



# NSW Health Child Safe Action Plan

*Empower, listen and act together*  
2023-2027



# Statement of acknowledgement of Aboriginal people and country

NSW Health recognises Aboriginal people as the First People of Australia, whose lands we now live and work upon. We pay our respects to Aboriginal Elders past, present and emerging. We value Aboriginal history, culture and knowledge and the many ways it enriches the life of our nation and communities.

The consequences of colonisation, as well as social determinants of health, such as education, employment, and housing, have had a devastating impact on the social, emotional, economic, and physical living conditions of Aboriginal people for more than 200 years and have contributed to intergenerational trauma. These factors continue to directly contribute to the health disparities experienced by many Aboriginal communities and the significant over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the statutory child protection system.

NSW Health acknowledges the extensive work by Aboriginal people, families and communities who keep their communities, cultures and families strong and thriving and share their knowledge of how to end violence, abuse and neglect for all people in NSW.

NSW Health acknowledges the importance of culturally safe environments and practices for Aboriginal children and young people accessing our services and NSW Health is committed to upholding their rights to:

- identify as Aboriginal without fear of retribution or questioning
- receive an education and healthcare that strengthens their culture and identity
- maintain connection to their land and Country

- maintain their strong kinship ties and social obligations
- be taught their cultural heritage by their Elders
- receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner
- be involved in services that are culturally respectful
- access Aboriginal health services, Aboriginal health professionals and programs.

The Child Safe Action Plan provides a pathway for NSW Health to improve the way our health services engage with Aboriginal children, young people and their families, and demonstrate respect for cultural diversity. For Aboriginal children and young people, cultural safety is essential to child safety within health services<sup>1</sup>. Culturally safe care and self-determination is vital to meeting the holistic health and wellbeing needs of Aboriginal children and young people. NSW Health recognises the importance of family and community to identity and is committed to Aboriginal children, families and communities being connected and determining their own futures.

<sup>1</sup> See glossary for a definition of cultural safety

INYADOT ART featured in this document was created by Indigenous artist Jake Simon, proud Worimi-Biripi man living on Gadigal lands.



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# Message from the Secretary



A key priority for NSW Health is to provide safe and positive experiences in delivering high quality health care and the best possible outcomes for children and young people in NSW.

We are committed to cultural change that makes child safety everyone's business in NSW

Health. All NSW Health staff, from support staff, to clinicians, policy makers and senior leaders, should be aware of their role in improving the safety and quality of services to prevent harm to children and young people.

We have already taken significant steps in our health system to keep children safe. However, more work needs to be done to fully embed child safety in our systems, policies and processes across our organisation and health sector.

The NSW Health Child Safe Action Plan operationalises [the NSW Child Safe Standards](#) to optimise the safety of children in our health system with a strong focus on prevention. Aligning to Future Health: Guiding the next

*Ensuring that the NSW health system provides positive and safe experiences for all children and young people is a key priority for NSW Health. Child safety is integral to patient safety.*

decade of health care in NSW 2022-2032, it builds on existing NSW Health strategies, policies and practices to ensure every aspect of our health system is working to keep children and young people safe.

Our new action plan also fulfils [our mandate as a prescribed NSW Government Agency](#) under the [NSW Children's Guardian Child Safe Scheme](#).

The health and wellbeing of children and young people provides a strong foundation to build lifelong good health. We will ensure that children and young people feel safe and secure when interacting with NSW Health staff. Together, we can improve the wellbeing of children and young people and improve access to quality healthcare.

**Susan Pearce AM**  
Secretary, NSW Health



# Development of the Child Safe Action Plan

The NSW Ministry of Health Child Safe Action Plan (CSAP) outlines the actions we will undertake to promote and support the safety of children in our NSW Health services.

NSW Health is a large and complex system comprising multiple entities and services; accordingly, the CSAP development process was underpinned by consultation and collaboration with key internal and external stakeholders across the sector. This included the Ministry of Health (Ministry), Local Health Districts (LHDs), Speciality Health Networks (SHNs), Statewide Health Services (SHS), Pillars, Shared Services and our partners in care, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) which are in scope for the CSAP. This input was pivotal to the development of the CSAP.

The CSAP Working Group comprised of representatives from across the Ministry, Pillars, Health organisations, LHDs and SHNs. The Working Group provided direction, advice and oversight on the development of the CSAP with the aim of:

- providing a whole of Health perspective on implementation of the Child Safe Standards
- promoting the rights of children and young people and empowering and promoting their voices within NSW Health
- ensuring communities with potentially greater need, including Aboriginal children, children with disability and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (as identified by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse), are central to the CSAP.

An initial system readiness and gap analysis was undertaken through the development and administration of a Child Safe Check Up Tool across the entire NSW Health system. This was designed to both inform NSW Health organisations about the development of the CSAP and the Child Safe Standards, as well as to gather the following information:

- The extent to which each organisation had planned or implemented activities aligned with the three CSAP objectives, with rating options being *unaware, emerging, capable* or *proficient*.



- Examples of good practice in terms of how cultural considerations have been incorporated into plans and/or activities.
- Identify system enablers, barriers and gaps.
- Indicate which of the ten Child Safe Standards should be the initial focus of the CSAP and why.

Twenty NSW Health organisations submitted a completed Check Up Tool, including LHDs, SHNs and specialist health services.

All information provided through the Check Up Tool was comprehensively analysed to develop a set of themes and findings which formed the basis of the initial CSAP draft actions and intended outcomes.

The following consultation sessions were held to gather additional information, insights and feedback on the draft actions and outcomes:

- The Youth Advisory Committee of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People
- LHDs and SHNs
- Ministry of Health branches and NSW Health Pillar organisations
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector
- Non-Government Organisations identified as related bodies in scope of the CSAP
- Targeted consultations with teams within the Ministry and Pillars with a key role in leading and implementing actions

The stakeholder consultation sessions informed changes to actions and intended outcomes, as well as to improve the way the CSAP addresses cultural safety. The actions and strategies within the CSAP will continue to be co-designed as they are implemented.

