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CHILD SAFE POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

Wonthaggi Theatrical Group Inc (WTG) is committed to promoting and protecting the wellbeing and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

A child includes children and young people 17 years and under.

Everyone involved with WTG is responsible for the safety and welfare of children and for reporting information about child abuse.

All children working with or engaged by WTG deserve to feel safe, nurtured, included, valued and protected from harm. They need to feel confident to share their views and concerns and trust that these will be heard and taken seriously. The culture, practices and priorities of WTG will work together to create and maintain a child safe environment.

WTG has developed this policy in accordance with our legal requirements as identified by the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People (July 2022). This policy ensures WTG fulfils its obligation to do the best it can to keep children safe from harm and abuse, as required by law.

This policy is based on *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation* (CCYP, Version 5.1, April 2023) and is accompanied by the *Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse* template and FlowChart.

If a child is in imminent or immediate danger, call 000 immediately.

One of the greatest risk factors for the harm or abuse of children is the lack of awareness about it among an organisation's staff and volunteers.' – *the Royal Commission*

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

Victorian organisations that provide services or facilities for children are required by law to implement policies mandated by the framework containing the 11 Child Safe Standards to protect children from harm.

Why do we need Child Safe Standards?

Child Safe Standards ensure we have robust policies and practices designed to keep children safe from abuse and harm. WTG works to build a culture in which children's safety is embedded in our everyday thinking and practice.

The Child Safe Standards

There are eleven standards:

Standard 1

Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

Standard 2

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

Standard 3

Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

Standard 4

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

Standard 5

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

Standard 6

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

Standard 7

Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.

Standard 8

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

Standard 9

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

Standard 10

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

Standard 11

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is:

1. to facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within WTG;
 - Physical abuse *through injury or threatening to injure*
 - Emotional abuse *through an attack on a child's self esteem through bullying, threatening, intimidating, ridiculing or isolating a child*
 - Sexual abuse *through any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child*
 - Neglect *harming through failing to provide basic physical or emotional necessities*
2. to continuously work on improving an organisational culture of child safety;
3. to ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs;
4. to provide guidance to the WTG Committee, members, volunteer workers, contractors, sub-contractors and other associated members of the WTG community as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside WTG;
5. to provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.
6. to provide young people avenues to voice concerns or complaints

POLICY

Enabling participation

WTG supports, enables and promotes the active participation of children by:

- encouraging expression of and respecting the views of children
- encouraging and empowering children and parents/legal guardians to raise any concerns or complaints
- listening to and acting upon any concerns raised by children and parents/legal guardians
- seeking the input of children when making decisions about matters that concern them
- teaching children what they can do and who they can turn to if they feel unsafe
- ensuring volunteers dealing with children are skilful in facilitating their participation
- valuing diversity and not tolerating any discriminatory practices.

Enabling satisfaction and enjoyment

WTG strives to create an environment where children gain enjoyment from activities by:

- supporting children to feel respected and in control of their behaviour/work
- ensuring children enjoy the overall experience of being engaged with a production or other WTG activity
- encouraging children to assist each other in fulfilling their role and developing a positive sense of pride in their work
- offering opportunities for children to derive personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement throughout their experience and the relationships they make
- encouraging children to develop self-discipline.

Valuing Diversity

WTG values diversity and does not tolerate any discriminatory practices. WTG is committed to protecting children engaged with our organisation from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse, as well as neglect and contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture, religion, gender (including transgender status), sexual orientation or disability.

In our activities with children we will:

- promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promote the safety of children with a disability
- promote the safety of LGBTI children and young people.

WTG is currently developing a Diversity Policy and all participants in WTG's activities will be expected to understand and comply with the Diversity Policy.

WTG community building practices

WTG will take all reasonable steps to ensure we engage suitable and appropriate people to work with children. This involves maintaining a recruitment, screening and selection process that seeks to ensure child safety and well-being.

