Child safeguarding

Is your organisation safeguarding children and young people?
“We are committed to ensuring the safety of children and young people, and to providing support to families and communities. It is for this reason we want to help you, as an organisation engaging with children and young people, to understand and meet your obligations. Children and young people are part of our community and we need to ensure they are valued, their rights respected and that they are kept safe from harm.”

Danielle Woolley
Health, Ageing & Human Services, KPMG

Where do we need to keep children safe?

- **Public transport**, including trains, trams and buses is used by children and young people on a daily basis.
- **Shared community spaces** such as playgrounds and recreational facilities are frequented by children.
- **Transportation services**, including privatised school buses and disability bus services maintain regular contact with children.
- **Faith-based organisations** engage with children at varying levels and across diverse activities.
- **Education** touches the lives of all children and young people, across early childhood learning, primary school, secondary school and tertiary education such as university, TAFE and vocational courses.
- **Youth volunteer and community programs** involve children and young people of all ages in a range of diverse activities.
Safeguarding children and young people is everyone’s responsibility

Commercial services, including entertainment, gym or play facilities are frequently visited by children, school students and young people.

Retailers and small businesses often employ young people under the age of 18 in their first job.

Health and emergency services agencies interact with children and young people on a daily basis.

Human services and welfare agencies support some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our community.

Airlines carry children and young people as passengers with their carers but also as solo travellers.

Sporting clubs and associations commonly have high interaction with children across all ages.

Youth justice and legal services interact with the most vulnerable children and youth.
Our first priority is the safeguarding of children and young people.
The importance of safeguarding children far outweighs business profits, revenue, popularity and market share. We know that the impacts of child abuse and harm are life long and irreversible. It is important to acknowledge the failings of the past and to ensure all children and young people of today, and future generations, are safe from abuse, neglect or harm.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has placed a growing obligation on organisations and institutions to be child safe.

Consider for a moment the impact on an organisation, such as a global fast food chain, prestigious school or iconic airline, if an incident of child abuse, harm or neglect were to occur under its supervision. Or the risk of employing a perpetrator unknowingly.

The ramifications for the organisation may include damaged brand and reputation, sanctions under law, and financial loss, including plunging share prices, compensation and litigation costs and a decline in sales. Further to this, is the impact on the Board and Executive for not satisfying their duty of care and fulfilling the community’s expectations.

And most importantly, the impact on the child and family. Although not mandatory, organisations who implement the national principles will be demonstrating their leadership and commitment to child safety and well-being. Organisations that engage with children must also continue to meet their existing child safe requirements in their State or Territory.

The more complex your organisation – including the type of direct and incidental interactions with children, or the sector and industry regulatory obligations you already face – the more important it is to comply now.

We understand risk and we understand child safeguarding requirements.
The ongoing reputational risks associated with a failure to make child safeguarding a priority, including strong public backlash and scrutiny, are significant. However, understanding what you must do to better protect children is a challenge in itself.

In order to address this need, KPMG and Child Wise, a social enterprise focused on child abuse prevention in organisations, have formed a strategic alliance to help organisations navigate and embrace their new requirements and public expectations.

"Knowing that child safeguarding is your organisation’s responsibility and that in some jurisdictions there are serious ramifications when you get it wrong should make you alert and eager to get this right. In some jurisdictions the law expects this, with other jurisdictions to follow suit. This expectation from the law is shared by the community, your customers and your shareholders."

Rochelle Hawkins
Associate Director, KPMG
Acknowledging how prevalent interaction and engagement with children and young people is across the entire community, including across a diverse range of organisations, and the prevalence of child abuse in contemporary society, makes for a sobering reflection.

Between 2016 and 2017 there were 60,930 substantiated cases of child abuse in Australia.\(^1\)

This was made up of:
- 26,217 cases of emotional abuse
- 16,734 cases of neglect
- 10,808 cases of physical abuse
- 7,171 cases of sexual abuse

1 in 3 children who were the subject of a substantiated case of child abuse were from the lowest socioeconomic areas.\(^2\)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are seven times more likely than non-Indigenous children to have received child protection services.\(^3\)

It is estimated that in 2019, a total of 2,492,000 people living in Australia had experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15.\(^5\)

This accounts for 1 in 6 women and 1 in 9 men experience physical or sexual abuse before the aged of 15.

Top 5 types of institutions where historical incidents of abuse occurred.\(^4\)
- 482 Recreation, sports and clubs
- 639 Youth detention
- 1,162 Religious activities
- 2,521 Schools
- 3,277 Out of home care

\(^1\) Australia Institute of Health and Welfare
\(^2\) Australia Institute of Health and Welfare
\(^3\) Australia Institute of Health and Welfare
\(^4\) Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2013-2017
\(^5\) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

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What are Child Safe Principles?