In developing and implementing the CSAP, we must acknowledge the continuing and devastating impact that child related policies in Australia have had and continue to have on Aboriginal people, families and communities. It is equally important to acknowledge the resilience and resistance of Aboriginal people and their expertise in supporting the healing, safety and health of their communities. To ensure cultural safety is embedded into every action, the CSAP must be implemented hand in hand with Aboriginal people, families, communities and health organisations.

The Office of the Children's Guardian is leading the NSW Child Safe Scheme and has a critical role in assisting organisations to implement the Child Safe Standards. NSW Health is committed to working in partnership with the Office of the Children's Guardian in developing and implementing its CSAP and acknowledges their leadership and guidance in the development process.



### Children and young people feel safer when they have:

- Approachable people available to speak to
- Group discussions, not just one on one
- Other children and young people to relate to. This increases confidence and engagement
- The option to speak to a female worker
- A safe physical space to raise concerns or provide feedback

*The Youth Advisory Committee of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People (2022)*



# Background and context

In 2013, the Commonwealth Government established a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) in response to community concern about widespread reports of cases where Australian institutions failed to protect children from sexual abuse, including within NSW Health organisations.

The Royal Commission's final recommendations emphasised that members of the public, children and young people, parents, carers, families and communities should feel confident that organisations working with children provide safe environments in which children's rights, needs and interests are met. To achieve this, the Royal Commission recommended 10 Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safe Standards provide a framework for making organisations safer for children. The Commonwealth, and all state and territory governments have confirmed their commitment to the Child Safe Standards through the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*.

A Child Safe Organisation is one that systematically:

- creates conditions to reduce the likelihood of children being harmed within the organisation

**All NSW Health staff have a responsibility to implement the Child Safe Standards, including adult services and across all clinical streams, where children may be present.**

- creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying and reporting harm
- responds appropriately to disclosures, allegations and suspicions of harm.

All NSW Health organisations are required to implement the Child Safe Standards under the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*. This includes areas of NSW Health that do not provide direct services to children specifically. The Office of the Children's Guardian may monitor progress in implementing the standards and has a suite of compliance powers available.



## Views of young people

NSW Health organisations must:

Uphold the rights of children and young people and act within their best interests

Listen to what children and young people have to say about what makes them feel safe in organisations and how we can meet their needs.

Young people told NSW Health that they feel safe when services:



Make them feel welcome by providing a child and youth friendly environment



Show a commitment to child rights and child safety



Employ friendly and helpful staff



Include children and young people's voices and take their opinions seriously



Are inclusive and show concern for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

Children and young people want to have a say about:

- Decisions affecting their own health
- What health services are needed by children and young people
- The way healthcare is delivered

If children and young people have concerns about their safety they would like:

- Straightforward processes to report their concerns, including the ability to report anonymously
- To be taken seriously by staff who are approachable and trusted
- To have their concerns acted upon in a timely manner

NSW Health acknowledges that children and young people have diverse needs, abilities and backgrounds, to which our responses need to be tailored.

Our response also needs to consider a social and cultural determinant approach, acknowledging the impacts of intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal communities.

Other groups who may face risk factors include those who:



are in contact with the justice system



are refugees



are in out of home care



feel vulnerable because of their gender identity or sexuality



are living with disability



come from culturally and linguistically diverse family backgrounds



have communication challenges



live remotely



have been exposed to trauma





# Purpose and scope

The NSW Health CSAP sets out the requirements to ensure that children and young people accessing NSW Health services are safe. It is a 4-year strategic plan from 2023-2027 that aims to drive cultural change and influence system reform to embed child safety within all parts of the NSW Health system.

As a prescribed agency under the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*, the Ministry has a legislative requirement to develop a CSAP. The CSAP must include the strategies NSW Health will take both in the services it provides and with *related bodies* to:

- build awareness in the community about the importance of child safety in child safe organisations, and
- build the capability of child safe organisations to implement the Child Safe Standards, and
- improve the safety of children by implementing the Child Safe Standards.

A *related body*<sup>2</sup> means a Child Safe Organisation (as specified under the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*) that the Ministry funds or regulates, namely:

- All Local Health Districts
- Ambulance Service of NSW
- Statutory Health Corporations (within the meaning of the *Health Services Act 1997*) that provide services to children
- Affiliated health organisations (within the meaning of the *Health Services Act 1997*) that provide services to children
- Religious bodies (within the meaning of section 15A of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*) that provide services to children
- Local councils that provide services to children
- Sport and recreation organisations where these may be providing programs or services of a recreational or sporting nature for children and in which workers are required to hold a working with children check clearance under the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012*.

<sup>2</sup> Related Bodies are defined in the Children's Guardian Act 2019.



# Child Safe Standards

Ten Child Safe Standards were recommended by the Royal Commission to provide a best practice, evidence-based quality improvement framework to create child safe organisations. The Child Safe Standards promote safety, quality and innovation and align with other key healthcare standards such as the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards and National Safety

and Quality Health Service Standards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

The Child Safe Standards are designed to drive cultural change in organisations so they can create, maintain and improve child safe practices.

1. Child safety is embedded in **organisational leadership, governance and culture**
2. **Children participate in decisions** affecting them and are taken seriously
3. **Families and communities** are informed and involved
4. **Equity is upheld** and diverse needs are taken into account
5. **People working with children** are suitable and supported
6. **Processes to respond to complaints** of child abuse (or other concerns) are child-focused
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through **continual education and training**
8. **Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse** or other kinds of harm to occur
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is **continuously reviewed and improved**
10. **Policies and procedures** document how the organisation is child safe



# Child Safe Action Plan Strategies and Objectives

The Office of the Children’s Guardian has specified three broad strategies and associated objectives to be included in the CSAP.



