



Child Safe Policy

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Purpose

To outline The Yarra Voices' expectation and commitment to creating a child safe environment, as well as communicate the organisation's approach to compliance of Victoria's *Child Safe Standards*.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, consultants, volunteers, guest artists and performers engaged by or connected with The Yarra Voices where interactions with Children may occur. Children are connected to the organisation as either participants or audience members. The scope extends to those individuals that may be involved in the collection or management of children's Personal Information or delivery of programs or activity taking place via on-line environments.

Authority

1. For the purposes of following best practice, this policy is informed by:
 - a. [Commission for Children and Young People \(CCYP\)](#)
 - b. [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)
 - i. [Child Safe Organisations – National Principles](#)
 - ii. [About Children's Rights](#)

2. This policy supports the compliance associated with:
 - a. [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005](#)
 - i. [Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment \(Child Safe Standards\) Act 2015](#)
 - ii. [Child Wellbeing and Safety \(Information Sharing\) Regulations 2018](#)
 - iii. [Child Safe Standards \(effective 1 July 2022\)](#)
 - b. [Working With Children Act 2005](#)
 - c. [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#)
 - d. [Wrongs Act 1958](#)
 - e. [Crimes Act 1958](#)
 - f. [Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#)

Policy

1. The Yarra Voices is an inclusive and welcoming environment that supports the safety, participation, empowerment and wellbeing of all children. In particular, the organisation will:
 - a. Treat all children with respect and dignity;
 - b. Promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
 - c. Provide a safe environment in which children with a disability can participate equally; and
 - d. Recognise and adapt to the needs of children and communities.

2. The Yarra Voices has a zero-tolerance approach to the harm and abuse of children and will:
 - a. Communicate its commitment to child safety and wellbeing (refer *Appendix A*);
 - b. Take a proactive, risk-based approach to the prevention of child abuse by identifying, removing and/or reducing risks early.

3. The Yarra Voices is committed to ensuring individuals feel supported to raise safety, welfare and wellbeing concerns of children. In particular, the organisation will:
 - a. Appoint and train Child Safety Officers to assist in complaint making;
 - b. Ensure appropriate child safe information, procedures and practices are accessible, easy to understand, culturally sensitive and child-friendly;
 - c. Treat all allegations and safety concerns relating to child abuse very seriously and respond promptly;
 - d. Adopt the protocols for incident reporting, investigation and management outlined for either Complaints or Crisis Incidents depending on the nature and severity of the breach; and
 - e. Consider engaging third party consultants with requisite expertise to conduct external investigations for complex cases as required.

4. Individuals associated with the organisation must behave ethically and professionally in the company of children and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child harm or abuse. Individuals also have a positive duty to avoid:
 - a. Using language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally insensitive;
 - b. Exploiting or harassing children in anyway;
 - c. Inappropriate or unauthorised physical or on-line contact with children, including via social networking sites;
 - d. Developing special relationships that could be interpreted as favouritism; or
 - e. Isolating children or preventing them from developing friendships contacting their family or support networks.

5. The Yarra Voices will maintain the integrity, security and confidentiality of records relating to Complaints or Crisis Incidents.

6. The Yarra Voices will meet its legislative or external Reporting obligations when handling Complaints which may be contrary to the wishes of the individual making a Complaint if it is required to protect the wellbeing of children or is in the individual's best interest.

7. Any breaches of this policy should be referred to a Child Safety Officer, the Artistic Director or Board Member in the first instance where an initial investigation will occur to determine whether the matter should be resolved internally or requires external investigation.

It should be noted that for employees of the Centre, breaches may constitute serious misconduct under the *PAA* and/or *Fair Work Regulations 2009* or be considered criminal behaviour under the *Crimes Act 1958*. Misconduct will lead to disciplinary action which may involve dismissal or termination of contracts.

For Children, By Children

This part of the Policy was developed with input from the young people of The Yarra Voices' and is written with their ideas, in their own words.

Being Safe Is...

- Having friends and trusted adults around
- Being valued and listened to
- Knowing who you can talk to
- Having personal boundaries respected
- Having the way you identify respected

If You or Someone Else Doesn't Feel Safe...

- Talk to a trusted adult
- Talk to another young person
- Say something, if safe to do so
- Call Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) or Lifeline (13 11 14)

Complaints Process

Reporting

The Yarra Voices is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints, breaches, incidents or safety concerns including 'near misses'. The information will be filed securely and confidentially on the Yarra Voices share drive which is only able to be accessed by the Artistic Director and Board members. Any hard copy incident forms that are completed by Child Safety Officers will be passed onto the Artistic Director who will scan the information, save onto the share drive and destroy the hard copy. Any electronic copy of the incident form should be sent to the Artistic Director for electronic filing on the share drive and then deleted from any personal drives.

Records and information will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint. The Yarra Voices will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This may include finding made, reasons for the decision and action taken.

[Supports Child Safe Standards 2, 7, 11]

Information Sharing

All complaints or incidents will be discussed at the Child Safety Board Sub-Committee meetings to determine the actions required from the organisation. The Yarra Voices may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. The organisation will keep information on complaints and breaches of incidents confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly and fully to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. The organisation may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities in order to comply with the law or prioritise safety. The relevant external authorities we may contact include the Victorian Police or the regulator, Commission for Children and Young People.

[Supports Child Safe Standards 2, 4, 7, 11]

Disciplinary Action

The Yarra Voices will enforce the Child Safe policy and any other procedure or practice that protects child safety and wellbeing. Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action that can range to include one or more of the following controls: removal of access and privileges, increased supervision, suspension, termination or being banned from the organisation.

[Supports Child Safe Standards 2, 7, 11]

Appendix A: Statement of Commitment to Child Safety & Wellbeing

Yarra Voices – Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Yarra Voices is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

Yarra Voices has zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to providing a child safe environment, both in person and online, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural needs of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and participation needs of children with a disability.

Every person involved in Yarra Voices has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

We will ensure that child safety is paramount for all of our decisions and practices including health and safety practices, recruitment practices, the management of volunteers, most importantly the reporting and management of any suspected abuse.

In its planning, decision-making and operations, Yarra Voices will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety by carrying out working with children checks for employees, contractors and volunteers pursuant to the *Working with Children Act 2005* ;
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children;
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Ensure all employees, contractors and volunteers sign the Yarra Voices Child Safety Code of Conduct on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues.