

Child Safe Policy and Commitment to Child Safety

Scope

This policy applies to any adult person (over the age of 18) engaged by Melbourne International Comedy Festival that may work or interact with children at any time including:

- employees (permanent and casual):
 - leadership and management roles
 - administration
 - education instructors and youth workshop facilitators
 - production and venue personnel (actors, stage management, chaperones, technical crew, ushers, etc.)
- volunteers
- contractors and sub-contractors
- work experience students/interns/secondments
- any other individual in the organisation that may deal with children

(Note: In this Policy, the term “employee” is used to cover all persons occupying any position listed above.)
A child includes children and young people up to the age of 18 (unless otherwise specified).

Commitment to Child Safety

All children working with or engaged by Melbourne International Comedy Festival have a right to feel and be safe, respected, valued and protected from harm. Children should be made aware of and feel confident in their rights and responsibilities.

Melbourne International Comedy Festival is strongly committed to the safety and well-being of all children that interact with our organisation as employees, audience members, education program participants or otherwise by creating and maintaining a child safe environment. The welfare of children entrusted under our care is our first priority and we have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Melbourne International Comedy Festival will take all necessary steps to prevent and protect children from abuse and neglect including:

- *Physical abuse*: purposefully injuring or threatening to injure a child
- *Emotional abuse*: an attack on a child’s self-esteem e.g. through bullying, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child
- *Sexual abuse*: any sexual act or sexual threat imposed upon a child
- *Neglect*: harming a child by failing to provide basic physical or emotional necessities.

Supporting Children’s Participation and Satisfaction

Melbourne International Comedy Festival supports, enables and promotes the **active participation** of children by:

- encouraging expression of and respecting the views of children and parents (including carers or legal guardians)
- encouraging and empowering children and parents to raise any concerns or complaints
- listening to and acting upon any concerns raised by children and parents, carers or legal guardians
- seeking the input of children when making decisions about matters that concern them
- ensuring children understand their rights and the appropriate behaviour expected of both adults and children
- teaching children what they can do and who they can turn to if they feel unsafe
- ensuring employees dealing with children are skilful in facilitating their participation
- valuing diversity and not tolerating any discriminatory practices.

Melbourne International Comedy Festival aims to create an environment where children gain **satisfaction** from their interaction with our organisation as employees, participants in a class/program/workshop, or other activity by:

- supporting children to feel respected and in control of their behaviour/work
- ensuring children enjoy the overall experience of being engaged with a production or other organisational activity
- encouraging children to assist each other in fulfilling their employment obligations and developing a positive sense of pride in their work (e.g. discussing character development and stagecraft in groups and leading warmup activities)
- offering opportunities for children to derive personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement throughout their experience and the relationships they make
- encouraging children to develop self-discipline in balancing their commitment to their performance, their education and their social and family activities.

Valuing Diversity

Melbourne International Comedy Festival values diversity and we do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.

Our organisation is committed to protecting children engaged with our organisation from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse, as well as neglect and contempt, ridicule, hatred, or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture, religion, gender (including transgender status), sexual orientation or disability.

In our activities with children we will:

- promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promote the safety of children with a disability
- promote the safety of LGBTI children and young people

Recruitment Practices

Melbourne International Comedy Festival will take all reasonable steps to ensure we engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children.

This involves maintaining a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process.

It is Melbourne International Comedy Festival's policy to:

- interview and conduct thorough referee checks on all employees (with their most recent supervisors)
- develop clear duty statements and job descriptions for roles that involve work with children that state clearly our commitment to providing safe environments for children
- attain and keep a record of Working with Children or criminal history/police checks for anyone with direct and unsupervised contact with children, such as employees designated to supervise or chaperone children
- ensure supervisors and chaperones recruited are suitably experienced and qualified to care for the safety and well-being of children in accordance with their age and needs.

Support for Employees

Melbourne International Comedy Festival seeks to support employees by:

- inducting new employees to our Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct and other relevant policies and procedures
- encouraging relevant employees to attend periodical information sessions as they become available, to remain up-to-date with knowledge of child protection, nature and signs of child abuse, cultural competency, regulation updates and other matters that affect children

- appointing a Child Safety Officer to be the first point of contact to provide advice and support to employees on the safety and well-being of children engaged with the organisation
- ensuring employees feel encouraged and empowered to report any complaints, concerns or perceived risks to child safety to the Child Safety Officer or other relevant management position
- ensuring designated supervisors and chaperones of children that are new to the role work with experienced supervisors sufficiently before working on productions or programs requiring single supervisors.

Code of Conduct

- Melbourne International Comedy Festival has developed a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our employees on expected behaviours when in direct contact with or working around children.
- All employees must abide by the Code of Conduct.
- We ask relevant employees to sign a written statement confirming they have read, understood and will comply with the Code of Conduct. We retain a copy of all signed statements.

Communication

Melbourne International Comedy Festival is committed to encouraging employees, children and parents (including carers or legal guardians) to raise any concerns or provide their views on the well-being of children involved with our organisation.

Melbourne International Comedy Festival keeps employees, parents (including carers or legal guardians) and children informed of our organisation's child safe policies and procedures by:

- ensuring that employees have read, understood, and are aware of their obligation under the Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct, and any other relevant policies and procedures
- making relevant documents easily accessible by displaying child safe materials in areas of common traffic, uploading relevant documents to our website, distributing documents to all relevant individuals, and having copies available upon request
- providing children and parents (including carers and legal guardians) with relevant Plain English child safe materials.

Parents (including carers or legal guardians) of children employed by Melbourne International Comedy Festival as performers are provided with at least one contact from Melbourne International Comedy Festival that is available to speak with them or to facilitate speaking with their children at any time during periods of work.

We provide parents (including carers or legal guardians) and child employees with information on:

- the child's expected role, activities, responsibilities and actions during their period of employment
- the child's progress throughout the production and timely notice of schedules
- the rights of parents and children regarding supervision and workplace conditions, as determined by relevant state regulation
- our Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct, and any other relevant policies and procedures.
- Children are encouraged to communicate and ask questions regarding their employment.

Complaints and Reporting Procedure

We believe employees, parents (including carers or legal guardians), and children should feel enabled, empowered and supported to safely raise any concerns or complaints about any perceived risks to a child's safety or signs of abuse.

Melbourne International Comedy Festival has developed a procedure to respond to any complaint of abuse or conduct not in keeping with this Policy and Code of Conduct, including means to take disciplinary action or rectify issues when necessary.

Risk Management

Melbourne International Comedy Festival takes a preventative and proactive approach to minimising the risk of harm to children. As part of our organisation's WH&S risk management process we periodically conduct reviews to identify potential risks to the safety and well-being of children.

Implementation and Review Process

Producer Education & Development Programs has been appointed as **Child Safety Officer/s**, responsible for being the first point of contact to provide advice and support to children, parents (including carers or legal guardians) and employees regarding the safety and well-being of children engaged with the organisation. This includes being the first point of contact for dealing with any complaint of abuse or conduct not in keeping with this Policy and Code of Conduct.

Our Child Safe Policy will be reviewed regularly and we will undertake to incorporate feedback from children, parents (including carers and legal guardians), employees and any other relevant personnel.