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YOUTH ARTS NETWORK CODE OF PRACTICE

The Bendigo/Loddon Youth Arts Network was conceived by arts and health workers who identified alternative approaches to health promotion and sought to use the arts as a way to provide opportunities to improve young people's (16-24 years) connectedness and thus sense of control. The Bendigo Youth Arts Network is supported by The City of Greater Bendigo and Primary Care Partnerships and the underlying principle of the Network is that there are significant health benefits for young people who engage in arts practice

The Network functions as a reference group and support for organisations to engage in arts practice, a forum for sharing ideas and creating links with resources, a forum for promoting art projects and initiatives, and assisting organisations and individuals to engage in arts practice. The Youth Arts Network has co-ordinated and facilitated a number of projects and activities since 2001, working with a range of artists, organisations and groups of young people.

AIMS

- To provide a platform for a coordinated approach to the application of arts in health promotion in the Bendigo region.
- Improve sense of self and well being of young people by using the arts as a medium for self-expression.

FUNDAMENTALS

The underlying principle of the Youth Arts Network is that there are significant health benefits in arts practice and a collaborative approach to service delivery.

The Network is committed to:

- Integrating arts practice & health promotion into youth service delivery
- Building capacity of organisations and community
- Creative engagement of young people

The Bendigo Youth Arts Network has identified the need for a 'youth arts network code of practice' for working with disengaged young people, particularly within a project setting. The code will assist the youth arts network, organizations, artists and support workers to clearly understand their roles and responsibilities within an arts project setting and provide tools and information to working with young people that aligns with youth work policies.

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1. Introduction

YOUTH ARTS describes work that involves creatively skilled and unskilled children and young people who participate in projects as creators, presenters, collaborators and managers. Participants make their own art both independently and as members of youth arts organisations. In youth arts the creative development phase, or *process* of working collectively, is considered to be just as important as the outcome.

WHAT IS A CODE OF PRACTICE?

A Code of Practice is a document developed to provide an agreed framework and set of values for professional practice. It provides a frame of reference in which to develop ethical and safe work practice. This Code of Practice was developed by the Bendigo Loddon Youth Arts Network to provide advice to artists, support workers, organizations and groups who engage young people in creative projects and activities. The information in this code draws from information collected by the Bendigo Youth Arts Network evaluations and consultations and also draws from youth affairs council of Victoria- *code of ethical practice- a first step of the Victorian youth sector*

WHO DOES IT APPLY TO?

It is relevant to all members of the Bendigo/Loddon Youth Arts Network, facilitating artists and support workers. It is also a document that can be used by other organizations and groups.

The principles and practice responsibilities outlined will support and guide the work that artists, support workers and organisation do with young people in a creative context.

For the purposes of this document 'young people', applies to those aged between 12 and 25 years. However, some organisations work with young people in a broader age bracket and this Code may still apply.

UNIVERSAL CONTEXT

This Code of Practice is based on a human rights framework. The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, ratified by Australia, has particular relevance to youth work practice. Its four core principles are 'nondiscrimination', 'the best interests of the child', 'the right to life, survival and development', and 'respect for the views of the child'. Article 3.1 of the Convention prescribes that 'in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.' Other United Nations declarations of particular relevance to the content of this Code are the *Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities* also outlines human rights that *all* Victorians can expect to enjoy. Youth workers need to have an understanding of these rights and actively work to promote them.

RESPECTING DIVERSITY

Central to working ethically with young people is a respect for diversity, including respect for the diversity of their experiences, identities, cultures and opinions. The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* contains several provisions to protect young people from discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parents' or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. The *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities* also highlights the importance of respecting diversity through provisions it makes for *all* Victorians to enjoy their cultural rights and freedom of expression. One of the strengths of youth work is the diversity of practice within the Victorian youth sector. There are many different and creative ways of working with young people that are compatible with the principles and practice responsibilities of this Code. It is the intention of this Code to support ethical practice, in all its diverse forms, and to promote a respectful appreciation of diversity in the wider community.

