



CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Authorised by Board:	17 February 2025
Next Revision Due:	February 2026

Introduction

Barking Gecko Arts is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children, young adults, vulnerable people and people at risk. We have zero tolerance for any form of physical and/or sexual abuse. Everyone working at Barking Gecko Arts is responsible for the protection of children, young adults, vulnerable people and people at risk and reporting information about any form of physical and or sexual abuse.

Young people are central to what we do at Barking Gecko Arts 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.

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 Arts.
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 Arts is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children, young adults, vulnerable people and people at risk involved in its programs.

All participants 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 Arts 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.

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility between Barking Gecko Arts, board members, all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the Barking Gecko community.

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 Principles for Child Safe Organisations is regularly reviewed and improved.
- **Principle 10:** Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Responsibilities

The **Board** of Barking Gecko Arts 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 Safeguarding Code of Conduct are in place.

The **CEO** of Barking Gecko Arts is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of abuse of children, young adults, vulnerable people and people at risk;
- 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, young adult, vulnerable person, or person at risk 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 safeguarding - online and offline);
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their safeguarding responsibilities.

All **staff** must ensure that they:

- Promote safeguarding at all times;
- Encourage children to speak up about all issues relating to their wellbeing, large and small;
- Assess the risk of 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 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.

Employment of New Personnel

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

- Promote and protect the safety of all children, young people, vulnerable people, and people at risk under the care of the organisation;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share Barking Gecko's values and commitment to protect children;
- Provide multiple checks and balances to assess a candidate's safety and suitability for a role and
- Prevent a person from working at Barking Gecko if they pose a risk to children.

Screening

Barking Gecko Arts 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 Arts requires permanent staff, volunteers, 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 Arts is a member company).
 - Artists and crew engaged for the Festival who are short-term visitors to WA engaged to work during the two-week period after the person arrives in WA are not eligible for a Working with Children Check.
- Barking Gecko Arts 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 Arts will ensure that child safety and safeguarding is a part of its overall risk management approach. Barking Gecko Arts has appointed a "safeguarding officer" committed to identifying and managing risks at Barking Gecko Arts. All full-time and admin staff will undertake annual training about safeguarding. All staff will conduct an annual audit of the safeguarding policy and report back to the CEO. The Safeguarding Policy will be presented to the Board for annual review.

Children's Voices

Child safe organisations are ones in which children, young adults, vulnerable people and people at risk 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 Arts we have a system of both formal and informal feedback, including informal suggestions sought by Teaching Artists, surveys and questionnaires.

Duty of Care

At Barking Gecko Arts the following activities always require a parent or teacher to remain in the room with a child or young person:

- Festival event, workshop, or exhibition,
- Theatre Production
- School workshop or residency
- Community event

School Holiday workshops do not require a parent or teacher to remain in the room with a child or young person.

Valuing Diversity

Barking Gecko Arts 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.

In our activities with children, we will promote the:

- Cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Cultural safety of children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Safety of children with a disability
- Safety of children and young people who identify as LGBTQIA+
- Safety of children who live in out-of-home care

Online Safety

Barking Gecko Arts takes the threats to vulnerable people through online interactions seriously and recognises that social media is changing how people communicate. All staff, volunteers or contractors are not to

- Post or Share with another person (either online or offline) any material that is offensive, harassing, discriminatory, embarrassing, intimidating, sexually explicit, bullying, hateful, racist, sexist, or otherwise inappropriate
- Contact children, young people or vulnerable persons for non-urgent contact or communication out of hours
- Have outside contact with children, young people and vulnerable people except for meetings where others are present, program-specific internet contacts through Barking Gecko Arts email system or brief telephone or texting contact for routine purposes such as scheduling
- Any contact or communication with children or vulnerable people must be undertaken on a publicly visible platform rather than on a private forum. It must include another staff member or volunteer as a dual (cc) recipient. Any breach of this requirement must be reported and will be treated seriously

Who can report?

In Western Australia it is mandatory for certain professionals to report a belief of child sexual abuse.

Mandatory reporters are:

- assessors appointed under section 125A of the Act

- boarding supervisors
- departmental officers of the Department of Communities
- doctors
- early childhood workers
- ministers of religion
- nurses and midwives
- out-of-home care workers
- police officers
- psychologists
- school counsellors
- teachers (including TAFE lecturers).
- Youth justice workers (from May 2025)

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 Arts about their concern.

HOW TO REPORT

1. It is Barking Gecko Arts policy that any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify their supervisor about their concern.
 - a. Contractors operating within regional and remote schools out of range of reliable communication may notify the school if they have grounds to suspect abusive activity. Contractors must also notify their supervisor as soon as they can reasonably do so.
 - b. 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.
2. A verbal report can be made, but must be followed by a written report (within 24hrs).
3. Supervisors must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the CEO urgently.
4. 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.**

WRITTEN REPORT

A written report must contain:

- The name and contact details of the reporter
- The name of the child, young person, or vulnerable person. Or if a name cannot be obtained after reasonable enquiries, a description of the young person or vulnerable person.
- If, or to the extent known to the reporter,
 - The date of birth
 - Information about where the person lives
 - The names of the parents (if applicable), guardian or other appropriate persons
- The grounds for the reporter's belief that the child, young person, or vulnerable person has been the subject of sexual abuse or is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse
- If, or to the extent known to the reporter:
 - The name of any person alleged to be responsible for the sexual abuse
 - The person's contact details
 - The person's relationship to the child
- The contact details to report all incidents or near misses are
 - Ryan Taaffe, CEO, ryan.taaffe@barkinggecko.com.au

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 Arts 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?

