



BELLINGEN SHIRE COUNCIL

**CHILD SAFE
CODE OF CONDUCT**



1. Commitment Statement

Bellingen Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

This includes encouraging a culture where the prevention and reporting of abuse is supported and encouraged.

All Councillors, employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors are required to comply with the behaviour expectations listed in this code of conduct and are responsible for promoting the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children.

- **Bellingen Shire Council has zero tolerance of child abuse in our organisation.**

We are working to embed the NSW Child Safe Standards into our organisational leadership, governance and culture and by adopting strategies and acting to put the interests of children first and keep them safe from harm.

2. Expectations

At Bellingen Shire Council

- We want children to be safe, resilient, happy and empowered.
- We want children to be connected to each other, community and culture.
- We respect and uphold children's right to privacy.
- We support and respect children of all ages, cultures, religions, education levels, children of diverse sexualities and genders and children with disability.
- We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with disability.
- All allegations and safety concerns are treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, or where there is an allegation against one of our employees or volunteers, which we follow rigorously.
- We are committed to preventing child abuse by identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
- We have robust human resources and recruitment practices to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing employees and volunteers.
- We work closely with our contracted service providers to ensure the services they are delivering on our behalf are child safe.
- We are committed to regularly training and educating our Councillors, employees and volunteers, on child abuse risks and obligations to prevent abuse and respond appropriately.
- We are committed to providing information and enforcing our expectations for contractors with regards to child abuse risks and obligations to prevent abuse and respond appropriately.
- We are committed to continually improving our child safeguarding policies and practices through scheduled policy reviews, audits and by closely examining our policy and practice following any child safety incident or report.

This Code of Conduct identifies positive child safe behaviours that we encourage all adults to support. It also identifies behaviours that we consider unacceptable. Engaging in unacceptable behaviour is a breach of this Code of Conduct and may result in managerial or disciplinary action.



3. Expected behaviours

This Code of Conduct sets out Council's expectations for how adults should behave around children.

This is important to help prevent children from being harmed. Child abuse takes many forms and can include physical, sexual and psychological abuse, ill-treatment and neglect.

All Councillors, employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors are required to:

- ✓ Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions
- ✓ Act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people
- ✓ Avoid any unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person
- ✓ Report any misconduct or inappropriate behaviour by other Council employees to their supervisor
- ✓ Contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse – phone 000.
- ✓ Report any suspicions based on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm to their supervisor or the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111.

4. Unacceptable behaviours

All Councillors, employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors must not:

- ✗ Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people
- ✗ Unlawfully discriminate against any child
- ✗ Engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them
- ✗ Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves
- ✗ Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time
- ✗ Develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs
- ✗ Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- ✗ Arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the Council's services, programs and activities
- ✗ Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and their parent/s or guardian/s
- ✗ Work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- ✗ Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children
- ✗ Use inappropriate language in the presence of children.

5. Expectations of holding a Working with Children Check

All employees, contractors and volunteers holding a Working with Children Check must:

- ✓ Act in accordance with this Code of Conduct outside of work, and note their behaviour, regardless of whether at work or not, may be subject to the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- ✓ Should they become aware another Bellinghen Shire Council employee poses a serious risk of abusing a child under 18 years of age, alert their supervisor and ensure measures are taken to remove or reduce the risk of abuse.
 - This may include, but is not limited to: taking the child to a safe place; arranging additional supervision and where necessary in consultation with Council's Manager People and Culture, removing the employee posing a potential risk to children from child related work.



Note: 'failure to protect' where an employee has power to do so, may incur a penalty of up to two years' imprisonment.

6. Related Legislation, Guidance and Policies

Relevant legislation and guidance:

- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- Children's Guardian Act 2019
- Child Safe Standards

Related Council policies:

- Child Safe Policy

7. Breaches of this Code

In addition to any legal action that may arise, Council will take appropriate action where breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct have been identified, this can include:

1. Councillors:
 - a. disciplinary action in accordance with their Code of Conduct
2. Employees:
 - a. disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
3. Contractors:
 - a. Contractors employees may be removed from the work place and prevented from entering, Council premises.
 - b. Contract organisations may have their contracts terminated in accordance with the terms of their contracts.
4. Volunteers:
 - a. disciplinary action up removal from Council premises and prevention from attending Council events.
5. Visitors:
 - a. disciplinary action up removal from Council premises and prevention from attending Council events.

8. Individual commitment to the Code of Conduct

All Councillors, employees' volunteers and contractors employees are required to sign a Child Safe Statement of Acknowledgement.

This Child Safe Statement of Acknowledgement includes a reference to the Child Safe Code of Conduct and a personal commitment to adhering to the expected Child Safe Behaviours.