CHILD EMPLOYMENT ON PRODUCTIONS NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY IN VICTORIA

The recently launched Wage Inspectorate Victoria (formerly Employment Information and Compliance) in the State Government Department of Economic Development, Jobs Transport and Resources is responsible for child employment in Victoria. It monitors compliance and child safety on all media and theatrical productions involving the employment of children. Quite rightly, it takes its role very seriously and expects those entities who fall under its compliance remit, to do the same.

Talentpay are required to conduct internal assessments and due diligence, to ensure we meet our legal obligations as the employer of children engaged on productions.

The legal and commercial consequences of poorly prepared applications or late notification of employment can result in permissions being delayed, or in some cases permits denied. If you fail to submit an application and proceed to employ children, the consequences are severe.

If you employ children on set or on location, you must submit a permit application and a safety report, along with an assessment form. The purpose of the assessment form is to collect detailed and specific information about a production, allowing the Department to assess the level of risk associated with each production.

IMPORTANT STEPS REQUIRED BEFORE EMPLOYING CHILDREN IN VICTORIA:

1) ALLOW MORE THAN 72 HOURS

The minimum turnaround time for a child employment permit is 72 hours, but there are various factors that could disrupt the processing time of your application, so always give yourself and the Child Employment Officer as much time as possible.

Failure to account for application turnaround time may adversely impact upon your production schedule and budget.

Some factors that could cause delay and cause your application to take longer than 72 hours to process:
- You are planning a large-scale shoot, with multiple children or across multiple days.
- Potentially risky sequences in the storyboards.
- Shooting in unusual locations.
- Additional child talent are cast within 72 hours of production commencing.

2) LOCK IN THE DETAILS BEFORE THE PERMIT DEADLINE

Permit applications must be submitted no less than 72 hours prior to a shoot. To ensure a smooth application process, you should have the following details confirmed before you submit a permit application:

- Child’s or children’s details.
- Shoot dates and location addresses (including unit base address and mud maps when shooting on location or outdoors).
- Detailed storyboard(s) and script(s).
- Safety report (ideally post-recce).

You should avoid changing production information after submitting a permit application, as each change made once a permit has been submitted requires the Department to conduct a further assessment.
3) PRE-EMPT THE RISK ASSESSMENT

If this is not your first permit, you will most likely already have a copy of assessment questions the Child Employment Officer will send upon receipt of your application. Look back at previous assessments and you will be able to anticipate some of the questions you will be asked on your current application. Have answers prepared in advance and you will be able to get to the core of any potential concerns much faster.

4) GATHER SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Child Employment Officers will ask for a range of supporting documentation depending on the nature of your shoot. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Council location permits;
- Traffic management plans;
- Drone operator licenses;
- Safety reports/risk assessments.

The process for obtaining some of the above documentation can be even longer than a permit application, so be prepared and apply well in advance. You may not have all the documents you need when you submit the permit application – council and Victoria Roads permits tend to be issued at the last possible moment – so advise the Child Employment Officer of when you expect to receive the paperwork. They will have a lot more confidence in the application if they know you are proactive and have already started the process of obtaining the permissions needed.

5) ORGANISE CHILD INFORMATION FORMS

You must have copies of the following forms completed by parents prior to any employment activity:

- Parental consent form.
- Child information form.
- School exemption form (if child is of school age).

Casting directors and agents can help get these details faster!

If you plan to shoot on a school day, make sure you have allowed enough time for school exemptions to be processed - in other words, don’t shoot on the first day back after a school holiday and don’t wait until the Friday afternoon before a Monday shoot to request a school letter.

6) MAKE SURE YOU HAVE APPROPRIATE FACILITIES

Children must have access to private toilet and wardrobe facilities. These facilities must be clean and access by the public is prohibited. If you are shooting outdoors or in public spaces, make appropriate arrangements such as a wardrobe bus or private hotel room within 5 minutes’ walk of the set.

You must also provide appropriate meals and drinks throughout the day.

7) HAVE A SHOOT SCHEDULE AND CALL SHEET PREPARED AT LEAST 12 HOURS IN ADVANCE

Having a locked in shoot schedule and call sheet prepared and available by at least midday before your shoot will assure the Child Employment Officer assessing your application that you have all your details locked in and that there will be no last-minute changes. It also gives a much clearer picture of how your shoot will proceed on
the day, making it much easier for the child employment officer to assess the shoot as a whole. All permits will be issued contingent on Department receiving an up to date call sheet prior to any employment commencing.

8) **ASK FOR HELP!**

The number one concern of Child Employment Officers is the safety and wellbeing of the children on your shoot. If you have questions about a child employment regulation, potential safety issues in a script, or how best to proceed for a scene, ask the Department for guidance.

9) **FOLLOW THROUGH**

If you have made assurances regarding safety measures to be taken on the day, they must be adhered to. Child Employment Officers are regular visitors to shoots in Victoria and failure to adhere to any recommendations or requirements can result in a breach and penalties.

Keep to the schedule, abide by the safety report, and adhere to your workplace and child employment undertakings, to ensure production compliance.

The full text of the **Mandatory Code of Practice** for child employment in Victoria can be found [here](#):