



# NICA

## Child Safe Policy

### National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA)

#### 1. Purpose

This policy outlines our commitment to child safety and wellbeing, aligned with the 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards introduced on 1 July 2022 and updated under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) and Ministerial Order 1359. It reflects the latest regulatory framework effective from 1 January 2023, including enhanced monitoring and enforcement powers.

#### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, and visitors at NICA. The Child Safe Standards are particularly applicable for NICA Rec term classes, out of school hours programs, birthday parties and NICA Ed tertiary programs where students are under 18 years.

#### 3. Commitment to Child Safety

NICA is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and empowering environment for all children and young people who participate in our programs, training, events, and activities. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and harm. All staff, trainers, contractors, students, volunteers and partners share responsibility for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children.

We embrace diversity and value the unique identities, strengths and cultural backgrounds of all children, including Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ young people, children with disability, and children with varied family structures.

Child safety is embedded in our leadership, governance, culture, and daily practices.

NICA is committed to:

- Zero tolerance of child abuse.
- Supporting and respecting all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from diverse cultural backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ young people, and children with disability and children with varied family structures.
- Creating culturally safe environments across studios, training venues, performance spaces and online environments.
- Empowering children to understand their rights and actively participate in decisions affecting their safety and wellbeing.
- Adhering to the Child Safe Standards
- Recruiting, screening and training staff in adherence with Child Safe practices

## 4. The 11 Child Safe Standards (2025)

### No. Standard

- 1 Establish culturally safe environments for Aboriginal children.
- 2 Embed child safety in leadership, governance, and culture.
- 3 Empower children to understand their rights and participate.
- 4 Involve families and communities in child safety efforts.
- 5 Uphold equity and respect diverse needs in policy and practice.
- 6 Ensure staff and volunteers are suitable and supported.
- 7 Maintain child-focused complaints and concerns processes.
- 8 Provide ongoing education and training for child safety.
- 9 Promote safety in physical and online environments.
- 10 Review and improve implementation of the Standards.
- 11 Document policies and procedures that support child safety.

## 5. Roles & Responsibilities

### Board & Executive Leadership

- Champion and model a child safe culture.
- Ensure compliance with legislation and the Child Safe Standards.
- Report on Child Safe compliance to OFTA as per Funding Agreement
- Approve and review this policy.

### Managers and Supervisors

- Promote child safety in daily operations.
- Ensure safe environments and practices in training spaces.
- Support staff with training and reporting responsibilities.

### Child Safety Officer (Designated Role)

- Provide advice, receive concerns, and support reporting processes.
- Maintain internal documentation related to child safety.

### All Staff, Students, Volunteers and Contractors

- Follow this policy and NICA's Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Participate in child safety training.
- Report concerns, allegations or breaches immediately.

### Students & Families

- Engage in safety initiatives and report concerns
- Provide feedback on Child Safe policy and practices.

## 6. Reporting & Responding

NICA has a tailored Child Safety Complaint process within the NICA Complaints Policy which allows confidential reporting to the NICA Executive Team via NICA People and Culture and the NICA Child Safety Officer.

Concerns can be reported in person to the Child Safety Officer or emailed to [People&Culture@nica.com.au](mailto:People&Culture@nica.com.au)

NICA follows the Four Critical Actions:

1. Respond to the emergency.
2. Report to authorities (e.g. Child Protection, Victoria Police).
3. Contact families.
4. Provide ongoing support.

### 6.1 Reporting mechanisms

NICA People & Culture contact:

Emily O'Connor, Operations Manager People and Culture [people&culture@nica.com.au](mailto:people&culture@nica.com.au)

NICA Child Safe Officer contact:

Paula McKaskill, Manager Commercial Programs, [pmckaskill@nica.edu.au](mailto:pmckaskill@nica.edu.au)

## 7. Implementation of the 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards

The following sections incorporate NICA-specific practices, programs and environments, including circus training spaces, aerial studios, backstage areas, high-risk physical activities and community-based programs.