2. Youth Work Principles

The youth work principles describe what youth work achieves. All of the principles reflect key underpinning values that inform youth work practice. This Code of Practice is based on the following general principles of youth work. The Code will guide artists, support workers and organisations to enable and ensure:

1. The empowerment of all young people
2. Young people's participation
3. Social justice for young people
4. The safety of young people
5. Respect for young people's human dignity and worth
6. Young people's connectedness to important people in their lives, such as family and community
7. Positive health and wellbeing outcomes for young people
8. The positive transitions and healthy development of young people.

3. Working with young people- Practice Responsibilities For artists, support workers and organizations

The practice responsibilities describe key elements of what artists, support workers and organisations do when guided by youth work principals. They are important to workers fulfilling their responsibilities. They are not placed in order of responsibility but are of equal importance. Each practice responsibility is outlined in further detail to assist in your understanding.

Recognition of Indigenous Peoples

Artist and support workers will be respectful of Indigenous culture recognising that culture and connection to land is a right of Indigenous young people. Workers will recognise the importance of culture to Indigenous young people's self-esteem and sense of identity. Workers will respect the unique rights of Indigenous peoples in promoting Indigenous young people's cultural safety and general wellbeing. For artists, support workers and organisation this involves recognising the rights of Indigenous young people and communities to self-determination and respecting Indigenous young people's rights to access both Indigenous services and all other services.

* Cultural Safety relies on the prevention of cultural abuse and is important to protect a person's emotional and psychological wellbeing. When the culture of a people is ignored, denigrated, or intentionally attacked, it is cultural abuse. Cultural abuse can be overt (such as in the case of direct racial vilification or discrimination) or covert (such as in the case of a lack of cultural sensitivity or an absence of positive images about another culture). Cultural abuse is harmful for young people because it strikes at their sense of identity.

Young People as the Primary Consideration

The primary consideration of the artist, support worker and organization is the young people with whom they engage. Achieving positive outcomes for young people can involve working closely with a range of other support networks. In a creative project setting often the support worker will be the person who will be working closely with a range of people including family or guardians, teachers, workers, other services and friends. Artists need to liaise with support workers when issues or concerns arise.

Duty of Care

Artists, support workers and organisations will act in the best interests of young people, avoid exposing them to physical, psychological or emotional harm or injury, and always uphold the principle of 'do no harm'. They will assess risk and manage the safety of work and activities involving young people while being aware of the need to encourage young people to partake in challenging activities. In working with young people, workers have a responsibility to make sure that the activity, referral or program is safe in general, and for the particular young person, and that there will not be harm that

results from their involvement. Risk assessment and management needs to be thorough. Equipment needs to be well maintained, and artist and support workers need to have appropriate skills, knowledge and training.

It is a legal requirement in Victoria that all people working either voluntarily or in employment with young people gain a Working with Children Check. * For further information see the Department of Justice website at <www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren>.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Artist and support workers will respect young people's rights to privacy and confidentiality.

This means that workers must avoid any undue invasion of privacy when collecting information about a young person and that confidentiality is protected. There are limits to preserving confidentiality, some of which are outlined by legal obligations on workers to share types of information. This means that young people must be informed from the outset about the restrictions to privacy and confidentiality that may exist and what may be done with information they provide. It is best practice to obtain their informed consent before collecting personal or health information or sharing it with others. Artist and support workers are encouraged to go beyond simply considering their legal obligations in protecting privacy and confidentiality, to consider the full extent of the privacy implications of particular activities or actions that a young person may engage in.

There are legal obligations that may impact on the way in which information is collected, kept and shared. One common, relevant example relates to the obligations outlined in the *Information Privacy Act 2000* and the *Health Records Act 2001* which regulate the way that government-funded services can collect, use, keep and secure personal and health information. The privacy implications may not always be clear, artists and youth workers are encouraged to liaise with organisations supporting the project for guidance on this issue.

In addition no photographs are to be taken or published without consent of the young person, support worker and organization involved. There can be legal issues arising from the publication of images of young people in temporary care or on court orders and there can be serious legal implications if this is not adhered to.

