

Child Safe Policy

January 2025

Policy title	Child Safe Policy
Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to outline to members, volunteers, suppliers, patrons and other relevant stakeholders the framework The Society has adopted for the safety of children within our organisation. The Policy is guided by the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. The policy aims to: • demonstrate The Society’s commitment to the safety and welfare of children and young people • minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct and misuse of positional power • inform all members and volunteers of their obligations and responsibilities in keeping children safe.
Our Commitment to Child Safety	We are committed to embedding child safety, in accordance with the <i>Children’s Guardian Act 2019</i> (NSW) in our organisation. We acknowledge the safety of all children is the responsibility of the whole community. The welfare of minors in our care when participating in the operation of The Society is of the highest priority and we have zero tolerance towards any form of neglect or abuse. We are committed to creating and maintaining a child safe and child friendly organisation where all minors feel valued and protected. We want them and their parent/guardian to know that we will listen to them respectfully and advocate for their right to feel safe. We undertake to communicate with adults involved in The Society the expectations around creating, maintaining and improving a safe environment for children and young people The Society, has since its inception, been welcoming and inclusive of family groups including children and we wish to continue to be an organisation reflective of inclusive and safe practices.

Definitions

The Society – means the Engadine Musical Society Incorporated

Management Committee – means the Management Committee of the Society

Working With Children Check (WWC) – means a system governed by The NSW Office of Children's Guardian.

Child/Young Person (CYP) or Child or Children - means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Adult - means a person aged 18 years or over.

Child Abuse means:

a. Physical Abuse is when a person subjects a Child/Young Person to application of physical force, which may cause injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a Child/Young Person. Physically abusive behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- i. shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, kicking; and
- ii. harmful training methods or overtraining where there is the potential to result in damage to a Child/Young Person's physical development.

b. Emotional Abuse occurs when a Child/Young Person does not receive the love, affection, or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological, and social development or are exposed to violence/abuse against other Children/Young People or Adults. Such abuse may involve:

- i. repeated rejection or threats to a Child/Young Person (either in-person or online);
- ii. constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule, intentional exclusion, continual coldness, and rejection (either in- person or online);
- iii. Bullying and Harassment (either in-person or online);
- iv. threats to physically harm or hurt a Child/Young Person (either in-person or online); and
- v. harmful training methods or overtraining where there is the potential to result in damage to a Child/Young Person's physical, intellectual, or emotional wellbeing and development.

c. Sexual Abuse occurs when an Adult, or a person in authority (i.e., older, or younger but more physically or intellectually developed) involves a Child/Young Person in any sexual activity.

Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority, or position over the Child/Young Person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a Child/Young Person, kissing, touching a Child/Young Person's genitals or breasts, oral sex, or intercourse with a Child/Young Person.

d. Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate failure or denial to meet a Child/Young Person's basic needs. Neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, medical attention, or supervision to the extent that the Child/Young Person's health and development is or is likely to be harmed. Types of Neglect include physical, medical, emotional, educational neglect and abandonment.

e. Exposure to Family and Domestic Violence refers to abusive behaviour in any personal relationship that allows one person to intimidate, or to gain power and control over the other. This is often thought of to occur between married spouses or in other intimate relationships, but actually refers to any family relationship, or persons living in the same home.

Scope and audience	This policy applies to any adult person (over the age of 18) engaged by Engadine Musical Society that may work, volunteer or interact with children at any time including but not limited to: • Committee members • Cast • People in leadership roles such as production team; including but not limited to Director, Musical Director, Choreographer, Assistants to the Production Team, Costume Coordinators, Stage Manager etc • Volunteers both in front and back of house roles • Contractors and their sub-contractors including but not limited to lighting and sound technicians, orchestra • Work experience students /interns/ secondments • Families; parents and carers and extended family members • Relevant government agencies. • Other relevant stakeholders.
Valuing Diversity	The Society values diversity and we do not tolerate any discriminatory practices. 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. In our activities with children we will: • promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children • 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
Commitment to Child Safety	All children working with or engaged by The Society have the right to feel and be safe, respected, valued and protected from harm. Children should be made aware of and feel confident in their rights and responsibilities. The Society is strongly committed to the safety and well-being of all children that interact with our organisation as employees, audience members, education program participants or otherwise by creating and maintaining a child safe environment. The welfare of children entrusted under our care is our first priority and we have zero tolerance for child abuse. The Society will take all necessary steps to prevent and protect children from abuse and neglect including: • <i>Physical abuse</i>: purposefully injuring or threatening to injure a child • <i>Emotional abuse</i>: an attack on a child's self-esteem e.g. through bullying, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child • <i>Sexual abuse</i>: any sexual act or sexual threat imposed upon a child • <i>Neglect</i>: harming a child by failing to provide basic physical or emotional necessities.

