

From: Cr Moira Deeming
Sent: Thursday, 8 September 2022 1:00 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Child Safety Organisational Questions

Dear [REDACTED],

I have been pursuing clarity around what is legal and what risks may need to be addressed in our organisation since my first ever Council meeting, and I would like to officially ask for clarity on the following matters.

1. I cannot see a policy that distinctly separates the youth outreach/youth activities according to reasonable and safe age brackets. Currently all our materials (as far as I can see) group the ages from 12-25 together. I see this as a huge safety risk. I have been reassured by officers that even participants over the age of 18 who might mix with 12 year olds are required to have a working with children's check, however this is not found in our policies as far as I can see. This most recent school holidays, we advertised a Melton Swimming pool event for ages 12-25- which of course, did not separate out those children from adults, and secondly, I don't understand why we offered adults to participate in a school holiday program with minors?
2. We also offer *at least* two services to minors that encourage them to disclose vulnerable emotional information and information about their sexuality, from the age of 12- and specify that their parents will not be told. On what legal basis do we claim the right to cultivate confidential, private, intimate and emotional relationships with other people's children without the parent's consent, whilst also acknowledging that those parents are not abusive by the fact that they are not reported to authorities?
3. One of our services offers group talk about sexuality and claims to serve minors aged 12-25!!! Why are we encouraging 12 year olds to talk about sex/sexuality at all, let alone in the presence of others, least of all those who may be aged up to 25? Do we have written parental consent to probe these topics- and what are the limits on these discussions, is there some kind of curriculum? I believe the risk of an abuser joining any multi-age group and especially one that deliberately brings up the topic of sexuality, and then cultivating a harmful relationship with a minor is astronomical.
4. How many of these confidential conversations about sexuality with minors have happened? Are parents explicitly informed, that if they drop off their children at these services, that their children are encouraged to have 'secret' conversations with staff behind their parents backs? And at what point exactly are the parents told of any anxiety their children might be experiencing- or is that kept back until it reaches a disclosable level of near suicide? What possible good could it do for children to have their first and best protectors cut out of such important information? These parents are acknowledged to be safe, or else we wouldn't send the children home with them, so why are we teaching children to develop secret relationships with other adults- as though their parents are safe to share the information with, or as if their parents are not entitled to the information? On what legal basis could we hold back information that is important for the care of a child, from their primary carers?
5. Why are we teaching children that it is normal, outside of an emergency situation, to have secret conversations with other adults? That appears to me, a teacher of over a decades experience, and in fact, a victim of child abuse myself, to be a harmful and dangerous precedent to set in children's minds. I am deeply opposed to this happening and am extremely troubled by it due to what I see as terrible risks and harms to children.
6. If it is legal for all this to be happening, please show me where in the law. If it is not legal, or questionable, would it be reasonable for the audit and risk committee to look these issues over?

Kindest regards,

Cr Moira Deeming
Watts Ward Councillor | **Melton City Council**

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From: Cr Moira Deeming

Sent: Thursday, 8 September 2022 11:28 AM

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Evidence

Hi all,

I know I keep bringing this up, but I am deeply unsatisfied and extremely concerned.

I thought it might help if I provided a sample of evidence to provide some real-time context for my concerns regarding our child safeguarding practices. As a mother, a resident and a councillor- I am extremely concerned about the fact that we are having confidential interactions with minors about non-reportable issues-especially about their mental health and SEXUALITY- without parent knowledge or consent? I am unsatisfied that these interactions are safe or appropriate for minors under 16 years.

My question as a Councillor, is why are we running private confidential and group talk sessions with 12, 13, 14, 15 year old minors (possibly with ppl up to the age of 25 who do not have a working with children's check) about their **sexuality whilst minors- at all?** How is pursuing conversations with with 12 year old minors about their sexuality in and of itself not a reportable interaction?