Boundaries

Whilst the relationship between an artist or support worker and a young person is often an important source of personal support for the young person, the relationship is a professional one, intentionally limited to protect both the young person and the youth worker. Workers will maintain the integrity of these limits, recognising the tensions between developing supportive and caring relationships with young people and the need to preserve the boundaries of the professional relationship. It is important that artists and support workers are able to develop trusting, healthy relationships with the young people they work with and recognize the power imbalance inherent in the professional relationship. Artists and support workers need to respect these professional boundaries with young people in both a work and broader public setting.

Transparency, Honesty and Integrity

Artist and support workers will be open and honest with young people, enabling them to access information to make choices and decisions in their lives and in relation to their participation in activities. Workers will act with integrity, adhering to the principles and practice responsibilities of their profession. Youth workers and youth agencies will not advance themselves or other stakeholders at the expense of young people. When developing a project, in initial meetings, artist and support workers must be clear on what they can and can't offer. Whilst being open and truthful, they should be mindful of issues of confidentiality, disclosure, health and safety, who the worker works for, and what the agency is funded or contracted to provide. Artists and support workers also have a role in explaining to young people the nature of other stakeholders' relationships to them and the expectations this may place upon them. Workers are aware of their role and the professional boundaries, principles and responsibilities required of them and other stakeholders. They will also value and respect difference in others' approaches.

Social Context

Artists and support workers will recognize the impact of social and structural forces on young people, so that their practice is responsive to young people's experiences and needs and to break down barriers that restrict young people's life opportunities. The work of an artist in a creative project is not about facilitating change within the individual young person, but extends to the social context in which the young person lives. Artists and support workers will particularly recognise that racism and cultural abuse is a factor in the lives of Indigenous young people and will seek to promote an environment which values their culture. This is also important when responding to young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Artists are agents of change in a variety of contexts, both with individual young people they may work with and in wider society. It is important to consider a young person within their social context rather than in isolation. Young people are shaped, influenced, contained and to some extent controlled by the contexts in which they live. They are part of their communities and broader social contexts and this should be acknowledged when working with them.

Anti-Oppressive Practice: Non-Discrimination, Equity and Self- Awareness

Artist and support workers will ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted and will enable and encourage young people to respect and celebrate their own and others' cultural backgrounds, identities and choices. Artists and support workers practice will be non-discriminatory and will work to overcome inequities caused by unequal access to economic, social and cultural resources, and will promote just and fair behavior. Artists and support workers will work with young people to challenge and oppose racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia and all other forms of discriminatory oppression. Artists and support workers will understand that, to work with Indigenous young people or young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with equity, their practice should be culturally appropriate and culturally competent.

All young people regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, environment, association, background or sexual identity, under Human Rights and Equal Opportunity legislation, have the right to be treated in a fair manner that promotes equity and equality. Regardless of workers personal beliefs, a young person has the right to be treated fairly and responded to on the basis of their need.

Cooperation and Collaboration

Artist and support workers will cooperate and collaborate with others, including other support networks in order to secure the best possible outcomes for young people. Artists and support workers will explore opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and professionals from other agencies and sectors that will mobilise young people and others to work together collectively on issues of common concern. Ethical practice involves a commitment to cooperative partnerships with relevant service providers and across sectors in order to collectively achieve positive outcomes for young people. Inter-agency and cross-sector collaborative approaches enable a young person to have a greater range of choices in terms of support networks and access to a range of information, skills and resources to meet all their needs. Collaboration between workers is an essential component of ethical practice, artists and support workers need to work together to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people.

