

# Ringwood Ballet Group



## Child Safe Policy

*Ringwood Ballet Group acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung People of the Kulin Nation, 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 respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.*

### Commitment to Child Safety

The Ringwood Ballet Group is (RBG) is committed to safeguarding and protecting all children<sup>1</sup> from harm. We aim to promote a culture and create an environment where children feel happy, safe and have fun whilst learning. The welfare of children in our care is our priority and we have a zero tolerance to child abuse.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Child Safe Policy and associated action plan is:

- to guide RBG employees and school members on how to treat and behave with children in our organisation; and
- to outline the actions that RBG will implement to meet the child safe standards.

### Scope

This policy applies to RBG employees, school members (Committee of Management [COM], parents and students), contractors, volunteers, people seconded from other organisations, people receiving on-the-job training, and visitors.

### Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to ensure that:

- the governance, systems and processes to keep children safe are in place;
- practices, procedures and policies are in place to ensure cultural safety of children, particularly vulnerable children, such as Aboriginal, those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, those with disability, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI);
- any hazards and risks to child abuse are identified early, assessed on a regular basis (at least yearly) and, where they cannot be removed, are effectively controlled;
- RBG complies with its legislative obligations in relation to responding to allegations of child abuse and mandatory reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> Children are defined in this policy and as per legislation as anyone under 18 years old.



This policy and related procedures comply with the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*. The development of this policy and action plan was informed by guidelines provided by the Commission for Children and Young People, and AUSdance Victoria.

## Communication of Policy

Employees and members will be provided with a copy of the policy and related procedures as part of their induction/professional development and (re)enrolment documentation. A copy of the current policy is available on the [RBG website](#) and communicated via [Operoo](#).

## Child Safe Standards

### **1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued**

We value diversity and do not tolerate racism and discrimination. We encourage children to express their views, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their suggestions and respect what they have to say.

We are committed to promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (i.e., by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification). The term 'Aboriginal' in this policy is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This policy applies, even if there are no students who have identified themselves as Aboriginal.

### **2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture**

RBG staff and the COM are committed to providing an environment where all children feel valued and supported, regardless of their cultural background, identity, and skill level. Our Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities regarding to the safety and wellbeing of children. Staff and volunteers are provided appropriate induction and training/supervision to ensure they understand their role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as their obligations on information sharing, record keeping and incident reporting.

### **3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously**

We teach children about what they can do if they feel unsafe. We listen to and act on any concerns that children, or their parents, raise with us. We work in partnership with parents and students to ensure that class placement is appropriate to the level and need of the student. We plan, develop and deliver class content that can help meet each individual's needs and goals and enable all children to participate.

Children are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation. The importance of friendships is recognized, and support from peers is encouraged, to help children feel safe and included.



RBG encourages, and provides opportunities for children to participate in a range of events (i.e. performances, exams), personal development and leadership roles (i.e. teacher assistant, office assistant) and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening their confidence and engagement.

#### **4. Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing**

Parents, guardians and carers are an important part of our dance community and should always feel their children are safe. We expect them to uphold the child safe standards and Code of Conduct, as per relevant policies which are provided to them upon (re)enrolment and are accessible via the RBG website.

RBG staff and members (parents, students, volunteers) are consulted on, and have a say in the development and ongoing review of policies and practices promoting child safety.

#### **5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice**

We welcome and promote the cultural safety, participation and inclusion of Aboriginal children, of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, of children with a disability, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children, and their families. We ensure that they have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.

#### **6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice**

##### **Recruitment**

RBG recruits staff and volunteers who are suitably skilled to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our legislative responsibilities, and ask relevant questions during interviews. RBG is committed to promoting diversity and equal opportunity in employment.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working With Children Check [WWCC] and to provide evidence of this Check.

#### **7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused**

##### **Concerns and Allegations**

Our organisation takes all complaints and allegations seriously and the COM has practices in place to investigate them thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.



If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves);
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed;
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it;
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be escalated to the Director and COM, who are the first port of call for all incidents and will guide staff and parents respectively through all procedural requirements.

