



Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy

24 March 2014

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 and the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Regulation 2001 require regulated organisations and businesses to develop and implement a child and youth risk management strategy which aims to keep children and young people safe. This is Barcaldine Regional Council's child and youth risk management strategy.

1 Introduction

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 and the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Regulation 2001 require regulated organisations and businesses to develop and implement a child and youth risk management strategy which aims to keep children and young people safe.

To comply with the legislative framework, a child and youth risk management strategy must include eight minimum requirements. These requirements:

- address an organisation or business's **commitment** to creating a safe and supportive service environment within the organisation
- strengthen an organisation or business's **capability** to provide such an environment
- assist an organisation or business to manage any particular **concerns** with respect to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who are involved with the organisation or business, and
- promote the **consistency** of an organisation or business's approach to risk management, both within the organisation or business and with respect to its compliance with the requirements under the Commission's Act.

1.1 The eight requirements are contained within four areas:

1.1.1 Commitment

- A statement of commitment to the principles of safe and supportive service environments (mandatory requirement 1), and
- A code of conduct (mandatory requirement 2).

1.1.2 Capability

- Recruitment, selection, training and management strategies that encourage best practice and enhance the safety and well-being of children and young people (mandatory requirement 3).

1.1.3 Concerns

- Policies and procedures for handling disclosures and suspicions of harm (mandatory requirement 4)
- Policies and procedures for the occasions where there might be a breach of the organisation's child and youth risk management strategy (mandatory requirement 5), and
- A planning process for high risk activities and special events (mandatory requirement 7).

1.1.4 Consistency

- Policies and procedures for compliance with Chapter 8 of the Commission's Act (which regulates the blue card system) [mandatory requirement 6], and
- Strategies for communication and support for all stakeholders including children and young people (mandatory requirement 8).

2 Commitment

2.1 Statement of Commitment

Barcaldine Regional Council supports the rights of children and young people and is committed to providing a safe and supportive service environment directed at ensuring their safety and wellbeing.

In order to support this commitment, Council is dedicated to its child and youth risk management strategy which has policies and procedures in place to effectively address the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in our care.

2.2 Code of conduct for employees and volunteers

To ensure children and young people are kept safe from harm, the following code of conduct applies for interactions with children and young people in the Barcaldine Regional Council (see Box 1). The table outlines the standards of appropriate behaviour under the code of conduct, and applies to all paid employees, volunteers and visitors who enter Council's service environment.

Box 1 Standards of appropriate behaviour

Behaviour	Appropriate	Inappropriate
Language	<input type="checkbox"/> Using encouraging/positive words and a pleasant tone of voice <input type="checkbox"/> Open and honest communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Insults, criticisms or name calling <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying, swearing or yelling <input type="checkbox"/> Sexually suggestive comments/jokes
Relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Being a positive role model <input type="checkbox"/> Building relationships based on trust <input type="checkbox"/> Empowering children to share in decision making	<input type="checkbox"/> Favouritism or giving gifts <input type="checkbox"/> Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children <input type="checkbox"/> Contact outside of working hours (either physical or via email/phone) <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying, harassment <input type="checkbox"/> 'Grooming' children or young people
Physical Contact	<input type="checkbox"/> Allowing for personal space <input type="checkbox"/> Touching due to medical emergency or protecting from physical harm <input type="checkbox"/> Non-threatening	<input type="checkbox"/> Violent or aggressive behaviour including hitting, kicking, slapping or pushing <input type="checkbox"/> Kissing or touching of a sexual nature consistent with 'grooming'
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate attire/clothing for role <input type="checkbox"/> Use of internet/mobile phone for work related purposes only	<input type="checkbox"/> Using alcohol or other substances before or during work <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate clothing <input type="checkbox"/> Sending inappropriate emails

In the event that the code of conduct for interacting with children and young people is breached, actions will be taken in accordance with Barcaldine Regional Council's plan for managing breaches of the child and youth risk management strategy.

"I have read, understood, and will act in accordance with the above code of conduct."

Name _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

3 Capability

3.1 Recruitment, Selection, Management and Training of Staff and Volunteers

Regulated employers, people carrying on regulated businesses and sole operators are responsible for developing policies and procedures about recruitment, selection, management and training to meet their particular environments.

Barcaldine Regional Council has put in place policies and procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing paid employees and volunteers. Each process is considered separately in order to minimise risks at each stage to provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people. This includes position descriptions and planning to ensure ongoing training and development.

