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# Child Safety Code of Conduct

## *For parents and guardians*

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### **Purpose**

The City of Stonnington aims to provide welcoming and safe environments for all. We believe that all parents/guardians play a valuable role in the life of the community.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct for parents and guardians (the Code) serves to protect children (aged 17 years and under) and parents/guardians by reducing opportunities for abuse to occur in our services and programs.

It establishes clear expectations for acceptable behaviour with children and stipulates the appropriate boundaries and standards of behaviour required of parents/guardians to ensure child safe environments are maintained at all times.

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**A child safe environment is one that is open, respectful, accountable, and aware of the possible risks to the safety and wellbeing of children.**

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The Code applies to parents, guardians, step-parents, carers, kinship carers, grandparents, extended family, babysitters, or any other adult caregiver of a child in Council's care.

For convenience, the term 'parents/guardians' will be used throughout the document. All parents/guardians are bound to observe child safe principles and act appropriately towards and in the company of children (as noted below) when using Council's services.



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## **Parents and guardians have the right to:**

- » be treated with respect and dignity by staff and other parents
- » have a timely response to concerns raised
- » be treated with professionalism from all staff members
- » be listened to and clearly communicated with
- » have their cultural identity valued by the people and environments that surround them
- » privacy, and to be informed of how their personal information will be used
- » confidentiality, and to be informed of the limits of confidentiality
- » be consulted on issues that affect them and their children
- » ask questions and speak up about how the organisation meets the child safe standards, and
- » ask for and receive appropriate supports.

**If a child is in immediate risk call Triple Zero (000) without delay**

## **All parents/guardians using City of Stonnington services are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:**

- » adhering to the Code at all times and upholding Council's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- » ensuring that your children are aware of their rights, the behaviours that are expected of the adults responsible for them, and know who to speak to if they feel unsafe, i.e. by reading the child-friendly version of the Code of Conduct with them
- » taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and harm
- » talking to and listening to your children about safety – it is only through their eyes that you can gain a sense of how safe the organisation and their relationships with other adults feel to them
- » regarding all children equally and with respect and dignity
- » behaving as a positive role model to all children
- » listening to and treating the safety concerns of all children seriously, particularly if they disclose that they or another child they know has been abused
- » placing the interests of any child being harmed, or at risk of harm, above your own interests
- » empowering your children to speak up if they have a concern for their safety or wellbeing
- » refraining from the use of violence, bullying, teasing, threatening and discriminatory remarks about or in the presence of children



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*For parents and guardians*

- » encouraging your children to participate in relevant programs and activities, and to 'have a say' about issues that affect/are important to them
- » respecting the privacy of other children and their families by only sharing your concerns and information with those who need to know, i.e. the relevant authorities and/or the service's staff
- » ensuring the safety of any child in immediate risk of harm by calling the police without delay
- » reporting any allegations/concerns regarding the sexual abuse of any child to the police, and
- » reporting any child safety or protective concerns you have, including the unsafe or inappropriate behaviour of a council officer, to the service manager as soon as practicable.



## Your responsibilities

### ***Failure to Disclose offence***

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. Established under the *Crimes Act 1958*, a new criminal offence was introduced in October 2014 which imposes a clear legal duty upon all adults to report information about child sexual abuse to police.

Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult (18 years and over) against a child 15 years and under (16 being the legal age of consent) **MUST** report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence. The maximum penalty is 3 years imprisonment.

» If the child is in immediate risk call Triple Zero (000) without delay.

» If there is no immediate risk but you have concerns about sexual abuse, call 000 or the Moorabbin Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) on 9556 6128.



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## **When attending our services, parents/guardians will not:**

- » engage in an intimate or sexual relationship with a child, or have purposeful contact with a child with the intention of grooming that child for later sexual activity
- » develop a 'special' relationship with a child to the exclusion of others or show favouritism, for example, by offering gifts or special treatment
- » hit, or physically assault a child
- » shout, yell or speak to a child in an angry, intimidating or threatening manner
- » exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical, or that are of a personal nature that one could reasonably expect a child to do for themselves
- » kiss, hold, or cuddle children (other than their own)
- » engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children
- » use inappropriate, offensive, humiliating or discriminatory language in the presence of children
- » express your personal values or beliefs regarding politics, culture, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability or lifestyle in the presence of, or when speaking to children, or to discriminate against a child either through communication or conduct based on such differences
- » provide children with your personal details, i.e. a phone number, address, social media profile
- » have inappropriate online contact with or use social media to access, solicit or befriend a child
- » misuse images of children taken at Council's services, programs or activities
- » smoke, consume alcohol or illicit drugs, or be substance affected in the presence of a child
- » condone, participate, or make inappropriate self-disclosures relating to participation (past or present) in illegal or unsafe behaviours when in the presence of a child, and
- » ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse and put children at further risk of abuse or harm either through negligence or inaction.

**Council Officers have a legal and duty of care obligations to report any suspected or disclosed incidences of child abuse to the police and/or child protection.**