

Commitment to Child Safety

All children who come to attend a Skunkworks Community event have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe and have fun while enjoying a Skunkworks Community event.

Purpose

This policy outlines how Skunkworks Community prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

Scope

This policy applies to all Skunkworks Community employees, members, volunteers, attendees, children and other individuals involved in our organisation. This policy applies to all activities including but not limited to rehearsals, tutoring, social events and performances – conducted by Skunkworks Community.

Definitions

Committee means all office bearers (Directors) of the Skunkworks Community.

Child abuse means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

Child/Children means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

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Concerns and Complaints

A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to Skunkworks Community related to one or more of the following:

- our services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a director, employee, volunteer or another individual associated with Skunkworks Community.
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person at Skunkworks Community
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

Role of the Committee (Directors)

The Committee has the role of making sure Skunkworks Community children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

The Committee will champion and model a child safe culture at Skunkworks Community. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Committee will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns.

Skunkworks Community and their volunteers have a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Committee will make sure that employees and volunteers conduct risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that child safety training for employees and volunteers is identified and completed.

The Committee will conduct an annual review of how effectively Skunkworks Community is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Skunkworks Committee will be sought as part of this review.

Children's empowerment and participation

We actively seek to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning, delivery of services including rehearsals and performances, and management of facilities.

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We want children to develop new friends through Skunkworks Community and encourage children to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and take action if this occurs.

We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights including the right to be safe at Skunkworks Community. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

Skunkworks Community values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families. Skunkworks Community supports children's participation in the following ways:

- Regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- An electronic suggestion questionnaire for children that regularly reviews suggestions assessed and acted on where appropriate. Children are provided with feedback on their suggestions.
- Consultation with children about any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, programs or staffing. Children's views are collected by Skunkworks Community, provided to management and considered in the decision-making process.
- Information provided to children and families about Skunkworks Community operations; programs are made suitable for different age groups and diversity of the children.

Families and Communities

Skunkworks Community recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

Skunkworks Community provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:

- including information about our child safety policy, our operations, in the Skunkworks Community / Victorian State Youth Brass Band (VSYBB) Players Information pack
- including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures, published on VSYBB Team App and Skunkworks Community website.

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- Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families.

Skunkworks Community is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country at all Skunkworks Community performances
- consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices in the Skunkworks Community programs
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture, including through performance and during Kids Have Fun Performing Arts Academy community activities
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- seeking feedback from Aboriginal children and families on their experience at Skunkworks Community, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture.

Valuing Diversity

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- offer children and families through our membership forms the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- strive to reflect on the diversity of our community through representation in our committee, volunteers and members.
- acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates
- have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity
- commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

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Code of Conduct

Skunkworks Community has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Volunteers, active members and the Committee must comply with the Code of Conduct at all times. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including termination of a person's involvement with the organisation.

All third-party contractors are also expected to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and where they are engaging with children will have to sign an agreement to comply with the code, prior to delivering any services.

Recruiting and Volunteers

Skunkworks Community puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for volunteers as outlined in the recruitment and screening policy. We only recruit volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children. Members of the Committee must also be screened.

We require a Working with Children Check (WWCC) or Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration (VIT) for volunteers who have a role with children or have access to children's personal information. Members of the committee must also hold a valid Working with Children Check or Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration.

Supporting Volunteers

Skunkworks Community is committed to ensuring that all volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. Skunkworks Community assists its volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decisions and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

All Skunkworks Community volunteers are required to complete annual child safety training. Training will be recorded in the Child Safety Training Action Plan.

Volunteers will receive supervision to support their engagement with children and for compliance with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed in line with our Code of Conduct, complaint handling policy and disciplinary policy.

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Complaints and Reporting

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

Skunkworks Community has a complaint handling policy that includes information for employees and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. An easy-to-understand complaints information sheet will be provided for children, families and the community to know about the complaint process and the support available to those making a complaint and those involved in the complaint process.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then directors and volunteers at Skunkworks Community must report it in accordance with the complaint handling policy. Skunkworks Community directors and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police. Under the complaint handling and disciplinary policies, committee and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
- having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at Skunkworks Community
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at Skunkworks Community
- removing their access to the Skunkworks Community online file system and other facilities such as Skunkworks Community social media.

Complaints can be emailed to contacttheskunk@gmail.com or you can speak with a Child Safety Person, Phillipa Edwards.

If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.

Child Safety Person

Skunkworks Community has a child safety person with responsibility for responding to any child safety related complaints or concerns.

Child safety person is introduced to children so they know and understand who the appointed officers are, and how and when they may contact them. Photos and name/s of the child safety person are displayed on our rehearsal venue and members only Facebook page.

If a person does not feel comfortable making a report to a child safety person, they may report their concern to any director of Skunkworks Community.

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Record Keeping

Skunkworks Community is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child- related complaints or safety concerns.

All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system.

Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.

We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

Records will be stored securely and kept by Skunkworks Community for at least 5 years.

Information Sharing

Skunkworks Community may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. Skunkworks Community will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety. More information is available in our complaint handling policy.

Risk Management

We recognise the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated by Skunkworks Community.

We conduct risk assessments and have a risk management plan to address the risk of child abuse and harm at Skunkworks Community. The risk management plan will be developed in consultation with our directors, employees, volunteers, parent representatives and children. We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at Skunkworks Community. The Skunkworks Community directors are responsible for approving the risk management plan.

Any contractors or other providers of services will always be supervised by a member while working with us to ensure child safety. See also Code of Conduct above.

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Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct.

Skunkworks Community will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies (see list below). Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement or other corrective action. More information can be found in our disciplinary policy.

Review

Skunkworks Community will review all child safe practices and policies at least every two years. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'. Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and also inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices. Reviews are overseen by the Skunkworks Community directors and will be informed by consultation with children, families and members.

Supporting documents – Skunkworks Community child safety and wellbeing system

- The following policies and procedures work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all of our operations:
 - Code of Conduct
 - Complaint policy
 - Recruitment and screening policy
 - Grievance Procedure – Skunkworks Community Constitution
 - Risk management plan
 - Child safe training plan

Supporting legislation

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (including Child Safe Standards)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (including reporting to Child Protection)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic) (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)

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CHILD SAFETY & WELLBEING POLICY

Working with Children Check & VIT

A registry of all members with valid WWC or VIT will be maintained in accordance with requirements. Musical directors and volunteers will be required to provide updated copy of WWCC before current checks expire.

No child related work will be permitted to any member, musical director or volunteer with an expired WWCC or VIT.

Contacts

For questions about this policy, please send an email to contactthatskunk@gmail.com.