Knowledge, Skills and Self- Care

Artist and support workers will keep abreast of the information, knowledge and practices needed to meet their obligations to young people. Artists and support workers have a responsibility to keep up-to-date with the information, resources, knowledge and practices needed to meet their obligations to young people. This includes recognising when new skills and knowledge are required, and seeking relevant education and training as well as feedback from service users and colleagues on the quality of their work. This also requires engaging in opportunities to reflect on practice. Ethical youth practice is consistent with preserving the health of artists and support workers. This means that they need to prioritize the practice of self-care and seek assistance where needed

4. Project Development

CONSULTATION AND EVALUATION

It is important that any youth arts project, program or initiative is relevant to the young people at that time and in that place and that the relevancy and effectiveness of the program continues and develops. Exploring a range of activities early in a project can assist greatly in the success of a project to discover what's possible and where the interest lies.

* Consult - keep in touch with the young people and /or organizations you will be working with as to where they're up to and what they're into. What are the issues they're facing with themselves and their communities? What art form sparks an interest? How should something be structured so they can access it?

* Evaluate - get feedback on and assess the stuff that you get out there. What did the young people think? What outcomes were achieved in relation to your objectives? How can it work better next time?

Consult and evaluate during projects as part of the artistic process when energy and inspiration are high. Go beyond the written response option, film or tape young people's comments. Get them to express what they thought or what they want through a piece of artwork. Keep in touch with what other groups are doing. And talk to them about how they are doing it.

CONTROL

Like all groups, young people have the right to self-determination in their arts and cultural expression. Youth control of how they engage in the arts is crucial. The young people you are working with may not be ready and it may not be appropriate for them to completely develop and implement a project, program or group themselves. If they are, it could be a positive experience through which they develop skills and self-empowerment. But if they're not, there are many other avenues within a process for youth to exert control and in doing so gain a level of ownership such as:

- informing the shape or content of a program at the consultation stage
- sitting on a committee to bring a youth perspective to the way a project/activity runs
- taking responsibility for different tasks associated with a project

ACCESSIBILITY

Not all young people want to sit on a board or take responsibility for organising an event, they may just want to turn up on the day. Not all young people want to participate, they may just want to watch. Some of the factors that need to be taken into account when considering the accessibility of youth arts activity are:

- Limited money and transport options
- Generational or cultural boundaries - a particular person, venue or situation not being deemed approachable or comfortable by a young person.
- Timing or structure of projects - young people who can only commit to a drop in basis
- Language and literacy levels are other accessibility factors.

Make sure that you identify the target audience for any organisation, group, program or project and maximise its accessibility in relation to their needs and wants. Organisations and larger programs may have an obligation to be as accessible as possible to the entire youth population. Smaller groups or specialised projects may not have the resources or intention to plan for broad youth access or may focus in on a particular segment of the youth population.

5. Important information for Artists, Support workers and Organisations

THE ROLES WITHIN OF AN ARTS PROJECT

For Community Cultural Development projects the following people are usually involved involved:

- **The artist** will be facilitating the creative direction and outcomes of a project,
- **The Support worker** will be a qualified youth worker or counselor present as a support worker for participants
- **Organisations** will be employing both staff or will be a participating partner in a project working in collaboration with another umbrella organisation

THE ARTIST

The role of the artist is to bring creative expertise to a project/program by sharing experience, skills and knowledge with participants and organizations

The artist needs to:

- Undergo a police check and a working with children check
- Make sure the project brief is clearly stated, understood and agreed upon by everyone involved, and most importantly manageable and achievable.
- Ensure the support worker is present at all times where possible (the artist is not a support worker and does not have the same duty-of-care role)
- Negotiate with the support worker and organisation on what strategies will be used to manage participants behavior and agree on a management strategy from the onset
- Understand the role of the support worker in the context of a project and be aware that ultimately, behavior management, attendance, OH&S, and participant supervision and welfare are all the responsibility of the support worker and participating organization
- Arrive punctually at the time their workshop program is to commence.
- Communicate clearly to the group what you expect to achieve in the project
- Should someone in your care abscond it is vital that you do not leave the group - but call relevant assistance (usually the support worker)
- Many organisations develop their own participant behavior management policy which can be provided upon request.

