



MIDCOAST
council

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES REPORT

DRAFT CHILD SAFETY ACTION PLAN

CONSULTATION: 30 November 2021 - 15 February 2022



CONTENTS

This report is presented in six sections:

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, MidCoast Council made a commitment to become a child safe organisation. Part of this is the implementation of a Child Safe Action Plan. This plan provides a blueprint for staff and elected Councillors in ensuring our organisation is safe for children and that we are putting their interests at the core of our decision making.

After the introduction of the Child Safe Scheme in 2021, all Councils were required to develop and implement a Child Safe Action Plan.

The plan draws upon the 10 Child Safe Standards, as set out by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in December 2017. Each year, we will measure our performance by how well we are meeting these standards or working towards meeting them.

The Child Safe Action Plan relates to Council facilities and programs, and does not extend to areas outside Council's influence, like schools, churches or other organisations or activities.

After the draft Action Plan was developed, we sought feedback from the general community as well as child-focused organisations.

The feedback will be considered in a final revision of the Action Plan, prior to its formal adoption by Council.



DRAFT CHILD SAFE ACTION PLAN

What you told us

We received valuable feedback on the draft Action Plan.

Overall, you supported the Action Plan and said it was a positive step

You suggested we could improve the document if we:

Strengthen the reporting and evaluation measures

Improve inclusivity and diversity

Simplify the document format

Well done... but it can be refined further.

“The indicators of success – how are you going to evaluate these?”

How you got involved

-  235 visits to dedicated web page - 155 unique visitors
-  556 emails to local child-centred community organisations
-  4,396 people reached via Facebook post
-  670 flyers distributed to libraries and schools
-  50 schools sent information for school newsletters
-  1 workshop held with MidCoast Council Youth Taskforce
-  7 submissions received

Our commitment is to become a child safe organisation.

The Child Safe Action Plan provides a blueprint for staff and Councillors to make sure our organisation is safe for children and that their interests are always considered in the decisions we make.

The Action Plan outlines actions we will take to ensure we meet the 10 standards which form the basis of new legislation under the NSW Child Safe Scheme. We will report annually on progress on these actions.

The Action Plan applies to all Council facilities and programs.

This consultation:

- sought your feedback to review the Action Plan
- focussed on the actions included in the Action Plan and the indicators of success.

Your feedback will help us finalise the Action Plan, prior to its adoption by Council.

What's next

We're now preparing a detailed Engagement Outcomes Report that will include all your feedback.

It will be available soon.

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

The draft Child Safe Action Plan was developed due to a commitment by Council and is the first step in ensuring Council is child safe.

The purpose of the engagement was to give the community, Council, Councillors and key stakeholders an opportunity to review the draft Action Plan and provide feedback. The engagement process also raised awareness of the plan and its relationship to the Child Safe Standards.

Overall, respondents felt the draft Child Safe Action Plan was a positive step; however, they commented on the need for better reporting and evaluation measures.

Seven people provided submissions. Sentiment about the Action Plan was mixed and included comments on what respondents thought was positive as well as suggestions for strengthening and improvement.

The key suggestions for improving the Action Plan included:

- strengthen the reporting and evaluation measures
- improve inclusivity and diversity
- simplify the document format

While the number of contributions were limited, the overall reach to the community was good and contributed to building awareness of the Child Safe Action Plan and its purpose.

This feedback will be considered by Council's community development team in their revision of the draft Action Plan. Responses to the issues raised will be documented as a part of a report to Council.



METHODOLOGY SUMMARY

The draft Child Safe Action Plan was placed on exhibition for 28 working days as well as a four-week period in December-January as specified in the Community Participation Plan.

In accordance with the principles in the Community Participation Plan, we aimed to engage with a wide variety of people in the community.

Key stakeholders targeted in the engagement included:

- Child-centred community organisations
- Schools and preschools
- Parents and carers of children
- Parents and carers of Aboriginal children
- Parents and carers of children living with disability
- Migrant families
- Council employees
- Councillors
- State agencies, including NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- YMCA – Manning and Great Lakes
- Sporting associations who use Council facilities
- NSW Surf Lifesaving – Mid-North Coast branch
- MidCoast residents

To get the word out, a range of strategies were used, including digital media, traditional media and direct communication with key stakeholders.

