

CHILD SAFETY FOR COMMUNITY THEATRE

WHY IT MATTERS, AND HOW TO DO IT
STAGECRAFT 2026 · ANDREW YAGER

BEFORE WE START

We'll talk about child abuse, including sexual abuse. Step out if you need to.

Lifeline

13 11 14

1800RESPECT

1800 737 732

Blue Knot Foundation

1300 657 380

Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800

Beyond Blue

1300 22 4636

Bravehearts

1800 272 831

Take a photo of this.

THREE QUESTIONS

Hands up if your organisation has

01

a written child safety policy

02

a Child Safety Officer your
members could name right
now

03

done the OCG self-
assessment

WHY IT MATTERS

THE PROBLEM

**1 IN 7 AUSTRALIAN
ADULTS**

**EXPERIENCED
PHYSICAL
AND/OR SEXUAL
ABUSE BEFORE
AGE 15**

*ABS PERSONAL SAFETY
SURVEY 2021-22*

62.2%

**NEARLY 2 IN 3
AUSTRALIANS**

**EXPERIENCED AT
LEAST ONE TYPE
OF CHILD
MALTREATMENT**

*AUSTRALIAN CHILD
MALTREATMENT STUDY,
2023*



Roughly 18 of them.

Survivors took an average of 23.9 years to tell anyone.

Royal Commission, 2017

CAST OF 30.

FOUR KINDS OF RISK

01

Environment

Where children and adults meet, and who can see

02

The child's vulnerability

Why some children are easier to harm, or less able to tell

03

The adult's propensity

Determined, opportunistic, situational

04

The organisation

What it puts ahead of children

Royal Commission, via the OCG

WHY THEATRE

Trust and intimacy are how we work

Physical contact is routine: costume, makeup, mics,
choreography

Adults and children share the show, the corridor, the after-
party

Late nights, lifts home, volunteers, group chats

The mentor is a hero



WHY MUSICAL THEATRE, SPECIFICALLY

- The shows are about sex, power and violence
- The craft is pushing past comfort
- One adult decides whether the kid gets the part
- We gather the kids who are different



ANYONE UNDER 18.

**YOUR 17-YEAR-
OLD ASM. THE 16-
YEAR-OLD IN THE
ADULT SHOW.
THE KID ON
FOLLOW SPOT.**

ABUSE, OR NOT?

- Twelve things that could happen in a rehearsal room.
- Two piles: abuse, and not abuse.
- For the abuse pile, name the kind.
- Five minutes. You will disagree. That's the point.



FIVE KINDS OF HARM

Emotional

Neglect

Family violence

Physical

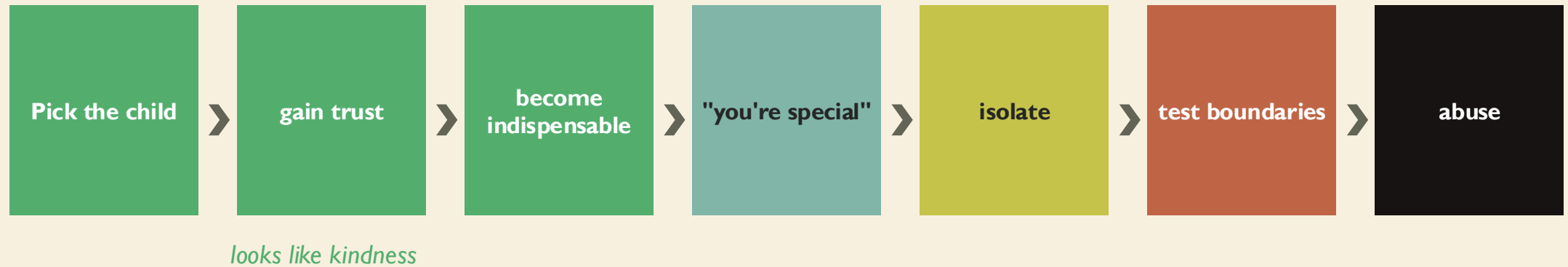
Sexual

Grooming

how sexual abuse gets built

Often several at once. Often building up over time.

GROOMING LOOKS LIKE KINDNESS



The early steps look like generosity.

Signs present differently.

