



## Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

*Please direct any questions or feedback regarding this document to [contact@sorellonstage.org](mailto:contact@sorellonstage.org)*

## **Sorell on Stage (SOS) Commitment to Child Safety, Cultural Safety, and Wellbeing**

All children and young people who work and study with Sorell on Stage have a right to feel safe and be safe. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. We are committed to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and can actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

SOS has a zero tolerance for child abuse and other harm and is committed to acting in children's and young people's best interests and keeping them safe from harm.

Each member of the SOS community has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role that they play individually, and collectively, to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all young people is at the forefront of all and every decision that they make.

SOS will be an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people feel safe to be themselves, their Aboriginality is respected and their sense of self and identity is nurtured and encouraged.

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## **Universal Principle: The Universal Principle to embed Aboriginal Cultural Safety**

An environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people feel safe to be themselves, their Aboriginality is respected and their sense of self and identity is nurtured and encouraged.

### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Having an appreciation of the historical context of colonisation, racism at individual and institutional levels, and the impact of this on Aboriginal people's lives and wellbeing, both past and present.
- Celebrating and understanding Aboriginal culture and promoting the strength of the community.
- Giving Aboriginal children a positive message about their Aboriginality, and the Aboriginal community to which they belong.
- Ensuring that each Child Safe Standard in this document has information on what actions and processes SOS can enact to comply with the Universal Principle. This information will be used to embed cultural safety within the organisation.
- Ensuring that cultural safety is a journey of understanding and truth-telling and that SOS's policies and practices will need to change to reflect this.
- Understanding the presence or absence of cultural safety cannot be determined by SOS. It can only be determined by Aboriginal children who access the organisation.

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## **Standard 1: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.**

All people involved with SOS care about children and young people's safety and wellbeing above everything else, and make sure they act that way and lead others to act that way.

- 1.1 SOS makes a public commitment to child safety.
- 1.2 A child-safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels at SOS from the top down and the bottom up.
- 1.3 Governance arrangements facilitate implementing the child safety and wellbeing policy at all levels.
- 1.4 A Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.
- 1.5 Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.
- 1.6 Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.

### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Publicly demonstrating a commitment to cultural safety, and embedding cultural safety into governance structures and strategic planning.
- Having publicly available current documents such as a child safety and wellbeing policy, record-keeping protocols, volunteer codes of conduct and risk management strategies.
- Ensuring that leadership models and reinforces attitudes and behaviours that value children and young people and a commitment to child safety, child wellbeing and cultural safety. This commitment is clear in duty statements and volunteer review processes.
- Ensuring volunteers and children and young people have a sound knowledge of children's rights, including their rights to feel safe and be heard, and the accountability that accompany these rights.
- Having leadership promote sharing good practices and learnings about child safety and wellbeing.

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## **Standard 2:**

### **Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.**

Children and young people are told about their human rights, have a say in decisions and are taken seriously.

- 2.1 SOS will ensure Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information, and participation.
- 2.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.
- 2.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, children may be offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age-appropriate way.
- 2.4 Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.

#### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Ensuring Aboriginal children understand their cultural rights and feel safe to practise their culture.
- Having access to resources to educate children and young people on their rights including their right to safety and right to be listened to.
- Being proactive in providing age-appropriate platforms to regularly seek children and young people's views and encourage participation in decision-making.
- Ensuring Volunteers have a good understanding of children and young people's developmental needs.
- Ensuring opportunities for participating are documented and regularly reviewed.
- Having an environment that is friendly and welcoming for children and young people.
- Inviting Children and young people to participate in decision-making in the organisation, including in relation to safety issues and risk identification.
- Ensuring Children and young people can identify trusted adults and friends.
- Ensuring Children and young people are informed about their roles and responsibilities in helping to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their peers.

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### **Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.**

Families, carers, and communities know about and are involved in the organisation's child and safety and wellbeing activities.

- 3.1 Families participate in decisions affecting their child.
- 3.2 SOS engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child-safe approach and relevant information is accessible.
- 3.3 Families and communities have a say in the development and review of the organisation's policies and practices.
- 3.4 Parents, caregivers and the community are informed about the organisation's operations and governance.

#### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Providing cultural safety by prioritising Aboriginal self-determination.
- Being responsive to the needs of families and communities, including cultural safety aspects.
- Creating opportunities for families and communities to be involved in how the organisation operates, including encouraging their children's participation and feedback.
- Having clear and accessible information for families and communities about the organisation's operations and policies, including child safety and wellbeing policy, Code of Conduct, record-keeping practices and complaints and investigation processes.
- Seeking feedback from families and communities on issues of child safety and wellbeing and incorporating this into SOS policies and practices.
- Engaging with and supporting approaches that build cultural safety through partnerships and respectful relationships.

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## **Standard 4:**

### **Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.**

The rights of every child and young person are being met, and children and young people are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

- 4.1 SOS, including staff and volunteers, understands children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.
- 4.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- 4.3 SOS pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.

#### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Understanding the needs of Aboriginal children, and the policies and practices of the organisation are responsive to inequities.
- Having specific policies in place that promote equity and respect diversity for the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.
- Producing child-friendly material in accessible language and formats that promotes inclusion and informs all children and young people of the support and complaints processes available to them.
- Volunteers champion attitudes and behaviours that respect the human rights of all children and young people, and are inclusive, well informed and responsive to diverse needs.
- Volunteers reflect on how discrimination and exclusion, whether intentional or unintentional, may work against a safe and inclusive culture and develop proactive strategies to address this.
- Volunteers trained to recognise and respond effectively to children and young people with diverse needs.

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## **Standard 5:**

### **People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.**

People working with children and young people are safe to work with children and young people and are respectful of them. They are taught how to keep children safe and well.

