# **SECTION 5.2.1: CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

# The Australian Ballet School

**RESPONSIBLE:** Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee (ARCC)

**VERSION 1 APPROVED BY THE BOARD:** April 2020

**LATEST VERSION:** June 2022

**NEXT REVIEW:** June 2025 (unless required earlier)

**POLICY ACCESS LOCATION:** Staff Portal and Student Portal

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Ballet School (School) may directly or indirectly be involved in an unexpected, traumatic event, involving personal, physical, reputational or professional threat. Such situations may result in extreme stress, fear, injury and overall distress. An incident may occur within the school environment or off-site.

The School is committed to ensuring education of the students and the welfare needs of the students and Staff Members are managed with due care and appropriate intervention is measured. Planning for and managing emergencies, by providing timely, focused and suitable support is a critical part of Emergency Management Planning.

#### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- Planning for and managing critical incidents;
- Duty of care obligations are supported, including the highest standard of health and safety;
- Responding quickly and thoroughly;
- Liaising with a range of support organizations, including Counselling Services;
- Reporting Critical Incidents; providing clear, accurate information to all involved and affected;
- Appointing a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT).

This policy provides clear guidelines acknowledging that **Critical Incidents** cover a wide range of complexities. Each incident is likely to be unique; nevertheless, the network of those directly involved or affected is likely to be wide. This may include people who may not (initially) seem to be closely connected to the event or the individuals involved.

Related Policies: This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies, Risk Management Policy (1.5), Business Continuity Policy (1.5.3), Media Relations Policy (3.1.1), Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Cyber Security Policy (4.3.3), Emergency Evacuation Policy (5.2.3), and Marilyn Rowe House Student and Parent Handbook. The policy also acknowledges the Crisis Management Plan of The Australian Ballet (TAB), as primary occupant of the School's building.

## 3. **DEFINITIONS**

A **Critical Incident:** a traumatic event, sitting outside the normal range of experiences of the people affected. Examples include, a criminal offence, civil unrest, a natural disaster, circumstances in which there is a threat of or actual loss of life, serious injury or emotional or mental disturbance, where

physical life or health is threatened or personal health issues are experienced. The School's Risk Register rates Critical Incidents as High-risk.

# 4. WHO DOES THIS POLICY APPLY TO

In the first instance, this policy applies to Staff Members, students and Volunteers including Marilyn Rowe House (MRH). In certain circumstances this may extend to the wider School community. Nothing in the policy overrides the Code of Conduct Policy (1.2).

#### 5. POLICY

The School is committed to ensuring that the education of the students and the welfare needs of the students, Staff Members and Volunteers are managed with due care and appropriate intervention measures during any Critical Incident.

A standing group comprising The Director of the School (Director), the Executive Director and the Director of Development will coordinate a test exercise at durations no longer than every three years, to ensure both the Critical Incident Policy and the Business Continuity Policy are ready to be enacted by the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) if required. See: Section 5.1.

# 5.1 Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT):

The function of the Critical Incident Management Team is to manage the School's response to a Critical Incident. A team of people are responsible for the operational management of a Critical Incident including response, business continuity and recovery.

The Director or in their absence the Executive Director, is the responsible officer for this policy and will determine whether or not the incident is classified as a Critical Incident and to put into operation the Critical Incident Procedural Guidelines. These decisions are based upon the following descriptions/criteria which constitute a Critical Incident:

- Large scale impact on the building: fire, explosion, bomb threat/suspicious item, sabotage, gas leak, flood, failure of essential services;
- Critical services impacted, including IT;
- Cyber-attack;
- Plagiarism or unlawful use of artistic material;
- Chemical, radiation or bio-hazard spillage;
- Coordination required for evacuation or lockdown (note: Marilyn Rowe House procedures are detailed in the Boarding House Handbook);
- Any fatality, near fatality or potential of injury to a member of the School community;
- Murder or suicide involving students/Staff Members and their family members;
- Threats of violence/serious assault to Staff Members and/or students;
- Incidents involving abuse of children;
- Suffering or witnessing domestic violence;
- Hold-up, attempted robbery or siege;
- Major theft or vandalism;
- Self-harm attempted;
- Medical Emergency or threat: poisoning, acute illness (Physical or mental), EpiPen use, threat of HIV infection;
- Natural disasters/storms;

- Incidents in which sights, sounds or smells are distressing;
- Off campus incident;
- Allegation of bullying becoming public.

The CIMT will include the following:

- Director
- Executive Director
- Director of Development
- Health and Wellbeing Manager
- The School Doctor
- Student Support Coordinator (for student/parent liaison);
- Where relevant: Head of Boarding, Head of Operations, Finance Manager, Compliance Lead,
  Digital Lead, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and External Support
  Organizations/Emergency Services.

While the School should aim to operate as normally as possible, the nature of the Critical Incident may impact on the operating environment of the School at the time and in the ensuing aftermath.

All team members should have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities in a Critical Incident. This is supported by the appropriate provision of resources and training including testing of the emergency response capability in desktop and field environments every three years.

The CIMT has responsibility for ensuring procedures are suitably addressed at times of high emotion and that if any of the CIMT members are the subject of the incident, the response mechanism should continue to proceed effectively and as detailed. If the incident subsequently involves legal action, a precise response to the incident should be known and be able to be verified by more than one person.

Functions of the CIMT during a Critical Incident include coordination, communication, implementation, supervision and liaison.

All communications with the media will be in accordance with the School's Media Policy. See: Media Relations Policy (3.1.1).

## 6. PROCEDURES

Every Critical Incident is unique and will vary in complexity. These procedures are not exhaustive, but rather provide a framework from which to work, based upon the individual incident and the needs of the people affected.

Regardless of circumstances, the following five principals must be adhered to in all Critical Incidents involving the School:

- Provision of clear, consistent and accurate information;
- Has the incident been confirmed?
- Description of actions to be undertaken;
- Provision of help and assistance for those affected;
- Where possible, the maintenance of normal school programmes.

It is of paramount importance that accurate information is obtained. Deal only with substantiated facts.

Strategies to mitigate the impact of a Critical Incident include:

- Protecting the School's property and infrastructure/operations: including security and access control;
- Stabilizing the situation;
- Continuing, resuming and recovering critical business functions;
- Reducing the likelihood, length, and impact of future critical incidents through the provision of appropriate training, testing and maintenance programmes.

## **6.1 Procedural Guidelines:**

#### All incidents require:



Assess protection for the health and safety of all involved. If safe to do so, take appropriate action to make the area safe or to prevent any further likelihood of injury or illness.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the initial response will generally be managed by the building emergency procedures for the School (see: Emergency Evacuation Policy) and/or the building procedures for the Primrose Potter Australian Ballet Centre (PPABC), which includes the response of emergency services (e.g.: Fire Brigade).

If the incident impacts other areas of the PPABC, liaison with the designated Incident Controller of TAB may be required.

The Director or in their absence the Executive Director will determine the location of the first meeting of the CIMT. In the event the meeting cannot be conducted at the School, it could occur by teleconference or an agreed secondary meeting point.

The Director or in their absence the Executive Director must assign a Log Keeper, preferably a member of the CIMT to ensure a record of strategic decisions made is registered. Such records should be marked 'Confidential' and retained accordingly. See: Section 6.2 - **Incident Assessment and Risk Assessment.** 

As soon as possible, inform Staff Members, especially those most directly involved. Inform emergency services, family and close friends on an individual basis. Allow questions and discussions as they arise. Dispel rumours.

If the event requires, call students together as soon as possible and provide information about what has happened and how the School is managing the situation. A follow-up letter/email to home is also important.

Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved. Maintain regular communication with the family for as long as it is considered necessary, this may include obtaining their expectations of the School in the aftermath of the event.

Awareness that the class teacher may be the first person students turn to for help and support.

Provide out of hours contact if necessary. This may involve circulating the Director or Executive Director's telephone number or the School's number redirected to the Director or Executive Director. In more complex situations, contact at the School may need to be maintained.

Coordinate resources, including emergency services.

Identify and manage any actions required to protect key assets, data and critical systems.

Sensitivity to all those affected by a Critical Incident is of paramount importance. In support of this, identify those most likely to need help, for example: classmates, special friends, teachers, operational Staff Members of the School, family. Ensure counselling assistance is available for everyone affected by the Critical Incident. Some people not directly affected may become distressed, sometimes after the event, manifesting as a delayed reaction. Consider that the psychologist/counsellor on site may be offering support to a large number of people and that they may require assistance from other qualified professionals to provide sufficient assistance.

Provide recommendations for Staff Members to seek counselling support; and/or access to the online confidential counselling and support service, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Ensure there are suitable places for counselling to take place in the School. Modifications to teaching timetables and other arrangements may be required.

Following a Critical Incident, the School will endeavour to continue normal routines, however also acknowledging the effect of a traumatic event on the School community. Flexibility with those requiring help should be available plus an awareness that the event may trigger people to recall a distressing event which involved them in the past. The anniversary, particularly the first, of a Critical Incident may also be a difficult time.

Some Critical Incidents will require initiation of the Business Continuity Plan (BCP). The Director or in the absence of, the Executive Director, based upon the circumstances and nature of the incident, will determine activation. Refer: Business Continuity Policy (1.5.3)

Policy and procedures for Critical Incident Management will be regularly monitored (at least annually) in accordance with the Strategic Business Plan and Risk Register.

# 6.2 Incident Assessment and Risk Assessment:

Following the completion of a response to a Critical Incident, a review is to be undertaken by the CIMT to determine the effectiveness of the response and any changes or improvements that can be put in place for the future. Information is required to be reported and captured for all types of incidents. **Confidentiality** must be maintained where appropriate and as far as circumstances allow. The Director, Health and Wellbeing Manager, Executive Director and Director of Development will coordinate the assessment and review as soon as practicable, update of the Critical Incident Policy

and Procedures and where applicable, organize training, further risk reduction activities and debriefing as required.

Incidents are to be classified in accordance with The Australian Ballet School Risk Register with the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee (ARCC) advised accordingly, and provided with a report indicating a scalable response, based upon the nature and severity of the Critical Incident.

All records relating to Critical Incidents are maintained in an approved records management system.