How you got involved

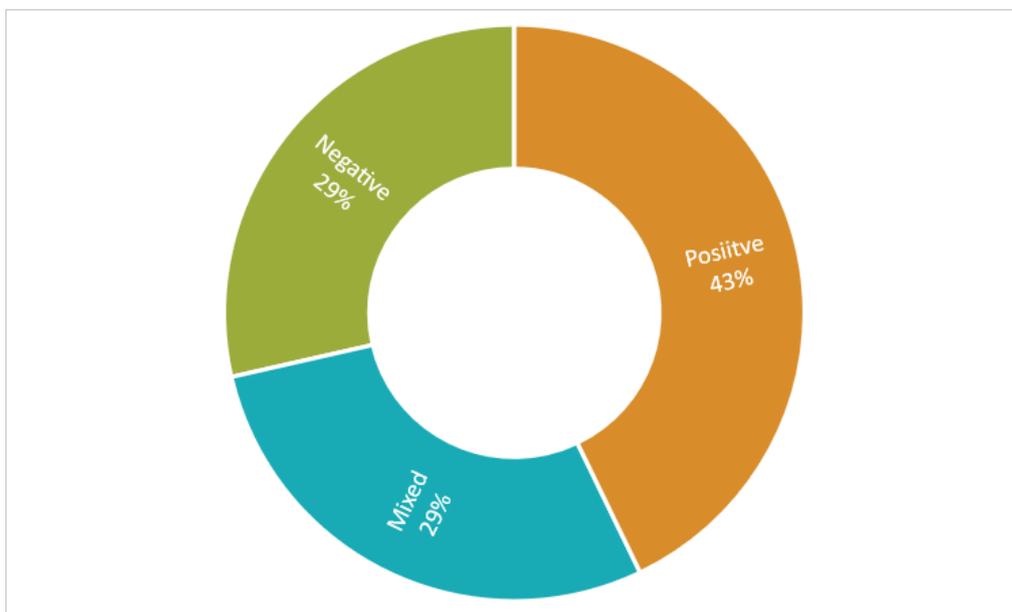
-  235 visits to dedicated web page - 155 unique visitors
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DETAILED DATA

Sentiment

Across the seven submissions, each was analysed to generate a general sentiment towards the draft Child Safe Action Plan. Those which contained neither positive nor negative comments, focusing on opportunities for improvement, were allocated to mixed. The distribution of sentiment is shown in the image below:



Themes

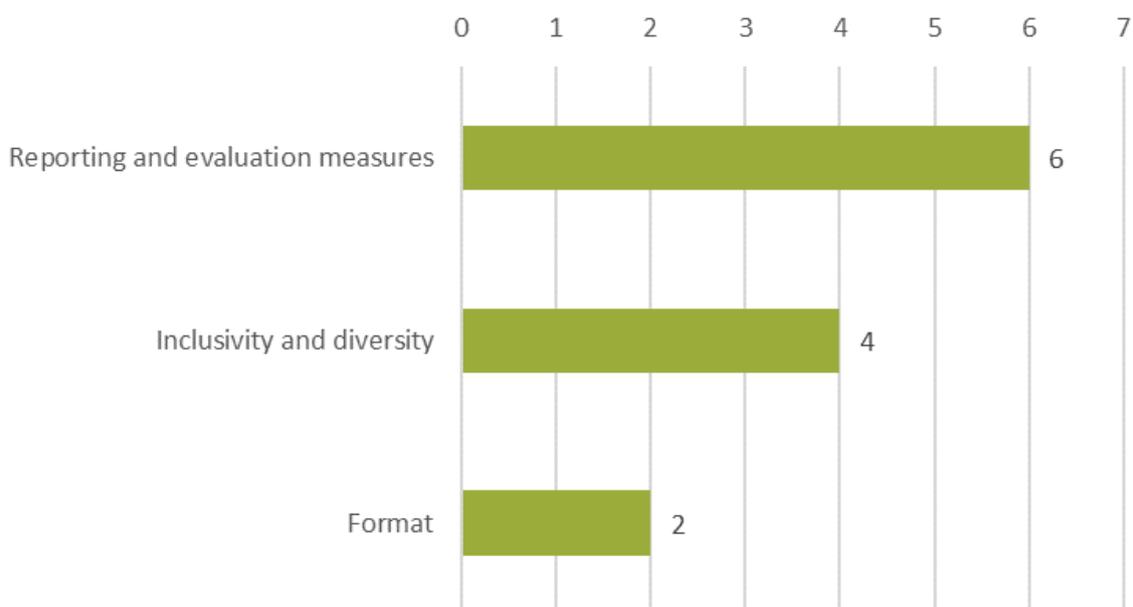
Overall, there was support for the Action Plan, especially the commitment by Council to be child safe. Feedback also highlighted the comprehensive nature of the Action Plan and the whole of Council approach taken.

Opportunities for improvement centred on three areas:

- Strengthen reporting and evaluation measures
- Inclusivity and diversity
- Simplify the document format



More than one issue could be raised within a submission. The breakdown of these areas for improvement are shown in the graph below:



The following table provides a detailed summary of the feedback on areas for improvement.

Areas for improvement	Detail
Implementation, accountability and evaluation	<p>Indicators need to be measurable</p> <p>Needs clarity on how these indicators will be evaluated and reported</p> <p>Alignment of standards, actions and indicators is not clear, and some don't line up at all</p> <p>Actions need to be realistic across whole of Council</p> <p>Child safe design actions need to be strengthened</p> <p>Opportunity for collaboration with child-focused sector</p> <p>Need greater clarification on how Council will demonstrate meaningful engagement</p>
Inclusivity and diversity	<p>Gaps in identified minority groups i.e. CALD</p> <p>LGBTQ+</p>

Advocacy of minority groups, particularly socio-economically disadvantaged groups, with relevance to child safety

Geographic location limits access to facilities and services of Council

Accessible infrastructure for diverse populations, particularly minority groups

Format

Simplification of document. Utilisation of plain English. Layout could be improved through the utilisation of more headings with lead-in introductory sentence

Create a simple one-page version for children

Imagery is good

In addition to the comments received, 155 people visited the draft Child Safe Action Plan – Have Your Say page. While it is recognised that there are numerous reasons why individuals may not make a comment, this could be an indication there are a number of people who, while aware of the document, didn't feel it necessary to make a comment.

APPENDIX ONE SUBMISSIONS



From: Have Your Say
Sent: Tuesday, 8 February 2022 3:41 PM
To: Have Your Say
Subject: Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission



Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission

There has been a submission of the form Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey through your Have Your Say website.

First Name

[Redacted]

Last Name

[Redacted]

Email address

[Redacted]

Age Group

30-34

Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

No

Do you live with a disability?

Yes

Where were you born?

Australia

Do you speak another language at home?

No

How do you feel about the actions included in the Draft Child Safe Action Plan?

It's not enough.

Is there anything in the draft plan you really like?

Not particularly

Is there anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like included?

LGBTQ+ children do not feel safe anywhere in our community. There are no protections for them and they don't even have toilets they can use. They are discriminated against in schools. They are ignored by you and by other adults. They are bullied constantly. There is no where in our backward communities they can feel safe.

Alternative people, goths and such, are also discriminated against and bullied and stigmatised.

This is not a means of making a child feel safe. No one, especially the council, stands up and supports them.

Please provide any final comments:

You miss a lot of people in your plans. Please consider ALL children please.

To view all of this form's submissions, visit

https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/index.php/dashboard/reports/forms_new/data/75

Subject: FW: Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission

From: Have Your Say <haveyoursay@midcoast.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 24 January 2022 3:22 PM
To: Have Your Say <haveyoursay@midcoast.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission



Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission

There has been a submission of the form Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey through your Have Your Say website.

First Name

[REDACTED]

Last Name

[REDACTED]

Email address

[REDACTED]

Age Group

40-44

Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

No

Do you live with a disability?

No

Where were you born?

Australia

Do you speak another language at home?

No

How do you feel about the actions included in the Draft Child Safe Action Plan?

Overall the document demonstrates Council's commitment to child safe principles and practice.

Is there anything in the draft plan you really like?

That the document takes a whole of organisation approach and does not limit the scope of these requirements to child serving business units within Council. That Council is making a commitment to support community groups and organisations more broadly to meet child safe standards.

Is there anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like included?

Under Standard 1 - An indicator of success is: 'Children feel safer knowing they have input into the organisation', if this is the case, under actions, there should be some reference for the development of mechanisms for the participation of children. Perhaps this indicator belongs under Standard 2?

Under Standard 3 - It mentions that Council is committed to running information sessions etc. for community groups but there is no indicator of success. An indicator of success might be: 'Community groups and organisations across the Mid Coast demonstrate an understanding of Child and Youth Safe Standards and Principles and are confident in applying same'.

A note on this, Council should identify child and family service providers who are expert in and / or are funded to deliver such training to improve engagement e.g. Mission Australia

(Communities for Children); Blue Sky Community Services; NSW Ombudsman etc.

Under Standard 4 - There is no mention of CALD groups? With an increasingly diverse population, have Council considered there might be a need for things such as CALD competency training amongst staff who work with children and families; information available in other languages for certain community groups etc?

Standard 8 - ' Incorporate child safe design into public spaces'. This is an important action in keeping children safe in a broader community sense, but as an action, this statement is too vague. How does Council incorporate child safe design? What mechanisms are in place to ensure this is canvassed in all social planning / design activities? Is a best practice process in place?

How will Council monitor the implementation of the actions and measure its progress against the nominated indicators? Will staff be required to report to progress to Council at certain intervals? Can an evaluation plan be included in the document to ensure accountability?

Please provide any final comments:

Council has an additional role to play when it comes to child safety and building a child friendly community. I refer you to the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook.

<https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/1591/file/Child%20Friendly%20Cities%20and%20Communities%20Handbook.pdf>

I would like to see Council taking a whole of community approach to this issue. See page 10 of the Handbook for information on the UNICEF 'Child Friendly Cities' initiative. Mid Coast 4 Kids are focused on community outcomes such as these. The group would be keen to work with Council to advance such a program.

To view all of this form's submissions, visit

https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/index.php/dashboard/reports/forms_new/data/75

From: Have Your Say
Sent: Saturday, 5 February 2022 6:02 PM
To: Have Your Say
Subject: Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission



Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission

There has been a submission of the form Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey through your Have Your Say website.

First Name

[REDACTED]

Last Name

[REDACTED]

Email address

[REDACTED]

Age Group

65-69

Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

No

Do you live with a disability?

No

Where were you born?

Australia

Do you speak another language at home?

No

How do you feel about the actions included in the Draft Child Safe Action Plan?

Can these be made more succinct especially when multiplied across the 10 standards?

Realistically, how will the interests of the child be included in all council policies, actions, decisions?

Are they understandable to all, especially children?

Is there anything in the draft plan you really like?

It is comprehensive.

Is there anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like included?

Not observed immediately at this point, but will there be a child friendly edition???

Please provide any final comments:

Well done. But can it be refined further. Review the language. Is it accessible by children?

To view all of this form's submissions, visit

https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/index.php/dashboard/reports/forms_new/data/75

This is not SPAM. You are receiving this message because you have submitted feedback or signed up to Have Your Say.

From: Have Your Say
Sent: Tuesday, 8 February 2022 12:14 AM
To: Have Your Say
Subject: Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission



Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission

There has been a submission of the form Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey through your Have Your Say website.

First Name

[Redacted]

Last Name

[Redacted]

Email address

[Redacted]

Age Group

60-64

Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

No

Do you live with a disability?

Yes

Where were you born?

Australia

Do you speak another language at home?

No

How do you feel about the actions included in the Draft Child Safe Action Plan?

1. Plain English required. I have two degrees and I don't easily understand it.
2. Writing needs to be concise, easily understood without complicated by irrelevant background information.
Important to write for your audience.
3. Need to write for your audience. The booklet appears to be written for government academics.

Is there anything in the draft plan you really like?

The pictures.

Is there anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like included?

1. Too hard to tell.
2. The material needs a great deal of editing to even work out the main points you are trying to relay.
3. Need more active sentences and less passive sentences.

Please provide any final comments:

One page with the main listed points. That is all that is required.

To view all of this form's submissions, visit

https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/index.php/dashboard/reports/forms_new/data/75

From: Lyndie Hepple
Sent: Wednesday, 11 May 2022 7:28 AM
To: Michelle Jobson
Subject: FW: Writing a draft plan
Attachments: Hunter-Regional-Plan-2036.pdf

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 11 February 2022 8:32 AM
To: Lyndie Hepple <Lyndie.Hepple@MidCoast.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Writing a draft plan

Security Notice: The attachments in this email were secured by a Check Point SandBlast.
The original attachments were not modified.

