



# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY, CODE OF CONDUCT and PROCEDURE

Approved 11 December 2024

**All children have the right to feel safe and be safe at Class Act Productions.**

Class Act Productions is a community-based organization in regional Victoria that helps school aged children and adults to develop and showcase their performing arts skills.

## Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

*Class Act Productions acknowledges the Ginnai Kurnai People, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we operate. We acknowledge and respect their contributions, experience and knowledge as First Nations people. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.*

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy was approved by the Committee on 11 December 2024. It demonstrates the strong commitment of committee, staff, volunteers and third party contractors to child safety and wellbeing, and how our organisation keeps children safe from harm, including child abuse.

### 1. Commitment to child safety

All children who come to Class Act Productions 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 learning and performing with Class Act Productions.

### 2. Purpose

This Policy outlines how Class Act Productions prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all committee, staff, volunteers and third party contractors, children and other individuals involved in our organisation. This policy applies to all activities – information sessions, auditions, rehearsals, performances, working bees, social events and excursions – conducted by Class Act Productions.

### 4. Definitions

- 4.1. **The Committee:** the President, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President and General Committee of Class Act Productions.
- 4.2. **Staff:** the Directing teams at Class Act Productions.
- 4.3. **Child/Children:** a person who is under the age of 18 years.
- 4.4. **Child abuse:**
  - o a sexual offence committed against a child
  - o an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
  - o physical violence against a child
  - o causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
  - o serious neglect of a child.
- 4.5. **Child protection:** any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.
- 4.6. **Harm:** 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.
- 4.7. **Concern:** any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.
- 4.8. **Complaint:** an expression of dissatisfaction to Class Act Productions related to one or more of the following:
  - o our services or dealings with individuals

- o allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with Class Act Productions
- o disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- o the conduct of a child or young person at Class Act Productions
- o the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- o general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

4.9. **Mandatory reporter:** 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.

4.10. **Grooming:** when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person for sexual activity at a later time.

Grooming can include communicating or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer.

Young people are often 'groomed' before they are sexually abused. At first they may be tricked into thinking they are in a safe and normal relationship so they may not know it's happening or may feel they have no choice but to be abused.

It may be hard to identify when someone is being groomed until after they have been sexually abused, because grooming behaviour can sometimes look like 'normal' caring behaviour, however this is not always the case.

Examples of grooming behaviour may include:

- o giving gifts or special attention to a child or young person, or their parent or carer, making the child or young person feel special or indebted to an adult
- o making close physical contact, such as inappropriate tickling and wrestling or play fighting
- o openly or pretending to accidentally expose the victim to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts (this in itself is classified as child sexual abuse but can also be a precursor to physical sexual assault)
- o controlling a child or young person through threats, force or use of authority making the child or young person fearful to report unwanted behaviour.

Groomers may rely on mobile phones, social media and the internet to interact with children in inappropriate ways and will often ask the child to keep their relationship a secret. The grooming process may continue for months before the offender arranges a physical meeting.

4.11. **Sexual violence/abuse:** is a broad term that captures any sexual act or attempt to engage in a sexual act where consent is not obtained or freely given.

It includes any time a person is forced, coerced, or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity (such as touching), sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, being made to have sex with other people, sexual assault, and rape. Being forced to watch or engage in pornography and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images are also considered acts of sexual violence.

Sexual assault is both a consequence and a reinforcer of the power disparity existing largely between men, and women and children. It occurs within families and in multiple other settings and types of relationships.

Sexual assault is an abuse of power, and it is never the fault or responsibility of the victim survivor.

Examples of behaviour that may constitute sexual assaults include (but are not limited to):

- o Stalking: Repeatedly being followed or watched by someone
- o Rape: Being forced to have vaginal, anal or oral sex
- o Unwanted touching: Pinching, patting, embracing, rubbing, groping, flicking, kissing, fondling, being touched on the breasts, bum, legs, etc
- o Sexual harassment: Dirty jokes or rude comments about a person's sex life
- o Obscene gestures: Simulating masturbation in front of a person
- o Voyeurism: Being watched doing intimate things without permission
- o Unwanted sexual comments or jokes: Comments about a person's body or relationships
- o Sex-related insults: Calling someone a slut, dyke, homo, slag, etc

- Pressuring for dates or demand for sex: Invitations that turn into threats or not taking 'no' for an answer
- Indecent exposure: Someone showing private parts of their body or 'flashing' their genitals
- Being forced to watch or participate in pornography: Taking a photo without permission, forcing someone to be on video, making someone watch a pornographic movie
- Offensive written material: Dirty notes, letters, phone messages, emails, SMS, pictures

## **5. Role of the Committee:**

The Committee has the role of making sure Class Act Productions prioritises 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 Class Act Productions. 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.

Everyone at Class Act Productions has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Committee will make sure that adults within the company are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for all staff and volunteers is identified, completed and updated annually.

