has robust child safeguarding practices in place that protect children from child abuse or harm
- effective support and training are provided to employees, contractors, and volunteers in undertaking their role in preventing, recognising, responding, and reporting child abuse or harm to children.
- Reportable Allegations are investigated and reported to the Commission for Children and Young People; and
- Promoting to employees, contractors and volunteers the importance of acknowledging and appreciating the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

## Employees, contractors, and volunteers

Council has clear and well-established behavioural expectations of all employees, contractors and volunteers who engage with children as a part of their role. This includes appropriate behavioural expectations for working with all children including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and children with a disability.

All employees, contractors and volunteers at Council are responsible for ensuring the safety, participation, wellbeing, and empowerment of children while undertaking their roles. All employees, contractors and volunteers are aware of and must abide by Council's relevant Code(s) of Conduct.

Employees, contractors, and volunteers must also ensure that they:

- promote child safety at all times
- assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate or minimise any risk to the extent possible
- ensure as far as reasonably possible that team members take reasonable steps to detect and prevent child abuse
- report any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and identify any cultural safety knowledge gaps and seek training
- familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, Code(s) of Conduct, policies, and procedures in relation to child safety and comply with all requirements; **and**
- comply with all additional reporting obligations that are specific to their role such as Mandatory Reporting

## **Child Safety Working Group**

Council has established the Child Safety Working Group to assist Council in identifying ways to strengthen child safety within Council and ensure Council's leadership team remains aware of the implementation of the Child Safe Standards. The Child Safety Working Group provides governance around the implementation of the Child Safe Standards and other activities that contribute to the development of Council as a Child Safe Organisation.

## **Requirements on providers of services to Council and community groups**

Council will require any:

- providers of services to Council.
- service providers using Council facilities to provide activities for children and young people; and
- organisations or individuals using Council assets for any activity at which children or young people may be present or involved.

to have a Child Safe policy and procedure or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety. Further, Council reserves the right to review such policy and procedure or statement for compliance with the Child Safe Standards.

## **Allegations, concerns, and complaints**

Council encourages reporting of alleged child abuse and takes all allegations of child abuse seriously. This includes a person believing, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is in need of protection and the child/young person's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

The accompanying Child Safety Procedure (Appendix Two) provides the reporting procedure and methods to deal with any allegation thoroughly and in a timely manner. Any inappropriate behaviour (such as breaching a relevant Code of Conduct) should be reported through appropriate channels, including internally within Council and to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Child Protection and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Any person employed by Council who has engaged in inappropriate behaviour or unlawful conduct such as child abuse which includes racism and other forms of discrimination, may be counselled, or warned in accordance with Council policies. Serious or persistent breaches can lead to formal discipline up to and including dismissal.

Disciplinary action may also be taken against any person employed by Council who makes a false or vexatious complaint. However, no such action will be taken if a person raises a legitimate concern about alleged child abuse that is proven to be unfounded on investigation.

If an allegation is made against a person not connected with Council, then Council will delegate suitable officers to implement an appropriate process, which may include reporting the allegations to Victoria Police or DFFH.

## **Councillors, Council staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.**

Council works to ensure all children, young people, and their families know how to report any experience or observation of child abuse

Council also trains Councillors, staff, and volunteers so that they know what to do and who to tell if they observe child abuse, or if they notice any inappropriate behaviour regarding children and young people.

### **Legislative responsibilities**

Council takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including the criminal offences of failure to disclose (which applies to all adults in Victoria) and failure to protect (which applies to relevant employees of Council as well as to Councillors), as set out above. In addition, any staff members or volunteers who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties, following Departmental or Team policies or protocols.

Council and the Chief Executive Officer will comply with all obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme and take advice and guidance from the Commission for Children and Young People.

### **Fair procedures**

As well as being concerned about the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, Council also aims to be fair and just to its staff, volunteers, and Councillors (and others listed above). The decisions Council makes when recruiting, assessing, or investigating alleged incidents and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence. The principles of procedural fairness and natural justice will be applied.

Council will record all allegations of child abuse and safety concerns using the online Child Safety Report form. All records will be securely stored in confidential files, subject to the privacy and confidentiality parameters set out below.

If an allegation of child abuse or a safety concern is raised, Council will provide updates as appropriate to relevant children, young people and/or families (as well as to the person who is alleged to have committed the child abuse) on progress and actions taken by Council.