Hi Lyndie,

Attached is an informative, well written, easily read draft.

I would scrap the draft children's plan and if one needs to be written make it like the attached document.

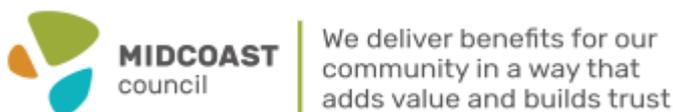
Succinct, informative, lots of headings with each first sentence of each paragraph, leading on to the next.

I was able to skim read it extremely easily. It was written in plain english and was a pleasure to read.

Regards,

Email secured by Check Point

Lyndie Hepple
Coordinator Community Development



Direct (02) 7955 7257

Lyndie.Hepple@MidCoast.nsw.gov.au

www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au or follow us 

Please note - the attached document referred to can be found at:

www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Plans-and-policies/Plans-for-your-area/Regional-plans/Hunter-Regional-Plan-2036.pdf

From: Have Your Say
Sent: Friday, 14 January 2022 6:57 PM
To: Have Your Say
Subject: Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission



Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission

There has been a submission of the form Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey through your Have Your Say website.

First Name

[Redacted]

Last Name

[Redacted]

Email address

[Redacted]

Age Group

55-59

Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

No

Do you live with a disability?

Yes

Where were you born?

Australia

Do you speak another language at home?

No

How do you feel about the actions included in the Draft Child Safe Action Plan?

ok

Is there anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like included?

The indicators of success - how are you going to evaluate these. What is the data/ measures and when will they be reported. Where is the evidence coming from to see how are progressing. PUMP not applied.

To view all of this form's submissions, visit

https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/index.php/dashboard/reports/forms_new/data/75

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From: Have Your Say
Sent: Thursday, 6 January 2022 11:04 AM
To: Have Your Say
Subject: Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission



Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission

There has been a submission of the form Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey through your Have Your Say website.

First Name

[Redacted]

Last Name

[Redacted]

Email address

[Redacted]

Age Group

55-59

Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

No

Do you live with a disability?

No

Where were you born?

Australia

Do you speak another language at home?

No

How do you feel about the actions included in the Draft Child Safe Action Plan?

Overall the actions are well presented and cover a wide area. It is imperative that the actions are implemented and all staff regardless of their area of work know and understand the requirements. There doesn't seem to be a reference under diversity to other cultures and religions, only Aboriginal.

Is there anything in the draft plan you really like?

The plan is clear and concise and easy to read, it covers a wide range and generally addresses each standard

Is there anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like included?

I feel there needs to be a greater emphasis on the link to community and how MCC will do this, particularly in relation to receiving feedback from children. The library is mentioned but a link with community and sporting groups could also provide a wider range of information.

Please provide any final comments:

Overall a good document that highlights the importance of child safety. If the document is well distributed and focussed on throughout MCC staff and the community it will be beneficial.

To view all of this form's submissions, visit

https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/index.php/dashboard/reports/forms_new/data/75

From: Have Your Say
Sent: Thursday, 3 February 2022 2:40 PM
To: Have Your Say
Subject: Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission



Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey Form Submission

There has been a submission of the form Draft Child Safe Action Plan - Feedback survey through your Have Your Say website.

First Name

[REDACTED]

Last Name

[REDACTED]

Email address

[REDACTED]

Age Group

60-64

Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

No

Do you live with a disability?

No

Where were you born?

Australia

Do you speak another language at home?

No

How do you feel about the actions included in the Draft Child Safe Action Plan?

Missing some groups

Is there anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like included?

Standard 2:

How do you measure the success indicators - there is a large age range here. What age groups will be captured and what groups will miss out?

The actions don't all align with applying the standards

Standard 4:

What actions are there for children from ethnic backgrounds?

What actions are there for children from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

What actions for children from families with mental health backgrounds?

What actions are there for children from domestic violent homes?

What actions are there for children in families who are homeless?

What about equity needs of rural children (from Gloucester and Bulahdelah) who miss out on many opportunities that are more easily available to those in Taree and Forster?

To view all of this form's submissions, visit

https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/index.php/dashboard/reports/forms_new/data/75

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