

Child Protection Policy & Procedure

Introduction

Latrobe Valley Eisteddfod Traralgon Inc. (LVE) is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at LVE 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 LVE
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

Child protection is a shared responsibility between Latrobe Valley Eisteddfod (LVE) and all employees, volunteers, participants, suppliers, and associates. LVE is committed at all times to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its programs.

All children regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, family, or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse and to feel safe while participating in our Eisteddfod. LVE is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and providing them with a safe environment.

LVE has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working and volunteering at LVE is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care involved in our Eisteddfod. LVE workers and volunteers are also responsible for reporting information about suspected child abuse.

If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

Procedure

Responsibilities

The Committee of LVE 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 responsible for ensuring the appropriate updates are included in the Child Protection Policy and Procedure and the Code of Conduct.

The Child Safety Officer of LVE is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct, and ensuring that they are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Ensuring that all adults working or volunteering within LVE are aware of their obligations to report suspected abuse of a child in accordance with this policy and procedure;
- Educate employees and volunteers about the prevention and detection of child abuse;
- Providing support for employees, volunteers and contractors in undertaking their child protection responsibilities;
- Annually assess and document the risk of child abuse within the various environments of the venue and processes of the Eisteddfod and eradicate / minimise any risk to the extent possible;

All employees and volunteers must ensure that they:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and LVE's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
- Promote child safety at all times;
- Report any *suspicion* that a child's safety is at risk to the Child Safety Officer, or if they have formed a *reasonable belief* that physical or sexual abuse of a child (including outside of LVE) may have occurred, they must report this belief directly to the police;
- Facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour of suspected abusive activities;
- Familiarise themselves with the child protection policy and procedure and comply with all requirements;
- 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 LVE and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

Definitions

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

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.

Reportable Child abuse means any physical or sexual abuse of 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. 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 that reportable 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",
- (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 Child Safety Officer or the Convenor on duty, or any other member of the Executive Committee of LVE, who must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police.

Convenors or other committee members who receive a notification must also report this to the Child Safety Officer.

The Child Safety Officer must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the LVE committee and also to any external regulatory body such as the police.

If the person having suspicion does not believe the matter is being appropriately addressed, the incident should be reported to the President of the LVE Committee, or if it regards the President, then to the Secretary of the Committee.

Investigating

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, volunteers, or contractors must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decided to conduct an investigation, the Child Safety Officer 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 Child Safety Officer may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, volunteers and contractors must fully co-operate with the investigation.

The Child Safety Officer will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however from time to time other members of staff or volunteers may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants an additional investigation, the Child Safety Officer shall co-ordinate 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 Breaches of the Code of Conduct and/or the Child Protection Policy

Any breach of LVE 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: 2019