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

## **6. Children's empowerment and participation**

Class Act Productions is a child-centred organisation. We actively seek to include children's views and ideas in our organisational planning, delivery of services including rehearsals and performances, and management of the organisation.

We want children to develop new friends through Class Act Productions 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 Class Act Productions. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We regularly communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

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

- Regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- Consultation with children about any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, programs or staffing. Children's views are collected by Committee members and Directing Teams, and considered in the decision-making process.
- Information provided to children and families about Class Act Productions operations, staffing and programs are made suitable for different age groups and diversity of the children.

## **7. Families and communities**

Class Act Productions 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.

At the annual general meeting each year, we elect a new Committee, and all community members are invited to join the committee to share their thoughts on the direction of Class Act Productions for the next year.

Class Act Productions provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:

- publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct on our website
- including information about our child safety approach, our operations, Committee and Directing Team structure, on Class Act Productions' social media pages.
- including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures, in our newsletter.

## **8. Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families**

Class Act Productions 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 performances
- consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices in Class Act Productions on projects relating to First Nations peoples.
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture, including through rehearsals, performance and during Class Act Productions community activities
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at Class Act Productions, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture.

## **9. 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 students and families through our registration 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
- deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our students
- 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.

## **10. Code of Conduct**

Class Act Productions has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Committee, staff, volunteers and third party contractors 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.

## **11. Recruitment of Staff**

Class Act Productions puts child safety and wellbeing at the centre of recruitment and screening processes for the staff. We only recruit staff who are appropriate to engage with children.

We require a Working with Children Check, National Police Checks and referee checks for all staff at Class Act Productions. We require staff to have appropriate qualifications for their roles and check to make sure these qualifications are valid. Members of the Committee must also hold a valid Working with Children Check and current National Police Check. Class Act Productions will be responsible for costs associated with obtaining National Police Checks.

## **12. Supporting staff and volunteers**

Class Act Productions is committed to ensuring that all committee, staff and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. Class Act Productions assists its committee, staff and 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 Class Act Productions Committee members, staff and volunteers over the age of 18 are required to complete annual child safety compliance, which includes supplying Class Act Productions with a current, valid Working With Children Check and agreeing to the terms of our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Compliance will be recorded in the Child Safety Record.

Volunteers will receive guidance by the committee and staff to support their engagement with children and for compliance with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Any issues or concerns that are made to the committee or staff about the safety of children at Class Act Productions will be raised immediately and addressed in line with our Code of Conduct, grievance procedures and disciplinary action, as outlined in Part 3 of our Rules of Association.

### **13. 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.

Class Act Productions has a complaint handling policy that includes information for staff 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 supports 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 staff and volunteers at Class Act Productions must follow a mandatory reporting process. At Class Act Productions, we have people on our committee and staff who are of a select employment classification within the community (including teachers, nurses and doctors - amongst others). These people are required by law to report to the Child Protection Unit of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria (DFFH) if 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.

During this process, staff and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including, being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation

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).

Any person who makes a report in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations (whether mandatory or voluntary) will be supported without discrimination by Class Act Productions.

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 one of our Child Safety Officers, for guidance and information.

Complaints can be emailed to [classactproductions2001@gmail.com](mailto:classactproductions2001@gmail.com) or you can speak with a Child Safety Officer.

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

### **14. Reporting Child Sexual Abuse**

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.

### **15. Child Safety Officers**

Class Act Productions has three trained child safety officers with responsibility for responding to any child safety related complaints or concerns.

Child safety officers are introduced to children so they know and understand who the appointed officers are, and how and when they may contact them. Photos and names of the child safety persons are displayed on our website and in our newsletters.

If a person does not feel comfortable making a report to a child safety officer, they may report their concern to any member of staff or the Committee.

### **16. Record keeping**

Class Act Productions 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 and kept on file

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 Class Act Productions for at least 45 years.

## **17. Information sharing**

Class Act Productions may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. Class Act Productions 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.

## **18. Risk management**

We recognise the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated by Class Act Productions.

We conduct regular risk assessments to address the risk of child abuse and harm at Class Act Productions. We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at Class Act Productions. The Committee and staff is ultimately responsible for risk management.

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

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

Class Act Productions 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 suspension or termination of engagement. More information can be found in the disciplinary action section, outlined in Part 3 of our Rules of Association.

## **20. Review**

Class Act Productions will review all child safe practices and policies every year, following an AGM. 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 inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices. Reviews are overseen by the Committee.

If you would like to provide Class Act Productions with any feedback or suggestions to improve this policy, please contact one of our Child Safety Officers via email at: [classactproductions2001@gmail.com](mailto:classactproductions2001@gmail.com)

## **21. Supporting documents – Class Act Productions child safety and wellbeing system**

The following policies and procedures work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all of our operations:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaint Handling Policy
- Recruitment and Screening Policy
- Disciplinary Policy (Part 3 of Rules of Association)

## **22. 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)