As of February 2019, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations had been endorsed by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments. The national endorsement of child safety principles means that every organisation in Australia that works or engages with children in any way, will have to ensure they provide a safe environment, where children are protected from harm.

Principle 1
Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
Strong leadership is a recognised driver for cultural change. It is crucial that in addition to clear and transparent governance mechanisms which prioritise child safety, there is also a culture of shared accountability and a clear commitment to the safety of children and young people.

Principle 2
Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
Children and young people are informed about their rights and responsibilities in an age appropriate way, participate in decision making and are provided with the tools to keep themselves safe.

Principle 3
Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
Parents, carers, families and the broader community are empowered to speak up and contribute to conversations regarding child safety and wellbeing, and how they can raise issues or concerns.

Principle 4
Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
Children and young people come from a diverse range of circumstances and backgrounds, and this is recognised to ensure all children and young people are empowered to participate effectively and that organisation understands culturally safe and inclusive behaviour.

Principle 5
People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
Organisations implement all necessary recruitment, screening, training, supervision and performance management mechanisms to ensure only safe people, including all safe, volunteers and contractors are brought into the organisation.

Principle 6
Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
It is important organisations outline clear and transparent processes for reporting and responding to concerns and allegations. The complaints process should be understood by children and vulnerable people, their families and all staff and volunteers.

Principle 7
Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
Organisations cannot rely on recruitment and induction processes to ensure knowledge, skills and awareness of staff and volunteers in child safety. These need to be upheld through continuous training.

Principle 8
Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
Risk management strategies should be utilised to identify and monitor potential risks where adult interactions and child interactions occur, where a physical environment is unsafe or where a technological platform is unsafe.

Principle 9
Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
Robust review and continuous improvement processes are pivotal to ensuring an organisation is compliant with all legislative and regulatory obligations and also on the front foot of changing conditions, challenges or opportunities.

Principle 10
Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.
Organisations should have a child safety policy that is an overarching document to pull together all key elements of an organisation’s approach to safety for children and young. Policies are critical in setting expectations for all to adhere to.
What are the risks?

How is this relevant to you?
Many organisations and institutions underestimate the relevance of child safeguarding to their operations and their risk profile.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse defined a child as every person below the age of 18 years unless the law applicable to the child states otherwise.

Engagement with a child or young person may occur directly – for example in schools or universities, health or welfare service settings, the employment of young people in retail outlets, or services targeted at children such as amusement parks.

Interaction with a child or young person may also occur indirectly – for example as customers in retail settings, or transport users on trains, planes, buses and trams, participants in research projects or colocation of a child care facility on your property.

Organisations and businesses face risk exposures in two key domains:

**Regulations and standards**

National, state-based and sector-based legislation and regulation, accompanied with mandatory reporting requirements, are all advancing. Relevant developments include:

- The Australian Human Rights Commission’s National Principles for Child Safe Organisations have been endorsed by the COAG as of February 2019. If legislated, failure to comply may result in sanctions and reputational backlash.
- Organisations risk civil litigation, with potential financial and reputational consequences, if they fail to adhere to regulations.
- Mandatory reporting requirements exist around Australia. In Victoria, for example, mandatory reporting requirements place a responsibility on all adult members of society to report a belief of sexual abuse against a child. Failure to do so may result in imprisonment.
- Multiple states, such as Queensland and Victoria have commenced exploring and reforming civil law to create a new duty of care that will allow an organisation to be held responsible for child abuse that occurred in their organisation. For example, in Victoria, Child Safe Standards are being enforced by the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People, through the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

**Reputation and responsibility**

Child safeguarding standards, principles and regulations are accountability and transparency drivers, however, it is a culture underpinned by a commitment to involving and protecting children and young people that is also critical to embedding these standards in an organisation.

As well as implementing strategies to prevent harm to children and young people, organisations and businesses need to make public statements about their commitment to protecting children and young people.

The reputational risk of the media, civil society, the Government, or others calling out unaddressed child safeguarding is high.
Taking action

Making sense of your duty of care
Children are the most vulnerable members of society, due to their dependence on adults, and limited awareness of their rights, identity and acceptable social norms and behaviours. This heightened vulnerability forms the basis for the legal and social obligations and responsibilities that an organisation has in reference to the protection of children – an extended duty of care to children specifically, to ensure their safety, happiness and wellbeing.

Principle 1 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations sets the expectation that child safety and wellbeing are embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture – specifically that a culture of accountability is promoted.

Organisational leadership and supporting governance arrangements are required to make a commitment to safeguarding children.

