Policy and Procedures
Child Safety

Policy
Warrandyte Mechanics Institute and Arts Association Inc. (WMIAA) is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of all children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse or harm.

Everyone involved with WMIAA, whether as a volunteer or employee, is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting any child abuse or harm they are aware of that has either occurred, or which could occur.

Principles
Our Policy is based on the following principles:

1. WMIAA has zero tolerance for child abuse;
2. All forms of child abuse cause harm to children;
3. The best interests, safety and wellbeing of the child are paramount;
4. Child safety is a shared responsibility of all adults in our community;
5. All children have a right to feel safe and be safe when they participate in WMIAA activities, and have equal rights to protection from child abuse and harm;
6. WMIAA will consider the opinions of children when developing child safety policies and procedures to promote engagement with and the empowerment of children;
7. WMIAA will ensure that families participate in decisions effecting their child, and will openly communicate with families and the community about its approach to child safety and ensure that information about child safety including information about making a complaint is readily available and accessible;
8. WMIAA will take into account the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities and any children who are vulnerable, and make reasonable efforts to accommodate these factors when dealing with them;
9. When any Child is involved in any WIMAA activity, all adult volunteers and employees will obtain Working with Children Checks (WWCC) and copies of these cards will be provided to the person organising the activity and the Secretary WMIAA. This procedure for WWCC given below will be followed in all cases;
10. WMIAA will maintain a register of employees and volunteers who have a WWCC and the details of the cards;
11. Unless an emergency, all volunteers and employees will avoid one-on-one situations with a child and ensure at least two adults are present during any activities involving a child. This will not apply if the volunteer or employee is the parent of the child;
12. When a child is under 15 years of age and is to be involved in any WMIAA activity, WMIAA will apply for a licence from the Workforce Inspectorate before the child is actively involved. The procedure detailed below will be followed in every case.

13. If anyone becomes aware of any form of Child Abuse or Harm, or has reasonable belief it is about to occur, during any WMIAA activity, it must be immediately reported to the Secretary of WMIAA and the Police.
14. All volunteers and employees of WMIAA must comply with this policy.

Definitions

Child, children or young person means a child or young person who is under 18 years of age, unless otherwise defined by law.

Child abuse or harm means conduct towards, against, with or in the presence of a child, or threatening to engage in such conduct, which includes:

- physical violence;
- conduct of a sexual nature, including a sexual offence against a child and
- grooming behaviour;
- serious emotional or psychological harm; or
- serious neglect of a child.

Child Employment is when any child under the age of 15 is involved in any activity at WMIAA

Child Safety means matters related to WMIAA's duty of care to children in its care, protecting all children from harm, managing the risk of child abuse or harm, taking steps to prevent the occurrence or reduce the occurrence of child abuse or harm, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

WWCC means a Working with Children Check issued pursuant to the Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic).

Review

This policy will be reviewed by the WMIAA Committee every 2 years or after any child-safety incident.

Procedure – Working with Children

1. Purpose

This procedure ensures compliance with the Victorian Worker Screening Act 2020, Working With Children Check requirements, and the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to:

- All volunteers who supervise activities involving children.
- Volunteers and employees who might come into contact with child during WMIAA activities
- Contractors of WMIAA who might come into contact with a child during WMIAA activities.

4. Requirement for WWCC

Any employees or volunteers who:

- might come into contact with a child during WMIAA activities
- supervises a child as part of WMIAA activities,
- conducts educational activities for children, or
- has direct and unsupervised contact with a child

must hold a current Victorian Working With Children Check before commencing those roles.

5. Verification Procedure

Before a person commences child-related duties:

Step 1

The WMIAA Secretary or person in control of the activity shall:

- Sight the WWCC card;
- Confirm the expiry date;
- Confirm the individual's identity;
- Copy the card and send the copy to the WMIAA Secretary who will record the information.

Step 2

The WMIAA Secretary shall record:

- Full name of volunteer or employee.
- WWCC number.
- Expiry date.
- Date verified.
- Who verified the card.

Step 3

The copy of the WWCC card will be securely retained on the WMIAA filing system.

6. Register of WWCC Holders

WMIAA will maintain a confidential WWCC Register containing:

- full name of volunteer or employee.
- WWCC number.
- expiry date.
- date verified.
- who verified the card

The Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary will review the register twice a year.