It is WTG's policy to:

- develop clear policies, duty statements and job descriptions for roles that involve work with children that state clearly our commitment to providing safe environments for children
- attain and keep a record of Working with Children Checks for anyone with direct and unsupervised contact with children, such as volunteers who will supervise the children or fulfil parent liaison roles
- ensure supervisors and parent liaison coordinators are suitably experienced to care for the safety and well-being of children in accordance with their age and needs.

Support for Parent Liaison coordinators or Supervising Adults

WTG seeks to support volunteer Parent Liaison coordinators and supervising adults by:

- induction to our Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct and other relevant policies and procedures
- appointing a Parent Liaison Coordinator to be the first point of contact to provide advice and support to supervising adults on the safety and well-being of children engaged with WTG
- ensuring child supervising adults feel encouraged and empowered to report any complaints, concerns or perceived risks to child safety to the Parent Liaison Coordinator
- ensuring designated supervising adults of children that are new to the role work with an experienced supervising adult sufficiently before working on productions requiring a single adult supervisor.

Code of Conduct (See Appendix 1)

WTG has developed a 'Code of Conduct' to provide guidance to our volunteers on expected behaviours when in direct contact with or working around children. All WTG volunteers must abide by this Code of Conduct. We will ask relevant volunteers to provide confirmation that they have read, understood and will comply with this Code of Conduct.

Communication

WTG is committed to encouraging volunteers, children and parents/legal guardians to raise any concerns or provide their views on the well-being of children involved with our organisation.

WTG keeps volunteers, parents/legal guardians and children informed of our organisation's child safe policies and procedures by:

- ensuring that volunteers have read, understood, and are aware of their obligations under the Child Safe and Well-being Policy, Code of Conduct (Volunteers and Supervision of Children) and any other relevant policies and procedures
- making relevant documents easily accessible by displaying child safe materials available on our website, distributing documents to relevant individuals and having copies available upon request.

Parents/legal guardians of children cast by WTG as performers, are provided with the contact details of the Parent Liaison Coordinator as well as the supervisor on duty for any particular session who is available to speak with them or to facilitate speaking with their children at any time when they are engaged in WTG activities.

WTG will provide parents/legal guardians and child volunteers with information on:

- the child's expected role, activities, responsibilities and actions during their engagement with WTG
- issues arising in respect of the child's progress during the production process
- timely notice of schedules
- WTG's Child Safe & Well-being Policy, Codes of Conduct and other relevant policies and procedures.

Children are encouraged to communicate and ask questions regarding their engagement with WTG as a volunteer performer.

Complaints and Reporting Procedure

WTG believes volunteers, parents/legal guardians and children should feel enabled, empowered and supported to safely raise any concerns or complaints about any perceived risks to a child's safety or signs of abuse. WTG has developed a procedure to respond to complaints of abuse or conduct not in keeping with this Policy and the Code of Conduct (Volunteers and Supervision of Children), including means to take disciplinary action or address issues when necessary.

Any issues raised about the activities of the Parent Liaison Coordinator should be raised with WTG's President.

These policies include a direction to report any instance of sexual abuse or physical abuse causing injury directly to the police.

Risk Management

WTG takes a preventative and proactive approach to minimising the risk of harm to all its volunteers including children, when they are engaged for a specific production. As part of our organisation's risk management processes, we periodically conduct reviews to identify potential risks to the safety and well-being of all volunteers. This includes having Child Safety as an agenda item at all committee and production meetings.

Implementation and Review Process

A Parent Liaison Coordinator will be appointed for each WTG production involving children 17 years and under as cast members. The Parent Liaison Coordinator will be responsible for being the first (and main) point of contact to provide advice and support to children, parents/legal guardians and

volunteers regarding the safety and well-being of children engaged with the company. Details of the Parent Liaison Coordinator will be notified to children, parents/legal guardians and volunteers including contact details (via phone and email).

This includes being the first point of contact for dealing with any complaint of abuse or conduct not in keeping with this Policy and Code of Conduct (Volunteers and Supervision of Children).

