

North Shore Theatre Company  
**Child Safe Policy**

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## **We have zero tolerance for child abuse.**

North Shore Theatre Company is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. Our policy is to guide staff and students on acceptable behaviour when working with children within the North Shore Theatre Company environment.

We empower children and emerging adults through interaction, decision-making, experience, and learning. We encourage children to give voice to their opinions and express their views – including on safety and harm. We listen to children and respect what they have to say and what they are feeling.

North Shore Theatre Company believes that child safety is a whole of community responsibility and is everyone's business. North Shore Theatre Company recognises that all children have a right to feel safe and upholds zero tolerance for child abuse and harassment. We are committed to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where protecting children, and preventing and responding to child abuse, is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of all North Shore Theatre Company committee, contractors, and volunteers.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is:

1. To have an organisational culture of child safety.
2. To proactively prevent child abuse within North Shore Theatre Company
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 the correct 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 NSW Police, and Department of Community Justice, as covered by the Children and Young People Act 2008.

### **Definitions**

1. Child means a person below the age of 12 years.
2. Young Person a person between the ages of 12 and 18 years.
3. Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children and young people from harm.
4. 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.

5. 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 NSW, 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.
6. Committee, staff, member, cast, crew or production teams means someone who is a paid or volunteer member of North Shore Theatre Company. In essence, anyone who is connected to the organisation, working or participating in an activity supported by North Shore Theatre Company
7. 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.
8. 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 a mere rumour or speculation.
9. 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;
  - 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.
10. 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.
11. Any adult in NSW who believes that a child or young person is experiencing harm may complete a report to Child Protection Helpline.
12. Voluntary reporter is any adult in NSW who is not a designated individual or organisation. They may make reports to either the Child Protection Helpline or NSW Police with their concern of reportable conduct.

## **Child Participation**

1. Supporting Children's Participation and Satisfaction

2. North Shore Theatre Company enables and promotes the active participation of children by:
  - a. encouraging expression of and respecting the views of children and parents/ carers/ legal guardians
  - b. encouraging and empowering children and parents/ carers / legal guardians to raise any concerns or complaints
  - c. listening to and acting upon any concerns raised by children and parents, carers or legal guardians
  - d. seeking the input of children when making decisions about matters that concern them
  - e. ensuring children understand their rights and the appropriate behaviour expected of both adults and children
  - f. teaching children what they can do and who they can turn to if they feel unsafe
  - g. ensuring employees dealing with children are skilful in facilitating their participation
  - h. valuing diversity and not tolerating any discriminatory practices.
  
3. North Shore Theatre Company aims to create an environment where children gain satisfaction from their interaction with our organisation as audience members, participants in a class/program/workshop/ creative development, or other activity by:
  - a. supporting children to feel respected and in control of their behaviour/work/experience
  - b. ensuring children enjoy the overall experience of being engaged with a production or other organisational activity
  - c. encouraging children to assist each other in fulfilling their participation obligations and developing a positive sense of pride in their work/activity/engagement (e.g. discussing character development and stagecraft in groups and leading warmup activities)
  - d. offering opportunities for children to derive personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement throughout their experience and the relationships they make
  - e. encouraging children to develop self-discipline in balancing their commitment to their performance, their education and their social and family activities.

### **Valuing Diversity**

1. North Shore Theatre Company values diversity and we do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.
2. Our organisation 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.
3. In our activities with children we will:
  - a. promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Indigenous children
  - b. promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds

## **Recruitment**

1. Productions will be classified in two categories.
  - a. Productions with a minimum cast age of 18 (adults) at the commencement of rehearsals.
  - b. Productions with children.
2. No children will be permitted to participate in any aspect of a production with a minimum cast age of 18. This is not negotiable.
3. Productions with children; All parties involved (cast, crew and production teams) must provide a valid Working With Children Check (volunteer) number prior to the commencement of the rehearsals which will be verified by the committee.
4. Chaperones will be appointed as part of the Production Team for productions with children.

## **Training and Support for Members**

1. North Shore Theatre Company seeks to support the committee, contractors, cast, crew, production teams and other associated parties by:
  - a. Inducting new employees to our Child Safe Environments Policy, Code of Conduct and other relevant policies and procedures
  - b. encouraging relevant members to attend periodical information sessions to remain up-to-date with knowledge of child protection, nature and signs of child abuse, cultural competency, regulation updates and other matters that affect children
  - c. Provide updates on Child Safe Environment Policy at committee meetings
  - d. appointing a Child Safety Officer to be the first point of contact to provide advice and support to North Shore Theatre Company members on the safety and well-being of children engaged with the organisation.
  - e. d) ensuring employees feel encouraged and empowered to report any complaints, concerns or perceived risks to child safety to the Child Safety Officer, president or any member of the production team or committee.

## **Photographing of Children**

These protocols are for the taking and publishing of (in print or online) photos of children and young people up to 18 years of age.

1. North Shore Theatre Company aims to protect the safety and privacy of child participants (audience members, workshop participants, etc) by:
  - a. obtaining informed consent from a parent (including carers or legal guardians) and child (if 15 years of age or older) for the use of images of child participants and audience members.
  - b. Consent will be sought prior to taking or publishing images for special projects such as Artist in Residence programs. Signed consent forms will be sought from parents/carers/legal guardians and we will provide details on how and where the images will be published, and if images will contain identifying or personal information about the child.
  - c. Images containing identifying or personal information will be avoided where possible.

- d. all documentarians or photographers must have a relevant Working with Children Check
  - e. providing details to parents, carers and legal guardians about who to contact if they have concerns or complaints regarding the use of inappropriate images or inappropriate behaviour in taking or publishing images.
2. ***The North Shore Theatre Company appointed photographer will under no circumstances be alone with children.*** The photographer must have another member of the committee, production team or chaperone present.

## **Communication**

1. North Shore Theatre Company is committed to being responsive to concerns raised by production team members, cast, crew, committee, children, and parents/legal guardians and seeking to resolve issues to the satisfaction of all parties inline with the Child Protection Act 2008.
2. North Shore Theatre Company keeps all members,, parents (including carers or legal guardians) and children informed of our organisation's child safe policies and procedures by:
  - a. ensuring that all committee members, cast, crew, production teams, volunteers, parents and guardians have read, understood, and are aware of their obligation under the Child Safe Environments Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct, and any other relevant policies and procedures.
  - b. ***All members participating in a production with children will be required to have a copy of this document and provide a signed read receipt.***
  - c. making relevant documents easily accessible by displaying child safe materials in areas of common traffic, uploading relevant documents to our website, distributing documents to all relevant individuals, and having copies available upon request
  - d. providing children and parents (including carers and legal guardians) with relevant Plain English child safe materials.

## **Complaints Management and Reporting**

1. We believe all members, parents (including carers or 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.
2. Complaints must be made to any member of the committee or production team and/or the NSW Police.
3. The complaint will be immediately advised to the president who will promptly complete a report to the Child Protection Helpline.