



PointCookDance provides dance and performing arts classes for children aged three and above. We aim to develop and showcase dance and performing arts skills.

PointCookDance operates in Point Cook and Werribee. We celebrate that fact that our students come from a range of diverse backgrounds and strive to create a safe, inclusive and vibrant dance school.

PointCookDance Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

PointCookDance acknowledges the Bunurong and Wadawurrung 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 General Manager on the 21st of January 2025. It demonstrates the strong commitment of 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 who come to PointCookDance have the 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 dance and performing arts.

Purpose

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

Scope

This policy applies to all teachers, team members, volunteers, children and other individuals involved in our organisation. This policy applies to all activities – classes, examinations and performances – conducted by PointCookDance.

Definitions

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.

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 at PointCookDance related to one or more of the following:

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

Role of PointCookDance Management

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

PCD Management will champion and model a child safe culture at PointCookDance.

We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report on a child safety concern.

PCD Management will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise any concerns.

Everyone at PointCookDance has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. PCD Management will make sure that staff and volunteers are taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. PCD will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

PCD Management will conduct an annual review of how effectively PointCookDance is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with PointCookDance will be sought as part of this review.

Children's empowerment and participation

PointCookDance 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 facilities.

We want children to develop new friends through PointCookDance and encourage children to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and will 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 PointCookDance. 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.

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

- Discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- A suggestion box for children that is regularly emptied with suggestions assessed and acted on where appropriate. Children are provided with feedback on their suggestions.
- Consultation with children about any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, programs or staffing. Children's views are collected by staff, provided to management and considered in the decision-making process.

Families and communities

PointCookDance 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.

PointCookDance provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:

- publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy on our website
- including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures, in our newsletter.

Creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families

PointCookDance 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
- Supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- Remove cultural appropriation from programming/events
- Providing training for staff and volunteers if required on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- Seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at PointCookDance, 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:

- 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 enrolment 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
- Acknowledge important cultural dates in our classes
- Commit to ensuring our facilities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.

Code of Conduct

PointCookDance has a Child Safe Code of Conduct. Teachers, team members, volunteers and the Management Committee 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 of our staff and volunteers must agree to our code of conduct when working with children. All staff and volunteers must hold a valid Working With Children Check. Ongoing training and education is important to ensure that everybody working at PointCookDance understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisations commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

CODE OF CONDUCT

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

All staff and volunteers at PointCookDance are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- Upholding our statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- Treating students and families in the PointCookDance community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities
- Be a positive role model at all times
- Maintaining a safe environment for children
- Contributing to an environment that is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment
- Speaking to children in an encouraging and positive manner
- Listening actively to children and offering empathy and support
- Giving each child positive guidance and encouraging appropriate behaviour
- Regarding all children equally, and with respect and dignity
- Having regard to the cultural values, age, physical and intellectual development, and abilities of each child at PointCookDance
- Providing opportunities for children to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other, and with other staff members and volunteers at PointCookDance

- Informing children if physical contact is required for any purpose, and asking them if they are comfortable with this interaction
- Respecting the confidential nature of information gained about each child while participating in the program
- Keeping a professional distance from Students and/or Parents
- Taking responsibility for the care & welfare of each student in the class
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to PointCookDance management
- Understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse
- If child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

All staff and volunteers, at PointCookDance must not:

- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- Develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- Exhibit behaviours, discuss or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive or sexual in nature and/or not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
- Ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- Treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- Communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- Photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with the PointCookDance video/photo policy
- In the dance school environment or at events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

Recruiting staff and volunteers

We take all reasonable steps to employ qualified, experienced, and skilled people to work with our students. Staff are employed based on the above criteria together with an acute understanding of our Child Safe Policy, a commitment to child safety and an understanding of their legal and ethical obligations. Referees for all new PCD team members will be checked.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work by PointCookDance, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

Supporting staff and volunteers

PointCookDance is committed to ensuring that all teachers, team members and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. PointCookDance assists its teachers, team members 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 PointCookDance teachers and team members are required to complete annual child safety training. Training will be recorded in the Child Safety Training Action Plan.

Volunteers will receive supervision to support their engagement with children and for compliance with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed.

Child Safety Person

PointCookDance has appointed Mandy Croker (General Manager) as its Child Safety Officer to look over matters concerning child safety and abuse. We expect our students, dance families, volunteers and staff to discuss any concerns that they may have about the welfare of a child immediately.

The Child Safety officer will ensure that the concerns/incident reported to her remain confidential and that the identity of the person reporting the concern/incident is not revealed.

The Child Safety Officer will be required to report all the incidents noted to her to the appropriate authority, who will then ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the organisation and act accordingly.

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.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then teachers, team members and volunteers at PointCookDance must report this immediately. PointCookDance teachers and team members are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police.

Any teachers and team members involved in an allegation may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
- having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at PointCookDance or not allowing unsupervised contact with children at PointCookDance.
- removing their access to the PointCookDance IT system and facilities.

Complaints can be emailed to info@pointcookdance.com.au or you can speak with the Child Safety Officer on 0416 679 911.

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

PointCookDance CHILD SAFETY REPORTING PROCESS

Who can report?

Parent

Child

Staff member or volunteer

What to report?

Any child safety concerns, including:

- disclosure of abuse or harm
- allegation, suspicion or observation
- breach of Code of Conduct
- environmental safety issues.

Call 000 if a child is in immediate danger

How?

- Face-to-face verbal report or meeting with the Child Safety Officer
- Email to info@pointcookdance.com.au
- Phone call to 0416 679 911

Who to?

PCD Child Safety Officer

What happens next?

The Child Safety Officer will:

- offer support to the child, the parents, the person who reports and the accused staff member or volunteer
- initiate internal processes to ensure the safety of the child, clarify the nature of the complaint and commence disciplinary process (if required)
- decide, in accordance with legal requirements and duty of care, whether the matter should/must be reported to the police or Child Protection and make report as soon as possible if required.

Outcome

Investigation; outcome decided; relevant staff, volunteers, parents and child notified of outcome of investigation; policies, procedures updated where necessary.

Record Keeping

PointCookDance 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 PointCookDance for at least 45 years.

Information sharing

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

Risk management

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

We conduct regular risk assessments to address the risk of child abuse and harm at PointCookDance.

Strategies to minimise risk include:

- Supervision of children – Children are supervised always in class by the responsible teacher assigned to that class. The studio does not take responsibility for the child outside of the premises; this responsibility lies solely with the caregiver.
- Classrooms are not sealed to parents. Parents are welcome to look through glass doors/windows and other viewing areas.
- Bathroom facilities at Featherbrook Community Centre and Dunnings Rd Reserve Pavilion are within the classroom, and as a result the public are unable to enter. At VU Fitness Centre, the toilets are located in the hallway. Older students will use the bathroom in pairs and younger students will be escorted in pairs with a team member. Students must arrive to class dressed and ready to go as changing facilities are not accessible for PCD students.

- Students are not allowed to enter storerooms or other areas where they can not be supervised and seen by others
- Photography/Video Policy based on both student and parental consent
- Physical contact – Some physical contact may be deemed necessary to demonstrate exercises and for personal correction, in which case, our staff will ask students for permission first.
- Protecting privacy and confidentiality- All information given to PCD is strictly confidential. Information is given to the child's teacher where it is in the best interest of the child.

We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at PointCookDance. PCD management is responsible for regularly reviewing its risk management plan.

Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct

PointCookDance will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies. 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

PointCookDance will review all child safe practices and policies at least every two years. 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 PCD Management and will be informed by consultation with children, families and staff.

Monday 27th January 2025