Mandatory reporter

- **Online:** Make a mandatory report via the [Mandatory Reporting Online Form\(link is external\)](#)
- **Email:** If you are experiencing technical difficulties lodging a mandatory report online, please email [mrs@communities.wa.gov.au\(link sends email\)](mailto:mrs@communities.wa.gov.au) to request a hard copy for completion
- **Telephone:** 1800 708 704
- **Fax:** (08) 6414 7316
- **Post:** Mandatory Reporting Service, PO Box 8146, PERTH BC, WA 6849

Not a Mandatory Reporter

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

- **For immediate concerns:** If you have a life-threatening concern about a child, contact the police on **000**.
- **Concern for a child's wellbeing:** If you are concerned about a child's wellbeing, please contact the Central Intake Team on **1800 273 889**.
- **Crisis Care:** [Crisis Care](#) provides Western Australia's after-hours response to reported concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing and information and referrals for people experiencing crisis.

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 Arts.

In **absence of the CEO**, the Festival Director will make this determination and inform the Chair of Barking Gecko Arts. 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 Arts 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:
 - *Barking Gecko's Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct*
 - *Barking Gecko's Teaching Artist Recruitment Policy and Artist Manuals*
 - *The law of the Commonwealth and of Western Australia.*
 - *LPA Guide to Child Safety in the Live Performance Industry*
 - *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*

DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All forms of physical and mental abuse, exploitation, coercion or ill-treatment. This might include, for example: • physical abuse; • emotional abuse; • threats of, or actual violence, verbal, emotional or social abuse; • sexual harassment, bullying or abuse; • sexual criminal offences; • cultural or identity abuse, such as racial, sexual or gender-based discrimination or hate crime; • coercion and exploitation; • abuse of power; and • neglect.
Adult	A person who is not a child.
Child or young person	A person under the age of 18 years.
Child abuse	Is emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse and/or sexual abuse (all as defined) to a child.
Child Safe Organisation	<p>An organisation that consciously and systematically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children. • creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying and reporting of harm. • responds appropriately to disclosures, allegations and suspicions of harm.
Complaint	<p>Includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of this Policy or [Name of Organisation]'s Code of Conduct. It also includes disclosures made to [Name of Organisation] that may be about or relate to abuse in an [Name of Organisation] context.</p> <p>[Name of Organisation] may receive a complaint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly or through a redress scheme (should one exist); • From anyone – a child, adult survivor, parent, trusted adult, independent support person, staff member, volunteer or community member; • About an adult allegedly perpetrating child sexual abuse or about a child exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours; or • In writing, verbally or as a result of other observations, including behavioural indicators. <p>A complaint may become a 'report' to an external authority or agency.</p>
Disclosure	<p>A process by which a child conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been sexually abused, or by which an adult conveys or attempts to convey that they were sexually abused as a child.</p> <p>This may take many forms, and might be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal disclosures using painting or drawing, gesticulating, or through behavioural changes, are more common among young children, children and vulnerable people with cognitive or communication impairments. Children, in particular, may also seek to disclose sexual abuse through emotional or behavioural cues, such as heightened anxiety, withdrawal, aggression or inappropriate sexual behaviour.</p> <p>Disclosures can be intentional or accidental, and they might be prompted by questions from another person, or triggered by a memory of the abuse. A disclosure may also become a 'complaint' when made to [Name of Organisation] or a 'report' when made to an external authority or agency.</p>
Emotional or Psychological Abuse	Serious psychological harm can occur where the behaviour of their parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self-esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional disturbance or psychological trauma.