# Guiding principles

The following principles guide NSW Health's commitment to prioritising children and young people's safety through this CSAP:

- 1 The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is paramount, including protection from child abuse.
- 2 Children and young people are respected and treated equally and their rights are upheld.
- 3 Recognition of the importance of a strength based approach which prioritises protective factors against child abuse, including Aboriginal culture.
- 4 Child and young people's safety is a shared responsibility across all levels and all roles in NSW Health.
- 5 There are multiple ways available for children and young people to have their say and be involved.
- 6 Children and young people are involved in their health care in developmentally appropriate ways and empowered in decision-making.
- 7 Children and young people are given information about their physical, mental, emotional and online safety, and what to do if they feel unsafe.
- 8 Child abuse is not tolerated, and suspected abuse or harm is reported.
- 9 NSW Health will listen and act on what children and young people tell us, including any concerns they raise.
- 10 Health services proactively address the barriers faced by some children and young people by being:
  - Culturally safe for Aboriginal children and young people
  - Equitable, acknowledging that additional or varied responses are required to support children and young people to engage with health services or participate in decisions about their care, including for children and young people with disability
  - Trauma-informed, recognising the impacts of adversity and promoting safety, choice, collaboration, empowerment, trustworthiness, culture and inclusivity.



# Child Safe Action Plan

## Role of the NSW Ministry of Health

The role of the Ministry of Health is to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of NSW and monitor the performance of health service organisations in NSW. It acts as system manager and guides the development of services and investments in the NSW public health system to ensure the health priorities of the NSW Government are achieved for the community of NSW.

The Ministry as a prescribed agency is responsible for oversight of implementation of the Child Safe Standards within relevant NSW Health related bodies, including:

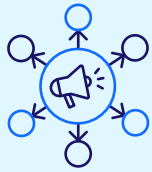
- Engaging with NSW Health entities to build awareness of the Child Safe Standards.
- Taking a strategic role in promoting the interests and rights of children and influencing sector wide reform to embed child safety across NSW Health services.
- Providing leadership in the development and implementation of statewide initiatives to support child safety.
- Establishing systems for monitoring and reporting on progress in implementing the Child Safe Standards.



## Key levers for change

NSW Health services are already demonstrating many examples of good practice in working towards implementing the Child Safe Standards. Promoting, sharing and further embedding this good practice would benefit children and young people in a broader range of settings.

The CSAP presents a unique and timely opportunity for NSW Health to:



**Expand awareness of and responsibility for child safety beyond child and family services and violence, abuse and neglect services to ensure it is everybody's business.**



**Mitigate against any recurrence of the failures to keep children safe identified through the Royal Commission.**



**Embed effective governance for implementing the Child Safe Standards, including within clinical safety and quality mechanisms across the health system.**



**Drive improvements in patient experiences.**



**Ensure the voices of children and young people are taken seriously in relation to all decisions that affect them.**



**Strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations to ensure that child safety systems, policies and processes are culturally safe and promote the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people, families and communities.**

## Key risks in relation to child safety

NSW Health is a large and complex system comprising a broad range of public facing services across multiple settings in the community, as well as a number of entities with policy, innovation and regulatory responsibilities. It is challenging to embed the Child Safe Standards across such diverse services and organisations. A quality improvement focus will leverage existing mechanisms for system wide implementation through innovation and continuous review and improvement.

NSW Health has already taken substantial steps to ensure an effective response to child protection issues. We now need to build on that work to further focus on improving prevention of harm to children and young people in the Health system. These issues have historically been led by our paediatrics, child and family health, youth health, and violence, abuse and neglect areas. Our challenge is to bring about cultural change to embed the ten Child Safe Standards across the entire service system.

While many LHDs have active youth advisory groups, their reach across the system is limited. A significant shift will ensure that we partner with children and young people, both in their own healthcare and in the co-design of our health system and implementation of the Child Safe Standards.

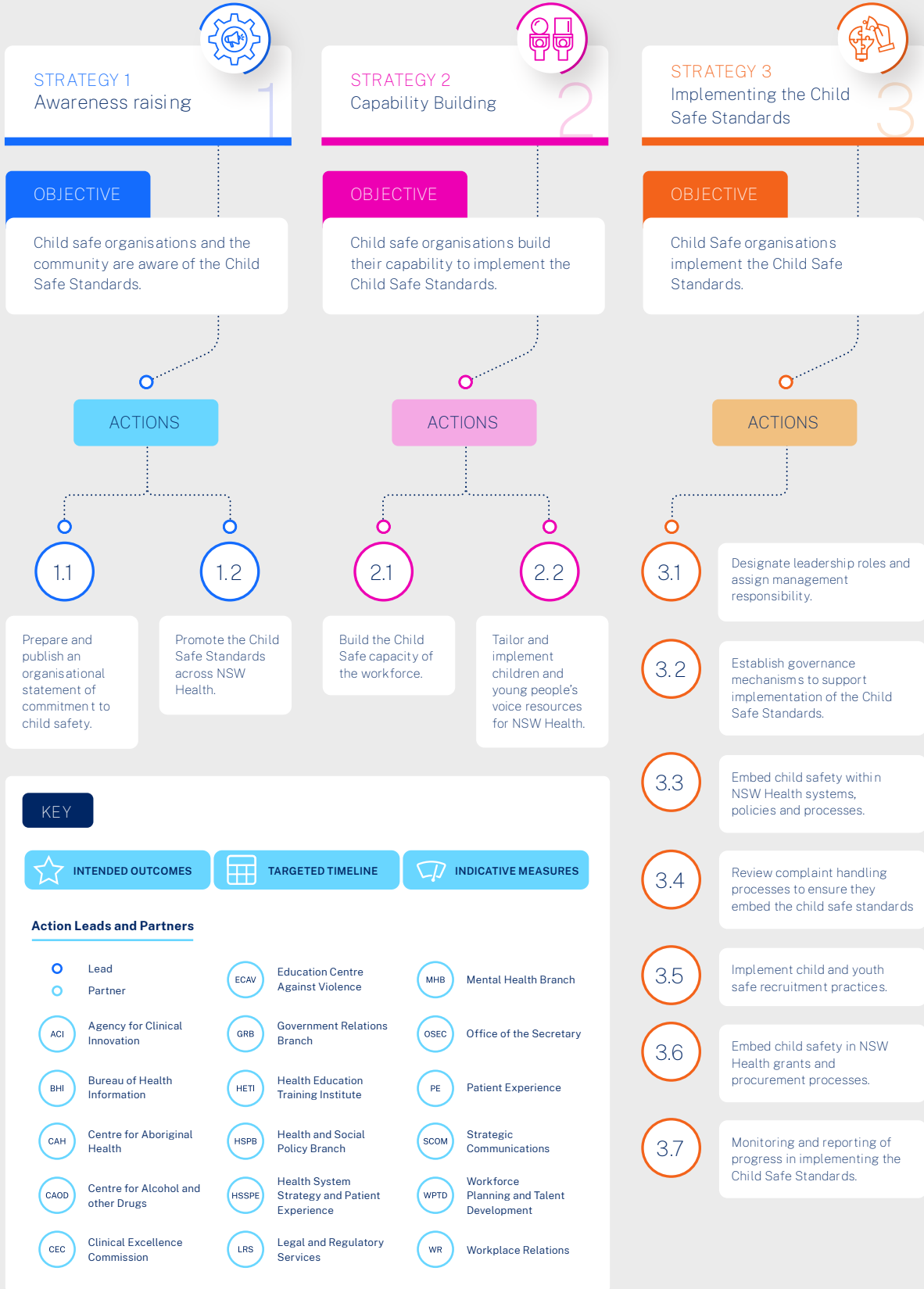
### Role of the Office of the Children's Guardian

