



YOUTH POLICY

TITLE	YOUTH POLICY
RESPONSIBLE PERSON	MANAGER COMMUNITY RELATIONS
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Definitions

Child - A child is any person under the age of 18.

Council – *Sorell Council*

Inappropriate Relationships - as any connection either romantic, sexual, or platonic, that crosses professional, ethical, or legal boundaries, often involving a misuse of power, secrecy, or harm to one or both parties.

Councillors - An elected member of Council known as a Councillor or Alderman or otherwise meeting the definition of a 'councillor' as defined under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1993 (TAS).

Service Providers – Organisations and/or individuals that provide an activity, presentation, or any contribution to young people in a Council arranged event or program.

Social media – A collection of internet and mobile based tools which allow for interactive sharing and discussion of information.

Staff – Someone who is employed by Sorell Council, including employees working within the Youth Hub.

Worker - A person, other than a Councillor, who carries out work in any capacity for Council, including work as: an employee; a contractor or subcontractor; an employee of a contractor or subcontractor; an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work at Council; an apprentice or trainee; a student gaining work experience; a volunteer.

Youth Hub (Fitzies) – Community space managed by Sorell Council available for youth programs, meetings, and events.

Youth/Young People - A youth or young person is any person aged between 12-25.

Policy Statement

Sorell Council is committed to placing young people at the centre of community life, by empowering them with skills and confidence, and meaningful opportunities to contribute to planning and decision-making.

This Youth Policy (the Policy) guides the Community Relations team, staff, external providers and Councillors working with young people in a Council capacity. It establishes a consistent approach to engaging with young people and supports the development and delivery of initiatives that promote their safety, wellbeing and positive participation in their communities.

Purpose

The Policy outlines how Council engages with children and young people in a safe, inclusive and respectful way. It sets clear expectations for all those working with young people to ensure consistent, best practice engagement across all Council activities.

It should be read in conjunction with Council's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, which provides the overarching framework for child safety and risk management.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- All Council staff and volunteers.
- Councillors when engaging with young people through Council activities.
- Contractors and service providers delivering youth-related services on behalf of Council.

It applies to all:

- Programs, services and events.
- Fitzies Youth Hub operations.
- Communications and engagement activities involving children and young people.
- Digital communication and online engagement involving young people.

Principles

Council is committed to:

- Providing safe environments for children and young people.
- Treating all young people with respect, dignity and fairness.
- Supporting inclusive and accessible participation.
- Actively engaging young people in decisions that affect them.
- Maintaining clear and professional boundaries at all times.

Expected Conduct

All people conducting work with young people, including staff, volunteers, Councillors, contractors or service providers must:

- Maintain professional boundaries when interacting with young people.
- Act in a manner that prioritises safety and wellbeing.
- Use approved Council communication channels only.
- Obtain appropriate consent for participation, information collection and images.
- Follow all safeguarding and reporting requirements.
- Respond appropriately to disclosures or safety concerns.
- Follow all relevant and related Council Policies and Procedures.

All people conducting work with young people, including staff, volunteers, Councillors, contractors or service providers must not:

- Engage in personal or inappropriate relationships with young people.
- Communicate with young people via personal social media or private accounts.
- Use language or behaviour that is inappropriate, discriminatory or unsafe
- Ignore, minimise or fail to report safety concerns.
- Be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while supervising youth activities in line with Council's *Drug and Alcohol Policy*.

Youth Participation and Engagement

Council is committed to ensuring young people have a voice in decisions that impact them.

This includes:

- Actively seeking input from young people through engagement activities.
- Supporting youth advisory groups and participation opportunities.
- Using co-design approaches where appropriate.
- Providing feedback to young people on how their input has informed decisions.

Program Delivery and Communication

I. Programs and Events

All youth-related activities must:

- Be appropriately planned and risk assessed using an approved operational template.
- Include supervision and staffing numbers in line with our identified staffing ratio procedures.
- Follow clear sign-in and sign-out processes where required.
- Ensure that documented procedures for incident, complaint and issue management are followed.

II. Fitzies Youth Hub and Council Facilities will:

- Provide a safe, inclusive and supervised environment.
- Clearly communicate expected behaviours.
- Ensure staff presence and oversight during operations.

