

Child Safe Standards

Date created:	January 2024				
Audience:	Latrobe Theatre Company Inc (LTC)				
Version:	2024:1				
Purpose of Document:	To provide LTC obligations and required actions around Child Safety.				
Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee Members, Members, Performers, Musicians, Crew and other volunteers regularly engaged in Company activities that involve children (under 18 years of age) to read and sign that they acknowledge and abide by this policy. • Parents acknowledge that they have read and understand this guide by confirming the audition form checkbox around company policies. • Encourage others to read and understand via promotion on our social media channels. 				
Review:	January 2025				
LTC Contact:	Kate Dougan - Child Safety Officer – 0407 544 939 Jacki Comber – Child Safety Officer - 0447 223 410				
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Other relevant resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Safe User Guide • Codes of Conduct for dealing with Children & Young People • Child Safe Parents and Guardians Guide • Kids Guide • eSafety Guide • Guidance to deal with Child Safe Concerns • Form - Confidential Record of Child Safe Concern • Member Protection Policy 				

CHILD SAFE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. LTC is committed to ensuring that children and young people who participate in its activities have a safe and happy experience. LTC supports and respects children, young people, staff, volunteers and participants.
- 1.2. The aim of LTC's Child Safe Policy (the Policy) is to protect the safety of children in our care and prevent abuse from occurring, and, in the event that allegations are raised in relation to child abuse, to ensure that the allegations are properly addressed. All complaints will be treated seriously and fully investigated and handled with maximum confidentiality and discretion.
- 1.3. Should a person wish to make any enquiries concerning this Policy, please contact Kate Dougan - LTC Child Safety Officer on 0407 544 939 or via email at: secretary@latrobetheatrecompany.org.au .

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1. LTC is committed to providing the highest level of safety for all involved with Theatre. This includes protecting members' privacy, promoting positive behaviours and attitudes, protecting the health safety and well-being of members, particularly children and delivering the Company's activities while acting in the best interests of children in the Performing Arts.
- 2.2. Specifically, LTC considers that the health, safety and well-being of children take priority over all other competing considerations. LTC considers that this is necessary to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all members and protect the image and reputation of the Theatre, LTC) and its members.
- 2.3. LTC has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and is committed to promoting and protecting children from abuse and neglect to the greatest extent possible. All children have equal rights to protection from child abuse, regardless of their gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation or sex characteristics etc.
- 2.4. Child protection is a shared responsibility between LTC its employees, workers, contractors, associates, parents/guardians, coaches, spectators, volunteers and members of the LTC community. Everyone who participates in LTC's activities is responsible for the care and protection of children, and reporting information about child abuse.
- 2.5. LTC supports the active participation of all children. It listens to their views, respects their views and involves them when making decisions, where appropriate, especially about matters that will directly affect them (including their safety). Some of the ways in which LTC empowers children are:
 - Children are informed and educated about their rights, including safety, information and participation.
 - The importance of friendships is recognized and support from peers is encouraged to help children feel safe and less isolated.
 - Where relevant children are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs in an age-appropriate way.

- Staff must be able to identify and act on signs of harm. They must also create opportunities and encourage children to express their views, participate in decision making and raise concerns.
- Have strategies in place to develop a culture that encourages participation and is responsive to a child's input.
- Provide opportunities for children to participate and be responsive to their contributions, to strengthen confidence and engagement.

2.6. LTC is also committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

2.7. LTC promotes fairness and consideration for all members, volunteers and participants.

3. SCOPE

3.1. This Policy applies to everyone involved in or connected to Latrobe Theatre Company Inc including (but not limited to) participants, parents, members, visitors, crew, orchestra, volunteers and staff throughout all LTC events and activities.

3.2. This Policy will continue to apply retrospectively to a person or Member following the cessation of their association or employment with LTC.

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS & LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

4.1. This Policy must be read in conjunction with:

4.1.1. the laws of the Commonwealth and Victoria (as amended from time to time) including but not limited to:

4.1.1.1. Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)

4.1.1.2. Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)

4.1.1.3. Crimes Act 1958 (Vic); and

4.1.1.4. Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)