This is necessary because while the blue card screening process is an assessment of a person's eligibility to work with children and young people, the recruitment and selection of staff is Council's first opportunity to ascertain a person's suitability to work with children and young people in Barcaldine Regional Council. Training and management allows Council to monitor and develop staff members' skills and performance.

Organisations that employ people who are committed to safe and supportive service environments for children and young people are better able to provide a high quality and effective service. Adults who work with children and young people have a responsibility to promote their wellbeing and protect them from harm. They also have an opportunity to make a positive contribution to the child or young person's life. It is important that the people who work in our organisation share the Barcaldine Regional Council's values and promote the wellbeing of children and young people.

3.1.1 Managing and Training

An effective organisation requires that staff receive ongoing training. It is essential that staff provide a positive contribution to the service environment and commit to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Training will enhance the skills and knowledge of employees and volunteers, and reduce exposure to risks.

Barcaldine Regional Council staff will receive training in the following areas:

- identifying, assessing and minimising risks
- the organisation's policies and procedures (including the organisation's code of conduct)
- compulsory training as required by industry standards or legislation, and
- handling a disclosure or suspicion of harm, including reporting guidelines.

Recognition of formal training may include:

- higher education training and accreditation
- training offered by external organisations
- training developed and delivered internally, and
- on-the-job training meeting key objectives.

Training may also be informal such as:

- inviting police officers or Child Safety staff to meetings to discuss issues in relation to child protection
- inviting other professionals to speak at meetings or functions, and
- internal mentoring and coaching.

A training register will be maintained to ensure that training procedures are followed and any training requirements are met. The training register will help to ensure that staff is appropriately trained and aware of the responsibilities of their roles, and that Barcaldine Regional Council keeps effective records in relation to training requirements, potential areas for staff development and the regularity of training.

Box 2 and Box 3 on the next two pages respectively show the Training Register template – Training Delivered for Barcaldine Regional Council, and the Training Register template for Individual Employees or Volunteers – Own Records.

4 Concerns

4.1 Policy and Procedures for Handling Disclosures or Suspicions of Harm

The following policy and procedures will ensure that staff respond as quickly as possible and in the best interests of the child or young person under 18 years of age, when disclosures or suspicions of harm are received. Barcaldine Regional Council recognises that children and young people are vulnerable members of the community and that extra measures must be taken to protect and support them.

4.1.1 Policy

All staff will receive training in identifying risks of harm and handling disclosures or suspicions of harm as soon as possible upon commencing employment. All staff will report disclosed or suspected harm to either the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) or the Queensland Police Service who will decide on an appropriate course of action.

4.1.2 Who must comply with this policy?

The following people must comply with this policy:

- employees and volunteers
- contractors
- committee members, and
- work experience students/ students on placement.

4.1.3 Definitions

Harm may be categorised by the following types:

- *physical abuse*, for example, beating, shaking, burning, biting, causing bruise or fractures by inappropriate discipline, giving children alcohol, drugs or inappropriate medication
- *emotional or psychological abuse*, for example, constant yelling, insults, swearing, criticism, bullying, not giving children positive support and encouragement
- *neglect* for example, not giving children sufficient food, clothing, enough sleep, hygiene, medical care, leaving children alone or children missing school, and
- *sexual abuse or exploitation*, for example, sexual jokes or touching, exposing children to sexual acts or pornography or having sexual intercourse with a child or young person under 16 years of age (even if the child appears to have consented).

4.1.4 Suspicion of harm

You can suspect harm if you are concerned by significant changes in behaviour or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries.

4.1.5 Disclosure of harm

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen.

Disclosures of harm may start with:

- “I think I saw...”
- “Somebody told me that...”
- “Just think you should know...”
- “I’m not sure what I want you to do, but...”

4.2 Procedures to minimise harm to children and young people

Barcaldine Regional Council works to minimise harm to children and young people by acting in a manner that supports their interests and wellbeing, by:

- making sure that children know that it is their right to feel safe at all times
- teaching them about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in general
- letting them know who is and who is not an employee in the organisation
- allowing them to be a part of decision-making processes
- making sure they are safe by monitoring their activities and ensuring their environment meets all safety requirements
- taking anything a child or young person says seriously and following up their concerns
- letting them know there is no secret too awful, no story too terrible, that they can’t share with someone they trust
- teaching them about appropriate and inappropriate contact in a manner appropriate to their age and level of understanding
- teaching children and young people to say ‘no’ to anything that makes them feel unsafe
- encouraging them to tell staff of any suspicious activities or people, and
- listening to children and young people and letting them know that staff are available for them if they have any concerns.

