

Quick Reference Guide

to implementing the
Universal Principle and
Child Safe Standards
in Queensland

Publication date: June 2025



QUEENSLAND
**Family & Child
Commission**
Child Safe Organisations



About this guide

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) is a statutory body of the Queensland Government. Our purpose is to influence change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families. Under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024*, the QFCC has been tasked by the Queensland Government to oversee the implementation of the Child Safe Organisations system and has been designated as the regulator.



Our commitment to accessibility standards

The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

If you have difficulty understanding this document, you can contact Translating and Interpreting Service National on **13 14 50** to arrange for an interpreter to effectively explain it to you. Local call charges apply if calling within Australia; higher rates apply from mobile phones and payphones.

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National consistency

Queensland's Child Safe Standards reflect the National Principles that were developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission in response to recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Our guide draws from work of other states that are already operating a Child Safe Organisations system. This works towards implementing a nationally consistent approach.

Acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians across the lands, seas and skies on which we walk, live and work.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples as two unique peoples, with their own rich and distinct cultures, strengths and knowledge. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Queensland and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Acknowledgement of Children's Rights

We acknowledge the special rights of children which are recorded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), guided by its four principles: the right of all children to survival and development; respect of the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all decisions relating to children; the right of all children to express their views freely on all matters affecting them; and the right of all children to enjoy all rights of the UNCRC without discrimination of any kind.

The voices of children and young people

Thank you to Samuel, Josh, Nooria, Jess, Rhea, Shraddha and Saanvi, young people who shared their time and insights for this guide.

ABSTARR Consulting

We acknowledge and thank ABSTARR Consulting (ABSTARR) for its advice about and contribution to our guidelines. ABSTARR's cultural safety expertise ensures these guidelines and accompanying resources effectively support organisations to implement the Universal Principle.

Disclaimer

This guide provides advice on interpreting and embedding the Child Safe Standards and Universal Principle. It is not intended to provide guidance on the interpretation and application of other relevant legislation and does not constitute formal legal advice.

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Support

This document may cause distress for some people. If you need help or support, please contact any of these services:

Lifeline 13 11 14

13Yarn 13 92 76

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800 (for 5 – 25 year olds)



“

Safety is important because...

Safety helps a young person grow up with a strong sense of agency. A feeling that their voices are being platformed and they are empowered to make an impact and a difference. You know that's a strong generation of young people to come up and speak on what they feel is right for the broader community.

— Josh

Every child has the right to be safe

Queensland has a new child safeguarding law—the *Child Safe Organisations Act*—and it applies to organisations that work with children or provide services or spaces for them. Under this law, organisations are required to introduce 10 Child Safe Standards, embedded with the Universal Principle to ensure cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The new law aims to build a culture of safety and wellbeing for all Queensland children, sustained through continuous improvement.

Every business and organisation will be at a different stage in its journey to becoming child safe—and that's OK. This guide provides you with practical advice to help you get started. You can also find resources and information on our website to help you implement the Standards in your policies and practices. Access these via the QR code below.

Children in this guide, 'children' refers to all individuals under 18 years of age

Not every organisation involving children is required to comply with the Standards, but any organisation may choose to. **Child safe entities** are those obliged under the legislation as having to follow the Standards. **Child safe organisations** includes those required to follow the Standards as well as those that choose to.

Child safety in this document refers broadly to children's safety, wellbeing and cultural safety and is not about meeting obligations under the *Child Protection Act 1999* or to the government department responsible for child protection in Queensland.

This document makes reference to **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing**. This is a framework used in research to centre the ways First Nations people and communities learn about, care for and interact with each other and the world around them. It recognises the deep history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as well as how they are practiced and experienced by First Nations people today.



Resources:

For resources to help you implement the Standards, visit our website.



The **Universal Principle** ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are culturally safe. This needs to be embedded across all 10 standards. If an organisation isn't culturally safe, it's not child safe.

The **10** Child Safe Standards

1	Leadership and culture	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in the entity's organisational leadership, governance and culture
2	Voice of children	Children are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3	Family and community	Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
4	Equity and diversity	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
5	People	People working with children are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
6	Complaints management	Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused
7	Knowledge and skills	Staff and volunteers of the entity are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through ongoing education and training
8	Physical and online environments	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children to be harmed
9	Continuous improvement	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
10	Policy and procedures	Policies and procedures document how the entity is safe for children

qfcc.qld.gov.au/childsafes to learn more about the Child Safe Standards

THE UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE

The Universal Principle is about providing an environment that promotes and upholds the right to cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Cultural safety requires organisations to take meaningful action to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel welcome, safe, valued, included and respected. Cultural safety needs to be reflected in day-to-day operations.

Cultural safety indicators

Embedding cultural safety in Queensland's Child Safe Standards

Ensuring cultural safety in child safe practices is essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The following cultural safety indicators provide guidance to organisations on how to embed and apply cultural safety across the 10 Child Safe Standards.



What does this look like in practice?

As we continue to develop our approach and consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations, we know that in a culturally safe environment:

- **Racism is called out and addressed properly**, respectfully and completely, and there are policies in place to ensure the organisation is accountable for racism and discrimination.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** define and measure cultural safety.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – including staff and stakeholders** – have a voice and decision-making powers about issues that affect them, acknowledging that First Nations peoples and communities know what is best for them and their children.
- **Individuals develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes** to recognise and address biases, stereotypes and tendencies towards racism and discrimination.
- **Organisations and systems** are transformed so they empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultural values, traditions and identities.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** children and families feel a sense of belonging, dignity and justice.
- There is clear leadership, governance and **culture that prioritises cultural safety**.
- **First Nations communities, Elders and leaders** are engaged regularly and meaningfully to ensure policies are culturally appropriate responsive and safe.
- Organisations have mechanisms in place to **ensure accountability and continuous quality improvement**.

