

## Child Protection Policy & Procedures

### Introduction

Moe Dance Eisteddfod (MDE) is committed to always promoting and protecting the interest and safety of children at this event. We have zero tolerance to child abuse.

Everyone working/ volunteering at MDE is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

### Purpose

The Purpose of the Child Protection Policy is

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within MDE
2. To work towards an organisational culture of child safety.
3. To ensure that all workers, volunteers, participants, customers, suppliers and associates are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
4. To provide guidance to employees, volunteers and others as to the actions that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
5. To provide a clear statement to staff, volunteers and contractors forbidding any such abuse.
6. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

### Policy

Moe Dance Eisteddfod is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its program.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the Moe Dance Eisteddfod, all employees, workers, volunteers, contractors, associates, and members of the Moe Dance Eisteddfod community.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Moe Dance Eisteddfod has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Moe Dance Eisteddfod is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

## Procedures

### Responsibilities

The committee of MDE 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 committee is also ensuring the appropriate updates are included in the Child Protection Policy and Procedures and the Code of Conduct.

#### ***The Executive Committee of MDE is responsible for:***

- Responding to reports of child abuse and liaising with appropriate organisations (DHHS / Victoria Police)
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of the relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the MDE community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Providing support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.
- Annually assess and document the risk of child abuse within the various environments of the venture and processes of the Eisteddfod and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;

#### ***All employees and volunteers must ensure that they:***

- Promote child safety at all times;
- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and MDE's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- Report any suspicion that a child's safety is a risk to the MDE Executive, or if they have formed a reasonable belief that physical or sexual abuse of a child may have occurred, they must report this belief directly to the police.
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety

All employees and volunteers should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within MDE and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

## Definitions

**Child** means a person below the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child.

**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 results 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 (see below) 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," or
- (c) the parents 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; and/or
- e) signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

## **Reporting**

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who becomes aware of abusive activity must immediately notify the executive committee of MDE, who must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police.

## **MAY ADD THINGS**

## **Investigating**

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to investigate a report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must cooperate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Executive Committee 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 Executive Committee may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must cooperate fully with investigation.

The Executive Committee 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 initial review and determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Executive Committee shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and or/ law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

All internal investigations will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

## **Responding to the breaches of the Code of CONduct and/or the Child Protection Policy**

Any breach of the MDE policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. If it is alleged that an employee may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation's child protection policies or its Code of Conduct, the person concerned may be stood down (with/without pay, where applicable) and not be permitted to continue in the organisation's activities, 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.

## Reviewing

Every two years, and following every 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

- This Policy must be read in conjunction with:
  - The Laws of the Commonwealth and the state of Victoria;
  - The organisation's Code of Conduct;

*Next Due for Review: 2023*