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CASE STUDY: A DISCUSSION RESOURCE FOR A VICTORIAN METROPOLITAN COUNCIL, 2026

Is the Child Safe Framework working for the people it exists to protect?

From compliance to evidence of practice

Built on the council's Families, Youth and Children Strategy and its Safety and Independence priority, through Community Leadership, Collaborative and Responsive Systems, Cultural Safety and Equity.

CASE STUDY · INDEPENDENT DEMONSTRATION BY LEJACIE

Compliance tells a council whether the safeguards exist. Evidence from practice tells it whether they work. This sheet sets out the difference across eight areas, the questions that test it, and the evidence to read together.

AREA	COMPLIANCE TELLS US	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE
Governance and risk	Policies, responsibilities, risk registers and reporting structures exist	Leaders can see where child-safety risks sit, act on them, and know whether controls are working consistently across services, environments and relationships
Training and capability	Staff and volunteers have completed required training	People can recognise and respond appropriately to ambiguous concerns under real-world pressure
Complaints and reporting	Clear reporting and complaints pathways are documented	Children and families know how to raise concerns, trust the process and understand what happens next
Child voice	Children and young people have been consulted	Their perspectives genuinely influence decisions, service design and continuous improvement
Cultural safety	Cultural safety is reflected in policy and procedure	Aboriginal children, young people and families feel respected, heard and able to participate without compromising cultural identity or safety
Equity and accessibility	Diverse needs are acknowledged	Children with different abilities, identities, languages and circumstances can actually understand, access and use the system
Incidents and concerns	Matters are reported, investigated and closed	Incidents, complaints and near misses generate learning that changes policy, supervision, training, environments or practice
Improvement and sustainability	Frameworks are reviewed, actions recorded and projects completed	The organisation can show child safety strengthening over time, with capability and accountability still embedded after project resources end

THE QUESTION TO KEEP ASKING

How do we know the Child Safe Framework is working for the people it exists to protect?

Five questions across the whole system

1. Can people recognise when something is wrong?
2. Do they know what to do next?
3. Can they trust what happens after they speak up?
4. Does the system work equitably across different people, settings and relationships with council?
5. Does what the council learns result in meaningful change?

How to test it

No single source proves the system works. Read together, these do:

- **Policy and audit evidence**
- **Incident and complaints data**
- **Workforce capability**
- **Community and child experience**

Who to test it with, and the link to the strategy: next page.

> **The outcome:** legal and policy obligations translated into consistent practice, a system children and families can rely on, and an organisation that learns.

THE STRATEGY

How this links to the council's Families, Youth and Children Strategy

The strategy's four guiding principles, read as tests for the Child Safe Framework.

Community leadership

Children, young people and families should help define what "safe" looks like in practice.

Feedback should influence decisions, not just be collected.

Collaborative and responsive systems

Child safety has to work across council teams, partners and referral pathways.

The test is whether people can move through the system without falling between responsibilities.

Cultural safety

Aboriginal children, young people and families should experience services as culturally safe, not simply see cultural safety referenced in policy.

Partnership should shape design and review.

Equity

A child-safe system should work for children with different abilities, identities, languages and circumstances.

Equal treatment is not enough if some groups face greater barriers to understanding, access or trust.

Who to test it with

One question for each group, to be shaped with them rather than for them.

THE QUESTION

How do we know the framework is working for the people it exists to protect?

INNER RING: PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE THE SYSTEM

Children and young people
If something felt wrong, would you know who you could tell?

Parents, carers and families
Would they know where to go, and would they trust the council's response?

Aboriginal children, families and partners
What would meaningful partnership look like beyond consultation?

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
What needs explanation rather than simple translation?

Children with disability and neurodivergent children
Can children raise concerns in ways that work for them?

OUTER RING: PEOPLE WHO OPERATE THE SYSTEM

Executive leadership
What should leaders be able to see before a serious incident tells us where the risk was?

Frontline staff and volunteers
If something ambiguous happened late in the day, would they know what to do next?

Managers and supervisors
What patterns are they seeing that are not yet visible at organisational level?

Council services and operational teams
Does the framework work equally well across every service, from children's services to libraries and events?

Contractors, tenants, hirers and community partners
Where could a child or family fall between different systems or responsibilities?

HR, legal, risk, governance and complaints
Where could competing processes create delay or uncertainty?

CASE STUDY NOTE

How this resource was built, and what it demonstrates

The brief. Prepared in September 2026 as a two-page discussion resource for a Victorian metropolitan council's child safety function, which owns the council's Child Safe Framework end to end: policy, risk, culture, workforce capability, third-party assurance, executive reporting and continuous improvement.

The problem it answers. Councils can demonstrate compliance with the eleven Child Safe Standards through policies, registers, training records and audit findings. What compliance evidence cannot show on its own is whether a child in a library or a youth program would know

who to tell, whether a frontline worker would know what to do next at five o'clock on a Friday, or whether a manager can see a pattern before an incident makes it visible. The resource separates those two kinds of evidence and gives the council a way to read them together.

The design. Deliberately built for fast executive use. Page 1 carries the whole argument: an eight-row table contrasting compliance evidence with observable practice, one governing question, five system-wide tests and four evidence sources. Page 2 maps the stakeholder groups around the governing question, with the people who experience the system closest to it, and gives each group the single sharpest question, to be shaped with them rather than for them. The four lenses are the council's own guiding principles from its Families, Youth and Children Strategy.

What it demonstrates

Translating obligation into practice. The resource turns statutory and regulatory obligations into observable practice: the right-hand column of the table is what each obligation looks like when it is working.

Assurance design. The four evidence sources (policy and audit, incidents and complaints, workforce capability, community and child experience) give an executive or audit and risk committee a repeatable structure for seeing whether the framework is working, rather than a list of activities completed.

Equity as system design. Aboriginal, culturally and linguistically diverse, and disability and neurodivergent communities each get their own question, on the principle that different barriers need different design responses.

Council as ecosystem. Contractors, tenants, hirers and community partners appear as their own node, because a council's child safety risk runs through facilities and funded activities it does not directly deliver.

Prepared against the Victorian child safety regulatory framework current at September 2026. Council name and identifying detail generalised for portfolio use.

AUTHOR

Chami Rupasinghe is an admitted Australian lawyer (non-practising) specialising in legal and regulatory implementation, knowledge translation, learning and workforce capability. Her work focuses on turning complex legal, policy and safety frameworks into practical guidance, workflows, learning and systems that people can safely use, with particular strengths in safeguarding, access to justice and inclusive practice design. She does not provide individual legal advice or representation.

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VERSION

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