“

Cultural Safety

Cultural safety is a committed consideration to the experiences and realities of what it is to be First Nations, the cultural load that is carried, as well as the familial and community responsibilities for activism and advocacy. Cultural safety encapsulates a shared commitment to the issues faced by First Nations peoples. It means staying informed and taking the time to embark on their own journey of learning and understanding.

— Josh



Key documents you may need

We've listed the documents you may need as part of your work to become child safe.

This is not an exhaustive list, and you may need to develop other documents or resources to implement the Child Safe Standards, depending on what your business or organisation does and how it interacts with children. These documents provide a good foundation for you to build on.



Publish a commitment to children's safety and wellbeing, which:

- > Explains how you prioritise the safety of children and young people and will not tolerate child abuse and harm.
- > Affirms your commitment to listen to and empower children within the organisation.
- > Is displayed for public access in your physical and/or online environment.
- > Includes a public commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



Cultural Safety Policy which:

- > Articulates your actions to integrate cultural safety into governance and operational frameworks.
- > Includes a zero-tolerance to racism.
- > Includes expectations for staff and actions to educate them.
- > Includes a safe mechanism for children, families and staff to report culturally unsafe incidents.
- > Is designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and uses Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conceptions of cultural safety.



Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, which:

- > Sets out your organisation's expectations, practices and approaches in relation to the Universal Principle and the Child Safe Standards.
- > Is displayed for public access in your physical and/or online environment.
- > Covers acceptable and unacceptable child-to-child and child-to-adult interactions.
- > Describes your commitment to equity, inclusion and cultural safety and how the organisation recognises, responds and respects this.



Code of Conduct, which:

- › Sets out expectations for behaviour of staff and volunteers with children and for promoting and maintaining children's safety and wellbeing, including cultural safety.
 - › Lists acceptable and unacceptable behaviours with children.
 - › Explains professional boundaries, ethical behaviour, expected standards of behaviour, and acceptable and unacceptable interactions.
 - › Explains how your business or organisation will respond to breaches of your Code of Conduct.
-



Complaints Handling Policy, which:

- › Is child-focused and describes policies and procedures in an easily accessible way to children and their families.
 - › Includes procedures for keeping families and carers informed and provides guidance on how to do this while complying with obligations regarding confidentiality and privacy.
 - › Sets out approaches for dealing with different types of complaints including concerns, suspicions, disclosures, allegations and breaches of the Code of Conduct.
 - › Sets out actions to be taken when the complaint is about a worker.
 - › Sets out approaches to responding to harm caused to children, including children displaying potentially harmful sexual behaviours.
 - › Sets out the support and assistance provided to people who make a complaint.
 - › Refers to relevant regulatory requirements applicable to the organisation.
 - › Refers to relevant legislative requirements in Queensland.
 - › Is linked to a Code of Conduct.
 - › Requires that all staff and volunteers cooperate with relevant external authorities, including police.
-



Risk Management Strategy, which:

- › Identifies, assesses and takes steps to minimise the opportunity for children to be harmed.
- › Focuses on preventing child harm, including child-to-child harm.
- › Considers increased risk with specific roles and activities and children with heightened vulnerability, for example, children with a disability.
- › Is outlined in policies and procedures and included in training for staff and volunteers.
- › Contains procedures for review.



STANDARD 1:

Leadership and culture

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in the entity's organisational leadership, governance and culture

Aim

Organisations create a culture where every decision, action and process prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children. Strong leadership and clear governance lay the foundation for a proactive, accountable and child-focused organisation.

Our vision for excellence

Every organisation should be a model of children's safety and wellbeing. Leaders set the tone and example by embedding children's safety and wellbeing into policies, procedures and culture and ensuring these are implemented and reviewed. Leaders actively and consistently foster an environment that is free of racism and structural violence and ensures there is a healthy reporting culture. The aim is to create an environment where everyone in the organisation understands the potential for unconscious bias, their role and responsibilities in protecting children, and that they act accordingly. All members of an organisation are accountable for providing a safe environment for every child.

Applying the Standard

Publicly commit to children's safety and wellbeing.

Champion and model a child safe culture at all levels of the organisation, from the top down and from the bottom up.

Actively challenge and effectively address individualised and structural racism and unconscious bias through leadership.

Implement your Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Cultural Safety Policy into all practices, operations and governance.

Provide guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities, including their responsibility to ensure cultural safety, through a Code of Conduct.

Focus risk management strategies on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children, including risks associated with racism, unconscious bias and structural violence.

Ensure staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.

Provide training for all staff and volunteers, emphasising the role of leaders in modelling and enforcing policies and the organisation's role in creating a child safe culture.

Include children's safety and wellbeing objectives in staff performance reviews, with clear consequences for breaches of policies or Codes of Conduct.

What does **embedding the Universal Principle** look like?

- > **Ensure** leaders set clear priorities and accountability structures to embed cultural safety into daily operations.
- > **Ensure** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are in leadership positions and have decision-making authority.
- > **Provide** opportunities for staff to self-reflect and challenge unconscious bias, racism and colonial thinking within their structures and workforce.
- > **Measure** progress using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defined success indicators, ensuring sustained improvement.



“

Being **safe** makes you feel seen.

Being safe makes you feel seen, heard and valued which is really important. There are a lot of times in a lot of places where you don't have that feeling. You just feel invisible.

— Rhea

Indicators in practice

Children's safety and wellbeing, including cultural safety, are standing agenda items in all leadership and governance discussions.

All staff and volunteers have completed internal onboarding training regarding the operationalisation of relevant policies and governance approaches.

All staff and volunteers have completed cultural safety training and commit to ongoing improvement.

Feedback from children, carers and families indicates trust in the organisation's approach to their safety.

