

Variety Children's Christmas Party Information and FAQ Sheet



DATE OF PARTY – Friday 8 December, 2017

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

The Variety Christmas Party is now in its 31st year and has welcomed over 150,000 sick, disadvantaged or special needs children. Variety Victoria is proud to announce its 2017 Variety Children's Christmas Party will once again be held in partnership with the Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre.

We hope to make the 2017 Variety Children's Christmas Party a happy and successful event and this can only be done with your assistance

- Up to 5000 children attend our Christmas Party every year.
- The first hour of the party is for children with disabilities **ONLY**. By disability, we mean children with mobility aids (wheelchairs/walkers etc.), sight or hearing loss, sensory issues with crowds and/or noise. By limiting numbers, it assists these children with reduced noise and more room to move, providing them with an opportunity to enjoy the party.
- Children with disabilities can register from 9.00am for entry from 10.00am. The carer and any other children in this immediate group who collect their wristbands with the child granted early entry will also be permitted entry at the same time. Everyone else will register from 10am and enter the party from 11.00am. Santa will arrive at around 11.15am. Everyone is welcome to stay at the party until it concludes at 1.30pm. Registration and Entry doors will close at 12.30pm.
- There is a chill out room for any children (or carers) who need a quiet space to have a break.
- We are unable to cater for any dietary requirements.
- Entry into the party is via invitation only and is FREE. It is the responsibility of those attending to pay for any transport and parking costs.
- Photo boards - on request a selection of photos showing the possible activities from past years can be emailed to organisations to help prepare children for the party.
- Do not advise carers to call Variety to ask for more tickets or information. Due to privacy we will not discuss any lists received with anyone except the registered contact from your organisation. We will refer them back to you.
- Variety run a funding appeal to assist with funding this event. If you would like to help with fundraising please contact us.

Variety – the Children's Charity Victoria ABN 14 020 124 537

REGISTRATION

- This is an invitation only event.
- All children are required to be registered for the party through their school or organisation. Variety does **not** take registrations from individuals.
- Schools/Organisations can nominate a maximum of 100 children.
- If a child's name and number of carers is not on the list they cannot attend the party.
- It is very important to mark on the response form if the School/Organisation is coming as a group via the loading dock.
- We highly recommend that children coming individually also have a name tag with contact details. All children attending as part of a group with a School/Organisation are required to wear a name tag to identify the group they are with and contact number should they end up in the lost children's area.
- Once your nominations are confirmed you will receive an invitation information sheet to forward to your nominated families. The invitation will have your organisation's registered name on top. We request that you complete the invitation by writing the name you have registered the child under and the number of carers. Then provide this to the family. You only need 1 invitation per family. We ask that carers bring the invitation with them as it helps to speed up registration.
- Variety can only accept 1 nomination form per School/Organisation. You can add or amend this list and resend. When doing so, please advise that you are sending an amendment through.
- Ensure that the contact details on the top of the form are of someone from your organisation who is available on the day should we have any issues.
- As this is a **children's party** we cannot cater for whole family groups such as grandparents, aunts, uncles etc. **Carers:** Please try to keep the numbers of carers to a minimum e.g. 1 carer per family. We understand that some children require multiple carers or for larger families multiple carers are required.
- **Translators** Please indicate in advance if you think your organisation will require a translator or if your organisation has a translator who can assist on the day.
- Children must be in attendance to receive gifts. Unborn children cannot receive gifts.
- The party is for children. Please do not send carers without children as they cannot attend the party or collect gifts without the children.
- Age groups this year will be from 1 day old to 13 years. This is actual age. Children 14 and over are unable to attend the party even if their intellectual age is less than 13.
- Carers/Parents must be over the age of 18.
- **SECURITY** – Please inform your families that aggressive behaviour/ violence will not be tolerated.

ENTRY *Via Concourse*

- Volunteers will be manning laptops to register children and carers.
- Adults/Carers will not be given wristbands unless they are with the child. The exception is case worker/teachers/nominated representatives from organizations who have children attending who have contacted Variety prior to the day.
- All children must be sighted to receive their wristband.
- Children must remain orderly while waiting to register.
- We do not require identification when registering.

ENTRY *Via Loading Dock - Organisations*

- Entry via the loading dock is for buses who are parking for the duration of the event. If your bus will be dropping you off and returning later you will need to utilise the service lane at the front of MCEC. This is for OH&S compliance.
- We ask that you keep all the children on the bus until our volunteers have entered the bus to mark all the children off the guest list. Please ensure that the children have their wristbands on. Please hand back any wristbands not required.
- Once the volunteers have marked everyone off they will assist you to move inside the party at the appropriate time.
- Please display the name of your school/organisation at the top of the windscreen on the bus. Would you please ask your drivers to leave a mobile number at the parking bay in case of an emergency or your organisation needs to leave early
- Groups entering via the loading dock please note that entry time prior to 10am is for special schools only. Please note if you turn up early you will need to wait on the bus.

WRISTBANDS

- Schools/Organisations arriving by bus via the loading dock will have wristbands mailed out 1 week prior to the party.
- Children and carers arriving independently will receive their wristbands once their names have been marked off at the registration desk on the concourse.
No wristband – no entry.
- All wrist bands are color coded to identify age groups, not gender, and must be worn to gain entry to the party. For children with sensory issues the wristband can be attached to wheelchairs or clothing.
- The children's wristband will be removed in exchange for a gift at the end of the party.