### **Privacy and confidentiality**

Council will respect the privacy of all individuals involved, whether they are staff members, volunteers, Councillors, parents/guardians/carers, children or young people, and all others listed above, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Information should be treated as confidential and should only be used and disclosed on a need-to-know basis, with the consent of the individual or their authorised representative, or otherwise in accordance with law.

Council has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal and/or health information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it. All personal, sensitive or health information is subject to Council's Privacy and Personal Information Policy.

Victimisation (such as subjecting, or threatening to subject, someone to a detriment because they have asserted their rights under law, made a complaint, helped someone else make a complaint, or participated in the investigation process) is against the law. No-one should be victimised because of making a complaint about child safety or participating in any processes associated with a complaint of child safety, including an investigation.

### **Risk management**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children and young people when a risk is identified (see information in section 2) about the offence of Failure to Protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, Council proactively manages risks of child abuse to our children and young people.

Council has risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any rooms with doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no employee, volunteer or Councillor is to have contact with a child on social media unless necessary or appropriate in the course of their role with Council).

## **6. RESPONSE TO THE OVERARCHING GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020**

This Policy is intended to ensure that Council meets the relevant governance principles in the *Local Government Act 2020*, in that it:

- makes decisions and takes actions in accordance with relevant child safety legislation, to protect the children with whom our employees, students, trainees, apprentices, volunteers, contractors and Councillors come into contact (see 'Legislative responsibilities' above – section 2).
- engages with the Greater Dandenong community, including its children, in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy where relevant and to further Council's intention to provide opportunities for children and young people in our municipality to participate in civic and community activities (see 'Our children' section above and the Greater Dandenong Council Plan);
- treats this Policy as a living document (see 'Reporting, Monitoring and Review' below);
- collaborates with the Commission for Children and Young People to ensure that Council responds appropriately to the Child Safe Standards and complies with the Reportable Conduct Scheme (see 'Legislative responsibilities' above); and
- deals with child safety in a transparent manner by having this policy on Council's website.

## 7. CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACT 2006 – COMPATIBILITY STATEMENT

The *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* has been considered in the preparation of this policy, to ensure that Council acts in a way which is consistent with human rights and is consistent with the standards set by the Charter. In particular, this policy is intended to ensure that every child with whom a Council employee, student, trainee, apprentice, volunteer, contractor or Councillor comes into contact, has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in their best interests and is needed by them by reason of being a child.

## 8. RESPONSE TO THE GENDER EQUALITY ACT 2020

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* has been considered in the preparation of this Policy but is not relevant to its contents. The Policy does not benefit or impact on any one gender group over any other.

## 9. CONSIDERATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

This Policy has no impact on Council's Declaration on a Climate and Ecological Emergency, Council's Climate Change Emergency Strategy 2020-2030 or the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* in relation to the overarching governance principle on climate change and sustainability, because the protective and administrative measures contained in it do not touch on the natural environment and does not seek to change any built environment.

## 10. RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy applies to all Council employees, students, trainees, apprentices, volunteers, contractors, and Councillors. All of those people are responsible for child safety.

This Policy is also intended to be read in conjunction with any department or business unit policy, procedure or requirements covering child safety, which will prevail over this Policy to the extent of any inconsistency.

This Policy should also be read in conjunction with the Child Safety Procedure (Appendix Two), which sets out additional responsibilities on the people covered by this Policy.

## 11. REPORTING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Council takes responsibility for continuously improving the ways in which, in its operations it provides for the safety of children and young people and the prevention of child abuse. Council encourages continuous improvement of the way in which it responds to allegations of child abuse.

As well as the scheduled review, this policy will be reviewed following significant incidents if they occur.

Council will also review this policy following any relevant feedback from children, young people, families, staff, volunteers, and Councillors.

## 12. REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

### Legislation

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (C'th)*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)*
- *Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*
- *Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)*
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)*
- *Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)*

### Related Council and Other Policies, Procedures, Strategies, Protocols, Guidelines

- Appropriate Workplace Behaviours Policy
- Child Safety Procedure (Appendix Two)
- Child Safety & Wellbeing Report form (online through Pulse)
- Betrayal of Trust: Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations 2013
- Code of Conduct - Councillors
- Code of Conduct - Contractors
- Code of Conduct – Staff
- Code of Conduct – Volunteers
- Diversity, Access and Equity Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Greater Dandenong City Council Satisfaction Procedure and Form
- Indigenous Policy
- Performance and Behavioural Issues Policy and Procedure
- Police Check Policy
- Privacy and Personal Information Policy
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Recruitment Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Working with Children Check Guidelines



