

Operational Policies



Child Safety Policy

Castlemaine Circus thrives on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. We acknowledge and pay respect to the Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples, their members and their ancestors, who are the Traditional Owners of this land. The Dja Dja Wurrung have been custodians of this land for many centuries and continue to perform age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal.

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Committee on August 24, 2023 and is due for review on August 24 2025. It reflects the commitment of all members of the Castlemaine Circus community, to upholding and ensuring the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable people.

Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

The Castlemaine Circus was created by a passionate group of volunteers in direct response to community requests. It is driven by the people for the people. We identify as an organisation that empowers, inspires and encourages children and young people to be active, creative, resourceful and solidaric. Castlemaine Circus is therefore committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests, well-being and safety of all children involved in our programs.

Purpose

This policy sets out a framework for ensuring Castlemaine Circus is a child-safe environment. It seeks to promote an organisational culture that values highly and protects at all times the interests, health, safety and well-being of children. It aims to ensure child abuse does not occur within Castlemaine Circus and procedures are in place should child-safety concerns be risen at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, associates, volunteers and members of the Castlemaine Circus community. Everyone at Castlemaine Circus is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care, and for reporting information about suspected child abuse.

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Responsibilities

The Castlemaine Circus, its staff, contractors and volunteers have a shared responsibility to ensure that children are safe at all times.

Everyone in the Castlemaine Circus community has:

- A right to work and/or train in a safe and healthy environment and to be treated with dignity and respect.
- A right to make a complaint in respect of any behaviour that is felt to be harassment or abuse and a right for such complaint to be taken seriously.
- A right to receive access to support and, where necessary, advice and representation.
- A right to fully respond to any allegations being made against them.
- A right to be presumed innocent until proven otherwise.
- A responsibility to take reasonable care for their own health, safety and wellbeing.
- A responsibility to ensure they do not tolerate or engage in any form of abuse or harassment and take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other people.
- A responsibility to co-operate and comply with this policy and any other relevant policy.

It is the responsibility of the **Committee** to ensure:

- Castlemaine Circus is a child-safe organisation.
- Child abuse is prevented and detected.
- Appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place.
- Appropriate policies and procedures are in place.
- To ensure that the General Manager both reports to them and is supported by them, in regard to child safety where necessary.

It is the responsibility of the **General Manager (or equivalent role)** to ensure:

- Child-safe standards are implemented and compliance with these standards is monitored.
- Reports of child abuse are investigated immediately.

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- All staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and Castlemaine Circus' Code of Conduct.
- All adults within the Castlemaine Circus community are aware of their obligation to report suspected abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures.
- All staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety).
- Support is provided to staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child-safe responsibilities.
- Promote child safety at all times.
- Assess risks to child safety within their area of control and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible.
- Educate employees, contractors and volunteers about the child-safe standards and procedures at Castlemaine Circus and about the prevention and detection of child abuse.
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

It is the responsibility of all **staff, volunteers and contractors** to ensure they

- Are familiar with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and Castlemaine Circus' policy and procedures in relation to child safety and comply with all requirements.
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety **may be** at risk to the General Manager.
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety **is** at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and / or the state-based child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters.
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

Definitions

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

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Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g., for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours include exposing a child to or involving a child in sexually explicit actions, but also include grooming.

Grooming refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

Reasonable grounds for belief are a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are considered and these are objectively assessed.

The Committee

Castlemaine Circus has a Committee as our governing body, and it is the equivalent to a Board.

Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children

Castlemaine Circus are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children within our organisation. We strive to create an environment in which the unique identities of aboriginal children are respected and valued. And to also create opportunity for aboriginal children to express and celebrate their culture.

We do this by

- Displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags in our foyer
- Including an acknowledgement of country at our public performances and at the bottom of all our emails to families
- Acknowledging National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation week
- Providing training for staff and volunteers on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- Seeking feedback from Aboriginal children and families about their experience in Castlemaine Circus Classes, especially with regards to safety

Inclusion, Diversity and Equity

We support and respect all children, with diverse backgrounds and needs. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We are also committed to the safety and inclusion of LGBTQIA+

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children and children from rainbow families. To ensure children from all backgrounds feel safe and included we:

- Have zero tolerance for discrimination of any kind for the children within our classes. This is further detailed in our Bullying Policy and our Code of Conduct
- Provide several scholarship spots for classes and support for those experiencing financial hardship
- Display the Pride flag and an “Everyone is Welcome” pride poster in our foyer
- Provide Accessibility information on our website and in emails about our classes and performances
- Celebrate relevant and appropriate events related to LGBTIQ+ pride in class, and on our social media
- Offer students and families opportunities through our enrolment portal an opportunity to provide any information about preferred pronouns and identity (This is optional)
- Offer students and families opportunities through our enrolment portal an opportunity to provide any information about specific needs they may have in relation to physical ability or neurodivergence
- All staff including trainers, engage in open dialogue with children and families to meet any diverse needs in class to support their participation and enjoyment

Code of Conduct

Castlemaine Circus has a Code of Conduct Policy and a Members Handbook, which includes the Code of Conduct and other relevant information. The Code of Conduct outlines expected behaviour towards all children within our organisation. It is in keeping with our Child Safety Policy and Procedures and contributes to maintaining a child safe environment.

The Code of Conduct Policy must be read and signed by all staff members prior to commencing work with Castlemaine Circus. All members of Castlemaine Circus, which includes families and students aged 18 and over, must also read and approve the Code of Conduct as part of their enrolment. In the case of any updates to the Code of Conduct Policy, the amended version must be read and signed by all staff.

