

Child Safe Organisations Bill 2024

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GIRL GUIDES QUEENSLAND

Girl Guides Queensland is the largest youth organisation for girls and young women in Queensland with almost 4,000 youth members and 1,000 volunteer leaders and adult members. We provide a non-formal educational program designed to create leaders of tomorrow by building on strengths and personal skills development.

The Guide Program is flexible and can be designed to suit each individual youth and adult members' goals. We are an organisation that welcomes and actively seeks members from all racial, ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups.

Girl Guides Queensland is a member of Girl Guides Australia and of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

Girl Guiding is facilitated by trained volunteers across all states in Australia. With a program that is girl-led and designed to empower girls and young women to be the change in their world.

OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Girl Guides Queensland as a member of Girl Guides Australia (GGA) is committed to being Australia's leading organisation for girls and young women in leadership and personal development.

GGA together with the State Girl Guide Organisations (SGGOs), including Girl Guides Queensland, recognise that the long-standing reputation and effectiveness of Girl Guiding in Australia (GGiA) is dependent on the behaviours and attitudes of the people who make up the Girl Guiding movement in Australia.

The Girl Guide Promise and Guide Law is fundamental to all aspects of Guiding and provides a foundation of expected behaviours.

There is a significant role that culture plays in keeping children and young people safe. Guiding worldwide focuses on giving girls and young women a voice and an opportunity to build lifelong friendships and networks. These two core elements alone encourage those in Guiding to speak up for themselves and others, an essential part of creating a child safe culture. Girl Guides Queensland has a zero tolerance of child abuse and neglect.

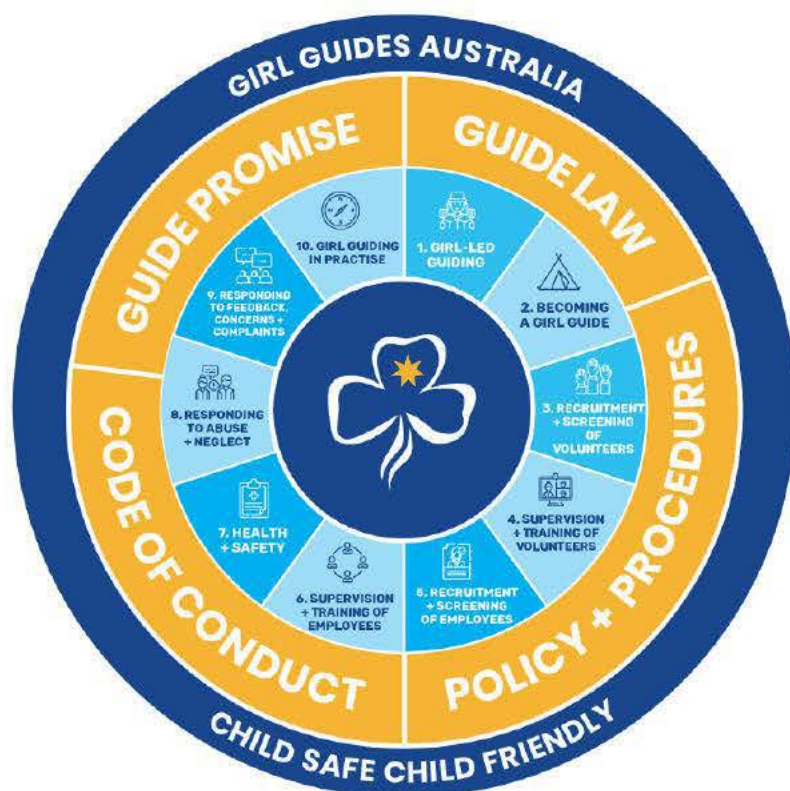
Girl Guides Queensland has always focused on the safety of its youth members. In response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, GGiA evolved its practices to implement the Child Safe Child Friendly framework¹ to further safeguard its members. The foundations of the Child Safe Child Friendly Policy are the National Principles for Child Safe

¹ [https://www.guidelinesforgirlguides.org.au/cscf/child-safe-child-friendly-policy/#:~:text=The%20foundations%20of%20the%20Girl,and%20Girl%20Scouts%20\(WAGGGS\).](https://www.guidelinesforgirlguides.org.au/cscf/child-safe-child-friendly-policy/#:~:text=The%20foundations%20of%20the%20Girl,and%20Girl%20Scouts%20(WAGGGS).)