### 13. APPENDIX ONE - DEFINITIONS

<p><b>Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child / young person</b></p>	<p>A person under the age of 18 who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent</li> <li>• identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and</li> <li>• is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Child abuse</b></p>	<p>For the purposes of this policy, ‘child abuse<sup>1</sup>’ includes any act committed against a child or young person involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical violence (Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person).</li> <li>• sexual offences (Sexual offences occur when a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to their age and development. It also includes possession of child abuse material and grooming).</li> <li>• significant emotional or psychological abuse (which may include hearing, witnessing or being exposed to family violence, or racial, cultural, or religious abuse. Significant emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed, or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Significant emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.); and/or</li> <li>• significant neglect (Significant neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child’s health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Significant neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life-threatening situations).</li> <li>• ‘Significant’, in relation to emotional or psychological harm or neglect, means that the harm or neglect is more than trivial or insignificant, but need not be as high as serious and need not have a lasting permanent effect.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Definitions prepared using ‘An overview of the Victorian child safe standards’, State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, November 2015, authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

<b>Children / young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds</b>	A child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.
<b>Child/Young Person</b>	A person who is under the age of 18 years.
<b>Child Safe Standards</b>	The 7 Victorian Child Safe Standards under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic).
<b>Child safety</b>	In the context of this policy, 'child safety' means measures to protect children and young people from child abuse.
<b>Child safe organisation</b>	In the context of this policy, a child safe organisation is one that meets the Child Safe Standards by proactively taking measures to protect children and young people from child abuse.
<b>Cultural safety for Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander children</b>	<p>The positive recognition and celebration of cultures is more than just the absence of racism and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.</p> <p>A culturally safe environment does not ignore, challenge, or deny cultural identity. Cultural safety upholds the rights of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander without fear of retribution or questioning.</li> <li>• have an education that strengthens their culture and identity.</li> <li>• maintain connections to their land and country.</li> <li>• maintain their strong kinship ties and social obligations.</li> <li>• be taught their cultural heritage by their Elders.</li> <li>• receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant, and accessible manner; and</li> <li>• be involved in services that are culturally respectful.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural safety for children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds</b>	<p>Cultural safety encompasses an environment which is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children and young people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are or what they need.</p> <p>Efforts need to be made to ensure that information is provided to culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and their families in a culturally sensitive, relevant, and accessible manner, including in relevant community languages.</p>

<p><b>Children or young people with a disability</b></p>	<p>Children or young people can be born with a disability or acquire a disability through an injury or illness. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are hidden.</p> <p>Disability includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• total or partial loss of body function or a body part.</li> <li>• the presence of organisms (such as HIV or Hepatitis C) that may cause disease or disability, malformation, or disfigurement of the body.</li> <li>• mental or psychological diseases or disorders; and</li> <li>• conditions or disorders that may result in a person experiencing learning difficulties.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LGBTIQA+ children and young people</b></p>	<p>Children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, gender diverse, non-binary, asexual and other terms that people use to describe their experiences of their gender, sexuality, and physiological sex characteristics.</p>
<p><b>Mandatory Reporting</b></p>	<p>The legal obligation under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), of certain professionals, as detailed in the Act, to report to the Child and Youth Protection Services when a child is in need of protection.</p>
<p><b>Reasonable belief of child sexual abuse</b></p>	<p>A ‘reasonable belief’ is not the same as having proof but requires more than suspicion. A ‘reasonable belief’ is a belief based on facts that would lead a reasonable person to think that the conduct may have occurred.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A ‘reasonable belief’ of child sexual abuse might be formed when: a child state that they have been sexually abused.</li> <li>• a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).</li> <li>• a person who knows a particular child states that the child has been sexually abused.</li> <li>• professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused; or</li> <li>• signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.</li> </ul> <p>A ‘reasonable belief’ of child abuse may occur if a person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• observed the conduct themselves.</li> <li>• heard from a child that the conduct occurred; or</li> <li>• received information from another source (including a person who witnessed the conduct).</li> </ul>