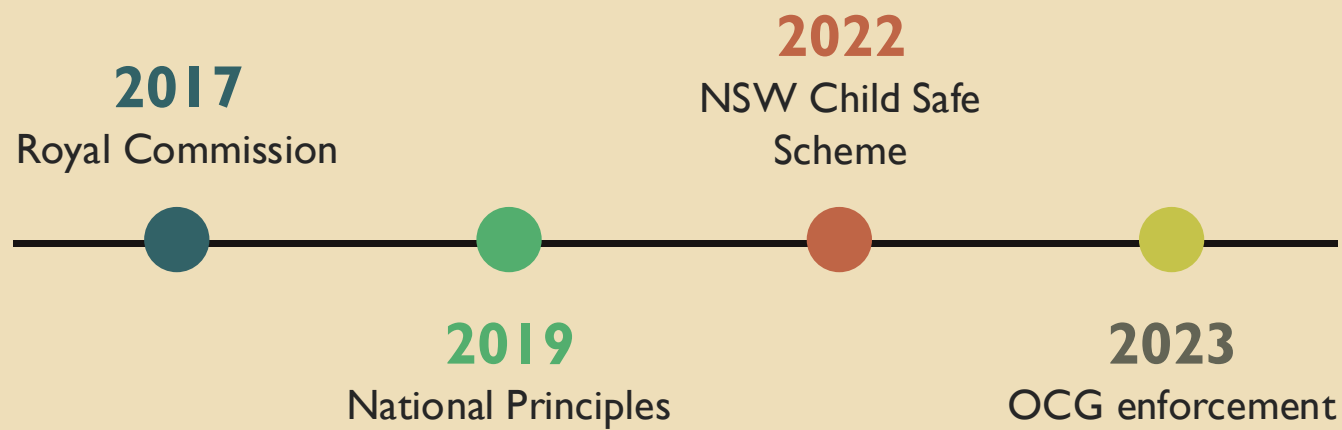
**Neurodivergent · culturally diverse ·
LGBTIQ+**

Signs aren't proof. They're a reason to pay attention and tell someone.

**“BUT THEY LOOK
OK”**

THE TEN PRINCIPLES

IN A REHEARSAL ROOM



ONE TIMELINE

Also: WWCC Act 2012 · Crimes Act ss 316A, 43B

THE TEN NATIONAL PRINCIPLES

1

**Leadership,
governance,
culture**

2

Children's voice

3

**Families and
communities**

4

**Equity and
diversity**

5

**Suitable,
supported people**

6

**Child-focused
complaints**

7

Training

8

**Safe physical and
online spaces**

9

**Review and
improve**

10

**Policies and
procedures**

LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, CULTURE

Principle



Child safety shows up wherever the organisation makes decisions

Committee meetings. Production team meetings. The AGM.

Casting, venue choice, budget, the rehearsal schedule

Ask your committee

Where in your organisation does child safety get discussed when nothing has gone wrong?

CHILDREN'S VOICE

Principle

2

Children know their rights and have a say

Tell them what they're entitled to, in their language

Ask them, then change something because of what they said

Ask your committee

How, specifically, would a 12-year-old in your show influence a decision?

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Principle

3

Parents know what you've committed to and how to raise a concern

In the room, or out of it? Decide, and say why.

Audition notice, published policies, a named CSO, an information night

Ask your committee

What does a parent of a new young member know about your child safety practice before rehearsal one?

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

Principle

4

Safety practice fits the actual children, not an average child

Identity, culture and neurodiversity - and also disability, money, faith, family
Ask each child's family what they need. Then do it.

Ask your committee

Which child in your current show would find it hardest to tell you something, and why?

SUITABLE, SUPPORTED PEOPLE

Principle

5

A WWCC, and then everything else

Ask about child safety when you recruit. Check references for the creatives you bring in.

Induct, sign the code, train, and never leave one adult holding the kids alone

Ask your committee

Does your newest volunteer know who the CSO is and what "no adult alone with a child" means in your venue?

CHILD-FOCUSED COMPLAINTS

Principle

6

A child can complain, and the process is built for them

Children are believed first. Adults are investigated later, by someone else.
A form a 12-year-old can use. A CSO at rehearsal, not just on paper.

Ask your committee

If a child complained about your most valued adult member, what would happen in the first hour?

TRAINING

Principle

7

Everyone knows the signs, the rules and what to do

Annual training for all adults, scenario-based. A briefing for every production.
You don't have to write it: OCG, Human Rights Commission, churches, ChildSafe, LPA

Ask your committee

What fraction of your current cast and crew has done any child safety training in the last two years?

