

Ausdance National

FACT SHEET

Child Safety — Keeping Our Kids Safe in Dance and Physical Performing Arts

What this Fact Sheet covers

National child safety principles applied to dance contexts, physical safety requirements, First Nations cultural safety, Working With Children Checks, reporting obligations and key resources for dance organisations.

Who is this for?

Dance teachers, studio owners, choreographers, company managers, school dance educators and anyone working with children in dance or physical performing arts.

Why this matters

Dance is a powerful space for self-expression, creativity and growth. With more than 150,000 children participating in dance each week in Australia, organisations have a clear responsibility to protect their physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing. This factsheet provides national, cross-jurisdictional guidance to help dance organisations meet their obligations and embed child safety into every aspect of their practice.

Authored and approved by the Ausdance national network, June 2025.

Guiding frameworks

All dance organisations working with children should comply with:

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations — Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019.
- State and territory child safety laws, including reportable conduct and Working With Children Check schemes.

The Safe Dance® principles developed by Ausdance National provide sector-specific guidance to support legal compliance.

While each state and territory operates its own WWCC screening unit, from November 2025 all jurisdictions have agreed to mutual recognition of negative notices under the Agreement to Deliver National Working with Children Check Reform

All child safe policies must embed the Universal Principle of First Nations Cultural Safety, requiring organisations to uphold the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to feel safe, valued and culturally supported.

Ten National Child Safe Principles in dance contexts

Principle	Best Practice in Dance
1. Leadership and Culture	Child safety is embedded in governance, leadership, and studio culture. Respect and accountability are modelled at all levels.
2. Child Participation	Children are empowered to express themselves, understand their rights, and contribute to safety practices.
3. Family Engagement	Families and communities are informed and involved in child safety decisions and communications.
4. Diversity and Equity	Policies and practices uphold the safety and inclusion of all children, including those who are First Nations, culturally diverse, LGBTQIA+, neurodiverse, or living with disability.
5. Suitable People	Robust recruitment, screening, induction and supervision of all teachers, staff and volunteers.
6. Complaints and Feedback	Clear, child-friendly pathways for raising concerns. Cultural safety embedded in complaints-handling processes.
7. Ongoing Training	Teachers and staff receive regular training in child protection, cultural safety, consent and trauma-informed practice.
8. Safe Physical and Online Spaces	Safe studio design, appropriate physical contact, respectful costuming, and online safety protocols are in place.
9. Continuous Improvement	Child safety policies are regularly reviewed in consultation with children, families and staff.
10. Documented Policies	Child safety commitments, codes of conduct and reporting procedures are publicly available and easily understood.

Adapted from: Australian Human Rights Commission and Commission for Children and Young People Victoria (CCYP VIC).

Promoting healthy lifestyles

Nutrition and Hydration

Educate dancers on the importance of balanced nutrition and staying hydrated before, during and after dance activities. Low energy availability is one of the most under-recognised risks to young dancers' health and performance. See the Ausdance fact sheets on Nutrition for Young Dancers and Fuelling the Dancer.

Body Image and Development

Encourage acceptance of diverse body types and educate about normal physical changes during growth periods. Avoid language that evaluates bodies on aesthetic grounds. Dance organisations have an ethical and legal obligation to avoid practices that shame or objectify children's bodies.

Substance Awareness

Provide age-appropriate information on the effects of substance use on performance and injury risk. Create a studio culture in which this can be discussed openly and without shame.

Emotional wellbeing

Supportive Environment

Foster open, trusting relationships between instructors and students to promote self-esteem and confidence. Research consistently shows that positive motivational climates are associated with lower injury rates and better long-term participation in dance.

Stress Management

Be attentive to external pressures faced by students, particularly adolescents. Provide strategies to manage stress and anxiety. Be aware Cultural load — the additional obligations carried by First Nations students — can compound psychological stress.

Professional Referrals

Refer students to appropriate health professionals when behavioural or physical signs indicate potential concerns. Teachers are not health clinicians — your role is to notice, respond with care, and connect to appropriate support. See the Ausdance fact sheets on Mental Health First Aid, Burnout Prevention and Eating Disorders and Dancers.

Balanced training approaches

- Recognise signs of overtraining and implement strategies to balance training intensity with adequate rest and recovery.
- Educate students on effective time management to balance dance with other life commitments.
- Incorporate complementary activities such as yoga, swimming or general sport to promote overall wellbeing and reduce overuse injury risk.
- Apply appropriate periodisation — planned variation in training load — to avoid large spikes in intensity.

Safe physical environments

- Ensure dance spaces are free from obstacles and have appropriate flooring, adequate lighting, ventilation and sufficient space per dancer.
- Conduct routine risk assessments to identify and mitigate potential hazards.
- Teach correct movement control and alignment patterns specific to dance styles to prevent injuries.
- Understand the cardiovascular, respiratory and neuromuscular demands of dance, and tailor training to individual capabilities.
- Develop training programs that gradually increase in intensity, allowing the body to adapt.
- Emphasise the importance of rest periods and recovery techniques within training schedules.
- Teach dancers to recognise their physical limits and to communicate discomfort or concerns.