The OCG leads the implementation of the Child Safe Scheme across NSW. The OCG's role is to:

- Provide guidance to prescribed agencies in developing Child Safe Action Plans through consultation and review of plans.
- Provide generic and sector-specific support to build capability in organisations to implement the Child Safe Standards.
- Engage with key stakeholders, including children and the broader community, to raise awareness of the Child Safe Standards.
- Monitor, investigate and enforce the Child Safe Standards through ongoing risk assessments of priority sectors and organisations.



# Overview of the Child Safe Plan





## STRATEGY 1: Awareness raising

**Objective:** Child safe organisations and the community are aware of the Child Safe Standards

1.1

### Prepare and publish an organisational statement of commitment to child safety

The Ministry and each NSW Health entity will:

- Prepare an organisational *statement of commitment* to child and youth safety.
- Ensure the *statement of commitment* acknowledges the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people (see definition of cultural safety) and is co-designed with key Aboriginal stakeholders.
- Co-design the *statement of commitment* with children and young people to ensure it reflects the views of children and young people including appropriate language.
- Publish the statement of commitment on NSW Health Intranet and Internet sites and display in hospital and community health settings.



#### Intended outcomes

- Demonstrated leadership commitment to organisational child and youth safety.
- Increased staff awareness of the importance of child and youth safety and the need to address issues of cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people.
- Children, young people and families attending NSW Health services are aware of how NSW Health will keep children safe within organisations.

#### Targeted timeline

June 2024

#### Indicative measures

1. Ministry statement of commitment is published.
2. Number of entities that have promoted the statement of commitment.

#### Action owner/s



1.2

### Promote the Child Safe Standards across NSW Health

The Ministry will publish the Child Safe Action Plan on the NSW Health website, supported by links to OCG resources including the Guide to the Child Safe Standards, Child Safe Self-Assessment and eLearning packages. NSW Health entities will promote the Action Plan through existing internal and public communications channels.

Promote the Child Safe Action Plan through existing strategic events and opportunities such as Children's Week and Human Experience Week.

Implement a communication strategy across NSW Health to inform key internal and external stakeholders about child rights, child safe practice and preventing and responding to abuse in organisations.

The communication strategy will encompass:

- A multi-faceted approach to awareness raising, including multiple touch points.





- A suite of communication materials for NSW Health staff about the Child Safe Standards and building a Child Safe Organisation in accessible formats, suitable for Intranet and Internet content and for distribution via staff newsletters/bulletins.
- A suite of communication materials for the community with developmentally appropriate messaging for children and young people and their families, about the Child Safe Standards and information about children and young people’s rights.

The Communication Strategy will include/emphasise the following messages, tailored to the health system:

- Child safety is a patient safety issue.
- Implementing the Child Safe Standards is a legislative requirement.
- Implementing the Child Safe Standards involves a significant cultural shift and requires support and leadership to influence organisational change.
- All NSW Health staff have a responsibility to implement the Child Safe Standards, including adult services and across all facilities, services and clinical streams.
- There are significant risks associated with not implementing the Child Safe Standards.
- Collaboration and co-design with children and young people is essential.
- The Child Safe Standards apply for children and young people under the age of 18 years.
- Child protection is only one component of a broader strategy to implement the Child Safe Standards.
- Cultural safety is an essential component of safety and there are key factors that impact on the safety of Aboriginal children and young people, including racism and discrimination.
- It is important managers understand their responsibilities in relation to reportable incidents.
- Children living in regional, rural and remote areas have unique risks affecting safety and access to services.

In developing the Communication Strategy, the Ministry will ensure:

- Children and young people are involved in decisions about approaches and messaging which targets children and young people.
- Co-design with NSW Health Aboriginal health staff and Aboriginal communities occurs in relation to all communication materials to ensure cultural safety is addressed. (see definition of cultural safety).
- Co-design with CALD staff and communities occurs in relation to all communication materials to ensure they are appropriate and accessible.

In implementing the Communication Strategy, NSW Health entities will:

- Take action to ensure all relevant staff are aware of the Child Safe Standards and their responsibilities for implementation.
- Promote the Child Safe Standards through relevant networks, including funded services, non-government organisations and the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector.



**Intended outcomes**

Increased awareness across NSW Health services of:

- Child Safe Standards.
- The role of the OCG (including in relation to the Reportable Conduct Scheme).
- Key responsibilities of staff in ensuring the rights of children and young people are upheld.

