



MELBOURNE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates the strong commitment of Melbourne Chamber Orchestra (MCO) management, staff and volunteers to child safety and wellbeing, and how our organisation keeps children safe from harm, including child abuse.

Commitment to child safety

All children and young people who attend MCO's child-facing activities 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 learning the performing arts. A child-safe culture is championed at all levels of the organisation from the top down and bottom up.

This commitment is clearly and publicly communicated through our website, in recruitment documentation, and in documents relating to child-facing events. This Policy and other relevant documents are also publicly available on our website.

Purpose

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

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, musicians, performers, volunteers, Board members, children and other individuals involved in our organisation's child-facing activities. This policy applies to all child-facing activities – classes, tutoring, workshops and performances – conducted by MCO.

Definitions

Board means the Board of Melbourne Chamber Orchestra.

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.

Engaged person means any person engaged by MCO, whether as a volunteer, contractor or staff member.

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.

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 MCO related to one or more of the following:

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

Role of the Board

The Board has the role of making sure MCO prioritises children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

Everyone at MCO has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm.

The Board will make sure that engaged persons 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 staff, contractors, musicians, performers and volunteers is identified and completed.

The Board will conduct an annual review of how effectively Melbourne Chamber Orchestra is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Melbourne Chamber Orchestra will be sought as part of this review.

Children's empowerment and participation

We seek to include children's views and ideas in child-facing activities.

We want children to develop new friends through MCO 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 a MCO workshop or performance. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation.

Families are included in decisions affecting their child where appropriate.

Children, their families and schools participating in MCO child-facing activities are invited to give feedback, including about child safety and these policies, through surveys, being directed to our website, and/or an appropriate email address.

Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families

Melbourne Chamber Orchestra is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Available strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- an Acknowledgement of Country at all workshops and performances
- consulting with families and members of the Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices in the MCO programs
- providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture, including through performance and during MCO activities
- supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- providing training for staff and volunteers on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- 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 MCO, 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:

- Include the respect of diversity in our Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Work with education partners to 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
- have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- Work with education partners to deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our students, their interests and cultures
- strive to reflect the diversity of our community through representation in our staff and Board members

Melbourne Chamber Orchestra has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Staff, musicians, performers, volunteers and the Board 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.

Recruitment & selection of engaged persons

Persons in child-facing roles must be engaged in compliance with the Child Safety Procedure.

Induction & Supporting of Engaged Persons

Persons in child-facing roles will be inducted and supported in compliance with the Child Safety Procedure.

Avenues for reporting concerns

Concerns or complaints can be reported to any member of MCO Management, who must follow up the report in accordance with Child Safety Procedures.

Concerns or complaints may also be reported by contacting the Child Safety Officer (a member of the Board with responsibility for all matters related to child safety and wellbeing). The Officer can be contacted by email at childsafety@mco.org.au.

These avenues are shared with engaged persons through the Child Safety Induction process. They should also be made available to the wider community by being clearly communicated through the MCO website, and on appropriate documents relating to child-facing activities.

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.

For this reason, if an engaged person has a reasonable suspicion or evidence that a vulnerable person has been harmed, this MUST be reported to MCO Management. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

MCO has Child Safety Procedures that includes information for staff and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then staff and volunteers at Melbourne Chamber Orchestra must report it in accordance with the Procedures. Melbourne Chamber Orchestra staff 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, staff and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down automatically during an investigation
- termination if found guilty of committing an offence following an investigation or trial
- having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at MCO
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at Melbourne Chamber Orchestra
- removing their access to the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra IT system and facilities.

Record keeping

Melbourne Chamber Orchestra 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 Melbourne Chamber Orchestra for at least 50 years.

Information sharing

Melbourne Chamber Orchestra may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. Melbourne Chamber Orchestra 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 Melbourne Chamber Orchestra.

We have a risk management framework that addresses the risk of child abuse and harm at Melbourne Chamber Orchestra.

The Board is responsible for approving the risk management framework.

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

A risk assessment should be undertaken prior to any child-facing activity; for ongoing activities, this risk assessment should be reviewed annually. Risk assessments must include external venues used for child-facing activities to ensure appropriate child safety and wellbeing policies are in place for all MCO events.

Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct

Melbourne Chamber Orchestra 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.

Review

Melbourne Chamber Orchestra will review all child safe practices and policies annually. 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 Board.

Supporting documents – Melbourne Chamber Orchestra 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
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedures
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Risk Management Framework
- Supporting legislation

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (including reporting to Child Protection)

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (including Child Safe Standards)

Child Employment Act 2003 (Vic.)

Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic.)

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)

Adopted by Melbourne Chamber Orchestra: September 2024