**Supporting
Children's
Participation
and
Satisfaction**

The Society supports, enables and promotes the **active participation** of children by:

- encouraging expression of and respecting the views of children and parents (including carers or legal guardians)
- encouraging and empowering children and parents to raise any concerns or complaints
- listening to and acting upon any concerns raised by children and parents, carers or legal guardians
- seeking the input of children when making decisions about matters that concern them
- ensuring children understand their rights and the appropriate behaviour expected of both adults and children
- teaching children what they can do and who they can turn to if they feel unsafe
- valuing diversity and not tolerating any discriminatory practices.

The Society aims to create an environment where children gain **satisfaction** from their interaction with our organisation and participate in our productions by:

- supporting children to feel respected and in control of their performance
 - ensuring children enjoy the overall experience of being engaged with a production or other organisational activity encouraging children and developing a positive sense of pride in their work (e.g. discussing character development and stagecraft in groups and leading warmup activities)
 - 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 in balancing their commitment to their performance, their education and their social and family activities.
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Responsibilities	The Society considers it is the responsibility of all members to be responsible and respectful of child safety. Specifically, the Management Committee will oversee the administration of Working with Children Checks for all adults involved in the Society. The NSW Working With Children Check (WWCC or WWC Check) In the interests of best-practice governance and leadership, and to ensure the highest possible child safety standards, The Society requires all Committee members to hold a valid WWC Check. Where a volunteer or contractor is engaged in a child-related role is responsible for a child or a group of children, their behaviour is governed by Engadine Musical Society Child Safe Policy to ensure children are treated with care and respect and that all reasonable action is taken to protect them against harm. The following roles within The Society are considered child-related roles and require a WWC Check under the <i>Child Protection Act</i>: • All creative and technical crew contracted to work on The Society productions - including but not limited to Director, Musical Director, Choreographer, Assistants. • Contractors and their sub-contractors including but not limited to Lighting and Sound technicians and orchestra members The following roles are not child-related roles or fall under an exemption and do not require a WWC Check. However, in the interests of best-practice governance and leadership, and to ensure the highest possible child safety standards The Society requires the following stakeholders to also hold a valid WWC Check: • Committee members • Cast aged over 18 years regardless of whether children are cast in the production • All volunteers in both front and back of house roles • All parents of cast members aged under 18 years
Supervision of children	The Society will appropriately supervise all children in our care whilst a production is underway during rehearsals and performances. We welcome all parents and caregivers to attend rehearsals. We maintain a register of contractors and volunteers able to be engaged in Child Related Roles. All children must be collected by parent(s) or parent(s) must inform the Society of any alternative arrangements if they are going to be late. The Society will ensure a Committee Member remains to supervise a child if the parent/ caregiver is unexpectedly detained. No members or other volunteers, other than designated supervisors, should be alone with children (under 18 years) at any time, and if by chance any children are found unsupervised, volunteers should direct and accompany children to Committee member. A supervisor's responsibility should be the safety and well-being of the children they have been assigned to supervise (e.g. a member of stage management that is appropriately credited and temporarily supervising children should not be undertaking any other duties while supervising). Supervisors are expected to build a mutually respectful, professional relationship with all children in their care.

Acceptable Conduct	The following practices are NOT acceptable with or in front of children. No person (minor or adult) should ever: • Engage in rough play, physical or sexually provocative activity. • Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching. • Use inappropriate language or swearing. • Make sexually suggestive comments to a minor or to other adults. • Bully a minor, threaten, intimidate or reduce them to tears, as a form of control or humiliation. • Engage in inappropriate photography, messaging, exposure to pornography or nudity. • Allow allegations made by a minor to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not be acted upon. • Do things of a personal nature for children, that they can do for themselves. • Engage in any illegal drug/alcohol use with minors or be under the influence of any drugs/alcohol when around minors • Change room supervision will be provided to all children by a suitably vetted adult typically a parent or a suitable volunteer with a Working With Children Check. • Inappropriately touch a child that may be ill or injured.
Social Media use	The Society is committed to protecting the privacy of children involved in our activities. The Society does not record, share or publish images, video or any other media depicting children engaged in our activities on any platform without written consent from appropriate parents/guardians either in the form of a release or other similar consent. This ensures that images are not recorded of children who may be involved in child protection, family court or criminal proceedings.
Photography and the use of images	As a producer of theatre which includes young people The Society regularly engages young people in diverse roles including, but not limited to, performers, crew and front of house roles. Where a young person is engaged by the Society to participate in a performance, marketing or fundraising event or any other activity the Society will obtain permission from appropriate parents/guardians. Regarding the personal use of phone cameras, videos or other, we discourage individuals taking footage of minors, without the parent/guardian's express permission. The Society will ensure photographers are not left unsupervised with children or have individual access to children.
Record Keeping	As required by the Office of NSW Children's Guardian, The Society collects the following information for the purposes of verifying WWC Checks, and retains this information for 7 years: • Full name of person being checked, • Date of birth of person being checked, • WWC Check number or current application number for an appropriate clearance, • WWC Check expiry date. Barred Workers If the Society becomes aware that a contractor or volunteer in a child-related role has received a bar or interim bar from working with children, they will be immediately relieved of all child-related duties and may not engage in child-related work for the duration of their suspension.