**Targeted timeline**

February 2024

**Indicative measures**

1. Number of unique visitors to NSW Health Child Safe Standards webpage.
2. Engagement with links embedded into internal newsletters and intranet sites.



- Processes for responding to suspected abuse within organisations.
- How to ensure cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people accessing NSW Health services.
- Addressing child safety issues for children and young people with diverse needs, including those with disabilities, from CALD backgrounds and trans or gender diverse children.

Increased community awareness of:

- How children and young people will be kept safe within organisations.
- How Aboriginal cultural safety will be addressed.
- Who children, young people and families can talk to about their concerns.

3. Number of downloads of materials for children, young people and families.

**Action owner/s**





## STRATEGY 2: Capability Building

**Objective:** Child safe organisations build their capability to implement the Child Safe Standards

### 2.1

#### Build the Child Safe capacity of the workforce

Build the capacity of the NSW Health workforce to implement the Child Safe Standards, including:

- Mapping exercise to identify the system needs for Child Safe education, with a broad definition of child safety (i.e. more than child protection) that incorporates prevention and response to child and youth safety issues.
- Collaborating with entity staff to confirm the system priorities for education and training, potentially through a communities of practice approach.
- Promoting access to existing training resources, including through the OCG. For example Responding to Reportable Allegations; Keeping children safe in organisations.
- Partnering with the OCG to tailor Child Safe training modules and materials to meet the range of NSW Health workforce needs, including leadership, managers and staff.
- Ensuring existing relevant NSW Health training modules include information about approaches to involving children and young people in organisational decision making.
- Including Child Safety content in existing relevant training packages (i.e. across a broad range of training topics).
- Ensuring that NSW Health Cultural Safety training aligns with and links to the Child Safe Standards.
- Exploring the links between the CEC Academy's role in building safety and quality leadership capacity and the implementation of the Child Safe Standards

In building the Child Safe workforce capacity NSW Health will:

- Ensure a consistent statewide approach across metro and regional areas.
- Collaborate with Aboriginal Health staff and communities (including children and young people) to ensure cultural safety and equity issues are embedded in training and development activities and materials.
- Ensure it applies across NSW Health, including to multiple disciplines, clinical streams and services.
- Ensure support mechanisms are in place for staff participating in training who have previous trauma experiences.

#### Intended outcomes

NSW Health staff have the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to keep children and young people safe and identify and respond to child safety concerns.

NSW Health managers:

- Understand their responsibilities in relation to reportable allegations and take appropriate action when required.
- Have increased risk management capability in relation to the Child Safe Standards.

#### Targeted timeline

August 2024

#### Indicative measures

1. Number of staff accessing identified relevant existing online training resources.
2. Proportion of relevant existing mandatory training that references the Child Safe Standards.
3. Proportion of relevant training published



- Child safe practices are embedded within day-to-day interactions between NSW Health staff and young people.
- Child and youth safety issues are embedded within NSW Health training packages.

by HETI that references the Child Safe Standards.

4. Proportion of staff who feel more confident to implement the Child Safe Standards following completion of training.
5. Proportion of entities actively engaging in the Community of Practice.

**Action owner/s**



**2.2**

**Tailor and implement children and young people’s voice resources for NSW Health**

Partner with children and young people to tailor existing resources to build NSW Health capacity to support children to participate in decisions that affect them, including:

- How children and young people can actively participate in decisions about their care, in developmentally appropriate ways.
- How staff can promote and uphold children and young people’s rights and how they can assist children and young people to understand their rights.
- Appropriate and effective processes for asking for the views of children and young people.
- Empowering children and young people to speak up if they are being harmed or abused or feel unsafe, including anonymously.
- Effective engagement of children and young people in organisational design and decision-making.
- Culturally safe processes when engaging with Aboriginal children and young people.
- Processes for engaging with diverse children and young people, including those with disabilities, from CALD backgrounds and trans or gender diverse children.

Entity leaders and managers plan and implement an internal strategy to:

- Promote use of the Resource Kit and ensure all relevant staff across the organisation are aware of it.
- Provide staff with access to the Resource Kit and support to develop their skills to implement recommended approaches.
- Display child rights posters and information in areas where children and young people attend.
- Monitor progress in adopting new engagement practices and/or adapting existing processes.
- Get feedback from children and young people about their experiences with staff.

**Intended outcomes**

- Children and young people’s rights are at the forefront of all interactions between staff and children and young people.
- Children and young people’s rights are central to NSW Health strategy, policy making and service design.

**Targeted timeline**

October 2024

**Indicative measures**

1. Number of unique visits to the toolkit
2. Number of engagements with children



- ✔ Aboriginal children and young people feel safe when accessing health services.
- ✔ Culturally diverse children and young people feel safe when accessing health services.
- ✔ Children and young people with a disability feel safe when accessing health services.

Children and young people’s needs and views are:

- ✔ Prioritised, particularly in relation to decisions that affect them.
- ✔ Actively listened and responded to.

NSW Health staff and managers have:

- ✔ The skills to empower children and young people in their healthcare.
- ✔ Increased capability and confidence to have conversations and appropriately respond to complaints and disclosures of harm caused.

and young people in developing tailored resources.

3. Proportion of Health entities reporting improvements in the engagement with children and young people.

**Action owner/s**





## STRATEGY 3: Implementing the Child Safe Standards

**Objective:** Child Safe organisations implement the Child Safe Standards

### 3.1

#### Designate leadership roles and assign management responsibility

At Ministry and entity levels:

- A senior executive sponsor is appointed to lead organisational change in relation to the Child Safe Standards.
- Responsibility for leading and managing implementation of the Child Safe Standards should be assigned to senior staff with roles that align with continuous quality improvement in clinical care, safety and broader organisational change, for example Clinical Governance Units.
- Where relevant, boards are engaged in endorsing and leading the commitment to the Child Safe Standards.
- Responsibility for implementation within local services/departments is assigned to key senior managers across disciplines and service streams.
- Leaders and managers across the organisation will:
  - Drive implementation of the Child Safe Standards.
  - Ensure collaboration and co-design with children and young people is embedded within the implementation process.
  - Ensure cultural safety is embedded within child safety processes and initiatives (see definition of cultural safety).

