



Child Safety Policy

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1. Purpose

This policy demonstrates Story Studios Australia's commitment to the safety and well-being of children and young people. It outlines our approach to creating a child-safe environment in accordance with the **Victorian Child Safe Standards (2025)**.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other individuals involved in the operations of Story Studios Australia, both online and in person.

3. Commitment to Child Safety

We are committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and will act promptly to protect children from harm.

We are also committed to fostering a creative environment where children and young people feel safe, respected, and supported to share and develop their ideas and imagination.

4. The Victorian Child Safe Standards and Our Actions

Standard 1: Culturally Safe Environments

We respect and value the identities, cultures, and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people.

Our actions: acknowledging Country in our programs, ensuring cultural safety training for staff, and embedding respect for First Nations perspectives in our storytelling practices.

Standard 2: Leadership, Governance and Culture

Child safety is embedded in our leadership and culture.

Our actions: child safety is led by the Managing Director (also the Child Safety Officer) and reviewed annually by the leadership team.

Standard 3: Empowerment of Children and Young People

Children and young people are informed of their rights, participate in decisions, and are taken seriously.

Our actions: inviting children to share feedback, encouraging their input in creative activities, and ensuring they know how to raise concerns.

Standard 4: Involving Families and Communities

Families and communities are informed and involved in child safety.

Our actions: clear communication with parents, transparent policies published online, and opt-out options for image sharing.

Standard 5: Equity and Diversity

Children's diverse needs are respected and equity is upheld.

Our actions: adapting programs for accessibility, ensuring respectful inclusion of children from all backgrounds and identities.

Standard 6: Suitable People Working With Children

Processes ensure staff and volunteers are safe to work with children.

Our actions: mandatory Working With Children Checks, reference checks, and child safety training. Ongoing supervision and training of staff.

Standard 7: Child-Focused Complaints Processes

Processes for complaints are child-friendly, accessible, and responsive.

Our actions: clear reporting channels via the Child Safety Officer, complaints handled promptly and respectfully, children encouraged and supported to express concerns to Studio Hosts, Mentors or other trusted persons.

Standard 8: Staff Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

Staff and volunteers are equipped with child safety knowledge.

Our actions: ongoing training, induction on child safety policies, refresher workshops, and support for studio hosts to maintain **current first aid qualifications**.

Standard 9: Safe Physical and Online Environments

Environments promote safety and wellbeing.

Our actions:

- Supervised in-person sessions with **always two vetted adults present**, and an **open-door/visibility policy**.
- First aid trained studio hosts available at all in-person programs in our studio.
- Online safeguards including waiting rooms, host controls, and no private messaging outside of official channels.
- Clear expectations of respectful behaviour, with **zero tolerance for bullying, harassment, or peer-to-peer harm**.
- Secure storage of online recordings for a minimum of **6 weeks**, for quality, training and child safety purposes.

Standard 10: Continuous Improvement

Child safety policies and practices are regularly reviewed and improved.

Our actions: annual policy review, updates following legislative changes, and incorporating feedback from families and children.

Standard 11: Policies and Procedures

Child safety is supported by policies and procedures that are documented, accessible, and understood.

Our actions: publishing policies on our website, providing clear guidelines to staff and families, and embedding child safety into organisational governance.

5. Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers, and contractors are expected to:

- Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions.
- Listen to children and respond to them appropriately.
- Ensure that interactions with children are appropriate and professional.
- Report any concerns about child safety or well-being to the designated Child Safety Officer.

The extended code of conduct for Story and Writing Mentors is outlined in the SSA Employee Handbook.

6. Recruitment and Training

We are committed to recruiting staff and volunteers who are suitable to work with children. Our recruitment processes include:

- Screening and background checks, including Working With Children Checks.
- Providing mandatory training and support to ensure staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities regarding child safety.
- Supporting studio hosts to maintain **current first aid qualifications** so they can respond to emergencies if required.

7. Reporting and Responding to Child Safety Concerns

We have clear procedures for reporting and responding to child safety concerns, including:

- Designating a Child Safety Officer to handle concerns and reports.
- Ensuring that all allegations and safety concerns are treated seriously and responded to promptly.
- Complying with all legal requirements, including mandatory reporting to appropriate authorities.

Our Child Safety Officer is Hannah Nixon (Managing Director):

E: hannah@storystudiosaustralia.com.au

M: 0413476535

8. Risk Management

We are committed to identifying and managing risks to child safety, including:

- Conducting regular risk assessments for activities involving children.
- Ensuring first aid trained studio hosts are available at in-person programs.
- Maintaining **two adults present** during all in-person sessions and an open-door/visibility policy. Online sessions, including groups and one-to-one mentoring are recorded and stored for a minimum of six weeks.
- Implementing strategies to minimize identified risks, including preventing and addressing **bullying, harassment, or peer-to-peer harm** within groups.

9. Communication

We will ensure that all stakeholders, including children, families, staff, and volunteers, are aware of our Child Safety Policy and procedures. This includes:

- Making the policy available on our website and in our studio.
- Providing training and information sessions as needed.
- Communicating clearly with families about how images and recordings are managed.

Image use: Photographs or short videos may occasionally be shared on our website, social media, or in marketing materials. Families may **opt out at any time** by notifying us in writing.

Recordings: All online sessions are recorded and securely stored for a minimum of **6 weeks**. Recordings are used only for quality assurance, safety, and training purposes.

10. Review

We are committed to continuous improvement and will review this policy annually, or as required, to ensure it remains effective and aligned with current laws and best practices.

By implementing this policy, Story Studios Australia aims to create a safe, inclusive, and creative environment where children can engage in writing activities free from harm, and where their voices and ideas are respected.

REVIEWED: SEPT 2025

Next review: SEPT 2026