Our Child Safe and Well-being Policy will be reviewed every two years as well as after any reported incident and we will undertake to incorporate feedback from children, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and any other relevant personnel.

PROCEDURES

The WTG Committee 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 Committee is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Code of Conduct are in place.

The WTG Executive Committee is responsible for:

- dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- ensuring that all members, volunteer workers and contractors are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct;
- ensuring that all adults within the WTG community are aware of their obligation to report any concerns, including suspected sexual abuse of a child, in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- ensuring that all members, volunteer workers and contractors are aware of their obligation to observe the Child Safety Policy; and
- providing support for members, volunteer workers and contractors in undertaking their child safe responsibilities.

The Production Team must ensure that they:

- promote child safety at all times;
- assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and seek to mitigate any risk to the extent possible;
- educate team members about the prevention and detection of child abuse;
- facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities;
- inform the Executive immediately of any concerns relating to child safety; and complete the WTG Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse form.

All members, volunteer workers and contractors share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- familiarise themselves with the relevant laws and WTG's policy and procedures in relation to child safety, and comply with all requirements;
- familiarise themselves with the content of our Child Safe Policy and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse;
- report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their Production Manager/Director/Organiser (or, if their Production Manager/Director/Organiser is involved in the suspicion, to a member of the WTG Executive); and
- provide an environment that is supportive of all children and young people's emotional and physical safety as per policy above.

Further, the person must immediately notify their Production Team Manager and complete a WTG Child Safety Incident Report.

The WTG Child Safety Incident Report is to be used by the Production Manager to record the alleged incident.

In situations where the Production Manager/Director/Organiser 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 President of WTG, or a Committee Member.

Production Team Managers must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the President and also to any external regulatory body such as the police as required by the relevant Victorian mandatory/voluntary reporting legislation - Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) and Crimes Act 1958 (Vic).

INVESTIGATING

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all members, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the President will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the President may decide to conduct such an investigation. All members, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

The President will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the alleged abuse warrants additional investigation, the President shall 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.

RESPONDING

If it is alleged that a member, volunteer worker or contractor may have committed an offence or have breached WTG's policies or its Code of Conduct the person concerned will be asked to cease involvement with WTG and any related activities 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, up to and including cessation of involvement with WTG. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety, in accordance with *The Privacy Act 1988*. WTG will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.

Policy Accepted by Committee 7th April 2024

Signed by..... (President)

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Members, volunteers and contractors are required to abide by this Code.

The Committee of Management will be responsible for:

- the overall welfare and wellbeing of members and volunteers including children;
- managing and maintaining a duty of care for children; and young people; and
- providing information and support to all members, volunteers, children, young people and their carers regarding child protection matters.

All people involved in working with children and young people on behalf of WTG will:

- work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organisation;
- comply with specific organisational guidelines on physical contact with children;
- maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities;
- establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
- be fair, considerate and honest with others;
- treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions;
- act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people;
- be professional in their actions;
 - maintain strict impartiality;
 - respect the privacy of children, their families/carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need to know;
 - maintain a child-safe environment for children and young people;
 - operate within the policies and guidelines of WTG; and
 - contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone 000).

No person shall:

- shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people;
- unlawfully discriminate against any child;
- engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves;
- be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time; • develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs; and • show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of WTG's programs and activities;
- photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians;
- work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children; or
- do anything in contravention of the organisation's policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct.

What happens if this Code of Conduct is breached?

The level of behaviour in breaching this Code of Conduct will determine the consequence, ranging from possible cessation of engagement with WTG, to police action.

Appendix 2

WTG CHILD SAFETY INCIDENT REPORT

Reference: WTG Child Safe Policy

Date :

Child :

Parent/Guardian :

Alleged Offender :

Witness/Witnesses :

WTG Team Leader Incident Reported to :

Reported Incident
Allegation

Location of incident(s)

Date and time of incident(s)

Action taken

Incident Report Referred To By Team Leader :

Child's Signature :

Parent/Guardian's Signature :

WTG Team Leader's Signature :