There is clear documentation of risk assessments and actions taken to mitigate risks to children's safety and wellbeing and cultural safety.

There is clear documentation of actions taken in response to any issues related to children's safety that occur, inclusive of the actions taken to resolve the issue and prevent it from occurring again.



STANDARD 1



STANDARD 2:

Voice of children



Children are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them, and are taken seriously.

Aim

Empowering children, informing them of their rights, and involving them in decision-making is fundamental to safeguarding their wellbeing. Child safe organisations foster an environment where children's voices are heard and actively shape outcomes that affect them.

Our vision for excellence

Organisations have the ability, support and resources to create spaces where children are knowledgeable about their rights and confident in their ability to express concerns, provide input, and participate in meaningful ways. The adults who support children in these organisations understand and respect children's agency and take steps to ensure they are treated as competent and capable. Adults tailor their approach based on the age, developmental stage, culture and any other specific needs of the child. Decision-making processes should centre on the perspectives of children and demonstrate genuine respect for their views.

Applying the Standard

Ensure children have access to resources and tools that enable them to understand all of their rights, including right to safety, information and participation – for example, posters or videos.

Recognise the importance of friendships and encourage peer support to help children feel safe and less isolated.

Where relevant to the setting or context, offer children access to sexual abuse prevention programs and related information in an age-appropriate way.

Ensure staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to express their views, participate in decision-making, and raise their concerns.

Put strategies in place to build a culture of participation that is responsive to the input of children – for example, training staff in active listening and child-centred communication techniques.

Provide opportunities for children to participate and be responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement, for example, surveys or forums for children to share their views.

Develop a child-friendly complaints process with clear steps on how feedback will be used and acted on.

What does **embedding the Universal Principle** look like?

- > **Develop** your resources and tools for children collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to ensure cultural safety.
- > **Ensure** your opportunities for participation are culturally safe and appropriate through consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- > **Value** and respond to the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to build their trust and confidence to participate.



“Children’s rights are not **taught**.”

Throughout all my years of school, in any pastoral care programs, assemblies or other activities, I never heard anything about children’s rights.

– Samuel

Indicators in practice

Children report feeling respected and heard within the organisation.

There is evidence that key decisions and policies have been shaped by input from children.

Staff and volunteers demonstrate strong knowledge of, and practice in, child-centred communication.

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the necessary training and skills to provide culturally safe, trauma-informed and strengths-based care and support to all children.

Feedback mechanisms are regularly used with children and result in actionable outcomes at all levels of the organisation.



STANDARD 2



STANDARD 3:

Family and community



Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

Aim

Organisations build trust and collaboration with families and communities to create a united front to ensure children's safety and wellbeing is a top priority. Child safety and wellbeing are strengthened when families and communities are informed, engaged and are active partners in promoting safe environments.

Our vision for excellence

Organisations should foster strong, transparent relationships with families and communities as valued contributors to the shared responsibility of protecting children. Open communication, trust and mutual respect are the foundation for collaborative and inclusive child-safe practices.

Applying the Standard

Give families ample opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their child within their family or community.

Engage and openly communicate with families and communities about your approach to child and cultural safety.

Provide families and communities with clear and accessible information about your safety and wellbeing policies and practices.

Ensure families and communities have a say in the design, development and review of your policies and practices.

Establish regular communication channels to keep families informed, and share progress on child safety and wellbeing initiatives with families and communities to maintain transparency and trust.

Involve families, carers and the community in your operations and governance.

What does **embedding the Universal Principle** look like?

- **Co-design** your policies and practices with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to reflect their perspectives on child safety and cultural safety.
- **Ensure your definitions** of 'family', 'parents' and 'primary carers' are broad and reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander understandings of family and family units.
- **Put culturally relevant** and culturally safe communication strategies in place that build trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.



“

Community

I love seeing my mob in a space doing deadly things. It's having real people there with stories and lived experience.

— Josh

Indicators in practice

Families and communities report feeling informed, included, heard and valued in children's safety and wellbeing initiatives.

Trusted partnerships with community stakeholder organisations are established and maintained.

Feedback from families, carers and communities directly informs policy and practice improvements.

Culturally safe resources and strategies are in place to engage with diverse families, carers and communities.

Families, communities and other stakeholders report that the organisation engages with them in a culturally safe and trauma-informed way.





STANDARD 4:

Equity and diversity

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

Aim

Organisations embed equity into policies and practices to create safe and inclusive environments for all children. Challenge yourself to go beyond compliance and actively ensure that the unique needs of children from diverse backgrounds are recognised, respected and met.

Our vision for excellence

Organisations foster environments where every child feels valued, respected, supported and culturally safe. Equity is reflected in every policy, decision and action, ensuring that all children have fair access to a safe, nurturing environment and healthy future. Equity requires that the unique needs of every child are met, and that no child is disadvantaged due to their culture, disability, gender or any other aspect of their identity or context.

Applying the Standard

Understand the diverse circumstances and needs of each child, provide culturally safe and trauma-informed support, and respond appropriately to those who need extra support.

Equip staff, volunteers and board members with the necessary training and skills to provide inclusive, trauma-informed and culturally safe supports and services to all children, and develop proactive strategies to achieve this.

Give children access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are accessible and easy to understand.

Provide children with educational opportunities to learn about different cultures, peoples and communities.

Pay particular attention to supporting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from culturally diverse backgrounds, children who are refugees or asylum seekers, those who are unable to live at home, and LGBTQIA+ children.

