

Child Safe Policy

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1. Polyglot Theatre – A Child Safe Organisation

Polyglot Theatre is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and recognises their role as vital and active participants in the organisation. We involve children when making decisions; as collaborators, instigators and audience. Our work exists to give children the power to be in control. Polyglot encourages children to express their views on safety and harm, and in turn we listen and respect what they have to say, especially about matters that directly affect them. Polyglot recognises that all children have a right to feel safe and upholds zero tolerance for child abuse.

Polyglot Theatre is committed to:

- Promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We believe in the power of the arts to transform children's lives, fuelling imagination, ambition and creativity in a safe and supportive environment.
- Creating an organisational culture of child safety by ensuring robust practices and policies that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers in keeping children safe.
- Ensuring all safety concerns and allegations of suspected child abuse are treated seriously and are guided by our legal and moral obligations.
- Welcoming all children, their families and carers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and we provide a safe and secure environment for children with disabilities.

Polyglot Theatre will not hesitate to take action to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and cultural harm. We also support the rights and wellbeing of staff, contractors and volunteers and encourage their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all children involved in Polyglot's activities.

2. A Culture of Safety

Polyglot Theatre understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all children, staff, Board of Management, contractors, volunteers and parents to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegation of child abuse or safety concerns.

- We train our staff, contractors and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.
- We follow child safe processes when recruiting staff, contractors and volunteers. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and actively encourage applications from Aboriginal people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with disability.

We ensure prospective employees have a current Working with Children Check, and if necessary, a Police Check. We request at least three referees who will be asked about the applicant's suitability to work with children, and implement an orientation and training program to maintain appropriate child safety support for staff.

- Polyglot's Child Safety Officers are responsible for communicating and maintaining knowledge of our child safety policy and procedures within the organisation. All allegations of suspected child abuse are reported to Polyglot Theatre's Child Safety Officers, Kath Fyffe and Sue Giles, to ensure the allegation is reported to the police or Commission for Children and Young People.
- All employees and volunteers are required to sign the company's Code of Conduct and participate in ongoing training that outlines appropriate behaviour, company processes and legislative responsibilities.

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to the company's personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action are always thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

3. Allegations, Concerns and Complaints

Polyglot Theatre takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe or experience abuse or notice inappropriate behaviour.

The best interests of the child is the primary consideration in all actions and decisions relating to children.

If an adult has a *reasonable belief* that an incident has occurred, then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- A child states that they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour.

4. Legislative Responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** all adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police

- **Failure to protect:** people of authority in our organisation who know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power to reduce or remove the risk, have a responsibility to do so. Negligent failure to do so is an offence.

In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, Polyglot Theatre proactively takes steps to assess and minimise child abuse risks. Where possible, we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with disability when reviewing this policy every two years.

5. Related documents

Workers, especially managers and supervisors, are encouraged to read this policy in conjunction with other relevant policies, procedures, documents and agreements of Polyglot Theatre, including, but not limited to:

- Complaint handling and investigation procedure: workplace discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and bullying
- Code of Conduct: workplace discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and bullying
- Parental leave policy
- Work health and safety policy
- Mission, vision and values statements
- Employment contract

6. External resources

- **Commission for Children and Young People**
 - Ph: 1300 78 29 78
 - <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au>
 - childsaf@ccyp.vic.gov.au

7. Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
Complaint	A formal allegation against a party.
Complaints Person	Complaints Persons are responsible for investigating all complaints of workplace discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and bullying, including by conducting interviews with workers and providing advice to the relevant leadership and management personnel on the outcome of the complaint and any disciplinary measures in response to a complaint.
Contact Person(s)	Contact Persons are workers who have been trained to provide confidential and impartial information and support to help workers make an informed decision about how to try to resolve an issue.

Criminal offence	Any criminal act committed against another person including physical assault, sexual assault, stalking, breach of an intervention order (or equivalent) or cybercrime, which is where a carriage service is used to menace, harass or cause offence. This can include conduct that occurs over the phone, in text messages or online.
Discrimination	<p>Discrimination is treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic protected by law, such as sex, age, race or disability. Protected personal characteristics under federal discrimination law include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A disability, disease or injury, including work-related injury • Parental status or status as a carer • Race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic background • Age • Gender and gender identity • Sexual orientation • Industrial activity • Religion • Pregnancy and breastfeeding • Marital status • Political opinion • Social origin • Medical records; or • Associating with someone who has, or is assumed to have, one of these characteristics, such as being the parent of a child with a disability.
Harassment	<p>Harassment is unwelcome and unsolicited behaviour that a reasonable person would consider to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening. Harassment can be physical, spoken or written. It can include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimidation, verbal abuse, repeated threats or ridicule. • Sending offensive messages by text, email or other means. • Derogatory comments. • Displaying offensive materials, pictures, comments or objects. • Ridiculing someone because of their accent or English-speaking ability. • Telling offensive jokes or making practical jokes based on a protected characteristic.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belittling or teasing someone based on a protected characteristic. • Isolating, segregating or humiliating someone based on a protected characteristic.
Incident report	<p>An incident report is a record of essential information about the incident, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time, date, location of the alleged incident • Nature of the alleged incident • The people involved • What action was taken to resolve the alleged incident • Why no further action was considered necessary; and • That the matter was not investigated and no findings were made in relation to the alleged conduct.
Privacy	<p>Privacy includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information privacy, which involves the establishment of rules governing the collection and handling of personal data such as credit information, and medical and government records. It is also known as 'data protection'. • Bodily privacy, which concerns the protection of people's physical selves against invasive procedures such as genetic tests, drug testing and cavity searches. • Privacy of communication, which covers the security and privacy of mail, telephones, e-mail and all other forms of communication. • Territorial privacy, which concerns the setting of limits on intrusion into the domestic and other environments such as the workplace or public space. This includes searches, video surveillance and ID checks.
Support Person	<p>A support person's role is to provide emotional support; they should not act as an advocate or speak for the participant. A support person is required to keep all details of the complaint and investigation confidential. They can be another worker, a friend, family member or union representative.</p>
Victimisation	<p>Victimisation is subjecting or threatening to subject someone to a detriment because they have asserted their rights under equal opportunity law, made a complaint, helped someone else make a complaint, or refused to do something because it would be discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or bullying. It is also victimisation to threaten someone (such as a witness) who may be involved in an investigation of a complaint.</p>

Vilification	Vilification is behaviour that incites hatred, serious contempt for, or revulsion or severe ridicule of a person or group of people because of their race, religion, sexuality or gender.
Workers	<p>Polyglot Theatre defines workers as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members. • Leadership and management personnel e.g. producers, promoters, CEOs, executive directors, artistic directors, general managers, company managers, managers, supervisors, etc. • Production and venue personnel e.g. artists, actors, dancers, directors, choreographers, writers, stage management, chaperones, technical crew, front of house, etc. • Full-time, part-time, season and casual employees. • Job candidates, including people auditioning for roles. • student placements, apprentices, work experience students/interns • Contractors, sub-contractors and secondees. • Volunteers and anyone working in an unpaid capacity.

8. Review details

This policy was last updated on 27 February 2020.