



CHILD SAFETY AND FRIENDLY POLICY

Introduction

Young people are central to what we do at Barking Gecko Theatre and we are committed to a culture that is safe and friendly for children, where we look after their wellbeing and listen to their opinions.

Barking Gecko Theatre has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working or volunteering at Barking Gecko Theatre Company is responsible for the care and protection of children in the care of the company and reporting information about any suspicion of mistreatment.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

1. To explicitly outline an organisational culture where children's voices, concerns and ideas are valued.
2. To explicitly outline an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To prevent child abuse within Barking Gecko Theatre Company.
4. 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 or detecting such abuse should it occur.
5. To provide guidance to staff, volunteers and contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
6. To provide assurance that any suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

Policy

Barking Gecko Theatre Company is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to personal freedoms and protection from abuse. Barking Gecko Theatre Company has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Barking Gecko is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between Barking Gecko Theatre Company, board members, all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the Barking Gecko community.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEEDURES

RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Board** of Barking Gecko Theatre Company 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 **Board** is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Code of Conduct are in place.

The **CEO** of Barking Gecko Theatre Company is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the Barking Gecko community are aware of their obligation to report suspected abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All **staff** must ensure that they:

- Promote child safety at all times;
- Encourage children to speak up about all issues relating to their wellbeing, large and small;
- Assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and minimise any risk to the extent possible;
- Educate new employees and staff about the prevention and detection of child abuse; and
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Staff should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

All **board members, staff, volunteers and contractors** share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and Barking Gecko Theatre Company's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- Report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police or the state-based child protection service) and fulfill their obligations as mandatory reporters;
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation); and
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

DEFINITIONS

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

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 and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child sexual assault is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

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. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) The child is in need of protection;
- (b) The child has suffered or is likely to suffer "significant harm as a result of physical injury";
- (c) The parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

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 states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- b) A child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- c) Someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- d) Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; or

- e) Signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

EMPLOYMENT OF NEW PERSONNEL

Barking Gecko Theatre Company undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers which aims to:

- Promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share Barking Gecko's values and commitment to protect children; and
- Prevent a person from working at Barking Gecko if they pose a risk to children.

Barking Gecko Theatre Company requires all workers and volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with Barking Gecko.

Barking Gecko Theatre Company requires permanent staff and teaching artists to hold a valid Working With Children Check before they commence working at Barking Gecko and during their time with Barking Gecko. Staff are to ensure that their Working With Children Check is current at all times during their employment with Barking Gecko. (Note – artists and crew who do not directly work with children are not required to have this check as children in professional productions are accompanied by a chaperone as stipulated by Live Performance Australia's Performance Agreement, to which Barking Gecko Theatre Company is a member company).

Barking Gecko Theatre Company will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure (see Staff Recruitment Policy document).

Once engaged, workers and volunteers must review and sign their commitment to our Code of Conduct.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Barking Gecko Theatre Company will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach. Barking Gecko Theatre Company has appointed a "child safety champion" committed to identifying and managing risks at Barking Gecko Theatre Company. The child safety champion will receive regular training in relation to child safety. They will work with a nominated board member to undertake and annual audit of risk and report back to the board, CEO and AD.

CHILDREN'S VOICES

Child safe and friendly organisations are ones in which children feel their voices are valued. If young people are listened to with small concerns, they will feel more confident to tell us about big ones. At Barking Gecko we have a system of both formal and informal feedback, including informal suggestions sought by Teaching Artists on a weekly basis from Gecko Ensemble participants, surveys and questionnaires for Ensemble members at the end of

term and our online Culture Counts survey shared post performances.

REPORTING

In Western Australia, mandatory reporting requirements do not apply to everyone. It is a legal requirement in Western Australia for doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers and police officers to report all reasonable beliefs of **child sexual abuse** to the Department for Child Protection. However, **anyone** who has reasonable grounds for suspecting a child or young person is at risk of being neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused, should also report their concerns to the Department for Child Protection. They should also advise their superiors at Barking Gecko Theatre Company about their concern.

It is Barking Gecko Theatre Company policy that any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify their supervisor about their concern. Supervisors must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the CEO urgently.

In situations where the supervisor 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 directly to the CEO.

The CEO will then contact the Department for Child Protection and Family Support on **1800 708 704** if there is a suspicion of neglect or abuse. **There is no requirement for proof.**

A verbal report can be made, but must be followed by a written report (within 24hrs).

The earlier a report is received, the faster action can be taken to protect a child, where this is necessary.

For **immediate assistance** Barking Gecko Theatre Company staff will contact the Western Australia Police on **131 444** or **000** for life threatening emergencies.

ACTION

What do I need to do to make a report?

If you are a mandatory reporter, go to the Department for Child Protection [mandatory reporting website](#) or phone **1800 708 704**.

If you are not a mandatory reporter but you have concerns or suspicions about a child's well being, contact the [Department for Child Protection](#). This website has the phones numbers for the local offices.

Investigating

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation. Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the CEO 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 CEO may decide to conduct such an investigation in consultation with the Chair of Barking Gecko Theatre Company.

In absence of the CEO, the Artistic Director will make this determination and inform the Chair of Barking Gecko Theatre Company. All employees, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted with the aim of procedural fairness for all involved.

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

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the CEO shall inform the Board and coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators 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 of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation's policies or its Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) 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 dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. 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. Barking Gecko Theatre Company 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.

Reviewing

Every year, and following any reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the organisation's care.

Related Documents

- Staff Recruitment Policy
- This policy must be read in conjunction with:
 - The law of the Commonwealth and of Western Australia.

- Barking Gecko's Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Barking Gecko's Teaching Artist Recruitment Policy
- Barking Gecko's Programs with Young People Risk Assessment