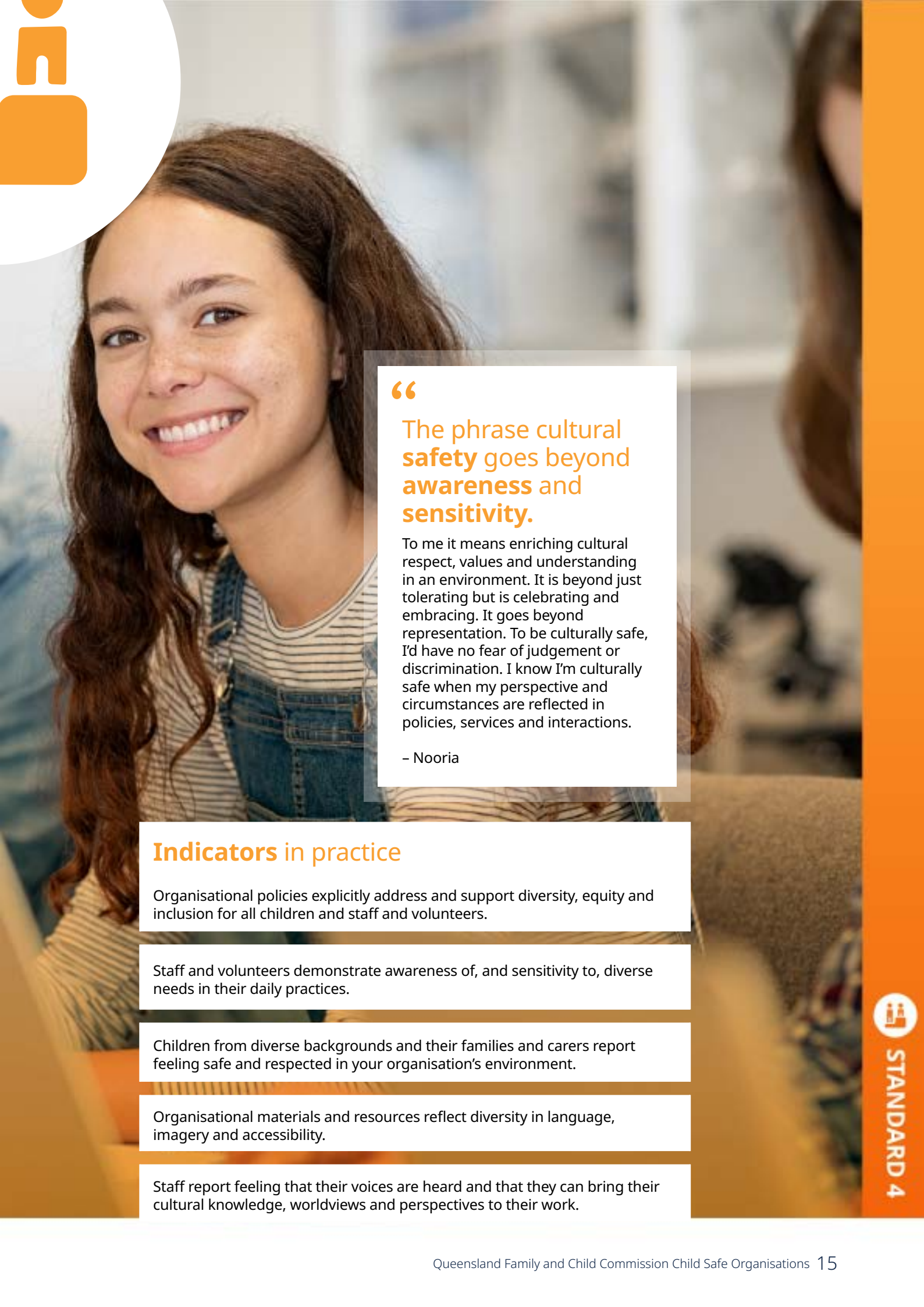
Put a Cultural Safety Framework and/or Action Plan in place to embed cultural safety, equity and diversity principles across policies, programs and governance structures.

Regularly review policies to ensure they address the needs of children from diverse backgrounds.

Ensure recruitment policies and practices are equitable and reflect a range of different worldviews. Actively recruit staff and volunteers from under-represented groups to reflect the diversity of the children served.

What does embedding the Universal Principle look like?

- > **Collaborate**, consult or co-design your Cultural Safety Framework and/or Action Plan with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, volunteers, families and communities.
- > **Design your physical and online spaces** to be welcoming to and respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- > **Ensure** your spaces, policies, procedures and governance models are equitable and inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.



“

The phrase **cultural safety** goes beyond **awareness** and **sensitivity**.

To me it means enriching cultural respect, values and understanding in an environment. It is beyond just tolerating but is celebrating and embracing. It goes beyond representation. To be culturally safe, I'd have no fear of judgement or discrimination. I know I'm culturally safe when my perspective and circumstances are reflected in policies, services and interactions.

– Nooria

Indicators in practice

Organisational policies explicitly address and support diversity, equity and inclusion for all children and staff and volunteers.

Staff and volunteers demonstrate awareness of, and sensitivity to, diverse needs in their daily practices.

Children from diverse backgrounds and their families and carers report feeling safe and respected in your organisation's environment.

Organisational materials and resources reflect diversity in language, imagery and accessibility.

Staff report feeling that their voices are heard and that they can bring their cultural knowledge, worldviews and perspectives to their work.



STANDARD 4



STANDARD 5:

People

People working with children are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

Aim

Organisations have robust recruitment, training and ongoing support systems in place to ensure all personnel embody child safety and wellbeing values in their actions. The suitability and capability of staff and volunteers is pivotal to creating safe environments for children.

Our vision for excellence

Organisations recruit and retain individuals who are not only qualified but are deeply committed to upholding children's safety and wellbeing, including cultural safety. Staff and volunteers are supported with ongoing professional development and clear guidance, empowering them to model safe and respectful practices in every interaction.

Applying the Standard

Prioritise children's safety, and wellbeing and cultural safety as pre-requisites for employment throughout your recruitment practices, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening.

