

FLINDERS QUARTET

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

This policy applies to any adult person (over the age of 18) engaged by Flinders Quartet that may work or interact with children at any time including:

- employees (permanent and casual):
 - leadership and management roles
 - administration
 - education instructors and youth workshop facilitators
 - production and project personnel (guest artists, stage management, technical crew, etc.)
- volunteers
- contractors and subcontractors
- work experience students/interns/secondments
- any other individual in the organisation that may deal with children
- any personnel from partner/other venues or organisations, unless they have their own policy.

(Note: In this Policy, the term “employee” is used to cover all persons occupying any position listed above.)

POLICY STATEMENT:

All children working with or engaged by Flinders Quartet have a right to feel and be safe, respected, valued and protected from harm. Children should be made aware of and feel confident in their rights and responsibilities.

Flinders Quartet is strongly committed to the safety and well-being of all children that interact with our organisation as employees, audience members, education program participants or otherwise by creating and maintaining a child safe environment. The welfare of children entrusted under our care is our first priority and we have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Flinders Quartet will take all necessary steps to prevent and protect children from abuse and neglect including:

- *Physical abuse: purposefully injuring or threatening to injure a child*
- *Emotional abuse: an attack on a child’s self-esteem e.g. through bullying, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child*
- *Sexual abuse: any sexual act or sexual threat imposed upon a child*
- *Neglect: harming a child by failing to provide basic physical or emotional necessities.*

Procedures

- This policy is available on flindersquartet.com and must be read by employees and be available to parents of children or young people participating in a Flinders Quartet program.
- Strategies for creating a child protective environment will be adopted and followed at each Flinders Quartet program or activity. This will include educating children and young people in self-protection.

Definitions

- **CHILD:** A child/young person means every human being below the age of eighteen years.
- **CHILD ABUSE:** Abuse is an act by a parent, caregiver, other adult or adolescent that endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. Abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time. Abuse can happen in several different ways. Abuse can be physical, emotional and/or sexual. It can also encompass neglect and harassing behaviours like bullying.
- **CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER:** Shall be an employee nominated by Flinders Quartet to provide support and guidance to employees when dealing with allegations of abuse.

Recruitment and Selection Procedures

Flinders Quartet will take all reasonable steps to ensure we engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children.

This involves maintaining a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process.

It is Flinders Quartet's policy to:

- interview and conduct thorough referee checks on all employees with their most recent supervisors
- develop clear duty statements and job descriptions for roles that involve work with children that state clearly our commitment to providing safe environments for children
- attain and keep a record of Working with Children or criminal history/police checks for anyone with direct and unsupervised contact with children, such as employees designated to supervise or chaperone children
- ensure supervisors and chaperones recruited are suitably experienced and qualified to care for the safety and well-being of children in accordance with their age and needs.

Employee or Volunteer Code of Conduct

- Flinders Quartet employees and volunteers must remain alert to the risk indicators of child abuse and promptly report suspected incidents to nominated Child Protection Officer.
- Flinders Quartet employees and volunteers are to avoid placing themselves in potentially compromising situations with children and young people.

- Flinders Quartet employees and volunteers are to ensure they are never alone with a child under the age of 12 years where they cannot be observed by other staff members, volunteers or other adults (where possible).
- Flinders Quartet employees and volunteers are to ensure that parent/guardian permission is obtained in writing prior to any photos of children and young people being taken.
- Flinders Quartet employees and volunteers are not to discipline children and young people through the use of physical punishment or the withdrawal of the necessities of care (e.g. food, shelter and emotional warmth).
- Flinders Quartet employees and volunteers are not to verbally or emotionally abuse or punish children and young people in their care.

Flinders Quartet Employees/Volunteers are to:

- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as a positive role model to children and young people, and as a representative of Flinders Quartet.
- Read, understand and conform to the Flinders Quartet policies and guidelines around the safety of children and young people as outlined in this policy, a copy of which is given to them prior to employment.
- Raise all concerns, issues, and problems with nominated Child Protection Officer as soon as possible. All concerns and issues need to be documented by the Child Protection Officer.