4.2.1 Procedures for receiving a disclosure of harm

When receiving a disclosure of harm:

- remain calm and find a private place to talk

- don't promise that you'll keep a secret; tell them they have done the right thing in telling you but that you'll need to tell someone who can help keep them safe
- only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter; probing questions could cause distress, confusion and interfere with any later enquiries, and
- do not attempt to conduct your own investigation or mediate an outcome between the parties involved.

5 Reporting guidelines for disclosures or suspicions of harm

Following are the actions Barcaldine Regional Council will take immediately following a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

5.1 Documenting a suspicion of harm

If you or others have concerns about the safety of a child, record your concerns in a non-judgmental and accurate manner as soon as possible. If a parent explains a noticeable mark on a child, record your own observations as well as accurate details of the conversation. If you see unsafe or harmful actions towards a child in your care, intervene immediately, provided it is safe to do so. If it is unsafe, call the police for assistance.

5.2 Documenting a disclosure of harm

Complete an incident report form or record the details as soon as possible so that they are accurately captured. Include:

- time, date and place of the disclosure
- 'word for word' what happened and what was said, including anything you said and any actions that have been taken, and
- date of report and signature.

If you need to take notes as the person is telling you, explain that you are taking a record in case any later enquiry occurs.

5.3 Reporting the disclosure or suspicion of harm to authorities

Barcaldine Regional Council will not conduct its own enquiries in relation to the disclosure or suspicion of harm or try to come to an agreement between the parties involved. The person who receives a disclosure or suspects harm is to contact the relevant authority to ensure information provided is comprehensive and accurate.

Report the matter to:

- Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) on freecall 1800 811 810, or
- Queensland Police Service on 4651 1322

5.4 Actions following a disclosure of harm

Support and counselling will be offered to all parties involved.

5.5 Processes for those involved in the report

5.5.1 The child or young person

The children and young people involved should be offered appropriate counselling and support.

5.5.2 The person who made the report

Under Section 22 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, a person who reports suspected child abuse is protected from civil or criminal legal actions and is not considered to have broken any code of conduct or ethics.

Details of the person who made the report will be kept completely confidential and will not be made available to the family of the child or young person, or the person against whom the allegation has been made.

5.5.3 The person against whom the allegation has been made

If the person responding to the allegation of harm is an employee of the Barcaldine Regional Council their duties will be reviewed. If they continue to interact/ work with children, they will be appropriately supervised at all times. Legal advice may be sought as to the extent to which that person can carry out duties in the Council.