Physical safety in dance settings

- Teaching methods, choreography and costumes must be developmentally appropriate for students' age and skill level.
- Physical adjustments and hands-on corrections should only occur with student awareness and consent, using professional techniques. See the Ausdance Consent, Safe Touch and Professional Relationships fact sheet.
- Avoid one-on-one situations between an adult and a child wherever possible. If unavoidable, doors should remain open or another adult should be present.
- Changing room and backstage protocols must protect children's privacy and dignity.
- First aid trained staff and appropriate first aid kits must be present at all sessions.
- Choreography and costuming that sexualises or objectifies children is prohibited under child safe standards and organisational codes of conduct.

Working with children checks

All teachers, contractors, volunteers and student teachers who work with children must hold a current, valid Working With Children Check (WWCC) or state/territory equivalent. The name and requirements vary by jurisdiction:

- In the ACT, this is called a Working With Vulnerable People Check
- In WA, parent volunteers who are supporting their own children may be exempt under the Working with Children (Screening) Act 2004 — organisations should confirm current requirements with their state screening authority
- From November 2025, all Australian jurisdictions have agreed to mutual recognition of negative notices under the national WWCC reform agreement
- Studios must verify checks through the relevant state screening portal and maintain an up-to-date register
- Checks must be renewed as required by each state (commonly every 3–5 years)
- Heads of child-facing organisations must also hold a WWCC, not only frontline staff
- National Police Checks are not a substitute for a WWCC

Obligations and reporting

All adults in child-facing roles have legal and moral obligations to report disclosures or suspicions of harm, abuse or neglect; breaches of child safety policy or code of conduct; and any known risk to a child's physical, emotional or cultural wellbeing.

In an emergency or if a child is at immediate risk, call 000. For non-emergency concerns, contact your state or territory child protection service or reportable conduct body.

State and territory governments provide specific, free training to support people in understanding their role as Mandatory Reporters. Studios should collect certificates of completion from all relevant staff. Links to state-specific training can be found at creativeworkplaces.gov.au/children-and-young-people/child-safeguarding

Internal reporting to a manager does not replace the legal obligation to report to authorities.

By State and Territory

The table below shows current requirements as of 2026. Fees are typically adjusted each 1 July — always confirm current fees and requirements with your state screening authority before applying.

State / Territory	Check Name	Paid Worker	Volunteer	Valid For
NSW	Working With Children Check (WWCC)	\$107	Free	5 years
VIC	Working With Children Check (WWC Check)	\$131.60	Free	5 years
QLD	Blue Card	Fee set by regulation — check qld.gov.au for current rate	Free	3 years
WA	Working With Children Check (WWC Check)	\$87 + GST	\$11 + GST	3 years
SA	Working With Children Check (WWCC)	\$115.50	Free	5 years
TAS	Registration to Work With Vulnerable People (WWVP)	\$130.90	\$22.44	3 years
ACT	Working With Vulnerable People Check (WWVP)	\$135	Free	5 years
NT	Ochre Card (Working With Children Clearance)	\$88	\$8	2 years

Fees sourced from state screening authorities, verified April 2026. Confirm current fees at the relevant state portal listed below.

Key rules that apply nationally

- Studios must verify checks through the relevant state screening portal and maintain an up-to-date register of all staff and volunteers.
- Checks must be renewed before expiry. Set calendar reminders well in advance.
- Heads of child-facing organisations must also hold a WWCC, not only frontline staff.
- National Police Checks are not a substitute for a WWCC.
- A volunteer check does not cover paid work. If a person moves from volunteer to paid work, they must upgrade within 30 days.
- A paid check covers both paid and volunteer roles.
- All jurisdictions apply continuous monitoring — a check can be suspended or cancelled during its validity period if criminal history changes.
- From November 2025, all Australian jurisdictions have agreed to mutual recognition of negative notices under the national WWCC reform agreement. Checks are not yet fully portable — if working across state borders, confirm requirements with the receiving state's screening authority.

State and Territory screening portals

NSW — Office of the Children's Guardian: kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au

VIC — Working With Children Check Victoria: workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

QLD — Blue Card Services: qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card-services

WA — Working With Children Check WA: workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au

SA — DHS Screening Unit: dhs.sa.gov.au/services/community-and-family-services/screening-unit

TAS — WWVP Registration, Service Tasmania: service.tas.gov.au

ACT — Access Canberra (WWVP): accesscanberra.act.gov.au

NT — Ochre Card, NT Government: worksafe.nt.gov.au

Note: In WA, parent volunteers supporting their own children may be exempt under the Working with Children (Screening) Act 2004. Organisations should confirm current requirements with the WA screening authority before assuming exemptions apply.

