

Submission

Child Safety Officers in Local Government

For this reason, the theory that local governments do not need to provide additional financial investment into implementing a Child Safety Officer role is ambitious and potentially misleading. Without the financial investment, gaps in services, information and consistent messaging is likely to result for communities (such as the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale) where Officers are already at capacity with the tasks they undertake. In the Shire's case, the fact that positions that may be upskilled to disseminate information are part time, means that there will be days organisations can not access immediate advice.

Training requirements as a minimum will have a financial impact on our organisation. For example, one hour of training would result in a resourcing commitment of 2.4 hours (specified positions only) to over 185 hours (whole of organisation training), even if the training facilitator was provided by a separate Department body or organisation.

The questions in this discussion paper have been focussed around implementation, being as specific as what requirements might be needed for training purposes. It is disappointing that comment has been sought on implementation prior to any specified advice pertaining to the State's involvement, role and actions for wider implementation of child safe practices and any mandatory requirements. This is directly relevant to the recommendation:

With support from governments at the national, state and territory levels, local governments should designate child safety officer positions from existing staff profiles to carry out the following functions:

- a) developing child safe messages in local government venues, grounds and facilities;*
- b) assisting local institutions to access online child safe resources;*
- c) providing child safety information and support to local institutions on a need's basis; and*
- d) supporting local institutions to work collaboratively with key services to ensure child safe approaches are culturally safe, disability aware and appropriate for children from diverse backgrounds.*

Without understanding the State's position and potential support, the Shire's ability to implement remains subjective. The ability to feed into the process and influence considerations is warmly welcomed. The dissemination of knowledge, information and advice to organisations that require assistance and guidance is a worthy objective. However, as no review has yet been undertaken to current Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale organizational practices to consider our alignment to the National Principles, it seems pertinent to postpone the consideration of a Child Safety Officer until that has occurred.

Should there be a requirement from the State to both implement organisational wide changes as a result of the Reportable Conduct Scheme at the same time as taking ownership of a Child Safety Officer function, the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale is not adequately resourced. Our priority will be ensuring our own organisation meets the highest standard of Child Safety.