The Ministry will:

- Collaborate with entity Chief Executives to develop strategies to ensure implementing the Child Safe Standards becomes everybody's business across NSW Health.



#### Intended outcomes

- Child safety issues being led and driven from the executive level across NSW Health.
- Managers are clear about their role in implementation of the Child Safe Standards and are held accountable for progress.
- There is system wide momentum for progressing the Child Safe Standards.
- Responsibility for child and youth safety issues is embedded within all levels of management.
- A culture of support for ensuring child and youth safety is developed/strengthened.

#### Targeted timeline

December 2023

#### Action owner/s

HSSPE



3.2

**Establish Governance mechanisms to support implementation of the Child Safe Standards**

At Ministry and entity levels:

- Governance mechanisms are established to drive implementation of the Child Safe Standards. This will leverage existing governance mechanisms where possible.
- A central governance mechanism is established, such as a *Child Safe Steering Committee*, with representation from a broad range of service streams. This could be embedded into existing governance structures.
- Governance mechanisms are established to empower children and young people to advise on organisational decisions.
- Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is included within terms of reference and/or is a standing agenda item on relevant forums/meetings.

The Ministry and ECAV will lead the establishment of a Child Safe Standards Community of Practice to support collaboration across entities in implementing the Standards.



**Intended outcomes**

- Progressing child and youth safety issues is embedded within organisational governance mechanisms across NSW Health.
- Addressing cultural safety and equity issues is a key component of child safe governance mechanisms.



**Targeted timeline**

December 2023



**Indicative measures**

1. Proportion of workplan on track for central Child Safe governance group.
2. Number of engagements with children and young people in developing tailored resources.
3. Proportion of entities that report including child safety in relevant agenda and terms of reference.

**Action owner/s**



3.3

**Reflect child safety within NSW Health systems, policies, and processes**

The Ministry will develop and publish the following statewide policies:

- Child and youth safe policy.
- Child and youth safe risk management plan, including LHD risk management requirements.

The Ministry will update the following statewide documents to ensure child safety and cultural safety are embedded:

- NSW Health Code of Conduct PD2015\_049.
- NSW Health Complaint Management Guidelines, GL2020\_008.
- NSW Health recruitment and employment policies (various).

The Ministry and entities will ensure system compliance with existing Policy Directives that mandate



child safe actions.

The Ministry will include the Child Safe Standards as a mandatory consideration for all new and revised policies.

The Ministry will ensure statewide strategic documents align with the Child Safe Standards.

Entities will:

- Develop a Child Safe Plan/Strategy to progress implementation of the high-level actions within the NSW Health Child Safe Action Plan.
- Update relevant existing policies and processes to ensure child and youth safety and cultural safety are embedded, including recruitment, induction and orientation processes.
- Where relevant, consult with children and young people in the development of relevant guidelines and procedures.



**Intended outcomes**

- Requirements to contribute to building a Child Safe Organisation are built into NSW Health strategic/operational plans.
- Child and youth safety issues are prioritised in NSW Health planning processes.
- Child Safe Standards are embedded throughout NSW Health processes, plans and policies.
- Staff employed within NSW are aware of their child and youth safety responsibilities.
- Commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people is explicit within NSW Health policies, procedures and guidelines.

**Targeted timeline**

July 2026

**Indicative measures**

1. Number of downloads of new and revised child safe policies.
2. Number and reach of communications about new policy requirements.
3. Proportion of relevant policies updated to incorporate the Child Safe Standards.

**Action owner/s**



3.4

**Review complaint handling processes to ensure they reflect the child safe standards**

Entities will:

- Work collaboratively to modify existing feedback and complaints handling processes to provide simple mechanisms for children and young people to provide feedback and report safety concerns (including anonymously), including appropriate and accessible processes for children and young people who are Aboriginal, CALD or with a disability.
- Ensure safety concerns raised by children and young people are responded to quickly and taken seriously.
- Engage with children and young people in these processes and their design.

**Intended outcomes**

Children and young people:

- Feel safe to raise concerns about their own or others safety.
- Feel listened to and believed when they raise safety issues.

**Targeted timeline**

July 2025

**Indicative measures**

1. Number of complaints and feedback received from children and young people





- ☑ Are confident their concerns will be addressed quickly and appropriately.

- or their families.
- 2. Percentage of complaints concerning children and young people that are resolved.
- 3. Percentage of complaints concerning children and young people where feedback on the outcome is provided.

**Action owner/s**



3.5

**Implement child and youth safe recruitment practices**

NSW Ministry and entities will implement child safe recruitment processes which:

- Emphasise the importance of child and youth safety.
- Comply with the requirements of *NSW Health Working with children and other police checks PD2019\_003*.
- Do not rely solely on WWCCs, rather a range of appropriate screening processes prevent unsuitable people from being recruited and discourage them from applying (e.g. job advertising that reference the organisation’s commitment to child safety, interview questions that establish staff suitability, ongoing staff supervision is in place).



**Intended outcomes**

- ☑ All NSW Health staff who come in contact with children and young people are screened to ensure suitability to keep children safe.
- ☑ People who may be inclined to harm children and young people are prevented or discouraged from applying for NSW Health positions.
- ☑ Children and young people accessing NSW Health services are safe around staff.

**Targeted timeline**

July 2025

**Indicative measures**

- 1. Percentage of Health entities that report adopting child safe recruitment practices.

**Action owner/s**



3.6

**Embed child safety in NSW Health grants and procurement processes**

The Ministry will:

- Collaborate with partner agencies to review and update NSW Government procurement and grants policies/guidelines and NGO contractual arrangements to ensure the Child Safe Standards and cultural safety are embedded.
- Provide guidance to NGOs that are related bodies to support their compliance with the Child Safe Standards.





**Intended outcomes**

- Government procurement processes ensure that child and youth safety risks are addressed within contractual arrangements with external suppliers and NGOs.
- NSW Health encourages and supports partner organisations to become child safe.