PARTY

- The food provided is largely donated and varies from year to year. It is typical party food and drink. The types of things to expect - Sausage rolls, party pies, wraps/sandwiches, fairy floss, water, juice, soft drink, chips etc.
- Both children and carers are catered for, everyone will receive a voucher in order to receive a lunch pack.

- For those with dietary requirements please bring your own food and drink.
- There are carnival rides, interactive activities like wheelchair basketball, handball, fencing, craft activities etc. There is stage entertainment with dancing, singing, magic acts, etc.
- The present area will be set up at one end of the building for children to collect their presents on leaving the party. **MOST IMPORTANT: ONCE A CHILD HAS RECEIVED THEIR PRESENT THEY CANNOT RE-ENTER THE PARTY.** Please note there are no pass outs from the party.
- Over 400 volunteers donate their time to assist with this party.
- Roving entertainment - there are a large number of volunteers who come dressed up in costume. In the past we have been lucky enough to have Disney Princesses, Transformers and Star Wars friends and foes attend the Christmas Party.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- **Passing on information to families.** Please ensure that all families receive the same information that you, the organisers, receive. Each year the Variety office receives calls from parents asking about transport, parking, time of the party – all of that information is in the invite that will be sent to the person co-coordinating for your organisation.
- **Transport** – Maps will be emailed with your confirmation with all details including parking and tram and train routes etc.
- **Variety's Charter** is to support children who are either disabled (physically or intellectually) or disadvantaged (financially or socially) and we do this in many ways including our Grants Program and through Variety@Work which hosts our Children's Christmas party.
- Please do not forward your invitation email to external parties as you cannot register for the party if you are not a registered organisation with Variety. If you know of another school or organisation that may be interested please contact the Variety office.
- When asked questions by parents/guardians do not ask them to call Variety. Please email any queries, for urgent enquires please call.
- If you have filled all your spaces and have additional children you would like to nominated:-
 - a) Are they involved with another support organisation? If yes, ask them to contact that group.
 - b) If they are not or that group has advised they have nominated the maximum, then email me explaining the situation.

**** Do NOT instruct the parent/individual contact Variety. All nominations must come from an organisation.**
- **RSVP** Nomination forms need to be returned as soon as possible to secure places. Last day for any nominations or amendments is Friday December 1 unless we reach capacity sooner. There have been some years where places were all filled weeks before the cut off.

Response Form

- Organisations must have 1 person coordinating the nomination sheet for the whole organisation. We will not accept multiple nomination sheets from multiple people.
- If the person coordinating the nomination sheet isn't the registered contact please also include the email address of the registered contact. All nomination forms are checked to see if an organisation's details are registered and as some organisations go by different names/departments this will assist with confirming your organisation.
- Once a nomination sheet is submitted and accepted, if you need to make changes, please do so on the file you last submitted. In the body of the email advise what changes have been made. The latest file received will replace any earlier sheets received.
- Attached is a sample of the response form. Each form must have all sections completed. If you need assistance filling in the form please contact the office on (03) 8698 3900 to be walked through how to complete it. Incomplete forms will not be accepted and will be returned. There are a number of formulas used to assist with the nomination sheet. Please complete as directed and do not modify.

Correct information is very important

- **School/Organisation name** – As some organisations have multiple offices please state suburb or department, eg. Anglicare - Broadmeadows if you are unsure please contact us.
- **Contact name & number**- Must be the person who will be dealing with the registration and who will also be available by phone on the day of the party should any problems arise.
- **Contact Email** – All response forms will be sent via email and they must be returned via email, they will not be accepted by fax.
- **Transport Type** – If coming as a group via the loading dock this is **Very Important**
- **Surname/First name** – We do understand due to protective reasons you may not be able to provide the child's whole name but we do request either a whole first name then the first letter from their last name or vice versa.
- **Age / Intellectual Age** – This refers to the gift the child will receive. For example a child aged 12 with an intellectual age of 7 will receive a 7 year old present. It is best to seek advice from parents.
- **There is now a drop box on the form to select the child's gender.**
- **Number of Carers** - A numeric '1' must be placed in this column, if one carer is looking after 5 children you do not have to place their name in 5 times or a number 1 each time as this will throw the total out. Each carers name must be listed.
- **Wheelchair** – If a child is in a wheelchair please place a numeric response of 1.
- **NO photo** - if a child cannot be photographed for protective or other reasons, you need to mark it in the appropriate column. When they register they will be given a sticker to inform our photographer that they are not to be photographed.
- **Age Group Summary** (right hand side of sheet) –there is now a formula to calculate this for us. Any issues, please contact Variety.

- Once you send the response form back you should receive an automatic response to confirm your email has been received. If you do not receive this within 24 hours, first check your junk email, then contact the Variety office to confirm if your nomination has been received. You will be advised within a week if your nomination has been accepted or rejected.
- The closing date for responses will be Friday December 1 or once maximum capacity is reached, whichever comes first.
- Registration is on a first come basis.
- Please do not refer an individual to Variety as we will redirect them to ask any questions through your organisation.
- With the confirmation you will receive an information sheet/invitation that is to be forwarded to all children and carers attending. Please forward this information and insert the child's name and number of carers.

If you have any questions not answered in this FAQ or require any assistance then please email varietyatwork@varietyvic.org.au. If the matter is urgent then please call 03 8698 3900

Thank you for your cooperation and we will see you on 8 December.