4.1.2. LTC policies and procedures, including but not limited to:

4.1.2.1. Constitution;

4.1.2.2. Codes of behaviour;

4.1.2.3. Grievance and Discipline procedures; and

4.1.2.4. Photography Policy

5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1. **Child** means a person involved in the activities of (Organisation) (including athletes) and under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child (eg, for the purposes of child sexual offences in Victoria, a "child" refers to a person under the age of 16 years).
- 5.2. **Child Abuse** is the mistreatment of a Child or Young person that has Harmed, is Harming or is likely to Harm or endanger that Child or Young Person's physical or emotional health, development or well-being and the child has not, or is not likely to be protected by the parent(s) or guardian(s). For the avoidance of doubt, this includes but is not limited to Emotional or Psychological Abuse, Bullying, Grooming, Sexual Exploitation, Neglect and Harassment.
- 5.3. **Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from Harm.
- 5.4. **Grooming** is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of Abuse builds a relationship with a Child with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the Grooming of Children. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the Abuse begins. The Child may be given special attention and what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a Child in and Abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom Children but Abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sport, theatre and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.
- 5.5. **Harm** means Harm to a person or a child is any detrimental effect of a significant nature to the person or Child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:
- Physical, Psychological or Emotional Abuse or Neglect;
 - Sexual Abuse or Exploitation;
 - a single act, omission or circumstance; and
 - a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
- 5.6. **Sexual offence** (in Victoria) means a criminal offence involving sexual activity or actions of indecency or any act which exposes a child under the age of 16 years to or involves a child under the age of 16 years in, sexual activity or matters beyond their understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually offence behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes grooming, which includes actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child under the age of 16 years (or their carer, family or supervisor) to lower their inhibitions and prepare them for engagement in a sexual offence.
- 5.7. **Mandatory reporter** means a person who is legally required to make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services or the Police if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. It includes (but is not limited to) teachers, principals, registered psychologists, nurses, doctors and midwives.

6. RECOGNISING AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

6.1. A person may, in the course of participating in the activities of LTC or carrying out their work, form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse.

6.2. If a person is concerned about an immediate risk to a child's safety, the person must phone Victoria Police on "000" as soon as practicable.

6.3. Specific types of **Child abuse** include:

6.3.1. **Physical abuse:** occurs when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant Harm as a result of a physical injury, such as a non-accidental physical injury.

6.3.2. **Sexual abuse:** occurs when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant Harm as a result of sexual abuse, such as when a child is exploited, or used by another for their sexual gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others.

6.3.3. **Emotional and psychological abuse:** occurs when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological Harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is or is likely to be significantly damaged; and

6.3.4. **Neglect:** occurs when a child's physical development or health has been or is likely to be significantly damaged. It refers to an omission, such as depriving a child of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

6.4. **Mandatory Reporters**

6.4.1. Select classes of people in the community (including teachers, nurses and doctors - amongst others) are required by law to report to the Child Protection Unit of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria (DFFH) where they have formed a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection because they have suffered (or are likely to suffer) significant harm due to physical or sexual abuse.

6.4.2. This report must be made as soon as practicable, and after each occasion where they become aware of further reasonable grounds for the belief.

6.5. **Reasonable grounds for belief**

6.5.1. A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

6.5.1.1. the child is in need of protection;

6.5.1.2. the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical or sexual injury; and

6.5.1.3. the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

6.5.2. To form a reasonable belief, you should consider and objectively assess all the relevant facts, such as the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

6.5.3. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

6.5.4. You will have reasonable grounds to notify if:

6.5.4.1. a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;

6.5.4.2. a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);

6.5.4.3. someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;

6.5.4.4. professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; or

6.5.4.5. signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

6.6. Voluntary Reporters

6.6.1. In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from any form of child abuse, *may* disclose that information to the Police, DFFH or the Commission for Children & Young People (**CCYP**).

6.7. Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

6.7.1. If a person receives information that leads them to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16 years) by another person (of or over the age of 18 years), the person has a legal obligation to disclose that information to the Police as soon as it is practicable. Individuals who fail to comply with this obligation under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) may be subject to a penalty of imprisonment.

6.8. LTC Approach to Reports of Abuse

6.8.1. LTC supports and encourages a person to make a report to the Police, CCYP or DFFH if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, or they are concerned about the safety, health or wellbeing of a child.

6.8.2. Any person who makes a report in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations (whether mandatory or voluntary) will be supported by LTC and will not be penalised by LTC for making the report.

6.8.3. If a person is uncertain as to whether they should make a report to an external authority in relation to the safety of a child, they may speak to the LTC Child Protection Officer, Company President or an Executive Committee Member for guidance and information. If in doubt, ask for assistance.

6.8.4. If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, LTC will follow the reporting procedure outlined in LTC Child Protection Policy and take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child and other children is paramount.

6.8.5. LTC will investigate allegations of inappropriate conduct against a child in accordance with procedural fairness and will handle the allegations in a confidential and sensitive manner to the greatest extent possible.

6.8.6. LTC will cooperate with the directions of the Police, CCYP and/or DFFH in relation to any investigation conducted by these authorities.

6.8.7. LTC will keep a register of any allegations regarding inappropriate conduct.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PERSONNEL PROTECTING CHILDREN

7.1. Personnel involved in protecting children include the board, management, staff and volunteers within the Organisation. Those people have responsibilities in relation to protection of children and are expected to:

7.1.1. understand the rights of children, as appropriate to their age;

7.1.2. respect the cultural and religious practices of families who access LTC's services, programs or events;

7.1.3. understand and appropriately respond to the needs of children with developmental delays or disabilities;

7.1.4. appropriately act on any concerns raised by children;

7.1.5. understand the definitions, indicators and impact of child abuse;

7.1.6. at all times, know and follow regulations in relation to the care of children and follow the Company's Codes of Conduct as Applicable.