### Reporting a Child Safety Concern or Complaint

All children, families, staff and volunteers can raise a complaint or concern if they observe abuse or are a victim, or if they notice inappropriate behavior in the organisation. The COM is responsible for investigating and responding to any complaints and concerns of child abuse in a professional and timely manner.

All allegations of abuse and safety concerns must be documented and reported to the COM for prompt resolution. Updates are provided to children and families on progress of any investigations, ensuring that confidentiality/privacy is maintained where required. Serious matters will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on their severity and urgency.

## **8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility, and that communication with children and young people is done in a way that is appropriate for their age, maturity and capability.

We train our staff and volunteers to:

- identify potential signs of child abuse, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse;
- understand how to behave around children, and how to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of those from CALD backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability;
- know how to address unconscious biases – teachers / COM members take account of diversity when making decisions (dance roles and recruitment).

Training and development plans are developed each year and identify team and individual training needs regarding child safety. Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.

## **9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children/young people to be harmed**

We take a risk management approach to minimising the potential for child abuse or harm to occur, and use this to guide our policy and procedures. In addition to general occupational



health and safety (OHS) risks, we proactively identify and manage child safety risks to our children. Example of common risks include those imposed by physical environments (e.g. any doors that can lock), and online environments (e.g. no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child on social media without parental knowledge and consent).

### **10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved**

We recognise the importance of regularly reviewing, evaluating and improving child safe practices. Child safety complaints, concerns and incidents are discussed by the COM at their monthly meetings to identify causes and systemic failures and inform continuous improvement.

### **11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people**

Our risk management strategies focus on identifying, preventing, and mitigating risks to children and young people and are reflected in the **Risk Register**.

## **Related Documents**

- RBG Code of Conduct
- RBG Bullying and Harassment Policy
- RBG enrolment form
- RBG Social Media Policy
- RBG Occupational Health & Safety Policy
- RBG photographic consent form

## **Approval and Review**

### **Approved by**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
xxx	xxx	xxx
xxx	xxx	xxx

### **Review cycle**

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years and in addition following significant incidents, if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute to the development of this policy. Next review date: July 2025



## Child Safe Standards Implementation Action Plan

Standard	Action	Lead	Due date
11	Develop Child Safe Policy addressing Victoria's new Child Safe Standards commencing 1 July 2022	Corina C	June 2022
11	Develop Child Safe poster with RBG child safe commitment, and display in the foyer / post on website	Corina C	June 2022
2	<p>Create calendar with significant cultural days/events so that they can be noted and/or celebrated with imagery, activities, and social media posts, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NAIDOC week</li> <li>• Harmony week (see <a href="http://harmony.gov.au">harmony.gov.au</a> for ideas)</li> <li>• International Children's Day</li> <li>• LGBTQ International day against homophobia</li> <li>• Chinese New Year</li> <li>• end of Ramadan</li> <li>• Diwali</li> </ul>		ongoing
2	Foster links with culturally diverse communities and community organisations to strengthen awareness and understanding		ongoing
3	Promote inclusive opportunities for children from all backgrounds to take up leadership roles (both paid and unpaid) within RBG (i.e. office assistant, teacher assistant)		At the start of each year
2	Where possible, use Aboriginal music and music representative of other cultures to choreograph presentation / end of year performances		Ongoing
1	Develop a poster with key words (eg 'welcome') in various languages - could be created as part of Harmony week and included on social media.		
2	Include images portraying cultural diversity in social media and communication		Ongoing
3	Create multilingual resources (eg Mandarin) to communicate in ways that are accessible to children, young people and families from non-English speaking backgrounds		
2	Acknowledgement to country prior to dance performances (i.e. at Karralyka theatre)		At every performance
8	Job / COM advertisements are amended, where required, to explicitly state RBG's commitment to child safety and associated requirements from teachers		
2	Prominently display a poster (or request plaque from Maroondah City Council) acknowledging land on which we operate and include traditional image (and on website)		
8	<p>Ensure that the yearly training and development plans for staff address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how to identify potential signs of child abuse, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse;</li> <li>• how to behave around children, and how to promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of those from CALD backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability;</li> <li>• unconscious biases when making decisions (dance roles and recruitment).</li> </ul>		30 June 2023