<b>Reportable Allegation</b>	<p>Any information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that a person to whom this policy applies has committed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reportable Conduct; or</li> <li>• Misconduct that may involve Reportable Conduct – whether or not the conduct or misconduct is alleged to have occurred within the course of the person’s employment or engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>Reportable Conduct</b>	<p>Reportable Conduct is conduct by an employee, student, trainee, apprentice, volunteer, contractor, or Councillor that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sexual offences committed against, with, or in the presence of a child.</li> <li>- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child.</li> <li>- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child.</li> <li>- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child; and/or</li> <li>- significant neglect of a child.</li> </ul>
<b>Reportable Conduct Scheme</b>	<p>The Reportable Conduct Scheme requires the Chief Executive Officer (or their delegate) to be made aware of any allegation of Reportable Conduct / Reportable Allegations made against an employee, student, trainee, apprentice, volunteer, contractor, or Councillor, and to report this to the Commission for Children and Young People (Commission).</p> <p>The Scheme also requires Council to ensure an appropriate investigation of such allegations and to report any findings and the reasons for the outcome to the Commission, who oversees those investigations. The Reportable Conduct Scheme process is set out in Appendix Two.</p>

## 14. APPENDIX TWO – CHILD SAFETY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Contents

The following procedures are intended to be read in conjunction with Council's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. They cover the following:

- Responding to an emergency.
- What to do if a child or young person discloses an incident of, or raises concerns about, alleged child abuse.
- What to do if another person, including a parent/guardian/carer raises a concern about alleged child abuse.
- Internal and external reporting requirements.
- Issues relating to people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with a disability.
- Council's internal processes following a report of alleged child abuse.
- Contacting parents/guardians/carers.
- Safety and support for child/young person, their family and any staff member involved.
- Record keeping requirements.
- Confidentiality and privacy; and
- External support organisations.

### Responding to an emergency

If you believe the child or young person is at immediate risk of abuse or the situation is an emergency:

- Separate the alleged victim and others involved. Ensure both parties are supervised by a Council staff member, if possible.
- If the alleged victim needs urgent medical assistance:
  - If practicable, arrange for the nearest staff member trained in first aid to assist; and
  - Call 000 and follow any instructions from emergency service officers/paramedics.
- Call 000 for urgent police assistance if the person who is alleged to have engaged in the abuse poses a risk to the health and safety of any person; and
  - Nominate a contact person within Council for future liaison with police; and
  - Find out the identity of the child/young person's care giver.

Where an incident of suspected child abuse occurs at Council, take reasonable steps to preserve the environment, the clothing, other items and potential witnesses until the police or other relevant authorities arrive. Do not clean up the area. Try to prevent discussion of the incident between those involved in the alleged incident, including any other children who may have witnessed the incident, by allocating them to separate rooms, ideally each with a Council staff member.

If the allegations are made against a Council staff member, ask that staff member to remain with a member of Council's leadership team. The staff member should be instructed **not** to discuss the incident with any other employees, children or young people, or the child's care giver or family.

## **If a child or young person discloses an incident of, or raises concerns about, alleged child abuse**

- Try to discreetly separate the child or young person from anyone else present and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child or young person talk in their own time and use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- If the child/young person has a disability, impairment or language barrier which may hinder their communication with you, use an appropriate alternative communication method. Ideally, this will be the method the child usually uses or is comfortable with. You may need to involve an interpreter or advocate.
- Remain calm and use a neutral and non-judgmental tone.
- Reassure the child or young person that you take what they are saying seriously; that it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing by telling you about it.
- Explain to the child or young person that this information will need to be shared with others, such as with specific people in Council, and potentially their parent/guardian/carer, the Department of Health, and Human Services (DFFH) Child Protection or Victoria Police (as relevant), so that they can help.
- Do not make promises to the child or young person (such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident), except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Comfort the child or young person if they are distressed but limit physical contact. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them and continue to follow these reporting procedures.
- Avoid asking investigative, unreasonably intrusive, or invasive questions which may cause the child to withdraw and may interfere with an investigation.
- Avoid going over information repeatedly.
- Give them the name and contact details of an appropriate contact person at Council, unless doing so will place the child's safety at risk.

## **If a parent/guardian/carer or other person raises a concern about alleged child abuse**

- Explain that Council has processes to ensure all abuse concerns or allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child or young person.
- Allow the person raising the concern to talk through the incident in their own words. Do not ask unreasonably intrusive or invasive questions.
- Advise the person that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information will need to be repeated to Council's management, and potentially Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection.
- Do not make any promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child or young person safe if this is within your power or control.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be, in accordance with this procedure.
- Give them the name and contact details of an appropriate contact person at Council.