Ensure all position descriptions outline children's safety and wellbeing responsibilities and expectations.

Ensure and continuously monitor that relevant staff and volunteers have current Working with Children Checks or equivalent background checks.

Give all staff and volunteers an appropriate induction and ensure they are aware of their responsibilities to children and to recordkeeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.

Include training on children's safety and wellbeing, cultural safety and trauma-informed care in your induction and onboarding processes, and schedule refresher training on a regular basis.

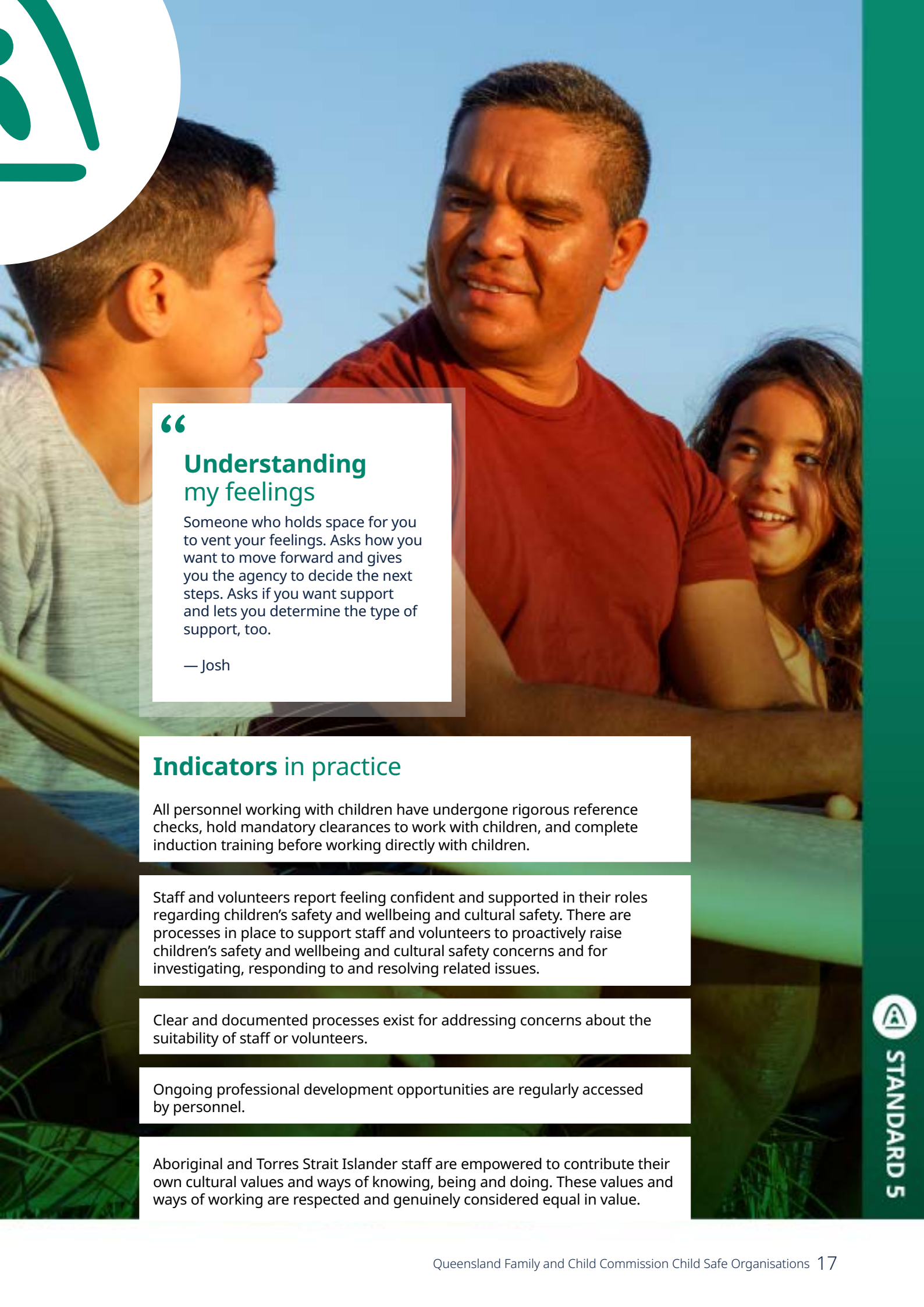
Focus ongoing supervision and people management on children's safety and wellbeing.

Communicate your zero-tolerance to racism policy to all existing and incoming staff and volunteers.

Ensure a safe and responsive mechanism is in place for reporting racism.

What does embedding the Universal Principle look like?

- **Employ** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in leadership positions and in various roles across your organisation to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and support networks.
- **Provide regular and meaningful opportunities** for your staff to challenge unconscious bias, racism and colonial thinking within your organisational structures and workforce.
- **Develop** and review your racism reporting and complaints mechanisms with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers.
- **Co-design** your policies and programs with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and stakeholders to reflect their perspectives on child safety and reporting mechanisms, without adding a cultural load or additional burden on staff.
- **Measure your success** using a range of different success indicators, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander success indicators.



“

Understanding my feelings

Someone who holds space for you to vent your feelings. Asks how you want to move forward and gives you the agency to decide the next steps. Asks if you want support and lets you determine the type of support, too.

— Josh

Indicators in practice

All personnel working with children have undergone rigorous reference checks, hold mandatory clearances to work with children, and complete induction training before working directly with children.

Staff and volunteers report feeling confident and supported in their roles regarding children's safety and wellbeing and cultural safety. There are processes in place to support staff and volunteers to proactively raise children's safety and wellbeing and cultural safety concerns and for investigating, responding to and resolving related issues.

Clear and documented processes exist for addressing concerns about the suitability of staff or volunteers.