- As an artist working on a project you are not required to undertake First Aid training but it is advisable.
- Design and implement programs and procedures to ensure the safety of the participants
- Educating and warn participants about dangerous situations or practices.
- Refer Participants to support workers if a young person discloses information that requires additional professional assistance. It is important to support young people during a project however it is imperative to recognize when a young person may require additional help

THE SUPPORT WORKER

The role of the support worker is to ensure the wellbeing and safety of young people participating in a project and to support the facilitating artist as required with issues that may arise for participants during the projects duration.

The support worker needs to:

- Undergo a police check and Have a current working with children check
- Uphold the 9 core youth worker principals of empowerment, social justice, safety, respect, connectedness, wellbeing and healthy development
- Be present in each workshop as requested by the participating organization and artist to support the participants
- Assist with supervision of the participants and to ensure that they stay within the rules and practices for their safety and that of other young people
- Consider whether it is reasonable to leave a group unsupervised and for how long if an issue arises with a participant, support workers must assess the maturity and propensities of the youth and the nature of their environment.
- Communicate clearly to the group as to where you are and when you'll re-enter the room.
- Check with the group that they feel confident to remain unsupervised for a short duration in your absence.
- Identify at least two within the group who can act as monitors for the safety in the short time
- Take prompt action to put an end to any dangerous or potentially dangerous behavior.
- Ensure that the workplace/employer has provided you with an emergency response plan - this should include access to a working phone, with emergency phone numbers easily available
- In case of a service emergency it is very important that you do not leave the group.
- Provide whatever assistance you can to help any injured person - and respond with due care ensuring that they receive adequate medical help if needed. (*This may require calling an ambulance).
- Be fully aware and informed of referral agencies available for young people if they require further professional assistance

Organisations

Organizations can be involved in arts projects in a number of ways, they could be employing the artist and the support worker to support young people accessing their service or alternatively they may be a participating organization referring young people into a broader project managed by another organisation

Organisations need to:

- Understand their role and responsibility in the context of the arts project, and have a well defined project brief designed by them or the partnering organization outlining aims, objectives and anticipated outcomes
- Ensure workshop site, buildings, facilities and equipment are safe
- provide information about special events such as sports day, swimming carnivals, camps etc. which may impact on planning.
- Provide information to the support worker on participants first aid, care needs
- Show artist and support worker emergency evacuation procedures
- Establish a methods for communication between key staff for the duration of the project
- Provide Information about participants that may be important for the artist to consider when planning and delivering an arts program. This information could include information about participants with special needs, participants identified as at risk or culturally and linguistically diverse participants
- Provide artists and support workers with information about the organizations sexual and racist harassment grievance procedures
- Ensure criminal history and working with children checks are in place before the artist and support workers begin working with young people involved
- check that the artists skills and style of working are appropriate for the project
- provide a suitable space for the artist and participants to work in
- provide induction for the artist
- coordinate the program including timetables, resources, equipment and meetings with the artist
- negotiate a contract of employment with the artist/s that includes the terms and conditions talked about at a face to face meeting

Other Relevant Resources

YPAA - Young People and the Arts Australia <http://ypaa.net/>

Australia Council - Young People and the Arts
http://www.ozco.gov.au/council_priorities/young_people/

Australia Council - Arts & Education http://www.ozco.gov.au/council_priorities/education/

Arts Encore (Victoria's equivalent of Arts Edge)
<http://vicartscentre.com.au/education/index/html>

Artsedge - AiS Projects (Western Australia) <http://www.artsedge.dca.wa.gov.au/>

Artist in Schools (AiS) Projects (Northern Territory) Department of Employment, Education and Training <http://www.deet.nt.gov.au/>

Regional Arts Australia Online <http://www.regionalarts.com.au/raa1/support/links/asp>

Australia Council for the Arts <http://ozco.gov.au/>

Foundation for Young Australians <http://youngaustralians.org/>

Grantslink <http://grantslink.gov.au/>

Fuel4arts - Arts marketing tools and ideas <http://www.fuel4arts.com/>

Sauce:hot tips for effective arts promotion
http://www.fuel4arts.com/sauce/12_communicating/communicating.htm

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