## Internal and external reporting requirements

**If you believe the child or young person is at immediate risk of abuse or the situation is an emergency, call 000 for urgent medical or police assistance.**

### Recording

- As soon as possible after any disclosure, record the information accurately and in as much detail as possible using the online Child Safe Incident Report form, in one of two ways:
  - Work through the Child Safe Incident Report form together either electronically or using a printed .pdf of the form, if you think the person is able to do this.
  - If the person is too upset, or has a disability, impairment or language barrier which may hinder or prevent them from being able to complete the Child Safe Incident Report form with your help, or you cannot access a networked computer at the time, complete the form yourself on the basis of the person's communication with you, using their words.
- Tell the person making the report that Council is collecting the information to assist it to respond to the allegations or safety concerns. Explain that the more information they can give you, the better Council can respond.
- If you otherwise form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, abused, record your allegations or belief accurately and in as much detail as possible on the Child Safe Incident Report form.

### Child Safe & Wellbeing Incident Report form

- The Child Safe & Wellbeing Incident Report form can be accessed via the following path:
  - Pulse / Incidents & Claim Management / Report other Incident*
  - Then type 'Child' into the search field to access the following report forms that may then be completed online or printed as a PDF to complete as a hardcopy:
    - **External** [regarding a non-Council person]; or
    - **Internal** [regarding a Council representative e.g., employee/agency/contractor/volunteer/Councillor].
- The completed online form will only go to the person to whom you report the incident. Do not give a copy of the form to any other person.
- Alternative reporting arrangements will be provided to staff who do not have access to Pulse

## Reporting internally

- Report the disclosure or allegation/belief to one of your direct supervisors.
- In particular, if you reasonably believe that a Council employee (including a person in authority at Council), student, trainee, apprentice, volunteer, contractor or Councillor has committed child abuse or misconduct involving child abuse either during or outside their Council duties, you may report this directly to the CEO. However, if your belief relates to the CEO, then you may directly notify the Commission.
- You must report internally even if you have reported to Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection.
- If the disclosure is made or allegation/belief is formed outside of office hours (usually before 8.00am or after 5.30pm on a weekday, or on the weekend), then follow your local reporting procedures.
- The person to whom you report the matter may then refer it to another Council officer to assist in dealing with it appropriately, including from Youth & Family Services, Children's Services, Maternal and Child Health or Integrated Community Support.

## Reporting externally

- If you form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 years of age, you **must** report this to Victoria Police, unless you have a reasonable excuse for not doing so (see Council's Child Safe Policy for more information). If you reasonably believe that a Council employee, student, trainee, apprentice, volunteer, contractor, or Councillor has committed child abuse or misconduct involving child abuse either during or outside their Council duties, you may notify the Commission.
- If your position within Council means that you have mandatory reporting requirements, comply with these requirements in accordance with any procedures set out for your work unit.
- In any event, if you believe, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is in need of protection and the child/young person's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child, you may notify DFFH Child Protection South Division Intake - 1300 655 795, or if it is after hours, call 13 12 78 (24 hours, 7 days a week, toll free within Victoria) State *'I want to make a report'*. You may first discuss your intention to notify with Manager People and Procurement Services, a member of the Organisational Development Team, Council executive leadership or another Council officer to whom the matter has been referred.

Permission to make an internal or external report is not required from Council or from parents/guardians/carers of a child where abuse is suspected, and parents/guardians/carers do not need to be notified that a report has been made.

## Issues relating to people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with a disability

Some people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse. For example, people from some cultures may experience anxiety when talking with police and communicating in English may be a barrier for some. You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet people's needs where possible, such as having an interpreter present.



If an allegation of abuse involves an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person, you will need to ensure a culturally appropriate response.

A way to help ensure this could include, if possible, engaging with parents/guardians/carers of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children or young people (with the child or young person's consent), local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation (see the External Support Organisations on the last page). Council's Community Development team can assist with this process.

Some children or young people with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an alleged incident. For example, children and young people with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters.

Advice on communicating with people with a disability can be found on the DFFH website [Communicate and consult with people with a disability - DFFH Service Providers](#). If the person has a disability and their advocate is not present or immediately available, or they do not have an advocate, contact the Office of the Public Advocate for advice or support (tel: 1300 309 337).

