

RSCDS Melbourne & District Branch Inc

Child Safe Policy

28 April 2019

Introduction

Under Victorian legislation, Child Safe Standards have been introduced in Victoria to keep children safe from harm and abuse. On 13 November 2013, the Victorian Parliament tabled the report of its Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations (the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry). The report provided 15 recommendations, including the introduction of minimum standards for ensuring child-safe organisations. "Children" also includes young people.

The Child Safe Standards are compulsory for all Victorian organisations that provide services or facilities for children, including those that are funded and/or regulated by Government, and those that are not.

Accordingly the Melbourne & District Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society ("Branch") is required to establish Child Safe Policies and Procedures to the extent that it provides services or facilities for children. Children and teenagers occasionally attend Branch functions and we have one Junior Associate. We also have an annual Bring a Child day to introduce children to Scottish Country Dancing, so it is necessary that the Branch establishes a policy.

Scope of Standards

The Child Safe Standards require¹:

1. Embedding a culture of child safety through effective leadership.
2. Making a commitment to child safety with a policy or statement.
3. Having a clear code of conduct that establishes appropriate behaviour with children.
4. Screening, supervision and training for staff, to reduce the risk of child abuse.
5. Clear processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.
6. Identifying child abuse risks and ways to reduce them.
7. Empowering children to share their feedback and experiences about feeling safe.

The standards are designed to drive cultural change in organisations, so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff and volunteers. This will assist organisations to:

- Promote the safety of children
- Prevent child abuse
- Ensure effective processes are in place to respond to and report allegations of child abuse
- Encourage children to 'have a say', especially on issues that are important to them or about decisions that affect their lives.

To create and maintain a child safe environment, organisations must implement the seven standards. This Child Safety Policy is established to meet these requirements and to ensure that children and teenagers are kept safe during all activities of the Branch. It has been adapted and developed from the information on the website of the Commission for Children and Young People at <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au>.

¹ <http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>

Standard 1 – Effective leadership

The first standard requires effective leadership and governance to ensure a culture of child safety².

Leadership

A culture of child safety requires the commitment of an organisation's leaders. By demonstrating our commitment to child safety in Branch meetings, we will influence and guide the thinking and behaviour of our Committee members, teachers, volunteers, children, and parents.

The commitment of our leaders will also ensure that the positive changes it makes will be sustained over time. It is vital that an organisation adopts an ongoing review and continuous improvement approach to meeting the standards.

Governance

Governance arrangements to set directions, manage affairs and make important decisions must always be clear and well communicated. Arrangements depend on the size and role of an organisation and must be able to be understood and acted upon.

Branch Leadership

The Branch has declared that a Member of the Committee will accept the position of Child Safety Officer and will be the point of contact for issues relating to Child Safety. Child Safety matters will be monitored by the Branch Committee. It will be an item on every Committee Meeting Agenda.

Standard 2 – Making a Statement of Commitment

Small organisations are required to make a Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, rather than have a "Policy". The Branch may be regarded as such an organisation as it does not have paid staff and has a cohesive group of teachers and volunteers who run the organisation.

Branch Statement of Commitment

The Branch has declared a Child Safe Statement of Commitment to all members at a Delegates meeting and has published this Policy on its website. It will also be communicated by email to members with a brief overview of the Statement.

The Statement of Commitment is attached as Appendix A. It is intentionally a single page to keep it simple and concise.

Standard 3 – Code of Conduct

Organisations are expected to have a code of conduct that spells out what types of behaviour are appropriate and inappropriate. It does not need to be an exhaustive list, but should provide overarching guidelines about behaviour expectations. A proposed code of conduct for the Branch is provided as Appendix B. Again it is a single page to assist communication. We may need to review prepare and review more specific guidelines for physical contact with children, as it cannot be completely avoided when teaching dancing.

Standard 4 – Supervision, screening and training for staff

The Child Safe Standards require that organisations develop and implement human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse occurring within your organisation. The human resources practices are particularly important for organisations who recruit staff. Since the Branch does not and is not likely to hire

² <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/the-child-safe-standards/standard-1-governance-and-leadership/>

paid staff, this aspect is not relevant apart from the need to ensure that teachers and volunteers who deliver the Branches activities are aware of their responsibilities for child safety.

