

## Open Space Workshop Notes:

### Child Safety Standards

Not all are aware of what these standards are, do they need to do anything and how they may affect them. As advised by those rolling out the standards, it was expressed that if we run activities of any sort or have children around for any purpose i.e. work placement or volunteer etc. we should be complying with the standards. In any circumstance, we are responsive to their needs. The standards are a guide for creating a child safe organisation, and must have regard to Aboriginal, multicultural, and disabled children. Schools also have a responsibility to ensure appropriate safe guards are in place in the 'workplace' they are sending them to.

Working with Children Check is a good starting place, but we need to be implementing more. There is a need for an organisational policy, internal process for reporting and include an action in JSA. Each person now has responsibility to report something if they see it. Even if reported to a General Manager or facilitator, if that person fails to report it, both are liable.

Participants were very confused on the requirements and how to go about becoming compliant. Given there are so many Coastcare groups the team felt that **DELWP should work up a basic policy and JSA actions** etc. that would go out to the groups that could be amended to meet each individual group's needs. Some of the participants did not have Working with Children's Check as they were of the understanding there was a fee associated with getting one. This is another issue maybe DELWP could work through with the groups again and assist them in obtaining these checks.

The Child Safe Standards is a guide for creating a child safe organisation. There are 7 standards. The guide is available on the web or a hard copy may be requested.

- The Commission for Children and Young People has set up a dedicated email and phone line and is the advocacy body to change the systemic blindness and cover up child abuse/children at risk over the years.
- The standards apply to organisations with direct and regular contact with children. The standards ensure a minimum standard of safety in all organisation and businesses providing services to children. This includes our schools program and summer holiday program. Even if parents are in attendance does not mitigate the risk. This includes volunteer organisations such as Coastcare and Landcare.
- The standards apply to all personnel within Barwon Coast and volunteer groups.
- The standards are about the rights of children to feel safe and be safe at all time, which is part of Victorian law. Nothing in the standards changes the responsibility to report child abuse to police.
- Child abuse is defined as sexual abuse including grooming with intent, physical abuse or violence, serious psychological or emotional abuse, serious neglect.
- What may be deemed to be sufficient in one standard may not be sufficient in our circumstances. The standards are flexible and are principle based.
- If a child requires a permit to work the standards must apply.

- If the child is on work placement or volunteering the standards must apply.
- Also need to ensure the child is not the abuser of others.
- The schools also have responsibility to ensure appropriate safe guards are in place in the work place they are sending them to.
- Must also be aware of cultural safety for Aboriginal children and CALD communities.; recognise the impacts of the past, consider their needs, create a respectful and inclusive environment.
- Must also consider children with disabilities and introduce measures to ensure safe participation of these children.

Standard 1 Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements: - leading from the top down, applying strong governance, zero tolerance and support for diversity of children. About removing barriers, statement of commitment and make it visible

Standard 2 A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety – making a statement and requiring all staff and volunteers to uphold this approach. There are already examples of policies and procedures to follow. A template is in the guide.

Standard 3 A Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour for children – provide clear written guidance detailing acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, educating staff and volunteers and acting on concerns. This is also applicable to whomever we engage to deliver services to children on our behalf.

Standard 4 Screening, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel - Working with childrens check a good starting point.

Standard 5 Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse – is everyones responsibility, have clear reporting process, ensure staff are aware of their duty of care and legal responsibilities, keep accurate records. Need internal process for reporting; could be as simple as calling the police if you believe a child to be at risk.

Standard 6 Strategies to identifying and reduce or remove the risk of child abuse – thinking and planning a risk management approach being proactive in reducing the likelihood or risk emerging or escalating. This could be as simple as including into our JSA something like evidence /suspicion of child abuse ring 000 and fill in BC incident report form. A staff member may choose to report it directly to the general manager. However if the general manager fails to notify the police, both the staff member and the general member are liable.

Standard 7 Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children - supporting children to understand their rights, valuing and respecting childrens opinions, seeking childrens views and establishing an environment of trust.

With regards to volunteer groups Coastcare etc, the Statewide Coordinator should be developing a standard package for each group that then could add to meet their needs as some may run different

programs. The biggest angst in the room was from these volunteer groups having to all do their own but it should not be handled that way.

A way forward is to look at what we currently have in place, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Understand the level of risk associated with our organisation and services/activities we provide, identify further information/advice needed, seek the support and develop and implement the plan/actions.

We do not have to have it in place immediately but must demonstrate we are working towards implementing Child Safety Standards over the next 12 months.