

# **Child Safe Environments Policy**

## **Riverland Youth Theatre (RYT) 2023**

### **Purpose**

Riverland Youth Theatre (RYT) enriches the lives of children and young people in the South Australian Riverland and Mallee through creativity, theatre, and play. We make art with and for our community, empower children and young people as artists, makers, storytellers, learners, and doers.

RYT exists for children and young people, their safety, wellbeing, and enjoyment is at the core of everything we do and every decision we make. We listen to children and respect their thoughts and feelings and encourage them to have their voice heard, including on matters of harm or risk of harm. Crucially, RYT is committed to making a safe place for children and young people to be themselves.

The purpose of the child Safe Environment policy is to:

- Demonstrate Riverland Youth Theatre's (RYTs) commitment to child safety in accordance with the guidelines of South Australian and national legislation.
- Set the parameters for establishing and creating a child safe and child friendly environment at RYT.
- Take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of all children and young people when in the care of RYT staff or while in the RYT environment.

### **Scope**

The policy applies to all RYT employees, tutors, contracted artists and volunteers of the Riverland Youth Theatre who may work or interact with children at any time, including:

- Employees
- Teaching artists, education instructors and workshop facilitators
- Performers and Creatives
- Volunteers, including members of the RYT Board
- Contractors and sub-contractors
- Work experience students

### **Definitions**

*A child or young person* - any persons under the age of 18 years.

*Harm* – Section 17 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 defines 'harm' to mean physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

*Complainant* – person who makes a complaint

*Working with children check* – Under the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016, people working or volunteering with children in South Australia must have a valid, not prohibited Working with Children Check. A Working with Children Check is an assessment of whether a person poses an unacceptable risk to children. As part of the process, the Screening Unit in the Department for Human Services will examine criminal history, child protection information and other information.

### **Commitment to child safety**

At RYT, children and young people are valued, respected, listened to and supported to be themselves. We value diversity and inclusivity and seek to empower and support children and young people regardless of their gender, pronouns, sexuality, nationality, religion or social, economic, or cultural background.

RYT is committed to:

- Promoting and protecting the health, safety, wellbeing of all children and young people
- Creating a safe and accessible space for all children and young people and seeking to remove the constraints of economic status, disability, and location.
- Listening to children and young people
- Empowering children and young people to participate in creativity and the Arts.
- Making information about services available and accessible to children and young people such as the Kids Helpline
- Upholding the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and complying with all relevant legislation and conventions, including the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

RYT will not hesitate to take actions to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional, psychological harm or risk of harm.

RYT has:

- A Child Safe Environments policy
- A Code of Conduct for all employees, contractors, and volunteers
- A mandated notifier who has completed all the relevant child safe training and has a legal obligation to report harm or risk of harm. They are appointed the RYT Child Safety Advisor
- Protocol and process for reporting suspected harm of a child or young person.
- A requirement that all staff, contractors and volunteers hold a valid Working with children check.

## **Riverland Youth Theatre recruiting practices, Induction and Working with Children Checks**

RYT takes all reasonable steps to ensure we find the most suitable candidate for all open staff, board member and volunteer positions. RYT interviews all candidates to ensure they have a strong commitment to understanding child safety and wellbeing and align with the organisation's core values.

All employees and volunteers must have current and verified Working with Children Checks.

Induction of all employees and volunteers includes a discussion of our code of conduct, this policy and pathways for reporting concerns.

### **Support for Employees**

RYT supports employees by

- Inducting all new employees to the Code of Conduct and Child Safe Environments Policy, ensuring all employees understand their obligations to child safety.
- Appointing a Child Safety Officer to be the first point of contact for all child safety concerns of harm or risk of harm.
- Ensuring all employees are equipped with awareness and feel encouraged and empowered to report any complaints, concerns, or perceived risks to the Child Safety Officer.
- Rostering more than one person to each class/ workshop wherever possible and viable.
- Keeping this policy prominent in day to day operations by encouraging open dialogue around child safety matters and maintaining Child Safety as a standing item in weekly Staff meetings and monthly Board Meetings.

### **Communication**

RYT will be responsive to all concerns raised by staff, children and parents/legal guardians and seek to resolve issues to the satisfaction of all parties.

RYT will maintain active processes to consult with and listen to our community, including children, young people and families.

RYT keeps all employees, parents and children informed about our Child Safe Policies and procedures by:

- Ensuring all employees, contractors and volunteers have read and understood the RYT Code of conduct and Child Safety Policy as part of their induction.
- Including a copy of this Policy in welcome packs for participants
- Having our Child Safe Policy available to access on our website and having copies available on request.
- Making it easy for people to make complaints and provide feedback.

## **Images of children policy**

RYT aims to protect the safety and privacy of all children and young people.

RYT will:

- Obtain informed consent from a parent (including carers or legal guardians) and child before using, publishing, or sharing an image of a child or young person.
- Only publish images that do not contain identifying information about children (such as school uniform) unless consent has been given by parent, carer or guardian.
- Seek photo permission as apart of the booking process for all workshops and term classes.

## **Complaints and Feedback procedure**

RYT is committed to taking all complaints and feedback seriously. Complaints and feedback are a vital part of keeping children safe and are also an opportunity to improve what we do.

We believe all employees, children, parents (including carers and legal guardians) should feel safe, empowered, enabled, and supported in raising any concerns or complaints, including about any perceived harm or risk of harm.

Complaints and feedback are welcomed through the RYT website, by email, phone and by all and any other means of communication. RYT endeavours to be open and responsive to all feedback. We will assess complaints, follow up and investigate, communicate with complainants and take any appropriate action as required, including making changes to what we do.

RYT have clear guidelines of what is expected of all employees, tutors, visiting artists, contractors, and volunteers. RYT has a process and procedure to investigate and respond to any complaint of harm or misconduct, including potentially disciplinary action.

## **Implementation and Review Process**

RYT has an appointed Child Safety Officer who is responsible for providing advice and support to children, parents (including carers and legal guardians), volunteers and employees regarding the health, safety and wellbeing of children and young people within the organisation. The Child Safety Officer is the first point of contact for matters relating to child safety and risk.

If there is reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected, a member of RYT will phone the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) 131 478. If a child is at immediate risk, RYT will call 000.

RYT will support and/or facilitate support to any children, young people and their families in the event that harm has occurred.

The Riverland Youth Theatre Child Safe Policy will be reviewed at least every five years, or accordingly when changes are made to the policy or organisation. A new compliance statement will be lodged with each update to the Child Safe Policy.

Date of Policy 16/02/2023. Review before 16/02/2028.