Ongoing professional development opportunities are regularly accessed by personnel.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are empowered to contribute their own cultural values and ways of knowing, being and doing. These values and ways of working are respected and genuinely considered equal in value.



STANDARD 5



STANDARD 6:

Complaints management

Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child-focused.

Aim

Organisations have robust recruitment, training and ongoing support systems in place to ensure all personnel embody child safety and wellbeing values in their actions. The suitability and capability of staff and volunteers is pivotal to creating safe environments for children.

Our vision for excellence

Organisations create a culture where children, families, carers, staff and volunteers feel safe and supported to speak up about concerns. Complaints are managed in a timely, transparent, trauma-informed and respectful way, with the child's wellbeing and safety at the centre of every response.

Applying the Standard

Have an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy, which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of individuals at each level of your organisation and their approach to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and their obligation to act and report.

Put policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operate with authorities that have a responsibility to investigate.

Ensure investigations into complaints do not re-traumatise children, by acknowledging the intergenerational impacts of racism and colonisation.

Have effective complaint handling processes that are understood by children, families, staff and volunteers, that are culturally safe. Train staff to respond sensitively to disclosures, ensuring children's safety and wellbeing is prioritised.

Take complaints seriously and respond to them promptly and thoroughly. Inform complainants about the outcomes and actions taken because of their feedback.

Meet all your reporting, privacy and employment law obligations.

Monitor and review complaint trends to identify systemic issues and drive continuous improvement.

What does **embedding the Universal Principle** look like?

- > **Adopt** First Nations-led approaches to responding to complaints, incorporating cultural protocols, yarning circles and restorative justice principles.
- > **Ensure** there are First Nations-led complaints handling and reporting mechanisms – for example, involving First Nations Liaison Officers and trusted community Elders in the process.
- > **Properly** resource Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led complaints and reporting personnel and processes.
- > **Adopt** a holistic, strengths-based approach to support the wellbeing of children, staff and families throughout the entire complaints process.
- > **Measure your progress**, restoration and successful outcomes using a range of different success indicators, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander success indicators.
- > **Offer** to have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support person when addressing complaints.



“

It's about **processes**

You need a proper process that has an outcome, and it doesn't keep getting referred on. It's not just conversations, it's action. Tangible things happen once something is reported, and it's not just brushed off with "Oh we're sorry this happened to you". The appropriate action is not just a band-aid solution like putting out a statement. It's putting in place measures to make sure it doesn't happen again.

– Rhea

Indicators in practice

Clear, documented complaints policies and procedures are in place and accessible.

Staff demonstrate confidence and competence in identifying and managing child-focused complaints.

Feedback from children, carers, families and staff confirms they feel safe and supported, when raising concerns and confident about the process.

Complaint data is regularly reviewed and informs potential systemic reform and policy and process improvements.

All children feel safe to report concerns and complaints and feel that the resolution process results in meaningful change.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people report that the complaints processes are culturally safe.



STANDARD 7:

Knowledge and skills

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through ongoing education and training.

Aim

Staff and volunteers are not only screened and qualified but also receive ongoing education, training and capacity building support to build the knowledge, skills and awareness required to proactively safeguard children in all interactions. Staff and volunteers are the backbone of child safe organisations.

Our vision for excellence

Organisations foster a culture of continuous learning and quality improvement where staff and volunteers are empowered with the latest knowledge and best practice in children's safety and wellbeing, cultural safety and trauma-informed care. Training is tailored to specific roles and equips staff and volunteers to identify risks or harm, respond appropriately, and create environments where children feel safe and supported.

Applying the Standard

Train and support staff and volunteers to effectively implement your Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Provide training and information for staff and volunteers to recognise indicators of child harm in all forms.

Provide training and information for staff and volunteers to respond effectively to issues of children's safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.

Provide training and information for staff and volunteers on how to build inclusive and culturally safe environments for children.

Develop a training schedule that includes induction, role-specific modules, and regular refresher courses to keep staff informed about changes in legislation and best-practice standards, and to keep knowledge and skills current. Maintain a system to monitor training completion and compliance across the organisation.

What does embedding the Universal Principle look like?

- > **Ensure** your staff and volunteer training includes a focus on understanding the impacts of intergenerational trauma, and historical and ongoing colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.
- > **Ensure** your staff and volunteers have adequate access to educational opportunities for truth-telling about Australia's history, and provide regular and meaningful opportunities for staff to learn and unlearn.
- > **Provide** your staff and volunteers opportunities to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, cultural protocols and knowledges, and embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews as equal at an organisational level.



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Cultural competence

We need adults who have cultural competence. Who understand about different disabilities. Who are prepared to educate and respond when they see something happening that isn't right.

– Rhea

Indicators in practice

All staff and volunteers have completed induction and ongoing training specific to children's safety and wellbeing and cultural safety.

Training records show high participation rates and regular refreshers.

Staff and volunteers report feeling confident and supported in their roles related to children's safety and wellbeing.

The organisation has a process to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of training programs based on feedback and outcomes.



STANDARD 7



STANDARD 8:

Physical and online environments

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children to be harmed.

Aim

Organisations actively identify, assess, and mitigate risks in all spaces that children access to ensure their wellbeing is prioritised and opportunities for harm are significantly reduced. Creating safe environments, both physical and online, is a cornerstone of children's safety and wellbeing.

Our vision for excellence

Organisations provide environments where children feel secure, safe, respected and supported. Physical and online environments must prioritise the physical, social, spiritual, emotional, and cultural safety and wellbeing of all children. This requires a holistic, strengths-based approach to safety and wellbeing. It includes designing physical spaces to minimise risks and maintaining online platforms that are safe, well-monitored, and aligned with the Child Safe Standards.

Applying the Standard

Take a holistic, strengths-based approach to safety and wellbeing, ensuring that all aspects of a child's wellbeing physical, social, spiritual, emotional and cultural are prioritised.