## Council's internal processes following a report of alleged child abuse

### A Council person

- If an allegation is made against, or a child safety concern is raised about:
  - a Council employee (including any student, trainee or apprentice employed directly by Council), Council will investigate and manage the allegation in accordance with Council's Policy & Procedure for Performance and Behavioural Issues.
  - the Chief Executive Officer, the Mayor will deal with the matter under the CEOs Contract of Employment. If the matter falls within the Reportable Conduct Scheme, the Mayor/delegate should notify the Commission.
  - a Councillor, the Chief Executive Officer will deal with the matter under the Code of Conduct – Councillors.
  - a student, trainee or apprentice who is not employed by Council, Council will investigate and manage the process in conjunction with the person's employer.
  - a volunteer, Council will investigate and manage the process in accordance with the Code of Conduct – Volunteers.
  - a contractor to Council, Council will investigate and manage the process in accordance with the Code of Conduct – Contractors.
- If the CEO becomes aware of an allegation which falls within the scope of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, then<sup>2</sup>:
  - The CEO/delegate must notify the Commission, in writing, within **3 business days** (the Commission has an online form for this purpose);
  - Council will conduct an investigation into the allegation/s, irrespective of whether a funding body, regulator or Victoria Police is also investigating some or all of the allegations.
  - Council will use an appropriately qualified, trained or experienced independent investigator for the investigation, who may be external to Council. The investigation should be conducted in accordance with the Commission for Children and Young People's guidance material.

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<sup>2</sup> More information about the Reportable Conduct Scheme requirements is available from the Commission for Children and Young People, The Source and Council's Organisational Development Department.

- The independent investigator should:
  - o Collect and document the evidence, including interviewing all alleged child victims and witnesses unless there is a good reason not to.
  - o Establish the facts, based on the evidence.
  - o Make findings or recommendations about the findings that could be made, based on the evidence, if asked to do so by Council; and
  - o Prepare an investigation report detailing the outcome of the investigation.
- As soon as possible and within **30 calendar days**, Council must provide the Commission with:
  - o Detailed information about the reportable allegation.
  - o Whether or not disciplinary or other action has been taken against the person.
  - o Reasons as to why disciplinary or other action is to be taken or not; and
  - o Any other written submissions the person wishes to be considered in determining disciplinary or other action to be taken against them.
- As soon as practical following the investigation, the CEO/delegate must provide the Commission with a copy of the investigation findings and information about actions taken.

If Victoria Police is investigating the allegations, Council will not commence an investigation until it has received permission from Victoria Police.

The Commission may report substantiated allegations to the Working with Children Check Unit as part of ensuring that individuals who pose a risk to children are not permitted to work with children, even if they do not have a criminal record.

## An external person

If an allegation is made, or child safety concern raised, about a person external to Council, then Council will delegate an appropriate Council employee to manage the process in conjunction with Victoria Police or DFFH.

## Contacting parents/guardians/carers

### If an allegation is made about a person connected with Council

If an allegation is made against a Council employee, volunteer, student, trainee, apprentice, contractor, or Councillor, it may be appropriate for Council to contact the child or young person's parent/guardian/carer. If so, the Manager People and Procurement Services, Organisational Development team member or Council executive team member or operational Manager, to whom the issue has been referred, will be responsible for contacting child or young person's parents/guardians/carers as soon as practicable. Ideally this contact will be made together with the reporting staff member. This enables the parents/guardians/carers to prevent or limit the child or young person's exposure to further abuse, and to ensure their child/young person receives the support they need.

However, in some circumstances, contacting a parent/guardian/carer may place the child or young person at greater risk. Therefore, before contacting the child or young person's parents/guardians/carers, the relevant Council officer **must** discuss this potential contact with Victoria Police or DFFH Child Protection (depending on to whom the report has been made). They will advise about whether and when it is appropriate to contact the child or young person's parents/guardians/carers.

Where a Council officer contacts the parents/guardians/carers:

- Remain calm.
- Be empathetic to feelings.
- Validate concerns.
- Provide appropriate details of the alleged incident, disclosure, or suspicion of child abuse.
- Outline the action that Council staff members have taken to date.
- Inform them of the person to whom the alleged incident, disclosure or suspicion has been reported.
- Provide the name and contact phone number of DFFH Child Protection and/or the police officer who is investigating the alleged incident.
- Provide information on whether they are likely to be contacted by DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police, if known.
- Inform them that the investigation may take some time and ask what further information they would like and how Council staff can assist them.
- Advise them of the support that can be provided to the child or young person.