First Nations considerations

Child safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children cannot be understood apart from history, Culture and the principle of self-determination. The forced removal of First Nations children from their families — through the policies creating the Stolen Generations — is not a historical event with no present consequence. Its ongoing impacts are felt across generations in the relationship between First Nations families and institutions, including arts organisations. Dance studios and programs working with First Nations children must understand this context and act with particular care, transparency and humility.

The Universal Principle: Cultural safety as child safety

The National Child Safe Standards include a Universal Principle applying specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: organisations must create environments making First Nations children feel Culturally safe — welcome, safe, valued, included and respected. The National Office for Child Safety and SNAICC — National Voice for our Children have jointly produced [Keeping Our Kids Safe](#), a resource applying a Cultural lens to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

This resource makes clear that the absence of Cultural safety is itself a form of harm. A dance studio where a First Nations child's identity is ignored, tokenised or subtly unwelcome is not a child-safe environment.

Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is not an add-on to child safety practice. It is child safety practice. An environment that is physically safe but Culturally unsafe is not a safe environment for First Nations children.

Strengths of First Nations approaches to child safety

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures have their own deep and sophisticated frameworks for keeping children safe. These include the concept of 'one community, many eyes' — the collective community focus in which children are held within a broad network of family, Elders and community members who share responsibility for their safety and development. Respect for Elders, connection to Country and spirituality are all identified as protective factors for First Nations children's safety

and wellbeing. Dance organisations should recognise and actively support these strengths, rather than assuming that Western child safety frameworks are the only valid approach.

Mandatory reporting

Dance teachers in some states and territories are mandatory reporters under child protection legislation. This obligation applies equally to all children. However, teachers must exercise particular care and Cultural sensitivity when concerns arise about First Nations children. The significant over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and out-of-home care systems is well documented and reflects the ongoing impacts of colonisation, poverty and structural disadvantage — not an inherent deficit in First Nations parenting or family life.

Before making a report about a First Nations child, teachers should:

- *Consult with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleague, Cultural advisor or local [NACCHO](#) where possible or appropriate.*
- *Consider whether the concern reflects genuine harm or risk, or whether it reflects Cultural difference or material disadvantage that could be addressed through support rather than reporting.*
- *Be aware the experience of having a child re-homed — or fear of that experience — may affect how First Nations families engage with organisations. Transparency, honesty and genuine relationship-building are essential.*

This is not a reason not to report genuine safety concerns —reporting obligations exist for important reasons. It is a reason to approach these situations with Cultural sensitivity, humility and appropriate consultation.

Child-safe practice that is also Culturally safe

- *Ensure First Nations children and families are genuinely involved in decisions that affect them, consistent with the principle of self-determination.*
- *Embed Cultural safety in codes of conduct, child safety policies and recruitment processes — not as a separate item but as a core component of child safety.*
- *Ensure staff training on child safety explicitly includes appropriate First Nations Cultural safety content.*
- *Maintain an Acknowledgement of Country and appropriate visible affirmation of First Nations identity in all studio spaces.*
- *Actively seek guidance from local First Nations communities, Elders and organisations — including [SNAICC](#) and local [NACCHO](#)s — when developing or reviewing child safety frameworks.*
- *Recognise Cultural connection — to family, Community, Country and Ceremony — as a protective factor for First Nations children and actively support it.*

Key resources

Australian Human Rights Commission — National Principles for Child Safe Organisations: childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles

Creative Workplaces — Child Safeguarding (including state/territory reportable bodies and Mandatory Reporter training): creativeworkplaces.gov.au/children-and-young-people/child-safeguarding

National Office for Child Safety: childsafety.gov.au

SNAICC — Keeping Our Kids Safe: snaicc.org.au/resources/keeping-our-kids-safe

Victoria — CCYP: ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards

Queensland — QFCC Child Safe Standards: qfcc.qld.gov.au/childsafe/standards

Ausdance National — Safe Dance Practice: ausdance.org.au/articles/details/safe-dance-practice

AIHW — Health and wellbeing of First Nations people: aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/indigenous-health-and-wellbeing

Lowitja Institute — First Nations health research: lowitja.org.au

13YARN — 24/7 crisis support for First Nations people: 13 92 76

Family Matters Campaign: familymatters.org.au

Thirrili — National Indigenous Critical Response Service: 1800 805 801

This fact sheet is intended as a general guide. Dance organisations must comply with the specific child safety legislation applicable in their state or territory. Always seek legal advice if you are unsure of your obligations. Ausdance Fact Sheet updates 2026 have been completed by Rita Pryce, Ashley Saltner Jr, Tom Davis, Annie Strauchs, Lynette Haines, Dr Joanna Nicholas, Ellen Paterniti, Isaac Campbell, Peta Blevins, Jacqueline Dimmock and Molly Tipping. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and Cultural Guidance – Rita Pryce, Pryce Centre for Culture and Arts.