**Targeted timeline**

July 2025

**Indicative measures**

1. Revised policies and processes are published and implemented.
2. Percentage of grant agreements and contracts that include information about Child Safe mandatory obligations.

**Action owner/s**



3.7

**Monitoring and reporting of progress in implementing the Child Safe Standards**

Systems are established to monitor and report progress in implementation of the Child Safe Standards, including:

- Annual reporting within entities to the Chief Executive.
- Annual reporting from entity Chief Executives to the Ministry.
- Annual reporting from Ministry branches through to the Secretary of NSW Health.
- Progress reporting to the OCG where requested.

Progress is analysed in a continuous improvement approach and to inform the development of the next Child Safe Action Plan.



**Intended outcomes**

- NSW Health demonstrates accountability for ensuring children and young people's safety.
- Gaps and ongoing areas of development are identified and acted on.

**Targeted timeline**

March 2024

**Indicative measures**

1. Reporting timelines are met.
2. Report on CSAP effectiveness in the Ministry Annual Report.

**Action owner/s**



# Alignment with other policy initiatives

The CSAP aligns with a number of other relevant NSW, national and international policies and frameworks as noted below.

## NSW Initiatives

### Future Health Strategic Framework: guiding the next decade of care in NSW 2022-2032

NSW Health's Strategic Framework provides a roadmap for the health system to achieve NSW Health's vision of a sustainable health system that delivers outcomes that matter most to patients and the community, is personalised, invests in wellness and is digitally enabled. Two of the six strategic outcomes outlined in the Framework are particularly relevant to the CSAP:

- Strategic Outcome 1: Patients and carers have positive experiences and outcomes that matter.
- Strategic Outcome 2: Safe care is delivered across all settings.

These outcomes commit NSW Health to:

- Delivering safe, high quality, reliable care for children and young people across hospitals and other health settings.
- Partnering with children and young people to ensure they are involved in their own care and are able to contribute to making decisions about the health outcomes that matter most to them.
- Providing personalised and culturally safe care to children and young people.
- Partnering with children and young people in co-design and implementation of models of care.

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### Healthy, Safe and Well: A strategic health plan for children, young people and families in NSW 2014-24

Healthy, Safe and Well is a 10-year strategic health plan for all children, young people and families in NSW. The Plan provides a comprehensive planning, service and policy roadmap from preconception to 24 years of



age, including pregnant women, babies, children, young people and families.

Of particular relevance to the CSAP is *Strategic direction 3: Addressing risk and harm* which aims to increase awareness of the health impacts of domestic and family violence, sexual assault and childhood maltreatment; identify and support children at risk of harm; and improve our ability to respond to, and treat, injuries caused by accidents and intentional harm.

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### Brighter Beginnings and the First 2000 Days Framework

The Brighter Beginnings initiative is a whole-of-government initiative to give children in NSW the best start in life no matter where they live or what their background is. The First 2000 Days Framework is a strategic policy document which outlines the importance of the first 2000 days in a child's life (from conception to age 5) and what action people within the NSW health system need to take to ensure that all



children have the best possible start in life. It applies to the entire NSW health system, including adult focused services.

The Framework recognises that a child's experiences in the first 2000 days has an impact throughout their entire life. Exposure to particular stressors before birth, and exposure to adverse experiences in early childhood, increases the probability that an individual will have poor health and wellbeing later in life. Adverse experiences in childhood include physical, sexual or emotional abuse and physical or emotional neglect.

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### NSW Youth Health Framework 2017-24

The Framework supports NSW Health to consider the health and wellbeing of young people when planning services and programs. It outlines the need for healthcare that is responsive to the needs of young people, including targeted approaches for young people at higher risk of poor health. The Framework promotes young people's engagement in health, youth-friendly services and better access for young people. It enhances workforce capacity to engage with and provide care to young people.

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### NSW Health Integrated Prevention and Response to Violence, Abuse and Neglect Framework

The Framework provides an overarching, strategic platform for NSW Health to respond to violence, abuse and neglect. The vision of the Framework is that all children, young people, adults and their families are supported by the public health system to live free of violence, abuse and neglect and their adverse impacts. Strategic priorities of the Framework include system improvement in relation to trauma-informed care and all NSW Health agencies becoming child safe organisations that promote and facilitate child safety.

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### NSW Health Integrated Trauma Informed Care Framework: My story, my health, my future

The Framework brings together elements of trauma-informed care and integrated care to enhance the experiences of clients and their families and carers accessing NSW Health services. An estimated half to two-thirds of young people have been exposed to at least one traumatic event by the time they turn 16. The Framework aims to mitigate the impacts of trauma, prevent the exacerbation of trauma, and promote healing.

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### Children First 2022-2031

Children First, 2022 – 2031 is the NSW multiagency public health framework for preventing and responding to problematic and harmful sexual behaviours by children and young people (PHSB). It sets the vision and priorities for how NSW can and will work together to support children and young people who have displayed, or been affected by, PHSB.

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### Talking About It

Talking About It supports Children First and is the NSW prevention action strategy. It sets out the evidence for why and how NSW needs to act to prevent children and young people presenting with, and being harmed by, PHSB. It responds to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommendation that we implement primary prevention strategies to “educate family, community members, carers and professionals (including mandatory



reporters) about preventing harmful sexual behaviours” (rec 10.1).

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### NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013-2023

The goal of the NSW Aboriginal Health Plan is to work in partnership with Aboriginal people to achieve the highest level of health possible for individuals, families and communities. The Plan emphasises the importance of building trust through partnerships and the need for Local Health Districts to build trust and cultural safety.

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### NSW Refugee Health Plan 2022-2027

Children and young people are a priority population under the Refugee Plan, which identifies that between 2015 and 2020 of the 31,418 humanitarian entrants resettled in NSW, one quarter were children aged 0-11 and more than one in five were young people aged 12-24 years. The Refugee Plan acknowledges that Children and young people from refugee backgrounds often need support for complex trauma and mental health issues and can face intergenerational and intercultural issues relating to family and community beliefs and education. A key outcome of the Plan is that people from refugee backgrounds can access healthcare that considers their cultural background and the impacts of their migration journey, settlement experiences and exposure to trauma.