SAFE PHYSICAL AND ONLINE SPACES

Principle

8

Design the room so wrongdoing would be seen

Dressing rooms, toileting, wings, quick changes, lifts home, the after-party
Every message is a room: no adult-to-child DMs, comms on a governed platform

Ask your committee

Walk your venue this week. Where could an adult be alone with a child unobserved?

REVIEW AND IMPROVE

Principle

9

You check whether it's working, and fix what isn't

Annual review against the ten Principles, reported to the committee

A fifteen-minute debrief after every production

Ask your committee

When was your child safety policy last read by anyone other than its author?

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Principle

10

Written down, current, accessible, and describing what you actually do

Start from a template pack: OCG, LPA, Human Rights Commission, or borrow ours

Then make them real: match practice, reference structures not names, put them where people look

Ask your committee

Does your policy describe your practice, or your intentions?

THE FRAMEWORK

WHO IS COVERED, AND WHO MUST DO WHAT

NOT FROM NSW?

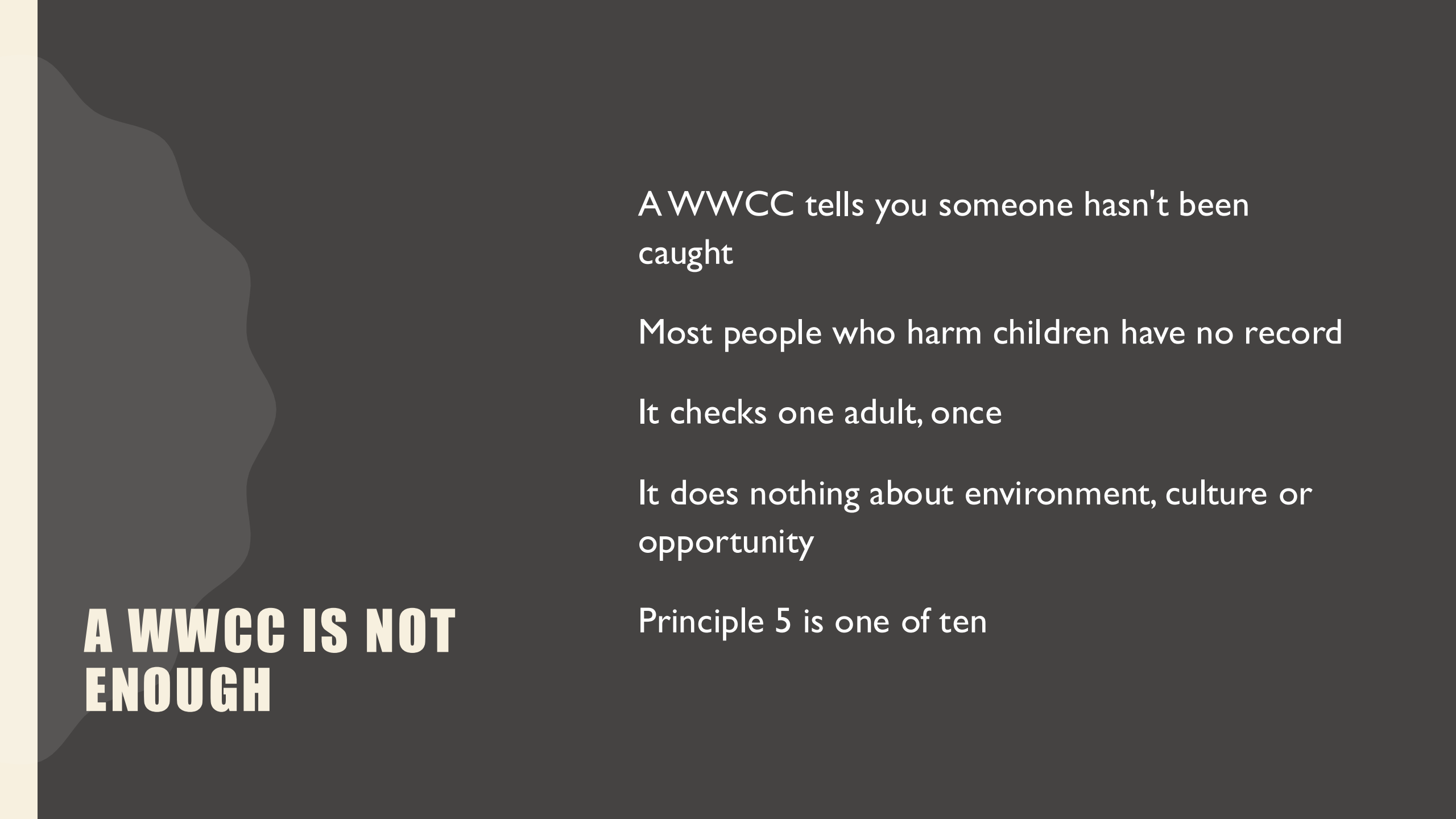
The National Principles apply everywhere in Australia

Each state runs its own scheme, regulator and check

The culture work is identical. The phone numbers aren't.