Conduct regular audits of physical spaces to identify and mitigate risks, including playgrounds, classrooms and communal areas.

Develop plans for responding to incidents in physical and digital environments, such as cyberbullying or accidents.

Establish clear protocols for supervising children in both physical and online spaces. Ensure that staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

Ensure the online environment is used in accordance with your Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and practices.

Consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities, and the physical environment in your risk management plans.

If you contract facilities and services from third parties, have procurement policies and checks that ensure the safety of children.

Gather feedback from children, carers, families and staff about the safety of your physical and online environments and act on concerns raised.

What does embedding the Universal Principle look like?

- > **Design** your physical and online environments with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- > **Ensure** your spaces reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identities, including signage, artwork and language representation.
- > **Directly** involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in designing and evaluating child-safe spaces.



“

Online safety

Education about online safety is really important. Like knowing how to stay safe, how to know when something is wrong, how to get support.

– Shraddha

Indicators in practice

Physical environments meet safety standards and are regularly assessed for risks.

Policies for online safety are documented, implemented and monitored effectively.

Children report feeling safe in both physical and online environments, including culturally safe.

Incidents of harm or breaches are rare and are responded to swiftly and effectively when they occur.



STANDARD 8



STANDARD 9:

Continuous improvement

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

Aim

Organisations proactively create the space and time to interrogate feedback and information gathered from children, families, staff and volunteers, as well as performance data to identify and address systemic issues. Ensuring children's safety is a core priority means building an organisational culture that is responsive to challenges and new situations and is willing to learn and change.

Our vision for excellence

Continuous improvement is a dynamic process where constant reflection on what is working and where challenges or gaps exist is prioritised. A child safe organisation ensures that progress and outcomes are set, measured and monitored based on a range of different success indicators, not just the normalised standards and methods. This includes definitions of success and evaluation methods that are determined with and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. Continuous quality improvement processes contribute to a culture of accountability and a commitment to ongoing quality assurance and improved practices.

Applying the Standard

Regularly review, evaluate and improve cultural safety, child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices.

Seek the participation of children, families and your community in your reviews of policies, procedures and practices, and keep them informed about how their feedback is being incorporated.

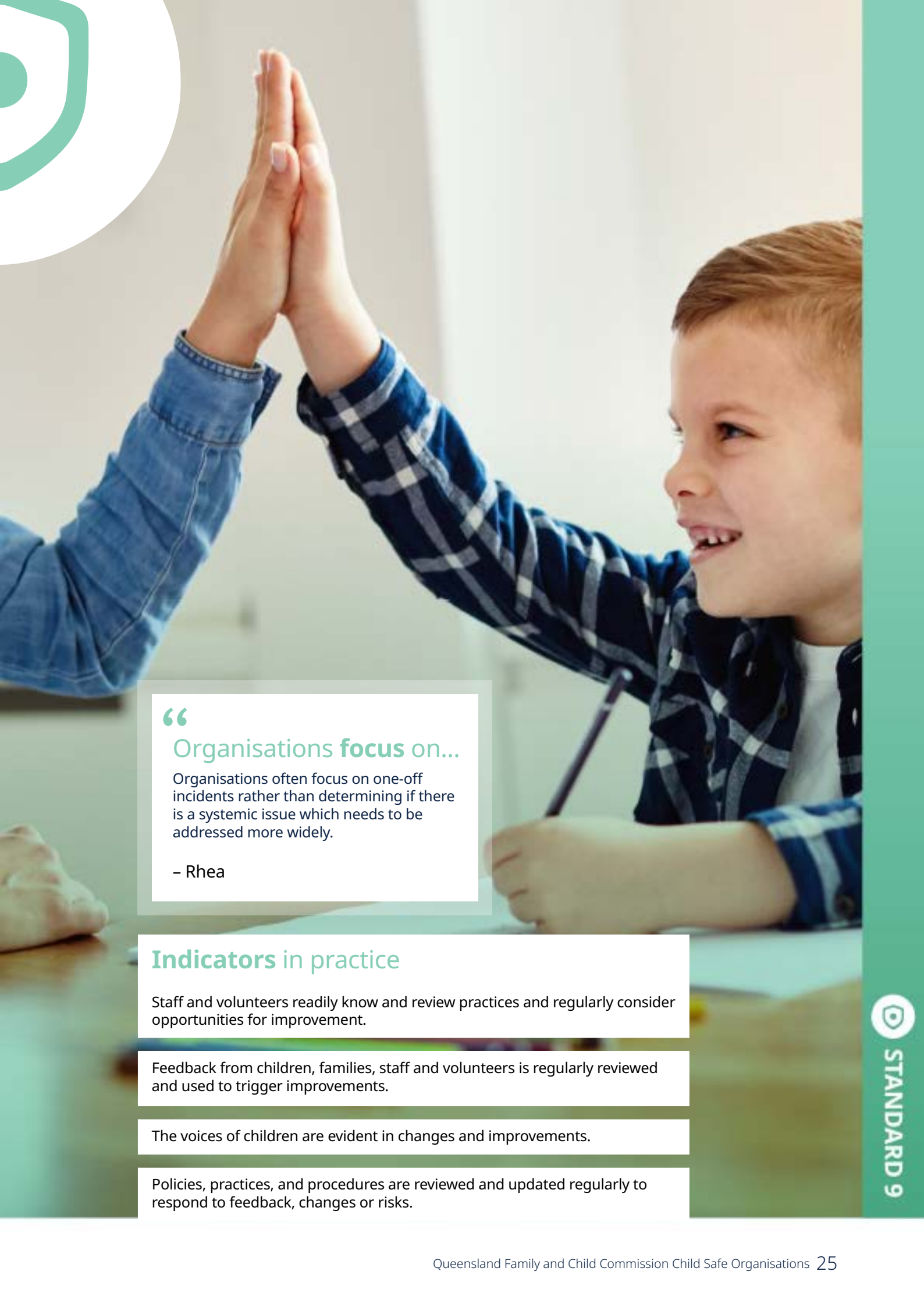
Analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.