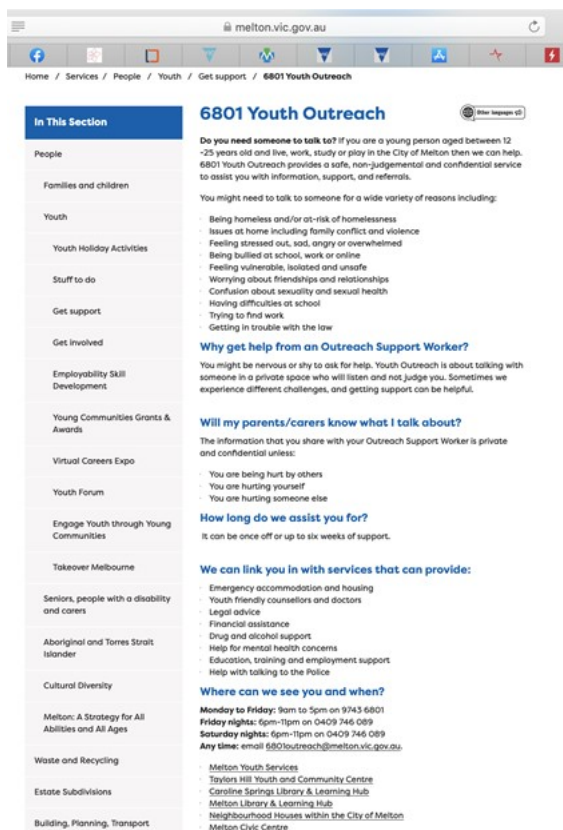
How is this even legal? How are these 'private' non reportable sessions with other people's children justified? Are we declaring them mature minors? I am very concerned about our legal grounds.

I do not believe that parents in Melton would be comfortable knowing that we are pursuing confidential and unaccountable interactions with their 12 year children about their sexuality, when no crimes have been committed and they have not given consent for such interactions to take place.

I cannot let this go until I have a satisfactory answer or changes to our policies.

Below are two examples, from two of our MCC pages.

1. 6801 Youth Outreach <https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/People/Youth/Get-support/6801-Youth-Outreach>



Here is a quote from the site:

"Do you need someone to talk to? If you are a young person aged between 12 -25 years old and live, work, study or play in the City of Melton then we can help. 6801 Youth Outreach provides a safe, non-judgemental and confidential service to assist you with information, support, and referrals.

You might need to talk to someone for a wide variety of reasons including:

- Being homeless and/or at-risk of homelessness
- Issues at home including family conflict and violence
- Feeling stressed out, sad, angry or overwhelmed
- Being bullied at school, work or online
- Feeling vulnerable, isolated and unsafe
- Worrying about friendships and relationships
- Confusion about sexuality and sexual health
- Having difficulties at school
- Trying to find work
- Getting in trouble with the law

Why get help from an Outreach Support Worker?

You might be nervous or shy to ask for help. Youth Outreach is about talking with someone in a private space who will listen and not judge you.

Will my parents/carers know what I talk about?

The information that you share with your Outreach Support Worker is private and confidential unless:

- You are being hurt by others, you are hurting yourself, you are hurting someone else".

2. The Space LGBTQA+ group on MCC

<https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/People/Youth/Get-support/The-Space>

The Space LGBTIQ+ group



Social support group

City of Melton's safe and inclusive space for young people aged 12 to 25. The Space is a social support group for same sex attracted, transgender, gender diverse and intersex young people who live, work, study or play in the Melton region.

The Space is a safe place to meet like-minded young people and hang out, share stories and support one another. This program is an initiative of Melton City Council's Young Communities.



We provide a range of services and support to ensure that the strength and diversity of LGBTIQ+ young people are valued, celebrated and affirmed in the Melton region.

To join, visit one of our youth centres or contact us on 9747 5373 or email: youngcommunities@melton.vic.gov.au

All enquiries and participation are kept confidential and any concerns can be discussed with a youth worker.

- To get involved, receive support or stay up to date with everything that is Young Communities across the City of Melton find us on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Instagram](#).
- For free confidential counselling, referral and information call LGBTIQ+ Helpline - QLife (qlife.org.au) on 1800 184 527 or webchat, between 3pm and 12am every day.
- For free specialist helpline for information, advice and referrals during COVID-19 and beyond, contact Rainbow Door (rainbowdoor.org.au) 10am to 6pm, everyday | Call 1800 729 367 | Text 0480 017 246 | Email support@rainbowdoor.org.au.



Quotes from the page as seen above

"For young people aged 12 to 25. The Space is a social support group for same sex attracted.... young people who live, work, study or play in the Melton region...."

The Space is a safe place to meet like-minded young people and hang out, share stories and support one another. This program is an initiative of Melton City Council's Young Communities....

All enquiries and participation are kept confidential and any concerns can be discussed with a youth worker...."

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