

CHILD SAFE POLICY

Introduction

Canberra Youth Theatre is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at Canberra Youth Theatre is responsible for the care and protection of children, and reporting information about child abuse.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

1. To have an organisational culture of child safety.
2. To proactively prevent child abuse within Canberra Youth Theatre
3. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
4. To provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
5. To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
6. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported to the relevant authorities including, but not limited to ACT Policing, and Child and Youth Protection Services, as covered by the [Children and Young People Act 2008](#).

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Definitions

Child means a person below the age of 12 years.

Young Person a person between the ages of 12 and 18 years.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children and young people from harm.

Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child or young person and includes any action that results in actual or potential harm to a child or young person.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child or young person to, or involves a child or young person in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. It includes grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of lowering the child's or young person's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child or young person. In the ACT, all adults who have reasonable grounds for belief have a moral obligation to report child sexual abuse or child sexual assault to the reported to the Police.

Core Staff means someone on payroll (as at January 2020 this includes Artistic Director/CEO, General Manager, Program Administrator, and Marketing & Administration Coordinator), as opposed to a Workshop Artist or other regular contractor.

Cultural Safety is an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.

Reasonable grounds for belief is a belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) The child or young person is in need of protection,
- (b) The child or young person has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury",
- (c) The parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child or young person. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- a) A child or young person states that they have been physically or sexually abused;

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- b) A child or young person states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child or young person may be talking about themselves);
- c) Someone who knows a child or young person states that the child or young person has been physically or sexually abused;
- d) Professional observations of the child or young person's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child or young person has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; and/or
- e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child or young person has been physically or sexually abused.

Mandatory Reporting is where an organisation or individual is deemed a designated entity. These individuals or organisations must report any [reportable conduct](#) to the [Child and Youth Protection Services](#). Canberra Youth Theatre is not deemed a designated entity. However, if we are contracted directly by a designated entity, the designated entity may act on information provided by Canberra Youth Theatre staff, should the need arise.

[Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) outlines any behaviour considered Reportable Conduct, that may cause harm to a child or young person. This includes physical abuse; emotional abuse; daily violence; and neglect. Any adult in the ACT who believes that a child or young person is experiencing harm may complete a [Child Concern Report](#).

Voluntary reporter is any adult in the ACT who is not a designated individual or organisation. They may make reports to either Child and Youth Protection Services or ACT Policing with their concern of reportable conduct. Canberra Youth Theatre is a voluntary reporter.

Child Concern Report. Any adult in the ACT may fill out a [Child Concern Report](#) if they believe the child or young person is at risk of harm due to anything outlined as reportable conduct.

Designated Entity is any employer or employee covered by the Mandatory Reporting Scheme. A full list can be found [here](#). Canberra Youth Theatre is not a designated entity.

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Policy

Canberra Youth Theatre is committed to promoting and protecting the safety of children involved in its programs and activities at all times, through the implementation of the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#). (detailed description of [NPCSO](#)). (Canberra specific documentation is available [here](#)).

Canberra Youth Theatre pays attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, children and young people with a disability, and children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and we have Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and Disability Inclusion Action Plan policies in place.

Canberra Youth Theatre acknowledges the extra barriers that are faced by children and young people who may be from these backgrounds. Canberra Youth Theatre is a culturally safe place for all children and young people. Canberra Youth Theatre has zero-tolerance for child abuse of any kind. Everyone (employees, contractors, associates and family members) at Canberra Youth Theatre is responsible for the care and protection of the children and young people within our care and reporting information about suspected abuse of children and young people.

Canberra Youth Theatre respects and supports all children, staff and volunteers. We actively seek children and young people's views on what we do and act upon any concerns raised.

While Canberra Youth Theatre does not have Mandatory Reporting obligations, we are committed to be a Voluntary Reporter if we form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person has experienced abuse or neglect as described in the ACT's Reportable Conduct Schemes. Where Reportable Conduct is involved, an independent investigator may be engaged. Where we have concerns, a Child Concern Report may be filed with Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS). As outlined by ACT Government Community Services (September 2019), "All adults in our community have a responsibility to report to CYPS if they believe or suspect a child may be at risk of abuse or neglect... In addition, all adults in our community must report to the Police if they believe child sexual abuse has occurred."

Where Canberra Youth Theatre is contracted by a designated entity such as a School or Out of School Hours Care, and offers a program such as Workshops by Design, Holiday Workshop or weekly workshop, (ie, not as a hirer at a school), Canberra Youth Theatre is considered an employee of the designated entity. In this instance, the designated entity is a mandatory reporter and would need to report allegations about Canberra Youth Theatre staff, if they were to arise. This will be forwarded directly to ACT Policing and / or to Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS).