	<p>Although it is possible for 'one off' incidents to cause serious harm, in general it is the frequency, persistence and duration of the parental or carer behaviour that is instrumental in defining the consequences for the child or young person.</p> <p>This can include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour.</p>
Grooming	<p>Behaviours that manipulate and control a child, their family and other support networks, or institutions with the intent of gaining access to the child, obtaining the child's compliance, maintaining the child's silence, and avoiding discovery of sexual abuse.</p> <p>Grooming can take place in person and online and is often difficult to identify and define. This is because the behaviours involved are not necessarily explicitly sexual, directly abusive or criminal in themselves, and may only be recognised in hindsight.</p> <p>Some grooming behaviours are consistent with behaviours or activities in non-abusive relationships, and can even include desirable social behaviours, with the only difference being motivation. Perpetrators can groom children, other people in children's lives, and institutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grooming may take a number of forms. • Building trust. • Favouritism. • Gaining the trust of the child's or young person's parents or carer/s. • Isolation - from family and/or, friends. • Intimidation and secrecy 'Testing the waters' or boundary violation. • Shaping the persons perceptions.
Harm	A detrimental effect to a person's safety or well-being caused by abuse.
Mandatory Reporting	<p>Where a legislative requirement is placed where there is the organisation forms a reasonable belief that a report needs to be made to report regarding known and/or suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the appropriate state based authority. This may be a nominated government department or agency (typically the Police and/or child protection authority).</p>
Neglect	Is when a parent, guardian caregiver cannot regularly give a child the basic things needed for his or her growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care, adequate supervision, and enough parenting and care.
Person at Risk	<p>Person aged 18 years and over who:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) has care and support needs; b) is being abused or neglected, or are at risk of abuse or neglect; and c) is unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect because of their care and support needs.
Physical Abuse	<p>Is a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child or young person caused by a parent, caregiver or any other person. It includes but is not limited to injuries which are caused by excessive discipline, severe beatings or shakings, cigarette burns, attempted strangulation and female genital mutilation.</p> <p>Injuries include bruising, lacerations or welts, burns, fractures or dislocation of joints. Hitting a child or young person around the head or neck, or using a stick, belt or other object to discipline or punishing a child or young person (in a non-trivial way) is a crime.</p>
Reasonable grounds for belief	<p>A reasonable belief is a belief based on facts that would lead a reasonable person to think that reportable conduct may have occurred.</p> <p>A reasonable belief is more than suspicion. There must be some objective basis for the belief. However, it does not require certainty. For example, a person is likely to have a reasonable belief if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observed the conduct themselves • heard from a child that the conduct occurred • received information from another source (including another person who witnessed the reportable conduct or misconduct). <p>The head of the organisation does not need to share the person's reasonable belief regarding the allegation.</p>

Reportable Conduct	Conduct that must be reported under legislation that obliges designated institutions to report allegations of institutional child sexual abuse to an independent statutory body.
Reportable conduct scheme	A scheme established under legislation by a State or Territory to monitor, investigate and report on reportable conduct.
Safeguarding	Protecting the welfare and human rights of people that are, in some way, connected with your organisation its work – particularly people that may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
Safeguarding Officer	The Member of [Name of Organisation] appointed by the Management Committee to coordinate [Name of Organisation] administration.
Sexual Abuse	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.
Vulnerable person	<p>Vulnerable people are defined as a people aged under 18 or other individuals who may be unable to take care of themselves or are unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation.</p> <p>While all people must be protected from harm, there are additional legislative and ethical considerations for protecting vulnerable people. Vulnerable people can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and seniors • people with impaired intellectual or physical functioning • people from a low socio-economic background • people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders • people who are not native speakers of the local language • people with low levels of literacy or education • people subject to modern slavery, which involves human exploitation and control, such as forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking, and child labour.
Whistle-blower	Anyone who makes or attempts to make a report of Reportable Conduct under this Policy, and is, or has previously been, an employee, volunteer, contractor, third party, child, young person or vulnerable person in the care of [Name of Organisation] or is a relative or dependent of such persons.
Working with Children Check	<p>A pre-employment screening program which ensures child-safe working environments in Australia.</p> <p>Pre-employment screening of adults and volunteers who come in contact with children is mandatory and legislated for across most States and Territories in Australia. However, there is no national framework setting out the requirements for obtaining a Working with Children Check (or Police Checks) - and each State and Territory has their own procedures and requirements</p>
Young person	<p>A teenager who is a child.</p> <p>Note: This term is used in recognition that a teenager may not identify as being a 'child' (notwithstanding the definition).</p>

APPENDIX: REPORTING OVERVIEW

<p>WHO CAN REPORT</p>	<p>Anyone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Child b) Adults family, friend, guardian c) Staff member or volunteer d) Any other witness
<p>WHAT TO REPORT</p>	<p>You must report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Abuse or safety related matters including potential grooming b) Current or historical disclosures of abuse c) Current or historical allegations, suspicions or observations d) Breaches of the safeguarding policy or code of conduct e) Behaviours that could be deemed as grooming or in appropriate
<p>HOW TO REPORT</p>	<p>Reporting can be done</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Verbally in person or over the phone b) Via email or in writing
<p>WHO TO REPORT</p>	<p>Reporting within the organisation may directed through supervisors and/or the CEO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Any director or board member. b) The Chief Executive Officer. c) Any Manager or Supervisor. d) Call Barking Gecko Arts on (08) 6184 490 5or emailing at gecko@barkinggecko.com.au e) Contact the appropriate authority directly, including the Police and State and Territory Mandatory Reporting Contacts <p>All safeguarding incidents <u>must</u> be recorded in the Incident Management system</p>
<p>WHAT HAPPENS NEXT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Offer support to the person involved b) Initiate process to ensure the safety of the person and others c) Where possible remove the person from the situation d) If appropriate stand the staff, volunteer or contractor accused of the incident down (with pay, where applicable) e) Report the matter to the appropriate authority including the Police. and State and Territory Mandatory Reporting Contacts f) Wait for clearance from authorities to commence an in internal investigation