Standard 5 – Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse

Organisations have a responsibility to promote and provide an environment in which children, staff and volunteers are encouraged to speak up when they are uncomfortable or concerned. This includes:

- recognising that the safety of children is everyone's responsibility
- having a clear procedure for reporting concerns and allegations
- encouraging children to report if they feel unsafe or concerned
- making people within the organisation aware of their duty of care and legal responsibilities
- appropriately acting on concerns and complaints
- keeping and securely storing accurate records

If the child is in immediate danger call triple zero (000) for emergency services. Otherwise, complaints or concerns should be referred to the Child Safety Officer or a Branch Committee Member.

Appendix C provides a proposed procedural flowchart to guide responses to child safety issues that are reported. The Branch will advise members of the Branch that a new child safety policy has been adopted and provide this document (in final form) as advice to teachers, volunteers and members on what should be done if child safety concerns become apparent at any Branch event.

Standard 6 – Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

A risk assessment is required to identify sources of risk to child safety and have a strategy to reduce or remove any risks. The Branch has assessed that child safety could be at risk at a child centred event if there are insufficient responsible adults available to supervise the children. Therefore, it is required that:

- parents help to look after their children at Branch events and do not "drop them off" to be looked after by teachers and volunteers
- physical contact with children is to be limited to the normal patterns and formations of Scottish Country and ceilidh dancing based on standard procedures for holding hands
- all children remain in the dance area during classes
- children will be accompanied to toilets and other areas if necessary only by their parents or responsible adult who brought them to the event
- children will be told at the start of an event of any safety issues (identified as no go areas and fire escape routes if relevant) and parents will be asked to supervise their children at all times.

Standard 7 – Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Children have a right to be heard and have their ideas and concerns taken seriously. As much as possible, children should be encouraged to speak of their experience and participation in Branch events so that they are used to engaging with the people in charge. In this way, they will be more likely to speak up if they feel at risk or have been abused. Children are more likely to report abuse or concerns if they feel safe and empowered in an organisation. Therefore, teachers and volunteers should seek opportunities to engage with children to find out what they like and dislike and to encourage them to participate fully in the learning and enjoyment of dancing. An opportunity should be given at the end of a class for children to say what they liked and disliked by either public speaking or talking with the teacher after the event. They may not be able to provide a response in written form, so speaking up is to be encouraged at an appropriate time.

Appendix A: Child Safety Statement

The Branch welcomes children's participation

The Melbourne & District Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society is committed to maintaining child safety in all of its activities: classes, socials and special day events for the enjoyment of Scottish Country Dancing. The Branch welcomes children (including teenagers) as participants in these activities subject to their parent's supervision and permissions and the children having sufficient dance training and skills to participate in each particular event. Some events are specifically designed for children with no prior experience of Scottish Country Dancing. In this context, we make the following Statement of Commitment.

Statement of Commitment

The Melbourne & District Branch is committed to child safety.

The Branch wants children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our teachers and volunteers.

The Branch is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

The Branch has a zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our procedures conducted by the Committee through the Child Safety Officer.

The Branch has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

The Branch is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

The Branch has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all teachers and volunteers. It requires all teachers and volunteers leading activities involving children and young people to have current Working with Children certificates.

The Branch is committed to regularly training and educating our teachers and volunteers on child abuse risks.

The Branch supports and respects all children, as well as our teachers and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

We have adopted this Statement of Commitment and have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our Committee, teachers and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

The Branch policy to keep children safe

The Branch is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for children. The Branch asks all members, parents, and teachers to be attentive to the safety of all participants in Branch activities, especially children.

A Child Safety Officer will be nominated from the Branch Committee members after each new election who will monitor the Branch's provisions for child safety and be a point of contact for any matters concerning unsafe practices that may be raised by children, parents, teachers or members.

Appendix B – Code of Conduct

The Branch has adopted the following Code of Conduct to promote Child safety.

Melbourne & District Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society

This Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour by adults towards children.

The Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. It also helps teachers and volunteers by providing them with guidance on how to best support children and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations. All teachers and volunteers are required to comply.

The Branch's Teachers and volunteers are responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- adhering to our Child Safe Statement of Commitment
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect, including listening to and valuing their ideas and opinions
- welcoming all children and their families and carers and being inclusive
- respecting cultural, religious and political differences and acting in a culturally sensitive way
- modelling appropriate adult behaviour with children
- listening to children and responding to them appropriately
- reporting and acting on any breaches of this Code of Conduct, complaints or concerns
- apart from normal participation in Scottish Country Dance, avoiding physical contact with children unless necessary to protect them from imminent danger
- working with children in an open and transparent way – other adults should always know about the work you are doing with children
- respecting the privacy of children and their families, and only disclosing information to people who have a need to know.

Appendix C: Flowchart - CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCESS

