



## PARLIAMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS POLICY

#### 1. PURPOSE

This policy informs Parliament of South Australia employees and volunteers of their responsibilities regarding the safety and welfare of children under the age of 18 when undertaking tours and programs at Parliament House or run by the Parliament off-site.

This policy is issued in accordance with relevant child protection legislation. The Parliament of South Australia is committed to South Australia's child protection systems. In keeping with the principles to be observed when dealing with children under the age of 18 as set down in the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA)* and the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)*, the safety of children under the age of 18 is the paramount principle of this policy.

#### 2. COMMITMENT TO SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children are entitled to be free from harm and risk of harm, have their rights upheld and their welfare promoted. For a child who has been, or is at risk of maltreatment, safety encompasses freedom from threat of danger or loss. It also includes protection of physical, sexual and psychological harm and risk of harm.

This policy is based on the principles that for children under the age of 18 their safety is the paramount concern; they are amongst the most vulnerable members of our society; they need to know and believe they have the right to be safe at all times; they are entitled to basic human rights regardless of gender, special needs, cultural or socioeconomic factors; and they are people in their own right deserving of respect, care and protection.

Regardless of whether they are employed in positions whereby formal screening and/or training is mandatory, all Parliament of South Australia staff and volunteers are to act in a positive way to maintain a safe environment for children when they engage in tours and programs in Parliament House or Parliament run programs off-site.

All Parliament of South Australia staff are also bound by the Staff Code of Conduct, which includes the values: professionalism, trust, respect and honesty and integrity. Identified employees will also be bound by the Child Safe Environments Code of Conduct.

#### 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of the Parliament of South Australia while they are at work or when performing work duties off-site. This policy also provides guidance to Members of the Parliament of South Australia and their staff when providing tours and programs to children in Parliament House and the course of their duties.

Identified employees are required to sign the Child Safe Environments Code of Conduct acknowledging they accept and will act in accordance with this policy.

This policy also underpins the Parliament's expectations of external organisations, their staff and volunteers that hold events at Parliament House.

#### **4. COMMUNICATION**

This policy is available to all staff on the Parliament House intranet page and is also included in induction materials for new staff. The policy is publicly available to schools or groups on the Parliament's Education website.

This policy is also provided to all Members of Parliament for their information and for their dissemination to their staff as they see fit.

#### **5. PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Children and young people engage with their Parliament in a variety of ways, including:

- School tours led by a Member or their staff (or, on occasion, a Parliament staff member);
- Civics and the City programs led by the Community Education Office;
- Other specialised programs and events organised or supported by the Community Education Office;
- Off-site programs delivered at schools by the Community Education Office and supporting staff; and
- External events held by third parties for which the Parliament serves as a venue for their program.

During all of the above, the safety of the children and young people participating is of paramount importance.

All schools are provided with and/or have access to a social story ahead of their visit to Parliament.

Feedback is sought from teachers and students via an online form at the conclusion of all Community Education Office programs, and once a school term for Member-hosted tours.

#### **6. CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Parliament of South Australia has a Child Safe Environments Code of Conduct (see Appendix 1) that staff in roles supervise or participate in the delivery of education programs to children and public tours must agree and adhere to. The Code is provided to new staff during induction or when transferring to a relevant role. Sections 9 and 10 of the Policy details how breaches of the Code will be addressed.

#### **7. RECRUITMENT**

All shortlisted candidates are required to satisfactorily complete a Recruitment Declaration prior to offer and formally acknowledge their obligations under the Staff Code of Conduct as part of their induction. Position descriptions identify when a role will be working with children and young people. Following face to face interviews, referee checks of preferred applicants are conducted. All new staff are subject to probationary periods during which they are supervised and observed.

Staff recruited to positions that have interaction with children and young people are required to obtain Working With Children Checks as administered by the Department of Human Services prior to commencing employment. It is the responsibility of the Recruitment Panel Chair to verify this has occurred, or the Manager of Community Education and Engagement's responsibility for internally seconded staff / when duties are assigned to existing staff.

## 8. SUPERVISION, TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

Staff and volunteers are appropriately inducted, supervised and trained in accordance with the requirements of their role descriptions. All school tours and programs provided in Parliament House or off-site have teachers and parent helpers present at all times. Programs off-site provided by the Parliament directly involve a minimum of two staff present at all times. No staff member will ever be left alone with children without another responsible adult present.

All staff who interact with children will read and understand the Mandatory Notification Information as part of their induction. Booklet available at [www.dhs.sa.gov.au/cse](http://www.dhs.sa.gov.au/cse). Staff who are mandatory reporters due to the nature of their position will undergo Safe Environments: Through Their Eyes training through a provider endorsed by the Department of Human Services.

Staff have access to free and confidential counselling and support via the Employee Assistance Program, Access on 1300 66 77 00.

## 9. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO HARM OR RISK OF HARM

Certain people have mandatory notification obligations under section 30 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)*. A mandated notifier is required by law to notify the Department for Child Protection if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm. The Act states that:

*Employees of, or volunteers in, an organisation that provides health, welfare, education, sporting or recreational, child care or residential services wholly or partly for children or young people, being a person who:*

- *provides such services directly to children or young people, or*
- *holds a management position in the organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children or young people*
- *officers or employee of a prescribed organisation (as per section 114 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)) who holds a management position in the organisation, the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of services to children and young people.*

Under these provisions, staff employed in the Community Education Office and the line manager of this office would meet the criteria of a mandatory reporter. Child protection is everyone's responsibility and all employees are encouraged to make a report regardless of whether they are legally obligated to.

In the event of a reasonable belief that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm, the following steps will be taken:

- A written record will be made of the suspicion of at risk of harm; As soon as practicable, as per Section 31 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)* a mandated reporter or notifier will report or notify the Department for Child Protection (via the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78) if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm and that suspicion was formed in the course of the person's employment;
- If a person suspects on reasonable grounds a child is being harmed or is at risk of harm right now, they must call the SA Police on 000.
- The person who has made the report to CARL will notify their line manager of the report.

Staff who may experience vicarious trauma through this process are referred to the Parliament's Employee Assistance Program, Access Programs.

For further information on what constitutes at risk of harm and when to make a report please see: <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse/mandated-notifiers-and-their-role>

## 10. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS OR FEEDBACK

The Parliament will deal with all complaints or breaches of its Code of Conduct promptly, sensitively and fairly.

When concerns or complaints, including suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct, are raised that do not trigger mandatory reports, these must be reported in the first instance to the Community Education and Engagement Manager. In the event that the concerns or complaints relate to the Community Education and Engagement Manager, they should be raised with the Serjeant-at-Arms and Usher of the Black Rod.

The following steps will be taken in the event of a complaint:

- A written record will be made of the complaint and stored securely;
- The staff member who is the subject of the complaint's Line Manager and/or the Manager of People and Culture will be notified of the complaint;
- A meeting will be held with the subject of the complaint (and their support person/representative if they so choose), their line manager and People and Culture to discuss the complaint.
- For further detail on the handling of complaints refer to the Parliament's Complaints and Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure.
- People and Culture to liaise with complainant/affected child or young person's caregivers as required.

In the event that the Parliament becomes aware of relevant information regarding a staff member, including a serious criminal offence, child protection information or disciplinary or misconduct information the screening unit will be notified by the Manager of People and Culture.

## 11. RISK MANAGEMENT

The following risks to children and young people at the Parliament include:

- Taking images of children and young people;
- Supervision of children and young people;
- Physical environment;
- Physical contact;
- Protecting privacy and confidentiality; and/or
- Procedures for dealing with situations where a member is being investigated for, or is charged with, a serious criminal offence.

A risk assessment matrix including mitigation strategies has been prepared and signed by management – see Appendix 2.

## 12. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- a) Child Safe Environments Code of Conduct
- b) Parliament of South Australia Staff Code of Conduct
- c) Child Safety Risk assessment matrix
- d) Staff and volunteer recruitment procedures and information regarding the working with children check requirements
- e) Parliament Risk Management Framework and Register

**13. REVIEW**

The Parliament will, at a minimum, review its child safe policies and procedures once every 5 years as required by the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (SA).

The Parliament will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with Department of Human Services upon review of child safe policies and procedures.



**Rick Crump**  
Clerk  
House of Assembly

23 / 1 / 2025



**Chris Schwarz**  
Clerk  
Legislative Council

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