



# THE VICTORIAN DRAMA LEAGUE

Supporting community theatre in Victoria

## MEMBER COMPANY EXPECTATIONS - CODE OF CONDUCT

### Does your theatre company have a robust Code of Conduct in place?

The VDL Committee has for some years urged each theatre company which hasn't already done so to develop a Code of Conduct to promote a culture of safety and respect within their company.

Such a Code should outline the individual company's policy regarding sexual harassment and abuse, bullying, etc, and the processes by which complaints would be handled. It should also ensure that legal requirements are met when minors are involved in productions. Many companies have a Code in place but others have yet to do so.

From time to time the VDL is contacted by individuals about situations of sexual harassment they have witnessed during productions which have greatly concerned them. **The VDL can only advise its member companies, not dictate – so here is the advice:**

- Theatre company managements must do all you can to ensure your company is providing a safe space for all cast and crew. This is a **legal requirement** of your management committee.
- Individual cast and crew members must encourage the companies you are currently involved with to get a Code in place if there is no Code, and to act by it.
- We are all responsible for contributing to safe and respectful theatres for everyone.

We are all aware of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse and the recent media focus on sexual harassment and misconduct in theatrical settings both here and in the US. There is no doubt that all organisations, no matter what activity they are formed for, and whether voluntary or not, *are required by law and by community expectation, to get this aspect of their structure and operations right.*

Things to consider when developing your Code of Conduct –

1. A commitment/statement of intent to the values of providing a safe and respectful environment for all members
2. The processes that should be put in place to facilitate this, including
  - where minors are involved in productions or events, ensuring that all key personnel (including but not limited to Director, Assistant Director, Wardrobe, Stage Manager) have current Working With Children Checks (WWCC)
  - where minors are involved in productions or events, ensuring appropriate management of dressing room arrangements, parental sign in/sign out, supervision, etc
  - establishing an appropriate complaints process for dealing with complaints of abuse, harassment or sexually inappropriate behaviour

3. Contact person - appoint someone to be the point of contact for members with questions or concerns, for record keeping of individual WWCCs, and to keep up to date with government legislation around WWCCs and other legal requirements for community groups
4. Publish - your code of conduct and all processes including complaints processes to your membership. All members including new members should be made aware of the company's code of conduct and their responsibilities, who they talk to if they have a complaint, and how that complaint will be handled
5. Review and update regularly.
6. **Resources:**
  - Department of Justice - Working with Children Check information, who needs to apply, application forms.  
*[www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)*
  - Department of Health & Human Services - Child Safe Standards  
*<https://www.vic.gov.au/news/child-safe-standards-a.html>*
  - Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse – recommendations for Sport, recreation, arts, culture, community and hobby groups  
*<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sport-recreation-arts-culture-community>*
  - Codes of conduct developed by other theatre companies – thanks to Bendigo Theatre Company for letting the VDL know about their Code of Conduct as a resource to help you get started if you need assistance –  
*<https://bendigotheatrecompany.org/about/code-of-conduct/>*

Many other companies have published their codes online too – have a look and get in touch with them.

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