5.6 Review procedures

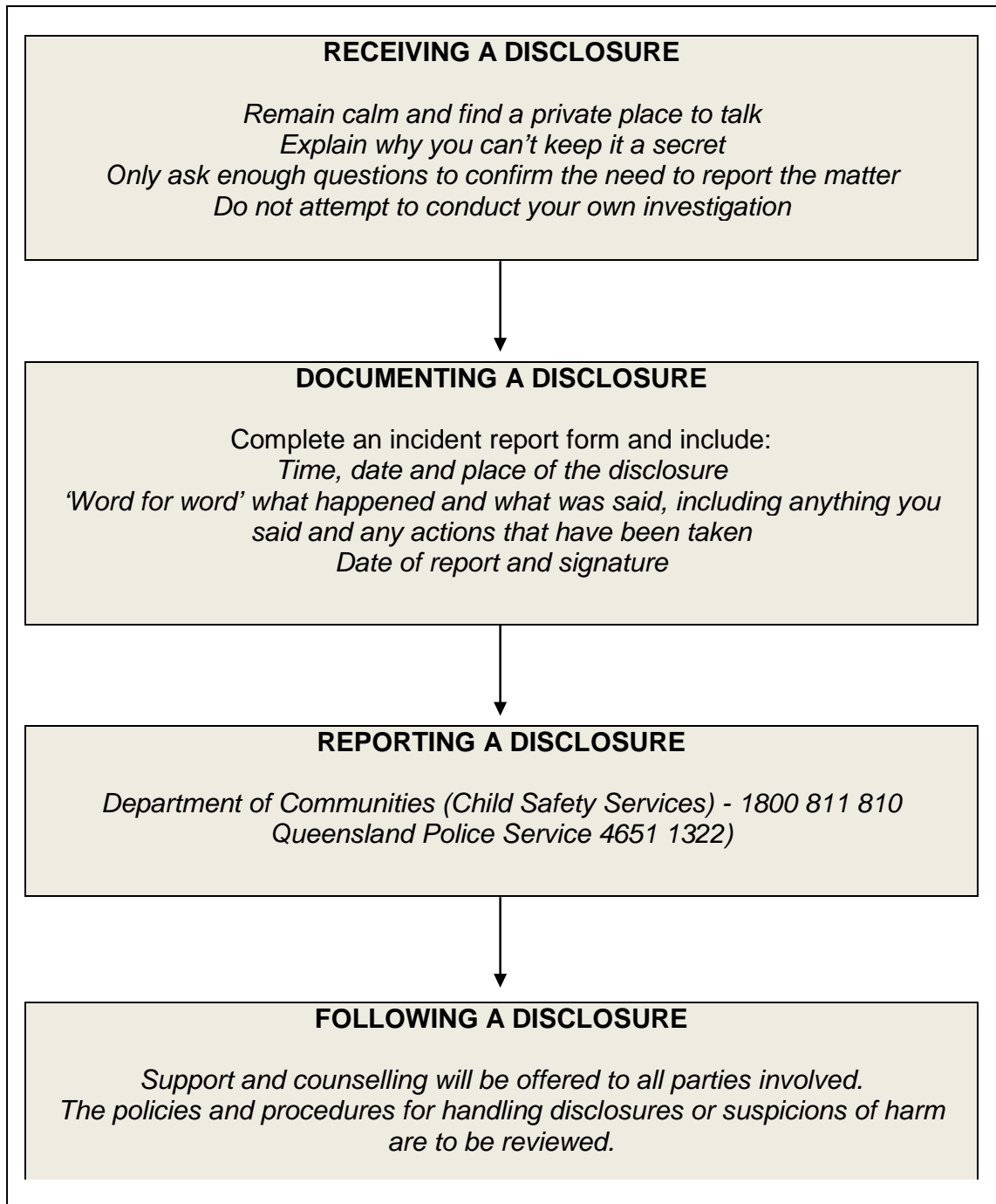
Barcaldine Regional Council's policy and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm will be reviewed and assessed regularly (at least annually) to ensure that the organisation is continuing to provide a safe and supportive service environment.

Responsible person/ officer: _____

Date: _____

Review Date: _____

Box 4 Flowchart for Reporting Guidelines



6 Consistency

6.1 Compliance with Chapter 8 of the Commission's Act (Blue Card Compliance)

Barcaldine Regional Council's policies and procedures comply with the blue card system requirements under the Commission's Act. The procedures are designed to:

- ensure compliance with the legislation
- maintain an accurate staff blue card register, and
- review and update the child and youth risk management strategy annually as required and ensure that the strategy remains current and effective in identifying and minimising risks of harm to children and young people.

The Barcaldine Regional Council will:

- appoint a 'contact person' who will be responsible for managing blue cards within the organisation
- develop policies and procedures about deciding who requires a blue card and who is exempt, as per the Commission's Act
- ensure that all information in relation to blue card applications is kept confidential, and
- maintain a blue card register of all staff and volunteers.

6.2 Procedures

In the initial application stage, Barcaldine Regional Council will:

- notify all applicants that by signing the application form they are consenting to the screening process under the Act
- be able to certify that the 'contact person' has sighted documents to confirm an employee's identity as prescribed under the Commission's Act
- carefully check through the application form to ensure all sections have been appropriately completed. This will minimise unnecessary delays that can result if the Commission is required to request further information after receiving an incorrect or incomplete form
- be aware that while paid employees can commence employment after an application form has been submitted to the Commission, volunteers and trainee students must not commence regulated employment until they hold a valid blue card and positive notice
- explicitly warn all potential staff (paid employees, volunteers and students) that it is an offence for a 'disqualified person' to sign a blue card application form or a renewal form. **It is an offence for an employer not to provide this warning.** A person is disqualified if they:
 - have been convicted of a 'disqualifying offence'

- are a 'reportable offender' with current reporting obligations under the *Child Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004*, or
- are subject to an offender prohibition order under the *Child Protection (Offender Prohibition Order) Act 2008*, or
- are subject to a sexual offender order under the *Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003*, or
- are subject to a disqualification order from a court prohibiting them from applying for, or holding a blue card (see the Commission's website for further details of all the above).
- inform prospective employees who may be 'disqualified persons', that in certain circumstances, they may be able to apply for an 'Eligibility declaration' under the Act, and
- send a completed 'Authorisation to confirm a valid blue card' form to the Commission to register Barcaldine Regional Council as the applicant's current employer if a new employee has a current blue card. This is compulsory and organisations may be subject to penalties for failing to submit an authorisation form for a new employee. As an authorised employer, the Commission will notify Barcaldine Regional Council if there is any change to the validity of the person's blue card due to a change in their police information.