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Responsibilities

The Board of Canberra Youth Theatre has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The Board of Canberra Youth Theatre endorses Canberra Youth Theatre's Child Safety Policy.

The Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The Artistic Director / CEO and General Manager of Canberra Youth Theatre is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the Canberra Youth Theatre community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All Staff (administrative, production and Workshop Artists) must ensure that they:

- Promote child safety at all times;
- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate/minimise any risk to the extent possible; and
- Report inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Everyone shares in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and Canberra Youth Theatre's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities. In the ACT, if you suspect a child is at risk of abuse or neglect by a family member or guardian, you can use the [online Child Concern Report form](#) to report your concerns. If your concerns relate to abuse outside of a family context, contact ACT Policing on 131 444 to make your report. If you believe a child is in immediate danger, contact the Police now by calling 000. In the ACT, anyone over 18 years old who reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed against a child must make a report to Police. It is an offence to have reasonable belief and not make a report.
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to the Program Administrator, General Manager or Artistic Director (or if they are involved in the suspicion, to a member of the Board); and
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

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Procedures

Employment of New Personnel

The recruitment and screening process at Canberra Youth Theatre aims to engage staff and volunteers to ensure the safest and most suitable people who share Canberra Youth Theatre's commitment to protect children and young people. This recruitment process prompts and protects the safety of all children and young people under the care of the organisation, by preventing a person from working for Canberra Youth Theatre if they pose a risk to children or young people.

All staff and volunteers at Canberra Youth Theatre must hold a valid Working with Vulnerable People card, or equivalent from other jurisdictions. In the unlikely event that a volunteer does not meet this requirement, there will be a member of staff present at all times during their interaction with young people, in line with the [Working with Vulnerable People \(Background Checking\) Act 2011 \(the WWVP Act\)](#). A copy of the Working With Vulnerable People card is kept on file for every employee.

All staff and volunteers are subject to reference checks prior to engagement at Canberra Youth Theatre. Reference checks include specific questions to ascertain the individual's suitability for working with children.

From January 2021, all new staff and volunteers engaged by Canberra Youth Theatre will be given specific child safety training as part of their induction. This training module will be reviewed yearly, and additional training will be provided to all staff where necessary. Existing staff members will complete this training no later than December 2020.

This training will ensure that all Canberra Youth Theatre staff will have the skillset to:

- Be aware of the warning signs and be open to noticing them.
- Understand the organisational protocols and procedures, know them and use them.
- Provide mutual support between staff members.

Risk Management

Canberra Youth Theatre will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

Canberra Youth Theatre's core staff are committed to identifying and managing risks at Canberra Youth Theatre. Core staff will ensure that all staff receive regular and up to date training in relation to child safety.

High risk situations such as one-on-one rehearsals or overnight stays will be individually assessed by the Core Staff ahead of being undertaken. Protocols will be documented and agreed with participants and their families ahead of time.

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Reporting

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has strong grounds to suspect sexual abuse must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police. They should also advise a core staff member about their concern. Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has reasonable belief to suspect Reportable Conduct must immediately advise a core staff member about their concern.

In situations where a core staff member is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision or the Board.

Core staff members must report complaints of suspected Reportable Conduct to the Artistic Director/CEO. If appropriate, the Artistic Director/CEO will launch an investigation into the concern, or make a Child Concern Report, or contact the police.

Parents and families are encouraged to contact the Program Administrator should they believe any Reportable Conduct has taken place or they suspect abuse. The Program Administrator can be contacted at 02 62485057; programs@canberrayouththeatre.com.au or during office hours 10am - 6pm Monday through Thursday.

The following Investigating and Responding guidelines will be followed regardless of who reports the allegations.

Investigating

If the police, CYPS or an independent investigator engaged by Canberra Youth Theatre for an internal investigation conduct an investigation of this reported Reportable Conduct, all employees, contractors and volunteers must cooperate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted in a fair and reasonable manner. The Core Staff will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the Reportable Conduct warrants additional investigation, the Core Staff will coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and/or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

In certain circumstances, Canberra Youth Theatre may act on the advice of CYPS, and direct children and young people to non-judicial support services such as CYPS, [OneLink](#), or Canberra's [Child and Family Centres](#).

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Responding

If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation's policies or its Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

Privacy

The privacy of the individuals involved in any investigation or incident will be respected unless there is a risk to someone's safety.

Everyone is entitled to know how their personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it. Please see Canberra Youth Theatre's Privacy Policy for more details.

Reviewing

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the organisation's care.

Related Document :

- Canberra Youth Theatre General Policy

Contact Us

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