***1. What is the National Statement of Principles for Child Safe Organisations?***

The National Statement of Principles (National Principles) sets out 10 principles and related guidance on how to build child safe organisations.

The National Principles will enable all organisations providing services to children and young people to consider what they need to do in their organisation to provide for child safety and wellbeing.

These principles will help all organisations that provide services to children and young people – whether large or small – to foster a culture of child safety.

The National Principles are:

* A commitment under the [*National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children Third Action Plan (2015-2018)*](https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children/programmes-services/children/protecting-children-is-everyones-business-national-framework-for-protecting-australias-children-2009-2020-third-action-plan-2015-2018) which is a joint commitment by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the non-government sector
* Underpinned by a child rights approach
* Designed to allow for flexibility in implementation
* Aligned with existing child safe approaches and state and territory regulations.

***2. What is a child safe organisation?***

A child safe organisation puts children’s best interests first.

Children gain great benefits from being involved in organisations of various kinds – such as their local sports club, art or cultural centres, their school, or youth centre. Organisations help children to meet friends, learn new skills and be active participants in their community. The vast majority of organisations, workers and volunteers are motivated to do what is best for children and young people. Many organisations are already working to ensure child safety and wellbeing, for example, by having a child safe policy or screening workers for suitability to work with children.

A child safe organisation consciously and systematically:

* creates an environment where children’s safety and wellbeing is the centre of thought, values and actions
* places emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children
* creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people
* creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm
* responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.

***3. What are child rights?***

Children as well as adults have human rights. Children also have the right to special protection because of their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.

The main international human rights treaty on children’s rights is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world. Australia ratified the CRC in December 1990, which means that Australia has a duty to ensure that all children in Australia enjoy the rights set out in the treaty.

The CRC incorporates the whole spectrum of the inter-connected human rights of children - civil, political, economic, social and cultural - and is underpinned by four general principles: children’s right to survival and development; children’s right to enjoy their rights without discrimination; respect for the best interests of the child as a primary consideration; and children’s right to be heard and participate in decisions that affect them.

The CRC also contains a specific right to safety under article 19. Article 19 requires Governments to implement legislative, administrative, social and educative mechanisms to ensure children are properly cared for and protected from violence, abuse and neglect from their parents, or anyone else who cares for them. This right can only be realised by ensuring all other rights are upheld.

[*https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/about-childrens-rights*](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/about-childrens-rights)

***4. How do the National Principles relate to requirements in my state/territory and for my organisation?***

Organisations and some individuals that provide services to or work with children and young people must meet the requirements of their state or territory. This includes background check schemes for those seeking to work or volunteer with children. Links to state and territory requirements can be found here: [www.humanrights.gov.au/child-safe](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/child-safe).

The National Principles provide additional high level guidance to organisations, to allow flexibility in implementation and recognising the variety of organisational, types, sizes and capacities. The indicators are examples of signposts that an organisation meets the principles. The indicators are provided as a guide only and will vary for different organisations.

Consultation on the draft National Principles in 2017-18 will consider how the principles work alongside state based standards and principles, particularly as they relate to practical implementation and monitoring. A number of jurisdictions have existing mandatory or voluntary schemes which many stakeholders will have experience of in practice. This experience will assist in designing national principles and tools that interlock well with state efforts, and provide a coherent system for education and practice in child safety nationally.

***5. How do the National Principles relate to the work of the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse?***

In 2013 the Australian Government authorised a [*Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*](http://childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/)in response to community concern about widespread reports of cases

where Australian institutions failed to protect children from sexual abuse. The work of this Commission has emphasised that members of the public, children and young people, parents, carers, families and communities should be confident that organisations working with children provide safe environments where children’s rights, needs and interests are met.

The Royal Commission drew on information available from its research, consultations, submissions, case studies and findings from the Children’s Safety Study to identify ten elements that create a child safe institution. The draft National Principles align with the elements identified by the Royal Commission, broadened to cover all forms of potential harms and taking a child rights, strengths based approach to organisational development.

The Royal Commission has publically welcomed this work and supports the scope and content of the draft National Principles.

***6. How do I implement the National Principles?***

The National Principles have guidance material with actions and indicators to help organisations, their staff and volunteers understand the important aspects of building a child safe culture.

The National Principles provide additional high level guidance to organisations, to allow flexibility in implementation and recognising the variety of organisational, types, sizes and capacities. The indicators are examples of signposts that an organisation meets the principles. The indicators are provided as a guide only and will vary for different organisations.

***7. My organisation is in a small community based setting, operated mainly by volunteers. How do the draft National Principles affect us?***

Organisations, their staff and volunteers and some individuals that provide services to or work with children and young people must meet the requirements of their state or territory. Links to state and territory websites can be found at [www.humanrights.gov.au/child-safe](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/child-safe).

The National Principles affect your organisation by working alongside state and territory requirements. The guidance material can be used to assess how your organisation is going in terms of upholding child safe values.

***8. Will these National Principles be compulsory for all organisations?***

The development of the draft National Principles is supported by all states and territories. The high level principles allow flexibility for implementation across organisations and government. They also support the use of existing levers and sector engagement strategies to drive cultural change rather than use of a mandatory approach.

The principles are not compulsory, but act as a starting point for your child safe journey.

***9. What is the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children?***

The *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020* is a long term collaboration and commitment between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the non‑government sector that focuses on keeping Australia’s children and young people safe and well. The Third Action Plan prioritises efforts on prevention and early intervention activities and strengthening abilities of organisations, families and communities to care for their children and young people. Implementation of the Third Acton Plan is also informed by the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Child Safe Organisations project involving the development of the National Principles and related tools and resources is a commitment under the National Framework.

*“Our ability to deliver on the goal and the supporting outcomes requires a fundamental shift from seeing protecting children and young people as a response to child abuse and neglect to one of promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.”*

*(National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020 Third Action Plan 2015‑18)*

***10. What consultation has occurred on the draft National Principles?***

Community Services Ministers in Commonwealth, state and territory governments have endorsed these draft principles for sector consultation in 2017-18. This builds on earlier targeted consultations in May 2017 with representatives of the Australian Children’s Commissioners and Guardians, the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing, and peak organisations from key sectors such as health, education, sport and recreation.

Consultation on the draft National Principles will cover the period October 2017 to mid-2018 and will involve testing the draft principles with key sectors. A range of stakeholders will be invited to consider the draft National Principles and its application. Once this consultation process is complete, the final draft National Principles will be submitted to the Council of Australian Governments for approval.

State and territory governments and Children’s Commissioners and Guardians in each state and territory have noted their support of the draft National Principles and its wide promotion.

***11. How do I become involved or learn more?***

Please visit [www.humanrights.gov.au/child-safe](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/child-safe) for more information on Child Safe Organisations. You can sign up to be involved through the website.