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### Elevating the human experience: our guide to action for patient, family, carer, volunteer and caregiver experiences

Human experience is defined as the sum of all interactions, shaped by our culture, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care. The Guide to Action outlines what the NSW health system can do in partnership with patients, families, carers and caregivers, to consistently create positive, personalised experiences.

It recognises that the safety of patients is improved if patients and carers are better informed about their care and treatments.

It acknowledges that experiences are enhanced when people and carers:

- are listened to by care teams and patient and carer perspectives, preferences and choices are honoured.
- are involved in shared decisions and receive treatment and care which is personalised and of the highest quality.
- receive clear information and effective communication.
- are shown compassion, respect and kindness.
- receive healthcare in clean, safe, comfortable, culturally appropriate environments.

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### NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2022 - 2032

The HEAL strategy aligns with the National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030 and the National Obesity Strategy 2022-2032 to reduce overweight and obesity in children and young people by 5% by 2030 and halt the rise and reverse the trend of obesity in adults by 2030. The priority populations highlighted in this strategy include children in the first 2000 days of life and children aged five to 16.

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## National Initiatives

### SNAICC Keeping our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the national Principles for Child Safe Organisations

This resource assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, their communities and non-Indigenous organisations to embed and reinforce cultural safety across all levels of their organisations.

It highlights key cultural considerations that will assist organisations to ensure their spaces are culturally safe, and their programs and activities are free from racism and discrimination.

These actions will help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children feel safe to participate and that their culture is respected and strengthened while they are engaged with the organisation.

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### Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031

The Framework aims to ensure that children and young people in Australia have the right to grow up safe and supported, in nurturing and culturally appropriate environments. It recognises that to achieve this aim, all Australians need to work together to keep children safe and to achieve the best outcomes for vulnerable children and those experiencing disadvantage.

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### The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030

Led by the National Office for Child Safety, the National Strategy was a key recommendation of the Royal Commission and sets up a nationally coordinated and consistent way to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in all settings.

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### National Agreement on Closing the Gap

Closing the Gap is a national Agreement to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments to work together to overcome inequalities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The NSW Government and NSW Coalition of

Aboriginal Peak Organisations are co-signatories to the Closing the Gap agreement and are working in partnership to develop implementation plans over the next ten years.

The NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2022-24 includes new initiatives to address the nationally agreed commitment that by 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero.

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### Charter of Children and Young People's Rights in Healthcare Services in Australia

The Charter aims to ensure that children and young people receive healthcare that is both appropriate and acceptable to them and their families. It stipulates that children and young people ought to be involved in decision-making about their healthcare to the greatest possible extent, in line with their capacities for understanding and participation.

Healthcare providers have an obligation to fulfil their responsibilities to children and young people by providing care that takes into account children's and young people's rights, their evolving capacities, and the rights and responsibilities of parents/carers to provide direction and guidance to their children.

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## International Initiatives

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Australia has committed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Under the Convention, children have a broad range of human rights, including the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account. In all actions concerning children the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration. Children also have the right to special protection because of their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.

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# Glossary

Term	Description
Children and young people	Children and young people under the age of 18. Noting that the term child/ children includes adolescent and young people.
Child Safe Organisation	<p>A child safe organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creates a culture, adopts strategies and takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people.</li> <li>• is obligated to implement the Child Safe Standards through systems policies and processes.</li> </ul> <p>The <i>Children's Guardian Act 2019</i> specifies that certain organisations must be child safe organisations.</p>
Child Safe Standards	Ten Child Safe Standards were recommended by the Royal Commission to provide a framework for making organisations safer for children. NSW has enacted the standards into the <i>Children's Guardian Act 2019</i> .
Child abuse and neglect	Different types of maltreatment of a child, including physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or psychological harm, including exposure to domestic violence and assault, including sexual assault.
Cultural Safety	<p>Cultural safety is determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities.</p> <p>Culturally safe practice is the ongoing critical reflection of health practitioner knowledge, skills, attitudes, practicing behaviours and power differentials in delivering safe, accessible and responsive healthcare, free of racism.</p>
NSW Health entities	<p>Refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Health Districts and Specialty Health Networks</li> <li>• NSW Ambulance</li> <li>• NSW Health Pillars (the Agency for Clinical Innovation, the Clinical Excellence Commission, Cancer Institute NSW, Bureau of Health Information and the Health Education and Training Institute)</li> <li>• NSW Health Agencies (NSW Health Pathology, Office for Health and Medical Research, Health Infrastructure, HealthShare NSW and eHealth NSW)</li> </ul>
Patient safety	The avoidance of unintended or unexpected harm to people during the provision of health care, maximising the things that go right and minimising the things that go wrong.



Term	Description
Related bodies	<p>A <i>related body</i> under the <i>Children’s Guardian Act 2019</i> is a Child Safe Organisation that the Ministry funds or regulates, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Local Health Districts</li> <li>• Ambulance Service of NSW</li> <li>• Statutory Health Corporations (within the meaning of the <i>Health Services Act 1997</i>) that provide services to children</li> <li>• Affiliated health organisations (within the meaning of the <i>Health Services Act 1997</i>) that provide services to children</li> <li>• Religious bodies (within the meaning of section 15A of the <i>Children’s Guardian Act 2019</i>) where Ministry may fund that provide services to children</li> <li>• Local councils that provide services to children</li> <li>• Sport and recreation organisations where these may be providing programs or services of a recreational or sporting nature for children and in which workers are required to hold a working with children check under the <i>Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012</i></li> </ul>
Trauma informed care	<p>A strengths-based model of care to provide a safe, supportive environment to clients and staff that minimises the impact of trauma and prevents re-traumatisation. It reflects research about the prevalence and effects of trauma exposure and the best methods for supporting clients exposed to trauma.</p>





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