**NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR LANDCARE GROUPS REGARDING CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS.**

While this legislation is not specific to Landcare groups, the work we do may either at times involve Children or directly invite Children to be involved e.g. Junior Landcare and Landcare Kids Days, thus Landcare groups, networks and CMA’s need to comply with the Child Safety Standards.

The standards are not prescriptive about HOW to comply, which is intentional as the level of compliance/due diligence is going to be totally different for a Landcare Group to a Preschool or Child Care Centre, so it is likely that groups can self-determine how they can demonstrate that they are a Child Safe organisation, which is most certainly Landcare’s intent.

This may all seem to be common sense, and many groups are saying that  “*Of course we’re keeping children safe and making sure they aren’t in danger at our activities*”, and that is all I have ever seen in Landcare however this legislation came into place from State inquiries that sadly demonstrate that there have been numerous cases in Victoria in which children have not been protected and felt unsafe in a diverse range of public and privately run organisations,  businesses , activities and settings.

***What do we do now?***

The overwhelming advice from the recent information session I attended was that child safety is most likely already common practice within our volunteer groups, we just need to be more overt about it, make it an ongoing part of our group’s culture and build understanding about the Standards. This should not be onerous or worrying and we’re all more than likely running events or activities in which Child Safety is already largely established but perhaps not documented anywhere.

**There are a few simple steps that your groups can take now as a minimum standard**

•                    Create a **Statement of Commitment** to child safety, to be documented in your constitution, minutes, website etc. E.g. “The XXXX Landcare group are committed to providing a child safe environment and being a Child Safe organisation in accordance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards”

•                    A further step might be some **supporting principles** such as “The XXXX Landcare Group has zero tolerance of child abuse” “The XXXX Landcare Group will ensure all new volunteers are aware of our commitment to child safely when they are welcomed into the group”

•                    An **Action Statement** will assist your members to know exactly what to do should any issue arise and for reporting any suspected abuse e.g. “The XXXX Landcare Group will comply with Victorian Law by contacting the police in any instance that abuse toward Children is suspected or witnessed”

•                    If you produce OHS/ Hazard Risk Assessments or Plans before your events, consider adding a line in specifically for the Safety of Children e.g. “This event is open to the general public, therefore parents are advised that their children remain their responsibility at all times”

•                    If working with schools, think about making the Standards part of the conversation with the teacher in charge when you’re planning the logistics of the activity e.g. “What do we both need to do to ensure this activity/event/session provides a child safe environment?”

***Supporting Landcare***

Currently, the degree of action in establishing and improving child safe policies varies greatly across organisations. The Child Safe Standards Team – Commission for Children and Young People are first and foremost about education and empowerment, not compliance, and to keep things in perspective, Landcare is a small margin of the huge array of businesses, institutions and providers that also need to comply to varying degrees with the standards.

So there is no need to worry or think of excluding children from events, this would be devastating for Landcare groups and the future of our work. The Commission has the advice should you require more understanding or have specific questions. In addition, my equivalents across the state are looking to work with FTLA and DELWP, to have Landcare specific advice/examples of groups working the Standards into their group’s activities, in the coming months.

The key contact on Child Safe Standards, including a range of advice, resources and templates and information on the scope of the Child Safe Standards is available from the [Child Safe Standards](http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/) page of the **Commission for Children and Young People** website.

**Contact**
Tel. (03) 8601 5281
Email childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au

I am always here to chat though any queries people may have on making this a standard part of the work we all do,

Warm regards,

Tess.

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