I. Communication with Young People must:

- Occur only through Council-approved platforms and channels.
- Be respectful, inclusive, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive.
- Use clear, accessible language appropriate to young people's needs and abilities

- Avoid private or one-on-one conversations in person, online or over the phone unless authorised and documented.

Ages of young people in Council Programs

Appropriate ages are established, maintained and reviewed for all youth activities. These align with relevant legislation and funding guidelines.

Fitzies Youth Hub is a safe, accessible place for young people aged 12-17 during regular opening hours.

Young people aged 18-25 may only attend designated activities and programs, held at separate times to the 12–17-year-olds.

Legal and Compliance Framework

Council is committed to meeting its obligations to children and young people through an integrated policy framework.

I. Duty of Care

All people engaged in activities and engagement with young people, including staff, volunteers, Councillors, contractors or service providers, have the responsibility to exercise a duty of care. That is, they must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in all activities and to avoid an act (or failure to act) which might reasonably be foreseen to result in injury to others.

II. Work Health and Safety (WHS)

Risks associated with youth activities will be identified, assessed and managed in line with Council's WHS Policy and associated requirements.

III. Consent and Privacy

All of Council's youth services are voluntary for young people. This means that young people have a choice to not take part in activities supervised by Council. Any person under 18 years must have the written consent of a parent or legal guardian to participate in Council's youth program and any related activities.

Council will:

- Obtain informed consent for participation in programs and activities.
- Obtain informed consent for use of personal information.
- Manage personal information in accordance with privacy legislation and Council's *Personal information Protection Policy*.

IV. Access and Equal Opportunity

Council will work to provide all access facilities for youth programs and to remove barriers for participation by:

- Providing inclusive and accessible opportunities for all young people.
- Consider subsidising or providing transport and access for rural young people, subject to available budget, resources and assessed need.
- Promoting a discrimination-free environment in Fitzies and removing any behaviours that directly or indirectly discriminate any individuals.
- Considering provision of affordable options to ensure all young people have equal access to Council run youth activities.
- Ensure youth voices are included in Council's Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee.

Safeguarding and Reporting

Council will comply with Tasmania's Child and Youth Safe Standards, which is a list of things organisations must do to protect the wellbeing and safety of children they come into contact with.

All staff, councillors, volunteers and service providers must:

- Comply with Council's *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy*.
- Report any concerns, incidents or disclosures in line with established procedures.
- Understand and meet any mandatory reporting obligations.

Third-Party Providers

All contractors and service providers working with young people on behalf of Council must:

- Complete Council's required induction process and procedures.
- Meet Council's safeguarding requirements.
- Hold relevant checks and clearances (e.g. Working with Vulnerable People registration).
- Comply with all relevant Council policies and procedures.

Council staff will work closely with the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) for quality assurance of service providers.

Responsibilities

- Council: Provide leadership, governance and policy oversight.
- CEO and Leadership Team: Ensure implementation and compliance with the Policy.
- Staff and Volunteers: Apply this Policy in all relevant activities.

- Service Providers: Meet contractual and policy obligations.
- Child Safe Organisation Working Group: Will monitor Council's activities in relation to the *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy*.

Complaints and feedback

Council is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and responsive environment where young people feel comfortable to speak up.

Young people and our community can:

- raise an issue or concern
- share feedback, including compliments and suggestions
- make a formal complaint

Feedback or concerns can be shared by:

- young people
- parents or guardians
- community members
- staff, volunteers or service providers

You can speak to Council:

- directly with staff or program supervisors
- in person, by phone, email or online

All Formal complaints are received and managed in accordance with Council's Complaint Resolution Policy. The process will be undertaken in an age-appropriate way, ensuring that young people are meaningfully included, supported to participate, and kept informed throughout in ways that are appropriate to their age and understanding.

Training and Capability

Council will ensure that staff and volunteers:

- Receive appropriate safeguarding and youth engagement training.
- Understand their responsibilities under this Policy.
- Are supported to apply best practice in working with young people.
- Staff receive recognised first aid and mental health first aid training.

Implementation and Review

Following the adoption of the policy, be made publicly available on Council's website.

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years or when identified as being required.