What happens if you fail to take action?
A Victorian Ombudsman review into a particular situation of child sexual abuse found the organisation’s “Board’s failures to be monumental”. In 1985, members of this Board knew that a paedophile was under police investigation for child sexual offences, yet he was not removed from the organisation until 1991. During this time he continued to abuse children. Board members, executive, management, and staff are all responsible for the safety of children.

The impact on reputation, brand and public trust was substantial.

What happens when systematic failure occurs?
A New South Wales Ombudsman review into a case of child sex abuse found a particular organisation’s poor recruitment processes resulted in the hiring of a convicted paedophile. This then allowed the offender to be direct provider of care to children to where they groomed and sexually abused several boys. Staff were aware something was wrong but were unaware of their child protection policies and breach them as a result.

The damage to the organisations reputation and trust within the community and nationally was harmful.
We understand that for many organisations tackling child safeguarding risk is unchartered territory. For some, operating as a child safe organisation is not foreign, however, these organisations may not feel comfortable that they are fully compliant and operating in line with better practice.

How can we help?

Using our Child Safeguarding Framework Tool, we will help you understand your current state process, risks and vulnerabilities, and the key areas of your organisation that will impact your reputation and public trust and leave you exposed. We will also identify gaps in legislative and regulatory compliance obligations, providing you with a roadmap to success including prioritised and practical actions.

We can provide specialised expertise to assist you in targeted areas, for example:

- Development and implementation of your own child safeguarding standards
- Managing data, privacy, record keeping and redress
- Legislative compliance
- Risk assessment and self-assessment tools
- Incident management, investigations and audit.

We will assist you in your ongoing success through:

- Child Wise Child Safe Accreditation Program
- Development and execution of compliance audit programs, suitable for single locations or large scale and across many sites.

We can assist you to build needed capacity and shift culture through:

- Child Wise training and capacity building services
- KPMG Soft Controls Methodology to assess organisational culture in a scientific way.

How do we manage the risks?

There are five distinct components an organisation should understand and embed to become a child safe organisation, and as a result, to manage associated risks.

- **Prevent**
  Prevent child abuse by building open and aware cultures, whilst targeting specific environmental and situational factors.

- **Identify**
  Identify child safeguarding risks, issues or concerns and intervene/mitigate in child-focused ways.

- **Respond**
  Respond to instances and allegations of abuse.

- **Learn**
  Learn from serious incidents and allegations of abuse and continue to improve.

- **Empower**
  Empower children of all ages to voice their views and contribute to increasing their safety.
Let’s start the conversation

Through KPMG and Child Wise, you will have access to subject matter expertise and experience in promoting, building and fostering safeguarding cultures and practices. Contact us and let’s start the conversation on how we can help you navigate child safeguarding risk.

We understand risk and we understand child safeguarding.

Between KPMG and Child Wise, you will have access to a passionate and multidisciplinary team, who bring expertise in many fields to provide an end-to-end service, with a deep understanding of child safeguarding.

We have access to expertise across all sectors which will bring to you, such as Kerry McGough our National Lead Partner for Health, Aging and Human Services, who is highly experienced in child safety, safeguarding children.

Rochelle and Jane will be your key points of contact. Please find their contact details overleaf.

Rochelle and Cassandra form our core team with extensive experience in working with organisations to become child safe, understand their obligations and build risk-based approaches.

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Rochelle Hawkins
Associate Director, Risk Assurance, KPMG

Rochelle is an Associate Director for KPMG Risk Assurance’s Child Safeguarding team. Rochelle has led some of KPMG’s largest risk, governance and audit engagements in health and human services, public and private sectors, and offers 10 years experience in helping organisations.

If your organisation is seeking advice in relation to meeting compliance obligations, developing assurance functions, or managing the many facets of child safeguarding risk, please contact Rochelle.

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Jane French
Executive Director, Child Wise

As the Executive Director of Child Wise, Jane is equipped with over 25 years of experience in keeping children and young people safe from harm, specialising in preventing and responding to child abuse within organisational contexts. Jane worked closely with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to design and implement victim support services, as well as a comprehensive support model for staff.

If your organisation is seeking support to build capability and capacity in this area, including access to leading child safety training and education, please contact Jane.

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Kerry McGough
National Leader Partner, Health, Ageing and Human Services, KPMG

Danielle Woolley
Partner, Health, Ageing & Human Services, KPMG

Cassandra Seibold
Manager, Risk Assurance, KPMG
“The Commissioner for Children in each jurisdiction will have very little
tolerance for inactivity given the Royal Commission handed down 409
recommendations in December 2017 that should be actioned now.”

Danielle Woolley
Partner, KPMG

“A focus on child safety should be the life blood of any organisation where
children spend time. Child safety needs to be embedded at every level of the
organisation and underpin all policies, procedures, practices and culture.”

Jane French
Executive Director, Child Wise
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