7. Renewal Requirements

WWCC holders must:

- maintain a current clearance;
- notify the WMIAA Secretary immediately if their clearance is suspended, revoked or subject to review;
- renew their WWCC before expiry;
- notify the Secretary WMIAA or the person controlling their activity when their card has been issued and allow that person to verify the card and take a copy of it.

14. Review

This procedure will be reviewed:

- every two years;
- following legislative changes; or
- after any child-safety incident.

Procedure – Employment of Children

1. Purpose

In Victoria Children can only be employed for light work, that is not harmful to their health, safety, wellbeing and development.

WMIAA will need to obtain a licence to employ someone under 15, whether the work is paid or voluntary. Employing a child without a licence is a crime. The only exceptions are if the activity is controlled by a school or a church. WMIAA is unlikely to be covered by these exceptions.

We can apply for either a 'General' or 'Entertainment' licence type. Normally, only theatre activities qualify for an 'entertainment' type licence.

Where a licence is granted, WMIAA can employ multiple children under one licence.

Licences are free and last for up to 2 years.

This is a laborious process as described in the Procedure below. This takes time and requires planning. It cannot be followed retrospectively, after a child under 15 is already involved in a WMIAA activity.

2. Procedure

Step 1 – Anticipate the need for a licence

When anyone who is in control of activity where they might intend to involve someone under the age of 15, they must seek the advice of the Secretary WMIAA as to how a permit can be applied for.

This must occur as soon as the person thinks they might involve someone under 15 years old – even if that person is not known at that time. For example, if the theatre company plan to stage a show in the future with people under 15 in the cast, even if auditions have not been conducted yet.

The delay in issuing a permit is typically about 2 weeks and legally the child cannot be involved at all until we have that licence.

In some cases, we might already hold a licence that is less than 2 years old and further application may not be necessary.

Step 2 – Apply for a licence

WMIAA is already registered with the Workforce Inspectorate – which speeds up the application process considerably.

An application must include information about a 'nominated officer', who is a delegate of the employer, who:

- is responsible for ensuring that the licence holder complies with the child employment laws and conditions of the licence.
- participates in or makes decisions about a child's employment and has a knowledge of the work that the child or children will do.
- has responsibilities under the Child Employment Act 2003.

At present the Secretary WMIAA is a nominated officer and holds an Employers WWCC. Another member of WMIAA can be a nominated officer but will have to obtain to apply for and obtain an Employers WWCC before progressing the application.

For employment in Theatre Group related activities, WMIAA would apply for an entertainment industry licence. In which case we must also nominate an 'employer representative' who can make day-to-day decisions about the child's work and ensure any licence conditions are met. They have responsibilities under the Child Employment Act 2003 and usually require a Working with Children Clearance. This, typically would be either the director or producer of a show.

With every application we must also complete a Fit and Proper Person Declaration and submit it along with the licence application.

The declaration on the form must be signed by a person with significant decision-making powers within WMIAA. These would normally be the Chair, Secretary, Vice Chair or Treasurer. These people are called 'officers' under the law.

This declaration is used to ensure applicants are fit and proper to employ children by seeking information on their compliance history with workplace and other relevant laws. It also helps the consideration of matters like integrity and whether a person has had criminal convictions in relation to offending against children.

We may also be subject to a National Police Check. If a police check is required, we will be notified after submitting our licence application.

As part of the application, we must also specify the nature of the employment and the tasks involved. The health and safety risks in the each case of each task must be listed.

Step 3 - Once the licence has been issued

We have to notify the Workforce Inspectorate of each child we will employ. It is preferable that this occurs before the child has started work. This can also take place when a licence is applied for.

To be provided is:

- their name, date of birth and home address
- the name and contact details of the parent or guardian
- information about when they will start work and what hours they will work.

Step 4 – Parental consent

We must also submit the written consent of a parent or guardian before a child can start employment. The consent form is available from the Workforce Inspectorate and the Secretary WMIAA can supply a copy.

WMIAA will have to complete part of the form before supplying it to the parent to complete and provide their consent.

3. Review

This procedure will be reviewed:

- every two years;
- following legislative changes; or
- after any child-safety incident

[signature]
Grant Purdy [date]
Secretary WMIAA