



## **Purpose**

This policy outlines our commitment to the safety of children who work or interact with Young Voices of Hobart Inc.

## **Policy Statement**

This policy is endorsed by the Board and Musical Director of Young Voices of Hobart Inc (YVH).

All children working or engaging with YVH have a right to feel and be safe, respected, valued and protected from harm. We are strongly committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children who interact with our organisation as choir members, employees, volunteers, or in any other capacity.

In this policy, the definition of 'child' includes any person who is under the age of eighteen years.

## **Legislative and Policy Framework**

This policy reflects the intentions and principles of the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023* (Tasmania). Reference material for this policy includes resources issued by the Tasmanian Government and Live Performance Australia in 2023 to support the new legislation.

## **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations**

Australia's National Principles for Child Safe Organisations provide a consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing and help keep children safe from harm in organisational settings. We strive to be a Child Safe organisation by operating in accordance with the National Principles, which are as follows:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

## **Aboriginal Cultural Safety**

Aboriginal Cultural Safety is a universal principle which applies across all of the National Principles listed above. In the context of this particular policy, we acknowledge the right to Cultural Safety for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children. We strive to ensure that there is no assault, challenge or denial of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person's identity, of who they are and of what they need. We also recognise, respect and nurture the unique cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## **Supporting Children's Participation**

Regardless of the way in which a child engages with our organisation, we strive to support, enable and promote their active participation and enjoyment by:

- encouraging expression by and respecting the views of children and their parents, guardians and carers;
- encouraging and empowering children to raise concerns, and acting on those concerns;
- ensuring children understand their rights and the appropriate behaviour expected of them and any accompanying adults;
- ensuring that employees dealing with children are appropriately skilled and qualified;
- valuing diversity and not tolerating any discriminatory practices or behaviours; and
- ensuring that children enjoy the overall experience of being engaged with a production or other professional or recreational activity.

We are committed to protecting children engaged with our organisation from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse, as well as neglect and contempt, ridicule, hatred, or any negativity towards a child because of their age, cultural background, religion, gender (including transgender status), sexual orientation or disability.

## **Adult Employee, Contractor and Volunteer Responsibilities**

When engaging with children, it is the responsibility of adult YVH employees, contractors and volunteers to ensure the following:

- If registration under the *Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013* is stated in a position description as a requirement, or is deemed by the YVH Board to be necessary, this registration will be obtained prior to working with any children.
- A child must not be left unsupervised at YVH rehearsals or events, or following a rehearsal/event while waiting for a parent/guardian/carer to collect them.
- Photos and videos of a child may only be taken with the child's explicit permission if the child is more than fifteen years of age. For children aged under fifteen years, permission must be given by the child's parent or legal guardian.
- Tobacco products must not be used in the vicinity of children. Under no circumstances may a child be offered tobacco, alcohol or any drugs (illegal or otherwise).

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- Unless there is a family or other personal connection beyond the context of a child’s interaction with YVH (a connection which is known to a child’s parent or legal guardian), adult employees, contractors and volunteers must not:
  - have personal contact with children by phone or email (unless in the explicit and authorised conduct of YVH activities or business);
  - accept children as personal friends or invite them to be personal contacts or followers on social media; or
  - engage in online gaming with children.
- Relationships must remain professional and specifically related to the adult’s role and responsibilities within YVH. Personal information should not be shared with (or invited to be shared by) children, friendships or ‘special relationships’ should not be sought or encouraged, and advice or guidance about personal matters should never be given to a child.
- Any adult who is meeting or otherwise talking with a child must do so in an area which is visible to and easily accessed by others (i.e. leave the door open, or meet in an open space such as a foyer).
- Adults are not permitted to enter children’s dressing rooms or changing areas when children are present, unless specifically authorised and directed to do so, and children are not allowed to enter dressing rooms or change areas allocated to adults.

### **Child-Safe Reporting and Child-Focused Investigations**

Children have the right to speak up, in a safe and supported way, in a variety of situations. As an organisation we value the presence, participation and engagement of children, and it is important that we listen to and act upon their concerns and complaints in a way that is meaningful to them.

The principles of a child-safe reporting process prioritise the rights and needs of children. The following principles apply:

- A child making a disclosure or allegation is always to be believed.
- The best interests of children are paramount.
- Complaint handling and reporting systems are accessible and recognise the diverse needs of children and their families.
- Complaints and allegations are dealt with thoroughly and promptly.

A complaint or concern raised by a child must be investigated by a person who is considered by the Musical Director or a Board member to have appropriate and relevant skills and abilities to ensure a child-focused investigation and response.

A child is not required to put a complaint in writing for it to be taken seriously – if a child even verbally discloses a complaint or allegation of the nature described in this policy, action must be taken by anyone receiving this information. For any child who wishes to submit a report more formally, we have a separate ‘Complaint form for children’ which is attached to this policy (see Attachment A). Even if a child chooses not to complete a complaint form, the person receiving a complaint from a child may find the document useful in documenting the issue and making sure the right information is obtained.

Detailed information, fact sheets and other tools to guide child-focused investigation processes are available from the Office of the Independent Regulator website (see 'Relevant Documents and Resources' section of this policy).

### **Reportable Conduct Scheme**

The Tasmanian Government's Reportable Conduct Scheme aims to create a culture where organisations that engage with children and young people investigate concerns about their wellbeing in a thorough, transparent, safe and child-centred way. 'Reportable conduct' involving children includes both criminal and non-criminal behaviour. In broad terms, reportable conduct includes:

- Significant emotional or psychological harm;
- Significant neglect;
- Physical violence;
- A sexual offence;
- Sexual misconduct;
- Grooming; and
- Relevant offences such as failing to report child abuse.