Conduct considered unacceptable:

- Engage in rough physical games
- Cuddle, kiss, hug, tickle or touch children and young people in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive manner
- Make negative, violent or sexually suggestive comments to a child, even as a joke
- Undertake a task of a personal nature that a child can do for itself, for example changing clothes, grooming, feeding, and toileting
- Take a child to your home, or encourage meetings outside the program activity
- Discipline children and young people by the use of emotional abuse, favouritism, physical abuse, verbal abuse, reference to cultural/ethnic differences, swearing
- Transporting of an individual child or a group of children and young people to or from Flinders Quartet programs in private vehicles. This is only an option when all other avenues of transport have been excluded. A code of conduct for travelling in cars needs to be adhered to at all times
- Sharing accommodation with a child without other staff members or children present
- Texting or emailing information directly to a child or young person's mobile or email address. All communication made should be directed to the parents/guardians.

Establishing an Environment to Protect Children and Young People

The Venue

- Plan your program location/venue to allow clear observation of all child-occupied areas, both indoors and outdoors. Plan supervision to overcome or minimise any limitations in the design of the venue. When planning the program and schedule, consider the need for children or young people and staff to be able to be observed.

Educating Children and Young People

- Foster the children's self-esteem and positive self-image.
- Encourage children and young people to be assertive, for example, how to stand up for themselves and say "no" when appropriate.
- Talk with children and young people about ways to keep themselves safe and encourage children and young people to believe that they have a right to feel safe at all times.
- Convey to children and young people that nothing happens to them in life that is so awful that they cannot talk about it to someone they trust.
- Provide information about sexuality in an age appropriate way

Reporting Procedures for Alleged Abuse of a Child or Young Person by a Flinders Quartet Employee or Volunteer

STEP 1

In accordance with Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct the employee or volunteer shall immediately report any suspected incident of abuse by another employee or volunteer to the nominated Child Protection Officer.

STEP 2

The Child Protection Officer is to assess the report, obtained from the employee, volunteer or external party and gather correct and concise information and statements from employees. Obtain details of all people involved, including any witnesses, and to meet with the person that has made the allegation to clarify the details. A written and signed statement should be obtained from this person if possible.

STEP 3

The incident is to be immediately reported verbally to Flinders Quartet management or a Board member, and then in writing accompanied by the relevant reports.

STEP 4

A decision to report the incident is made and endorsed by Flinders Quartet management or Board member. The Victorian Child Protection Service (or relevant state service, if the incident occurs interstate) is to be contacted within 24 hours of the alleged incident.

STEP 5

Employees will be fully supported, and professional counselling and debriefing arranged if required.

In the event that allegations are made against a Flinders Quartet employee or volunteer, the Board of Flinders Quartet is required to immediately suspend that person (on full pay) from all activities involving the direct supervision of, and/or direct contact with, children and young people.

Reinstatement of a staff person or volunteer may only occur after any and all allegations against that person have been dismissed or cleared to the satisfaction of the Board of Flinders Quartet and any authorised interveners involved in investigations.

PROCESS CHART

Observation/Suspicion of Abuse Occurs



Employee notifies Child Protection Officer



Appropriate Authorities are contacted and notified

▲
If an allegation is made against an employee



Employee stood down on full pay immediately



Investigation of allegation occurs by authorised authorities



Reinstatement only occurs after all allegations have been dismissed or cleared to the satisfaction of the Board of Flinders Quartet or any authorised interveners

If an allegation is made against a parent/caregiver or other party



Professional counselling or debriefing will be offered to the employee



Employees or volunteers should not contact the parent/caregiver or other party. This is the responsibility of the relevant authorities

Policy Created – March 2019 Policy Reviewed – March 2019 Policy Ratified by Board – March 2019 Policy reviewed and updated – January 2022
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Appendix A

Employee/Volunteer Confirmation/ Acceptance Form

I, _____ (Employee/Volunteer Name) have read and understand Flinders Quartet's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and will ensure this policy is implemented during my employment with Flinders Quartet. I also understand the code of conduct section within the policy.

I also understand that a copy of this signed statement will be included in my personal file for future reference.

Employee/Volunteer Signature: _____ **Date:** __/__/__