Create action plans to implement any changes resulting from periodic reviews and communicate these changes to staff and volunteers, families, children and the community to reinforce a culture of accountability and growth.

Make sure appropriate mechanisms are in place to measure progress and success using diverse evaluation methods, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander success indicators.

What does embedding the Universal Principle look like?

- **Make sure** your reviews of governance and policy frameworks identify and dismantle racism and bias.
- **Establish clear**, measurable cultural safety priorities, with progress reviewed annually in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to ensure they are kept up to date.
- **Embed First Nations-led** audits and community consultations in your governance processes to ensure that cultural safety standards are continuously evaluated and strengthened without adding a colonial burden onto Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples.



“

Organisations **focus** on...

Organisations often focus on one-off incidents rather than determining if there is a systemic issue which needs to be addressed more widely.

– Rhea

Indicators in practice

Staff and volunteers readily know and review practices and regularly consider opportunities for improvement.

Feedback from children, families, staff and volunteers is regularly reviewed and used to trigger improvements.

The voices of children are evident in changes and improvements.

Policies, practices, and procedures are reviewed and updated regularly to respond to feedback, changes or risks.



STANDARD 9

STANDARD 10:

Policy and procedures

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children.

Aim

Staff at all levels of your organisation understand their individual responsibility to ensure transparency of all aspects of service delivery in a child safe organisation.

Our **vision** for excellence

Organisations' policies and procedures clearly prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children. They enable culturally safe and trauma-informed practice and adequately equip staff and volunteers with a working knowledge to identify and prevent harm.

Applying the Standard

Embed the Child Safe Standards and the Universal Principle in your policies and procedures.

Make sure your policies and procedures are well-documented, accessible and easy to understand.

Use best practice models and stakeholder consultation to inform the development of your policies and procedures.

Have leaders who champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.

Ensure your policies and procedures are well understood and implemented by staff and volunteers.

Regularly review your policies and practices to ensure they prioritise children's safety and wellbeing.

What does **embedding the Universal Principle** look like?

- **Examine** your cultural safety and implementation of the Universal Principle as part of every policy review process.
- **Communicate** regularly and clearly about your progress and implementation of the Child Safe Standards and Universal Principle to help you stay transparent and accountable, and build trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.
- **Embed First Nations-led** audits and community consultations in governance processes to ensure that cultural safety standards are continuously evaluated, documented, and communicated without adding colonial burden onto Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



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Feeling **safe** to speak up

Young people need to have the agency and the ability to speak up, and feeling safe is an enabler to that. If they're not feeling safe, they're not going to speak up about the issues impacting them. You need to feel safe to speak up.

— Nooria

Indicators in practice

There is a clear understanding of and engagement with policy and procedure documents by staff and stakeholders.

Policies and procedures are accessed regularly by staff and stakeholders.

Policies and procedures are easily accessible by everyone and are culturally safe.



STANDARD 10

Next steps for implementing the Child Safe Standards

The below prompts will help you to take the first steps towards implementing the Child Safe Standards.

1. Policies and practices

- ☐ Review your policies and practices against this guide to evaluate the actions you need to take to be child safe.
- ☐ Develop the documents listed on pages 6 and 7 of this guide, or if you already have them, review them to ensure they are current.
- ☐ Engage with children, families and staff involved with your business or organisation about the effectiveness of your policies and practices.
- ☐ Update your documents so they are easily accessible, reflect equity and diversity, and are culturally safe.
- ☐ Commit to regularly reviewing and updating your policies and practices so that you continue to prioritise children's safety and wellbeing.

2. Leadership and culture

- ☐ Make a public commitment about your actions to prioritise children's safety and wellbeing.
- ☐ Nurture a child safe culture at all levels of your organisation.
- ☐ Embed cultural safety in day-to-day operations of your business or organisation.

3. Engagement with children and families

- ☐ Talk to the children and families involved with your business or organisation about being child safe.
- ☐ Assess whether your information is child-friendly and makes children feel safe, respected, welcome and involved.
- ☐ Review your communication channels and check they meet families' needs.
- ☐ Assess your ability to engage in a culturally safe way with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and take action to build capability.

4. Building capability and skills

- ☐ Talk to your staff and volunteers about their confidence in prioritising children's safety and wellbeing and take action on what they say.
- ☐ Assess your staff's and volunteers' ability to identify and prevent harm and take action on their recommendations to address their needs or gaps in reporting systems.
- ☐ Arrange training to build knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe and make a plan to continually invest in your staff and volunteers.

5. Places and spaces

- ☐ Review your physical and online environments and whether they make children feel secure, safe, respected and supported.
- ☐ Make a plan to regularly audit spaces to identify and mitigate risks that could lead to harm.
- ☐ Make sure your plans for responding to incidents are adequate.

5. Cultural Safety

- ☐ Read about cultural safety on pages 4 and 5 of this guide.
- ☐ Assess whether you have embedded cultural safety in each of the standards.
- ☐ Seek feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families engaged with your business or organisation about the actions you need to take to deliver a culturally safe environment, and take action on what you hear.

If you're looking for more detailed guidance, access our full **Guidelines and Self-Assessment tool** using the QR code.





We are building a culture
of **safety** and **wellbeing**
for all Queensland children
through the **Child Safe**
Organisations system.

Every Queensland child
is loved, respected and
has their rights upheld.



QUEENSLAND
**Family & Child
Commission**
Child Safe Organisations