Exposure to Adult Themes	The Society, has since its inception in 1976, been welcoming and inclusive of family groups as both performers and audiences including children and we wish to continue to be an organisation reflective of inclusive and safe practices. Child performers (under 18 years) will not be placed in a situation that exposes them to inappropriate behaviour or language for their age level. This includes: • 'adult' talk (e.g. overtly sexual), • smoking of any substance or drinking of alcohol (except as required in the performance following a conversation with the child about the use of adult language, substances or alcohol for dramatic purpose) • harassment, humiliating or demeaning behaviour • aggressive, threatening or uncontrolled behaviour • inappropriate influence in regard to opinions, beliefs, behaviour or conduct. It is important that the production child performers partake in, and the performance required of them, is not overtly dangerous, distressful, or inappropriate in any way, with regard to the child's age, culture, religion, maturity, emotional or psychological development and sensitivity. If, due to the dramatic context of the production and are required to present licensed work as scripted, children are involved in a production containing potentially distressing, controversial or negatively influential material or themes, The Society will discuss this with the child's parent/s, carer/s or legal guardian/s at the beginning of the rehearsal process and seek their consent. All relevant details will be clearly explained to children and parents, carers or legal guardians, and all efforts will be made to minimise a child's exposure to potentially upsetting material.
Auditions and casting of Minors	The Society aims to ensure the casting and audition process for child performers (under 18 years) is a safe and positive experience. • Informing parents (including carers or legal guardians) in the audition notice of relevant production details, casting requirements, and how any concerning issues will be managed including: • Details regarding choreography, content, and involvement of potentially frightening or confusing elements (e.g. adult themes, etc) • Point of contact (e.g., relevant Committee management, Child Safety Officer) • Allowing children to meet the Production team and Committee Management team in a friendly and unthreatening environment • Having auditions conducted by appropriately experienced and screened volunteers • Providing a positive audition experience for children to assist them to build their confidence.

Reporting Procedures	Our Complaints Procedures Document outlines the organisational procedures for minors and adults to raise concerns or complaints. It is not the responsibility of anyone working with/for The Society to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child neglect or abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns, through contact with the appropriate authorities. The Society assures members that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports concerns of neglect or abuse. - Any person who has a child safety concern or complaint should report their concerns directly to the relevant Child Safety Contact, who will liaise with the Society's Child Safety Officer (Secretary). - We will refer to any relevant bodies, which may include the Department of Family and Community Services, the NSW Ombudsman, NSW Police and the Office of the Children's Guardian. - Any complaints made are accepted and addressed in confidence, with respect to both parties involved.
Publication	This policy will be made available to all stakeholders including but not limited to: The policy will be publicised on: - Our social media platforms - Our website - Noticeboards at our venues - Newsletters - Welcome information to new members
Review	The Society reviews and updates all procedures and policies annually and adjusts as regulatory issues arise. This policy and its guidelines will be reviewed and incorporate comments and suggestions from a range of our stakeholders (minors and adults). Date of Policy Implementation: January 2025 Version: 3 Written By: Meredith Lavery, Secretary and Public Officer (reviewed by members and committee)

Related legislation, regulations and standards	In developing the Child Safe Policy and Procedures, The Society has been guided by the following: Legislation/Convention • <i>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> • <i>The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012</i> • <i>The Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013</i> • <i>Children and Young Persons (Care & Protection) Act 1998</i> • <i>Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998</i> • <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection)(Child Employment) Regulation 2015</i> • <i>Disability Inclusion Act 2014</i> • <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1977</i> Guiding Documents/Website • NSW Office of the Children's Guardian https://ocg.nsw.gov.au • Human Rights Commission https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights & https://chidsafe.humanrights.gov.au • Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians Submission, in response to Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Issues Paper 3 – Child Safe Institutions, 2013 • National Principles for Child Safe Organisations https://chidsafe.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/National_Principles_for_Child_Safe_Organisations2019.pdf • The National Office for Child Safety https://www.childsafety.gov.au • The Office of the eSafety Commissioner https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/cyberbullying • Live Performance Australia - https://liveperformance.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/LPA-Guide-to-Child-Safety-Oct-2023-FINAL.pdf
	National Principles for Child Safe Organisations: Principle #1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture. Principle #2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously. Principle #3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing. Principle #4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice. Principle #5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. Principle #6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused. Principle #7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training. Principle #8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed. Principle #9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved. Principle #10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.