Complaints and Concerns

At Castlemaine Circus, we highly value the input and feedback from parents and children in our community. We want our participants and the community to feel welcome and safe to raise any complaints and concerns they have regarding our operations, space, etc. We have a complaint record form which is made accessible on our website, and families are informed with regards to this process.

Children are welcome to express any concerns or complaints in class time, which the trainers will then relay to the General Manager. Families may also express any

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concerns/complaints on behalf of children, where children do not feel confident or comfortable to do so.

Reporting of suspected abusive activity

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police. They must also advise the General Manager (or equivalent role) about their concern.

In situations where the staff or contractor is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the General Manager (or equivalent role) or the Committee if it is the General Manager.

The General Manager (or equivalent role) must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the Committee and also to any external regulatory body such as the police.

If at Castlemaine Circus a person of 18 years or older forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child by another person of or over the age of 18 years, they must report this to the appropriate authorities immediately.

Likewise, if significant concerns for the welfare or any forms of abuse of children in the care of Castlemaine Circus come to the attention of our organisation, we will report these to the appropriate authorities.

Responding to allegations and reports

If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached Castlemaine Circus' Child-Safe Policy or its Code of Conduct Policy the person concerned will be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If an investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of our policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

Privacy and Information sharing

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Castlemaine Circus has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Everyone is entitled to know how their personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it. Castlemaine Circus keeps any personal information and records safely stored, away from public access.

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Castlemaine Circus needs to provide realistic advice to children and young people and others, about the types of circumstances in which information may be shared and with whom. Information obtained as part of a disclosure process should be kept confidential. It should only be disclosed if required by law or where it is otherwise appropriate in the circumstances for it to be shared to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people eg child protection authority and/or the police.

Recruitment of Castlemaine Circus staff, contractors and volunteers

Castlemaine Circus undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers. This process aims to

- Promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of our organisation.
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share our values and commitment to protect children.
- Prevent a person from working at Castlemaine Circus if they pose a risk to children.

Castlemaine Circus requires all workers and volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with Castlemaine Circus.

Castlemaine Circus may require staff and contractors working with children and young people to provide a police check before they commence working at Castlemaine Circus and during their time with our organisation.

We also require that all staff and contractors working with children and young people undergo a Working with Children Check through the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People and receive clearance as a condition of their employment.

All staff and contractors must sign a contract of employment and read the Castlemaine Circus Code of Conduct. Which includes standards and expectations of behaviour, when working with children within the organisation.

All volunteers assisting staff and working with children and young people must be a member and therefore have read and approved the Code of Conduct in the Members Handbook.

Once engaged, employees, contractors and volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Child Safety Policy.

Support and Training for Staff members

At Castlemaine Circus, it is paramount that our staff members feel both supported and adequately trained to provide safe and empowering training for children. We want our staff to feel thoroughly supported and equipped to provide the best possible experience for all children they work with. To do this we

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- Brief trainers at staff meetings about any changes to relevant policy and procedures relating to child safety, and engage in discussion about the changes
- Provide compulsory First Aid trainers for all trainers
- Provide in house training on how to handle disclosure of abuse, by the General Manger who has been trained by Child Safe Australia
- Provide training opportunities for staff members in relation to the LGBTIQ+ inclusion and Aboriginal Cultural awareness
- Support staff to follow up any conversation with parents and families in regards to child safety and providing adequate support for children's diverse needs
- Provide professional development opportunities relevant to staff member's duties and needs, such as training with Occupation Therapists around behaviour management
- Have discussions in staff meetings about Equity and Diversity, and how we can be more inclusive in our class settings
- Matching junior coaches with an appropriate senior coach and class, to support their learning and development of teaching skills

Risk Management

Castlemaine Circus will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach. We do so to create a physically safe environment for children to participate in our classes.

Castlemaine Circus will have a risk and compliance sub-committee committed to identifying and managing risks at Castlemaine Circus. Risk and compliance sub-committee members will receive regular training in relation to child safety.

Trainers also are provided access to risk assessment tables in relation to disciplines which they teach to children.

All children's Circus and Parkour classes have a set of class agreements, which are explained to the children at the beginning of each term. The agreements are simple and easy for children to understand, and ensure their safety while in the training space. These agreements are presented in a manner which promotes child participation and empowerment. I.e. encouraging children to explain one of the agreements in their own words, and share when they feel safe/unsafe. If needed, trainers will also provide examples of feeling safe/unsafe.

Children's classes have a 3-warning system, framed around keeping Children Safe in our training space and keeping their peers safe too. This system is explained at the beginning of each term, and is the disciplinary procedure for unsafe behaviours. It is delivered in a calm manner and involves conversation with the child, to ensure they understand why their behaviour was unsafe.

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Review

Castlemaine Circus will review the child safe policies and procedures every two years. We will review any incidents in the process and use this information to update and amend policies and procedures. Reviews are overseen by the General Manager and by the Committee and be informed by feedback from children, staff and families.

Supporting documents and policies

Risk Management Policy and Procedures

Bullying Policy

Sexual Harassment Policy

Code of Conduct Policy

Grievances and Dispute Resolution Policy

Members Handbook

Occupational Health & Safety Policy

Injury & Incident Reporting Policy

Venue Access & Usage Policy

Equipment & Resources Policy

Legislative Compliance Policy

First Aid Policy

Risk Management Checklist

Injury & Incident Reporting Form

Complaint Record Form

Disclosure Record Form

Child Safe Procedure – Disclosure of Abuse

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)