

Benalla Theatre Company

CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE

CODE OF CONDUCT

We are committed to having a performing arts company that is safe for all children and vulnerable people where abuse and harm are not tolerated. The safety of children and vulnerable people is a priority for Benalla Theatre Company and the prevention and reporting of abuse is supported and encouraged. All volunteers and contractors are responsible for promoting the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children. Benalla Theatre Company recognises that discrimination can harm children and we treat all children and vulnerable people with dignity and respect.

This Code of Conduct sets expectations for how volunteers and contractors of Benalla Theatre Company should behave around children and vulnerable people. This helps them participate safely in our company and have fun.

Performing arts is a physical activity, so having behavioural standards to manage the risks to children/vulnerable is important. This Code of Conduct identifies positive child/vulnerable safe behaviours that we ask volunteers and contractors to demonstrate. It also identifies behaviours that we consider unacceptable and not permitted at our company.

Not following standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is a breach of this Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action. Some behaviours on their own may not be a serious breach of the Code of Conduct but together may indicate a concerning pattern of behaviour that poses a risk to the safety of children/vulnerable. Our disciplinary policy provides further information on processes that will be followed if breaches are identified.

All Benalla Theatre Company volunteers and contractors must always follow these standards of behaviour, including when at Benalla Theatre Company, attending a rehearsal, performance, meeting or social gathering, and when engaging with Benalla Theatre Company children and their families and vulnerable people at any time:

I WILL:

- take all reasonable steps to protect children/vulnerable from abuse
- take disclosures of harm or abuse made by a child/vulnerable seriously
- raise concerns with Company Champions if risks to child/vulnerable safety are identified. Report and act on any concerns or observed breaches of this Code of Conduct
- participate in all compulsory training and professional development including training on child/vulnerable safety and wellbeing

- treat all children, young and vulnerable people with respect, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability or other characteristics
- consider the different needs of all children/vulnerable at Benalla Theatre Company, support them to participate fully in activities and help them and their families feel included in the company
- make Aboriginal children and families feel included and welcome at Benalla Theatre Company and support Aboriginal children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights
- never be racist towards anyone at Benalla Theatre Company and report any instances of racism I become aware of
- help Benalla Theatre Company be a place where people of all cultures feel safe and included
- listen to children/vulnerable and respond to them if they feel unsafe.
- value children and young people's ideas and opinions
- promote friendships and encourage children, young and vulnerable people to support their peers
- involve children, young and vulnerable people in decisions about the activities they participate in at Benalla Theatre Company and welcome the participation of parents and carers in these decisions
- report any conflicts of interest I have (such as an outside relationship with a child/vulnerable person) that may affect my ability to perform my role
- respect the privacy of children/vulnerable and their families, including keeping all personal information confidential unless required by law to share it
- inform parents and carers if there are situations that need to be safely managed but are outside the boundaries of this Code of Conduct (such as driving a child to a performance or rehearsal)
- ensure breaches of this Code are reported to our Company Champions immediately
- comply with all relevant Australian and Victorian legislation and our child safe policies and procedures
- uphold the rights of the child and always prioritise their needs.

I WILL NOT:

- condone or participate in illegal, unsafe, abusive or harmful behaviour towards children/vulnerable – this includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, grooming, neglect or sexual misconduct
- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child/vulnerable people abuse or harm
- exaggerate or trivialise child/vulnerable abuse issues
- use hurtful or offensive behaviour or language with children/vulnerable
- fail to report information to police if I know a child/vulnerable has been abused
- touch children/vulnerable people in a way that is unnecessary or unsuitable and falls outside what is reasonable as part of rehearsals, performances or other activities of Benalla Theatre Company
- persistently criticise and/or denigrate a child or vulnerable
- deliberately prevent a child/vulnerable people from forming friendships
- verbally assault a child/vulnerable people or create a climate of fear
- offer children, young and vulnerable people alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs
- show children/vulnerable pornographic images
- share details of sexual experiences with a child/vulnerable
- use sexual language or gestures in the presence of children/vulnerable
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children/vulnerable people or do things of a personal nature that children/vulnerable can do for themselves such as changing clothes
- develop 'special' relationships with specific children/vulnerable or show favouritism through the provision of gifts or unnecessary or unsuitable attention
- have unauthorised contact with children, young and vulnerable people online, on social media or by phone
- take photographs, screenshots or share images of children/vulnerable involved in activities that are not authorised by Benalla Theatre Company
- be alone with a child/vulnerable when there is no professional reason for doing so
- enter changing facilities without first knocking.

If I suspect that this Code of Conduct has been breached by another person in the organisation:

I WILL:

- act to prioritise the best interests of the child or children or vulnerable person
- promptly take actions to ensure the child or children or vulnerable people are safe
- as soon as possible report the incident or concerns using the Benalla Theatre Company complaints process
- maintain the privacy of those involved, following Benalla Theatre Company record keeping, privacy and information sharing guidelines.

Complaints about a breach of this Code of Conduct must be reported to our Company Champions.

Some breaches of this Code of Conduct may need to be reported to the Victorian Police, or to the Commission for Children and Young People. Our Complaint Handling Policy provides more information about our reporting obligations to external authorities as well as describing protections and confidentiality provisions for anyone making a report.

Volunteers who breach our Code of Conduct may also be subject to disciplinary action. This can include increased supervision, suspension or termination from the organisation. Detailed descriptions of breaches are found in our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

PLEASE NOTE:

If any person in a position of authority within our organisation becomes aware of a substantial risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation (for example, a contractor or volunteer), and they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, then they must take all reasonable steps to do so. A person in authority who negligently fails to take appropriate action to address the risk may be charged with the criminal offence of 'failing to protect' and may face a term of imprisonment.

If an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Victoria Police by calling 000 or going to their local police station. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.

I have read this Code of Conduct and agree to abide by its terms.

Name:

Signature:

Date: Last reviewed: 1 January 2023

Next review date: 1 January 2024