### Standard 1 – Culturally Safe Environments for Aboriginal Children

NICA will:

- Acknowledge and respect Aboriginal cultures and identities.
- Provide visible, active expressions of respect (artwork, language, welcome statements).
- Consult Aboriginal families, staff and community organisations.
- Train staff to understand cultural rights and respond to racism.
- Ensure programs are culturally inclusive and accessible.

### Standard 2 – Child Safety Embedded in Leadership, Governance and Culture

- Leaders model and reinforce expectations for safety, inclusivity, and respect.
- Child safety is embedded in planning, decision-making and policy review.
- A Child Safe Code of Conduct applies to all staff, students, volunteers and visitors.
- Regular review cycles ensure continuous improvement.

### Standard 3 – Children Are Empowered and Participating

NICA will:

- Educate children about their rights, safety, and how to seek help.
- Provide multiple opportunities for children to contribute feedback on classes and safety.
- Ensure training spaces encourage peer support, inclusion and positive relationships.
- Offer age-appropriate resources and information.

#### Standard 4 – Families and Communities Are Informed and Involved

- Families receive clear information about programs, expectations, safety procedures and reporting mechanisms.
- Family perspectives inform decision-making, especially around safety.
- NICA publishes relevant child safety materials on its website.

#### Standard 5 – Equity and Diversity

NICA will:

- Ensure environments are accessible to children with disability.
- Provide flexible, supportive responses for children facing vulnerability.
- Eliminate discriminatory language and behaviour.
- Ensure children and families can communicate their needs safely.

#### Standard 6 – Suitable and Supported Staff and Volunteers

- Recruitment processes include WWCC, reference checks, screening and child-safe interview questions.
- Job descriptions include child safety responsibilities.
- Staff receive induction, supervision, and ongoing training.
- Performance reviews include child safety expectations.

#### Standard 7 – Child-Focused Complaints Processes

- Complaints can be made verbally, in writing, anonymously, or through an advocate.
- All concerns are taken seriously and acted upon promptly.
- Children have simple, accessible ways to express concerns.
- We ensure procedural fairness and transparency.

#### Standard 8 – Staff Knowledge, Training and Awareness

- All staff train regularly in child safety, identifying abuse, risk mitigation, and the Code of Conduct.
- Refresher training is provided annually.
- Specialist roles receive additional training.

#### Standard 9 – Physical and Online Environments

NICA adopts circus-specific child safe practices including:

- Safe physical contact and spotting guidelines for acrobatics, aerials, manipulation and ground-based disciplines.
- Restricted-area access controls for studios, rigging spaces, dressing rooms and backstage zones.
- Online safety protocols, including NICA Social Media Policy, approved communication channels and secure digital learning platforms.
- Media and photography permissions, ensuring images of children are captured and used only with consent.
- Production and performance suitability reviews to ensure shows are age-appropriate when children are performing or attending.

#### Standard 10 – Review of Policies and Practices

- Annual review of this policy, Code of Conduct, and safety procedures.
- Reviews consider child and family feedback, incident data, and legislative changes.
- Updates are communicated across the organisation.

#### Standard 11 – Documentation of Child Safety Issues

- NICA documents all risk management strategies.
- Child safety records are stored securely and confidentially.
- Reporting pathways, decision-making and actions are recorded.
- Clear processes govern information sharing with authorities.

## 8. Related documents

- NICA Complaints Policy
- NICA Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- NICA Workplace Behaviour Policy
- NICA Social Media Policy
- NICA Cultural Safety Policy
- NICA Staff Code of Conduct
- NICA Student Code of Conduct
- NICA Student Handbook
- NICA Staff Handbook
- NICA Rec Parent Portal

## 9 Accessing This Policy

This policy is available:

- On the NICA website
- At reception and training spaces
- In induction packs for new staff, volunteers and students

## 10. Review

This policy is reviewed annually and updated to reflect legislative changes and best practices.

| Version 1                      | Approved By | Date    | Review date |
|--------------------------------|-------------|---------|-------------|
| P – 007 NICA Child Safe Policy | NICA, CEO   | 3/3/26  | 6/3/27      |
| Version 2                      | NICA, CEO   | 3/07/26 | 6/07/27     |