While a blue card application is being processed, Barcaldine Regional Council will not:

- employ volunteers or students until they have received their blue cards, nor
- employ any person in regulated employment:
 - who withdraws their consent to employment screening
 - whose application has been withdrawn for any other reason, or
 - who is issued with a negative notice or whose blue card is cancelled or suspended.

If Barcaldine Regional Council employees or volunteers advise that they have had a change in their police or disciplinary information after being issued with a blue card (and during the application process if it is a paid employee who has already commenced working), Council must not continue to employ the person unless it has submitted a 'Change in police information' form to the Commission. Barcaldine Regional Council is aware that employees and volunteers are not required to disclose to it the specific nature of any change in their police or disciplinary information, only that a change has occurred. As a listed employer (either on the initial application form that was submitted or on an 'Authorisation to confirm a valid blue card' form), the Commission will notify you of any suspension or cancellation of the person's blue card.

If an employee has had a blue card cancelled or suspended or receives a negative notice after a change in police information, Barcaldine Regional Council will:

- ensure the employee does not continue to undertake child related work within Council (work that is regulated by the Commission’s Act), and
- if Council does continue to employ the person to perform work that is not child-related, will ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to manage any risks of harm to children and young people that may arise as a result of the person’s ongoing employment within Council.

Barcaldine Regional Council will notify the Commission if an applicant or blue card holder stops working for Council, and if the contact person changes.

It is important to note that:

- blue cards are current for three years unless cancelled or suspended
- the blue card renewal process involves a new national police information check, a check of disciplinary information where applicable and a complete reassessment of an applicant’s eligibility, and
- in order to continue working while a renewal application is being processed, blue card holders must submit their renewal application at least 30 days prior to their card’s expiry date.

6.3 Annual Review

Barcaldine Regional Council’s child and youth risk management strategy will be reviewed at least annually and will include input from Council’s stakeholders, including children and young people, within policies and procedures.

Council’s annual review of its child and youth risk management strategy will be documented and consider:

- whether policies and procedures were followed
- whether any incidents relating to children and young people’s risk management issues occurred
- the actual process used to manage any incidents
- the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in preventing or minimising harm to children and young people, and
- the content and frequency of training in relation to the child and youth risk management strategy.

6.3.1 Procedures for reviewing the child and youth risk management strategy

To ensure that the child and youth risk management strategy remains current and effective in identifying and minimising risks of harm to children, this strategy will be monitored and reviewed.

6.3.2 Frequency of reviews

This strategy will be reviewed annually in accordance with the legislation. In the event that Council identifies concerns, particularly following an incident, the child and youth risk management strategy will be reviewed.

6.3.3 Who will be involved in the review?

Employees and volunteers, parents and carers, children and young people and other stakeholders will be involved in the review of the child and youth risk management strategy.

6.3.4 What will be covered in the review?

The child and youth risk management strategy will be reviewed in its entirety. The date of the review, where the review took place, who was present and what was discussed will be recorded. Issues to be considered in the review include:

- whether stakeholders adhered to the policies and procedures
- the incidents relating to the protection of children or young people from harm and the outcome of these incidents
- the effectiveness of policies and procedures in preventing or minimising harm to children and young people, and
- the frequency of training in the child and youth risk management strategy.

6.3.5 Following the review

Stakeholders will be advised of any changes to policies and procedures, and training will be provided if necessary.

6.3.6 Procedures for maintaining the employee register

Barcaldine Regional Council will regularly review and update the employee register.

Responsible person/officer _____

Date _____ **Review Date** _____

6.4 Employee Register

Under the Commission's Act, the Commission has the power to conduct an audit on an organisation to ensure that organisations maintain an employee register. In addition, if a complaint is made to the Commission in relation to an individual or the organisation, the Commission may ask for a copy of the employee register. Failure to comply with this requirement is an offence.

Barcaldine Regional Council will establish and maintain an employee register which is a written record or register of all business operators, paid employees and volunteers involved in child-related activities within Council. Procedures will be developed for establishing and maintaining a register in either electronic or hard copy format.

If employees or volunteers come to Barcaldine Regional Council with a blue card, Council will confirm validity of the card.