### **If an allegation is made about a person not connected with Council**

If an allegation is made against a person not connected with Council, then Council delegated officers will manage the notification process in conjunction with Victoria Police or DFFH.

### **Safety and support for child/young person and any staff member involved**

The child or young person should be referred to the appropriate community services for support. As these services can change over time, the relevant unit in the Community Services Directorate (Aged Care, Youth Services, or Children's Services) may be asked for advice as to the best service to contact. Otherwise, see the table at the end of this procedure for external contact details.

Council staff members involved in any way in any suspected child abuse situation may access Council's Employee Assistance Program on 1300 687 327.

### **Record keeping requirements**

Records must be kept about any child safety concern or complaint. These records should contain comprehensive description of incidents/ issues of concern and provide evidence for actions taken, including reports made to statutory authorities or professional bodies and follow-up actions to be completed.

As a first step, use Council's online Child Safe Incident Report form.

## **Privacy and confidentiality**

### **Confidentiality of reporter**

Reporters are permitted to remain anonymous, except in specific circumstances. These include where a court or tribunal decides that it is necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child, or the reporter or a person with information is required to attend court to provide evidence.

## Confidentiality of information and records

All information and records must be handled in accordance with Council's Privacy & Personal Information Policy. This means, among other things, that privacy must be maintained, and information only used and disclosed on a need-to-know basis, with the consent of the individual or their authorised representative, or otherwise in accordance with law. Reports contain personal information and may also contain sensitive or health information so they must be treated as private and securely stored.

## Collection notices

The Child Safe Incident Report form is designed to capture personal and sometimes health information about the reporter, the child or children in question and other support people. This information is protected by privacy legislation.

As a general rule, Council needs to give a 'collection notice' to an individual where it has collected this type of information about them, unless an exception applies. As such, the Council person to whom the information is reported should assess, together with Organisational Development, whether Council has taken reasonable steps to ensure that each individual about whom the information has been collected, has received an appropriate collection notice.

**If you believe a child or young person is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.**

## External support organisations

### Child Protection

Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection intake: **8765 5444**

State *'I want to make a report'*.

### Interpreting and translating

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Service provided</b>	<b>Contact number</b>
Victorian Interpreting & Translating Service (VITS) Language Loop	Interpreting in over 160 languages including indigenous: onsite, in conference, telephone, video, SMS and multilingual chatbots	(03) 9280 1941 User ID: 39811 PIN: 3175
Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)	24/7 interpreting services to people who do not speak English.  Can request interpreter of particular gender, if available	131 450  <i>Council currently not signed up to this service but will accept calls from TIS National</i>

## Disability

Office of the Public Advocate	Provides an advice service for people with disability 9am-4.45pm, Monday to Friday	Tel: 1300 309 337 TTY: 1300 305 612 National Relay Service: 133 677
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## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)	Provides programs and services to reinforce Aboriginal culture and encourage best parenting practices and advise government in relation to child abuse and neglect in the Aboriginal community.	(03) 9108 3500 (Dandenong office)
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## Support for children and young people

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Service provided</b>	<b>Contact number</b>
Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) – Emergency Counselling & Support Line	Support and intervention for victims/survivors of sexual assault 24/7 sexual assault and family violence crisis response	1800 806 292 (sexual assault) 1800 015 088 (family violence)
South-Eastern CASA	Support and intervention for victims/survivors of sexual assault in our region.	(03) 9594 2289 (Bentleigh East office)
Australian Childhood Foundation	Provides trauma recovery services to children who have suffered abuse, among other services	1300 381 581
Child Wise – National Child Abuse Helpline	Support for anyone concerned about or affected by child abuse including victims, caregivers, friends, professionals. Will provide guidance where a person has a concern about a child/young person.	1800 991 099
headspace	Provides a variety of services to support good mental health	1800 367 968 (Dandenong centre)

Kids Help Line	24/7 counselling for children and young people (5-25 yo) about any issue.	1800 551 800
eSafety Commissioner	Takes cyberbullying complaints from anyone – can report online abuse at any time <a href="https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/contact-us">https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/contact-us</a>	
Lifeline	24/7 crisis support suicide prevention by phone, text (12 to midnight) or online chat (7pm to midnight)	13 11 14 Text 0477 131 114
Berry Street	Therapy and ongoing support to help children affected by violence, abuse, and neglect.	Noble Park (03) 9239 1400 or (03) 9429 9266 Dandenong (03) 9792 1110