More information regarding these types of conduct is available at the Department of Justice website (see 'Relevant Documents and Resources' section of this policy).

Reportable conduct includes historical allegations.

### **Ensuring Reportable Conduct Allegations are Reported and Investigated**

Anyone who is made aware of any reportable conduct by, or a reportable allegation/concern against any YVH employee, contractor, Board member or volunteer, must ensure that any child who may be affected by the allegation is currently safe. Any immediate (perceived, potential or actual) risk to a child's safety must be addressed immediately. Tasmania Police may be called without hesitation if assistance is required in this regard.

The reportable allegation/conduct/concern must be reported immediately to the Musical Director. If the Musical Director is unavailable, or named in an allegation, the allegation or incident must be reported to the Chairperson of the YVH Board.

If the reportable allegation involves suspected criminal behaviour, the Musical Director (or Board Chairperson – see above) must inform Tasmania Police as soon as possible.

For all reportable allegations (including those already referred to Tasmania Police), the Musical Director or Board Chairperson is responsible for ensuring that the concern is reported in writing within three business days to the Tasmanian Government Office of the Independent Regulator (OIR – see [www.oir.tas.gov.au/home](http://www.oir.tas.gov.au/home) for contact information, online reporting forms and relevant procedures). Assistance may be obtained from YVH Board members to complete relevant documentation.

The Musical Director or Board Chairperson will communicate with the OIR to ensure an appropriate investigation takes place (see 'Child-Focused Investigations' section below), and will follow any instructions or advice provided by the OIR in this regard. The Musical Director and YVH Board are ultimately responsible for ensuring an appropriate and thorough investigation occurs though they may delegate responsibility for conducting the investigation itself. The OIR must be notified of the outcomes of the investigation in accordance with specific timeframe and information requirements (see the OIR website for details).

Reporting a matter to the OIR ensures that an appropriate investigative process is followed and does not imply that there will be any particular outcome from an allegation.

Anyone who is aware of a reported incident or allegation, whether or not they are involved in an investigation, must treat relevant information as strictly confidential, other than reporting the matter as outlined above.

### **'Non-Reportable' Complaints**

A child may report an allegation or make a complaint about matters which are not considered 'reportable conduct' under this Child Safety policy – examples include matters such as general rehearsing/performing conditions, or operational health and safety issues. These issues must still be taken seriously in accordance with Child Safe reporting principles, and a child-focused complaint handling and investigation process must be followed, however they do not require the involvement of the OIR.

### **Attachments:**

#### *A: Complaint Form for Children*

This document must be easy to find on the YVH website, so that any child wishing to lodge a complaint may do so without first having to approach an adult at YVH.

### **Relevant Documents and Resources**

- *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023* (Tasmania)
- *Introducing Tasmania's Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework* (Tasmanian Department of Justice, 2023)
- *Live Performance Australia Guide: Child Safety in the Live Performance Industry* (revised October 2023), available via [www.liveperformance.com.au](http://www.liveperformance.com.au)
- Department of Justice website – [www.justice.tas.gov.au/cysof](http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/cysof)
- Tasmanian Office of the Independent Regulator website – [www.oir.tas.gov.au/home](http://www.oir.tas.gov.au/home).
- *Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people* (Australian Government National Office for Child Safety) – [www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/complaint-handling-guide-upholding-rights-children-and-young-people](http://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/complaint-handling-guide-upholding-rights-children-and-young-people)
- *Child-centred Complaints Handling: Best Practices Guide* (CREATE Foundation) – [www.create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Best-Practice-Guide-Complaints-Updated.pdf](http://www.create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Best-Practice-Guide-Complaints-Updated.pdf)

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed at a minimum of once every 12 months. The YVH Board is responsible for monitoring and reviewing this policy.



**Attachment A: Complaint Form for Children**

A complaint form is a way of letting us know you are unhappy about something. After you fill in this form, we will listen to you and your problem and work on a solution. If you'd rather talk to someone straight away, please ask to see an adult who works with YVH.

You can ask a family member or another trusted adult (including someone from YVH) to help you with this form. When you've completed the form, you can give it to an adult who works for YVH. If you'd rather not give it to someone at YVH in person, you can send it to either of the following people:

- Aaron Powell (YVH Musical Director), email aaron@youngvoiceshobart.com.au
- Jane Christie-Johnston, Chair of the YVH Board, email janeyvh@tadaa.com.au.

**Your name and contact details:**

*You can make a complaint without giving this information, but it's easier for us to help you if we can contact you.*

Your first name:	
Your family name (surname):	
Phone number:	
Email:	
Address:	
How would you like us to contact you? <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> In writing to your address	

**Tell us about your concern.**

*A 'concern' is something that might be making you or someone else feel unhappy, frightened, uncomfortable or angry. You can write it down, draw a picture, or both. If you need more space, you can use the back of this page or another piece of paper. If you'd rather talk to someone, you can talk to any of the adults who work at YVH.*

**What would make the problem better?**

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. We know that it might feel difficult or uncomfortable to make a complaint.

An adult from YVH will contact you to talk about your complaint (we'll make sure you have a parent, carer or other support person with you), and we'll do our best to find a way to make this problem better for you.

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**Details of person receiving this form**

*Someone from YVH will fill in this section when they get this form.*

Name:	
Position/role:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Date form received:	

***If the person receiving this form is not a Young Voices of Hobart Inc employee, contractor, volunteer or Board member, please ensure this form is delivered confidentially to the YVH Musical Director or Board Chairperson immediately.***