



## Child Safety Policy 2017-2018

### 1. Introduction and Purpose

Australian Poetry supports, respects and values writers of all ages. Any children involved with our organisation or its activities have the right to be and feel safe, and to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect.

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the commitment of our Board of directors, staff, teachers and interns/volunteers to the safety of any children in our care.

It aims to make sure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities for identifying and reporting child safety concerns.

It also provides an outline of the procedures we have in place to create a safe and inclusive environment for those subscribers, program and project participants (including those involved in festival programs and publication programs), and visitors who are under 18 years old.

### 2. Overview

This policy has been developed in line with Victoria's new Child Safe Standards, which came into effect in January 2017.

The safety of children is everyone's responsibility. This policy applies to all Australian Poetry Board directors, staff, interns/volunteers, teachers/tutors and any other Australian Poetry representatives or partners who have direct contact with the children and young people in our care.

### 3. Policy

3.1 Australian Poetry welcomes and values the participation of young writers in all areas of our work, and aims to make sure they have full and safe access our program, organisation and venues.

We aim to make our programs and opportunities as accessible, inclusive and safe as possible.

We take a zero tolerance approach to child abuse, neglect, bullying and discrimination.

We aim to make sure that young people can say what they think and are taken seriously.

3.2 Australian Poetry respects, embraces and supports the diversity of children. We acknowledge that some children may experience additional barriers to participation and/or require special consideration in terms of cultural, access or safety concerns. As such, we will take particular care in the areas of:

- The cultural safety of Aboriginal children.
- The cultural safety of children for culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- The safety of children with disability.

We recognise the intersectionality of these groups and acknowledge that some writers within our community may identify as being part of more than one of the above areas.

## 4. Strategies

### 4.1 Staff, Teachers/Tutors, Contractors, Interns/Volunteers

All staff members will go through an interview process and receive two positive references before appointment, and will be required to have a current Police Clearance. Any staff members specifically involved in working with children will also be required to have a current Working with Children check.

All interns/volunteers will go through an interview process. As interns/volunteers will be supervised by a Australian Poetry staff member or contractor at all times, they will not be required to have a current Police Clearance or Working with Children check.

External teachers/tutors who are employed to run programs or activities for children will be required to have a current Working with Children check.

External teachers/tutors who are employed to run programs or activities for adults will not be required to have a current Working with Children check.

All new and existing personnel will be provided with training on our Child Safety Policy and reporting procedures as part of their induction and as part of any projects or activities that involve children.

Where Australian Poetry works in partnership with other organisations, we make sure to view and agree to that organisation's own Child Safety Policy and procedures.

### 4.2 Booking Procedures and Permission Forms

The majority of Australian Poetry's program is designed for adult writers. However, in most cases, writers under 18 years of age are welcome to attend. We will indicate on promotional and booking information where events or programs are inappropriate for children.

Australian Poetry may also deliver activities specifically designed for children from time to time, especially in its educational festival programs. Adult participants are not able to register for such events.

If a booking is made by or on behalf of a person under 18 years of age prior to an event:

- The child's parent or guardian will be informed whether the event is appropriate for the age or experience of the child.
- The child's parent or guardian will be informed that Australian Poetry's preferred approach is for them attend the event with their child and retain full responsibility for their safety and wellbeing. In this instance, parents and guardians will be able to attend the activity free of charge.
- Where it is not possible for the child's parent or guardian to attend, Australian Poetry will attempt to make a staff member, teacher/tutor or intern/volunteer with a current Working with Children check available to supervise the young person during the activity and breaks. Where that is not possible, Australian Poetry reserves the right to refuse the booking.
- If the booking goes ahead, the child's parent or guardian will be required to complete a Permission and Emergency Contact form.

If a booking is made by or on behalf of a person under 18 years of age that does not disclose prior to the event:

- The Australian Poetry representative will ask the participant to confirm their age.
- If the participant is under 18, Australian Poetry will contact the child's parent or guardian and go through the process listed above.

### 4.3 Code of Conduct

We have developed a Code of Conduct (this is presently under review in next Board and Governance meetings) to outline what we expect from everyone who works or comes in contact with children whilst engaged in Australian Poetry activities. Our Board of directors, staff and contractors, teachers/tutors and interns/volunteers will:

- Make sure they're familiar with the Australian Poetry Child Safety policy, and follow its guidelines.
- Establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work.
- Make sure participants in Australian Poetry activities under 18 years of age have a Permission and Emergency Contact form completed by a parent or guardian.
- Act with an appropriate level of care and responsibility.
- Be fair, considerate and honest with others.
- Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions.
- Make sure children in their care have appropriate levels of supervision.
- Only work with children under direct supervision of an Australian Poetry or nominated staff member, casual staff, or contractor.
- Avoid being alone with, making unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can either do for themselves or with the support of their own carer.
- Never have contact with young participants outside of Australian Poetry activities, provide their contact details to children or obtain a child's contact details.
- Never develop 'special' relationships with specific children or seek to use children in any way to meet their own needs.
- Avoid showing favouritism.
- Model appropriate adult behaviour and not use bullying, discriminatory or oppressive behaviour or language with children.
- Take action to protect the wellbeing of children if necessary (see Response and Reporting below).
- Make sure young people know what to do if they feel unsafe.
- Never share or distribute images of children (see Documentation and Publication below).

Anyone who breaches this Code of Conduct will face disciplinary action, including and up to termination of employment or cessation of engagement with the organisation.

#### **4.4 Reporting and Response**

Australian Poetry's Chief Executive has been appointed as Child Safety Person with the specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children.

Anyone with concerns about inappropriate behaviour about children in our care must report it to the CEO immediately, who will inform the appropriate authorities as required under:

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Oversight and Enforcement of Child Safe Standards) Act 2016 (Vic)
- Crimes Act 1658 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)

Anyone who believes a child is in immediate danger should contact the police.

Training on the correct procedure for reporting a concern will be provided to staff/contractors and interns/volunteers. All staff and volunteers are expected to comply with the correct reporting procedure.

Different responses will be appropriate depending on the circumstances of the person making the report, and the level of risk or danger that is suspected. Where an allegation involves our own team members or actions on our own premises, we may undertake an internal investigation in parallel with a police or other external investigation.

A record of all reported concerns and responses will be maintained in a secure location to ensure the privacy of all involved.

#### **4.5 Documentation and Publication**

Australian Poetry may document work with photographs, video and voice recordings of our participants. We also publish some of our participants' creative work. This documentation may be used in our publications, reports, funding applications, for promotional material and marketing, and online.

We will not use or publish any of this material without written permission from the young person and their parent / guardian. We will limit publication of young people's details to their first name.

If Australian Poetry employs people under the age of 18 years (paid or unpaid), or exhibits, publishes or distributes pictures of children under the age of 18 years, we will comply with the [Australia Council's Protocols for Working with Children in Art](#).

#### **4.6 Participation and Empowerment**

We also aim to make sure that young people can say what they think, are taken seriously, and feel a sense of ownership in the organisation.

Australian Poetry will encourage young people to express their views and listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them.

**Date Created: 24 January 2017**

**Last updated and reviewed with approval: AP Governance Committee 11 September 2017**