Organisations as agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments in February 2019 and the requirements of the WAGGGS. Child Safe Child Friendly Community is one of the strategic foundations.

The Child Safe Child Friendly Policy identifies ten fundamental elements (Figure 1). Procedures and Guidance Notes are available to members and non-members for each of these ten elements to support Child Safe Child Friendly practice across GGIA.

Figure 1 Child Safe Child Friendly Framework



Girl Guides Queensland is committed to providing safe activities and environments for all Guides, volunteers, and employees and has policies and procedures for specific aspects. These include supervision ratios, risk management, outdoor activities, adventure-based activities, overnight stays, interstate events, international events and travel, social media and internet, and engagement and activities with other organisations. These policies and procedures support youth members to engage in Girl Guiding safely.

Adult members, volunteers and employees must be familiar with the Girl Guide policies and procedures relevant to their role. All GGIA members, volunteers, and employees will adopt a culture of adherence to the policies and procedures of GGA and the relevant SGGO according to their role in Guiding.

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

Options for implementing child safe standards in Queensland

Girl Guides Queensland supports an ongoing commitment to delivering safe spaces for youth and in principle supports the implementation of child safe standards in Queensland.

However, the preferred option of delivering, Option 3 – Establish a legislated regulatory model which requires in-scope organisations to comply with child safe standards, presents significant challenges for not-for-profit entities that facilitate activities through volunteer commitment.

The State of Volunteering in Queensland Report (2024)² highlights that participation in volunteering is down more than 10% since 2020 and hours volunteered are down by approximately 20% over the same period. Girl Guides Queensland remains one of the youth organisations with the highest ratios of adults to youth members³ in support of a child safe child friendly environment. Adding increased administrative burdens to an already declining pool of volunteers will significantly impact the ability of Girl Guides to continue with its mission to empower young women to become the leaders of their world.

In addition to challenges with its volunteer base, as with many organisations, the cost of goods and services increase is placing pressure on the financial systems of the organisation. Whilst both staff and volunteers continue to do what is within their control to reduce costs and increase efficiencies, the additional costs required if a new legislative regulatory model is introduced would reduce the investment into the organisation's volunteers and its ability to meet evolving volunteer and youth member expectations.

Recommendations

Based on these reasons, Girl Guides Queensland would support Option 2 – Establish a non-legislative model for CSS implementation, with a limited scope. This would present a lower level of administrative and cost burden on the organisation, noting that it would in no way inhibit the continued focus on establishing the highest compliance to GGiA's child safe child friendly framework and policy suite.

Should Government decide to proceed to Option 3 as outlined in the summary impact analysis statement, Girl Guides Queensland would strongly recommend implementing in a phased manner in which organisations such as ours are provided a five-year timeline for implementation ensuring that our budgeting can accommodate the requirements and that the administration is introduced with a limited impact on our small workforce and volunteers.

Options for a reportable conduct scheme

Girl Guides Queensland supports the proposal for an integrated model for child safe organisations to create alignment and build cost efficiencies. The value of cohesive communication should not be overlooked in such a complex space. The need to follow and adhere to multiple updates from multiple bodies can be overwhelming and challenging. A singular entity with a single update pathway will

² <https://volunteeringqld.org.au/state-of-volunteering-in-queensland/>

³ <https://www.guidelinesforgirlguides.org.au/ratios-at-a-glance/>

reduce the likelihood of missed or conflicting information making the child safe lead's role more effective.

Recommendation

Proceed with option 2 to create an integrated nationally consistent reportable conduct scheme.

Other considerations

Girl Guides Queensland advocates for a review of the Blue Card process alongside changes to child safety processes. As a part of the GGiA approach to its child safe child friendly framework, volunteers are now required to have a current Blue Card for practices in Queensland and a Police Check to meet national requirements for child safety. This double-up in paperwork and compliance is costly for the organisation and volunteers. Girl Guides Queensland would advocate to see a stronger Police Check element within the Blue Card system that allows for a single application that is rigorous and protect youth.