Barcaldine Regional Council's obligation regarding its blue card register is to maintain a written record of all Council employees (see blank employee register on the next page) which includes:

- whether or not the person requires a blue card (if not, why not - eg. the parent exemption applies)
- the type of application (eg. paid or volunteer)
- when the person applied and/or the date of issue of the positive notice and blue card
- the expiry date of the blue card
- the renewal date (this should be at least 30 days before expiry to allow employees, including volunteers, to continue working in child-related employment)
- whether a negative notice has been issued any change in status to a blue card (eg. a change in police information, the positive notice and blue card is cancelled or suspended);
- where there is a change in police information, the date you informed the Commission of the change
- where an employee leaves your organisation and the date you informed the Commission, and
- any change of personal information of an employee, including the date they informed the Commission (it is an offence for an employee to fail to notify the Commission on the appropriate form of any change in personal details within 14 days).
-

Blank Employee Register¹

Name of organisation: _____

Nature of services provided to children and young people: _____

Categories of Regulated Business and Employment - Please tick relevant category below

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Residential facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Schools – employees other than teachers or parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Health, counselling or support services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hostel for children other than residential facility | <input type="checkbox"/> School crossing supervisors | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious representatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Care of children under Child Protection Act 1999 | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational programs conducted outside of school | <input type="checkbox"/> Churches, clubs and associations involving children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child accommodation services including homestays | <input type="checkbox"/> Private teaching, coaching or tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Sport and active recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Schools – boarding facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Child care | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency services cadet program |

Name	Date of Birth	Employee Type (B=Business / Self Employed P=Paid V=Volunteer E=Executive Officer)	Is a blue card/Exemption Card required?		Status 1. Holds valid blue card 2. Application being processed 3. Negative Notice 4. Blue card suspended 5. Application withdrawn	Action if: • Negative Notice • Blue card suspended • Application withdrawn	Blue card Number (----/--)	Expiry date of Blue card	Renewal due date for application
			Y/N	If no, state reason					

Employee Register completed by: _____

Position held: _____

Date Reviewed: _____

¹ The requirement to maintain a register of staff is made pursuant to Section 171 and 172 of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 and Section 3(a)(f)(i) of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Regulation 2001.

6.5 Managing Breaches

6.5.1 Plan for Managing Breaches

This plan outlines the steps to be taken following a breach of the child and youth risk management strategy in order to address the breach in a fair and supportive manner.

6.5.2 Definition

A breach is any action or inaction by any member of the organisation, including children and young people, that fails to comply with any part of the strategy. This includes any breach in relation to the:

- statement of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and the protection of children from harm
- code of conduct for interacting with children and young people;
- procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing paid employees and volunteers
- policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines
- policies and procedures for implementing and reviewing the children and youth risk management strategy and maintaining an employee register
- risk management plans for high risk activities and special events, and
- strategies for communication and support.

All stakeholders will be made aware of the actions or inactions that form a breach as well as the potential outcomes of breaching the child and youth risk management strategy.

6.5.3 Who must comply with this plan?

- employees, volunteers and contractors
- committee members
- work experience students/students on placement
- parents and carers
- children and young people.

6.5.4 Processes to manage a breach of the child and youth risk management strategy

Breaches will be managed in a fair, unbiased and supportive manner. The following will occur:

- all people concerned will be advised of the process
- all people concerned will be able to provide their version of events

- the details of the breach, including the versions of all parties and the outcome will be recorded
- matters discussed in relation to the breach will be kept confidential, and
- an appropriate outcome will be decided.

6.5.5 Suitable outcomes for breaches

Depending on the nature of the breach, outcomes may include:

- emphasising the relevant component of the child and youth risk management strategy, for example, the code of conduct
- providing closer supervision
- further education and training
- mediating between those involved in the incident (where appropriate)
- disciplinary procedures if necessary, or
- reviewing current policies and procedures and developing new policies and procedures if necessary.

Responsible person/ officer _____

Date _____ **Review Date** _____

The following Incident Report Form will be completed in the event of a reported breach.

Incident Report Form



Name/s of the person or people involved in the incident

Description of the incident

Date incident occurred _____

Time incident occurred _____ AM / PM

Location where incident occurred

Immediate action taken

If no action taken – reason

Name of person completing form _____

Contact telephone number _____

Signature _____

Date _____ Time _____ AM / PM

Name of person to whom the incident was reported _____

Contact Numbers:

Barcaldine Police (07) 4651 1322

BRC On Call Phone 0428 683 465

Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) on freecall 1800 811 810,