7.1.7. co-operate with police and/or other formal investigations to the best of their ability; and

7.1.8. not harm or exploit children who access LTC's services.

7.2. LTC will appoint a Child Safety Officer or equivalent person who will be the primary point of contact for all concerns related to child safety.

8. RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

8.1. The minimum standard for background checks of employees, contractors and volunteers of LTC and its members is the law as it applies in Victoria.

8.2. LTC undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all staff, contractors and volunteers which aims to:

8.2.1. promote and protect the safety of all children who participate in the activities of LTC;

8.2.2. identify and recruit the safest and most suitable candidates who share LTC's values and commitment to protecting children; and

- 8.2.3. prevent a person from working at LTC if they pose an unacceptable risk to children.
- 8.3. LTC requires staff, contractors and volunteers to pass the recruitment and screening process prior to commencing their engagement with LTC.
- 8.4. As part of the screening and recruitment process, an applicant must provide appropriate evidence (e.g. WWCC or other state equivalent and/or Police check) to show that they are suitable to work with children and young people in a recreational setting. LTC requires that:
 - 8.4.1. all LTC staff and Board members require a WWCC; and
 - 8.4.2. the following key event personnel must have a valid WWCC:
 - 8.4.2.1. those paid by LTC for their services in associated Company roles who come into any form of contact with children(18 years and under).
 - 8.4.2.2. Life, Financial, Performers, Musicians and volunteers involved with LTC;
 - 8.4.2.3. relevant contractors who may have unsupervised access to children; and
 - 8.4.2.4. anyone else who the LTC Committee feel requires a WWCC due to the nature of the work that they are undertaking for LTC.
- 8.5. The type of evidence that an applicant is required to provide to LTC will vary depending on the type of position that they are applying for. However, an applicant will not be offered a position until they provide the required evidence to LTC.
- 8.6. LTC will exercise discretion and may require applicants to provide a Police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate before they commence their engagement and during their time with LTC in regular intervals.
- 8.7. LTC will undertake at least two thorough reference checks prior to engaging any personnel.
- 8.8. Once engaged, LTC will provide staff and volunteers with access to this policy and staff and volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this policy.
- 8.9. Latrobe Theatre Company Inc requires that affiliated Companies ensure all staff and volunteers (including staff and any officials) likely to have contact with children and vulnerable adults have a current WWCC, which needs to be signed off annually as part of the affiliation process. Companies which do not comply with their legal obligations will be found to have not complied with the Latrobe Theatre Company affiliation requirements and may be disaffiliated.
- 8.10. LTC requires all affiliated Company personnel including owners, Committee Members, Volunteers, Judges etc and anyone else who has contact with children to possess a valid working with children check. Any costs associated with gaining a valid WWCC will be dealt with in a manner determined by that Company.

9. SUPPORTING PERSONNEL

- 9.1. LTC is committed to ensuring that all staff, Committee members, volunteers, families and contractors receive training to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety.
- 9.2. LTC assists its Committee members, staff, contractors and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decision-making and to promote a culturally safe environment where children are supported to speak up about issues that affect them.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- 10.1. Child safety is a part of LTC 's overall risk management approach.
- 10.2. See [CCYP Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation](#).

11. POLICY BREACHES

- 11.1. It is a breach of this policy for any person or organisation to which this policy applies, to have been found to have done anything contrary to this policy. Any person who may breach this policy is subject to the grievance procedure outlined in the LTC constitution.

12. POLICY PROMOTION

- 12.1. This policy will be made available to all members via LTC social media pages, hard copies will be on display at the Company for access.
- 12.2. This policy will be communicated to all staff, Board, and Committee members via email and added as a periodical Agenda item for Company committee meetings.
- 12.3. References to this policy will be included in the documentation provided to all persons who represent LTC

13. RECORD KEEPING

- 13.1. LTC will retain records of reports of child abuse and complaints about child safety.
- 13.2. In maintaining records of reports about child safety, LTC will maintain confidentiality and privacy for children and families in accordance with legislation.
- 13.3. LTC will appropriately note identified risks to child safety through the record keeping process and will incorporate those into its risk management plan.

14. REVIEW PROCESS

- 14.1. This policy will be reviewed by the LTC Committee on annual basis.
- 14.2. If you would like to provide LTC with any feedback or suggestions to improve this policy, please contact Kate Dougan - LTC Child Safety Officer on 0407 544 939 or via email at: secretary@latrobetheatrecompany.org.au
- 14.3. In addition to the regular review of this policy, recommendations for changes to the policy may be submitted to the Committee for consideration at any time. In the event that changes are accepted, the policy will be updated, and circulated to all stakeholders via the webpage, email, newsletter and other appropriate communication channels.