- 5.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasise child safety and wellbeing.
- 5.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current working with vulnerable people checks.
- 5.3 All staff and volunteers receive appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.
- 5.4 Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.

#### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Emphasising its commitment to Aboriginal cultural safety, child safety and wellbeing when screening volunteers.
- Ensuring volunteers in an organisation have completed working with vulnerable people check requirements where appropriate.
- Ensuring volunteers understand the organisation's child safety policy and procedures and meet their record-keeping, information sharing and reporting responsibilities.
- Having ongoing volunteer support, supervision and performance management processes involving child safety elements.
- Maintaining suitable record-keeping systems and protocols for volunteers.
- Having a range of tools and processes to monitor and mitigate risk.

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## **Standard 6:**

### **Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child-focused.**

Children, young people, families, carers, staff and volunteers are listened to and can share problems and concerns.

- 6.1 SOS has an accessible, child-focused complaint-handling policy that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.
- 6.2 Effective complaint-handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.
- 6.3 Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- 6.4 SOS has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.
- 6.5 Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

#### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Having meaningful processes that encourage and support Aboriginal children to raise complaints and concerns that are related to their safety.
- Volunteers are well-informed about their roles and responsibilities, reporting and privacy obligations and processes for responding to disclosures. They feel empowered and supported to draw attention to breaches of the Code of Conduct within the organisation and to challenge these behaviours.
- The complaints handling policy prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and recognises the role of families and communities in understanding and using the policy.
- Policies and procedures demonstrate regard for fairness to all parties to a complaint or investigation including support and information as appropriate.
- Volunteers have a good knowledge of the different ways children and young people express concerns or distress and disclose harm.
- Information about all complaints and concerns, including breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct, will be recorded and analysed, including in relation to processes, timeframes and record-keeping practices. Systemic issues will be identified and mitigated through this process.
- Ensuring children and young people know who to talk to if they are feeling unsafe and know what will happen.
- Having timely feedback provided to children and young people, families and volunteers who raise concerns or complaints. This includes reporting back on incidents, concerns and complaints

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## **Standard 7:**

### **Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.**

Staff and volunteers keep learning all the time so they know how to keep children and young people safe and well.

- 7.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement SOS's child safety and wellbeing policy.
- 7.2 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people.
- 7.3 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- 7.4 Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

#### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Ensuring Volunteers' knowledge of Aboriginal history and the ongoing impacts of colonisation and intergenerational trauma on the Aboriginal community is reflected in their practice.
- Providing regular opportunities to educate and train Volunteers on child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures and evidence-based practice.
- Providing a supportive and safe environment for Volunteers who disclose harm or risk to children and young people.
- Volunteers will receive training on the rights of children and young people in relation to records being created about children and young people and their use.
- Volunteers will receive training to recognise the range of indicators of child harm.
- Ensuring Volunteers respond effectively when issues of child safety and wellbeing or cultural safety arise.

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## **Standard 8: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.**

Children and young people are safe in online and physical spaces.

- 8.1 Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- 8.2 The online environment is used in accordance with SOS's Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing policy and practices.
- 8.3 Risk management plans consider risks posed by SOS's settings, activities and the physical environment.
- 8.4 Facilities and services from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people.

### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Ensuring physical and online environments show respect for Aboriginal people.
- Having a risk management strategy that addresses physical and online risks, including risks arising from child-to-child and adult-to-child interactions and the state and nature of physical spaces.
- Considering ways in which the physical environment might promote cultural safety.
- Having Volunteers be proactive in identifying and mitigating physical and online risks.
- Ensuring Volunteers access and use online environments in line with the organisation's Code of Conduct and relevant communication protocols.
- Ensuring third-party contractors for the provision of facilities and services have appropriate measures in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

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## **Standard 9: Implementation of the Child and Youth Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.**

Regularly review and improve child safety and wellbeing practices.

- 9.1 SOS regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child-safe practices.
- 9.2 Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures so as to inform continuous improvement.
- 9.3 SOS reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community, families and children and young people.

### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Acknowledging that cultural safety is a journey of understanding and truth-telling.
- Seeking the participation of children and young people, parents and communities in its regular reviews of child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices.
- Ensuring child safety and wellbeing indicators are included in documentation used for reviews.
- Ensuring review outcomes are considered and implemented to improve child-safe practices.
- Ensuring that regular analysis of complaints demonstrates improvement in child-safe practices.

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## **Standard 10:**

### **Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.**

Document the process of keeping children and young people safe and well, and making sure that everyone can access these documents.

- 10.1 SOS's policies and procedures will address all national child-safe principles.
- 10.2 SOS's policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.
- 10.3 SOS will undertake best practice models, and stakeholder consultation will inform the development of policies and procedures.
- 10.4 SOS leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.
- 10.5 SOS Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.

#### **Sorell on Stage shall achieve this by:**

- Have a comprehensive child safety and wellbeing policy that addresses all ten of the Child and Youth Safe Standards and the Universal Principal for Aboriginal Cultural Safety
- Ensuring that child safety and wellbeing policy and procedures are documented in a language and format that is easily understood and accessible to staff, volunteers, families and children and young people.
- Having audits of the policies and procedures to provide evidence of how the SOS is child-safe through its governance, leadership and culture.
- Ensuring practice within SOS is consistent across the board and compliant with child-safe policies and procedures, including culturally safe work practices.
- Interviewing and surveying children and young people, families and community members to confirm confidence in and awareness of SOS's policies and procedures on promoting a child-safe culture.
- Interviewing and surveying committee and volunteers to confirm high levels of understanding of policies, procedures and practice requirements.

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