Your regulator is on the resources page





A WWCC IS NOT ENOUGH

A WWCC tells you someone hasn't been caught

Most people who harm children have no record

It checks one adult, once

It does nothing about environment, culture or opportunity

Principle 5 is one of ten

WHO IS COVERED?

Child Safe Scheme	Yes, that's you
Reportable Conduct Scheme	Usually not, unless church- or school-auspiced
WWCC	Everyone in child-related work, paid or volunteer
Our practice	If under-18s are involved, every adult holds a WWCC



WHAT YOU MUST DO

Under 16 = child. 16-17 = young person. Both under 18 = covered.

Make safe

Everyone, every time

Report to police

Every adult (Crimes Act s316A)

Report to the Helpline

Anyone may; mandatory reporters must (under-16s)

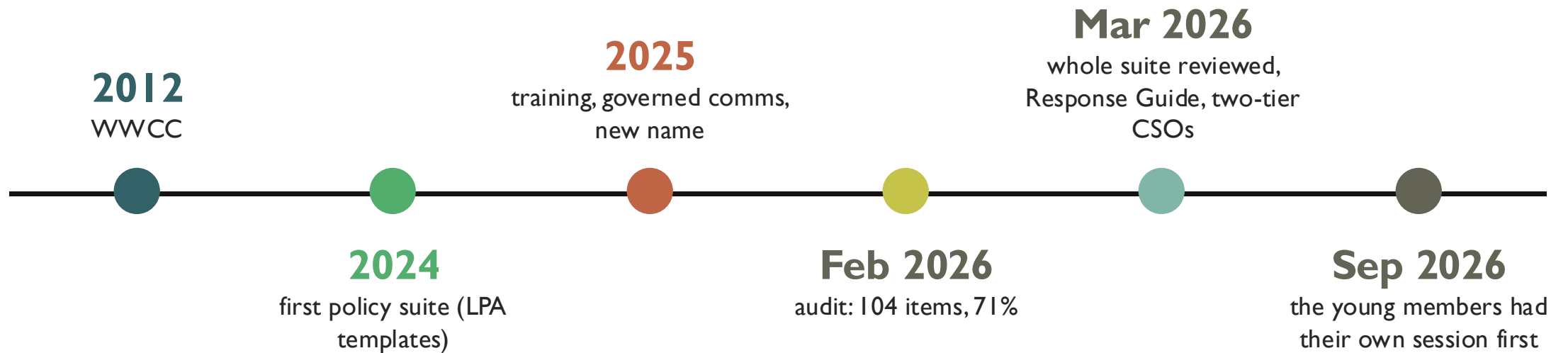
NSW. Not legal advice - confirm with your committee.

BEAMS AND RED GLOBE

A CASE STUDY



BEAMS: THE TIMELINE



WHAT WE LEARNT

- Most gaps were mechanical
- Don't name people in the policy
- CSOs burn out. Split the role.
- A standing agenda item is the whole game
- Ask the kids first, then tell the adults what the kids were promised



RED GLOBE: THE HIRED CREW ARE COVERED TOO

- We're often on shows with children in them
- **WWCC** for every crew member, every time
- Mic techs, dressing rooms, long bump-ins: it all has to work together
- We follow the client's protocols, and we bring our own



SIX STEPS TO GETTING STARTED

01

**Understand the
Standards**

02

**Check your people
(WWCC)**

03

**Write or review six key
documents**

04

Reduce risks

05

Show your commitment

06

Track and review

ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-scheme/getting-started

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WRITE IT

OCG

template pack
6 documents

LPA

example policies
8 documents

AHRC

policy template

BeaMS's whole suite is public: beams.org.au/childsafety

Pick one pack. Adapt it. Publish it.

An artistic illustration in a painterly style. In the center, two people are seated on the floor, surrounded by numerous colorful sticky notes (yellow, orange, red, blue) that they appear to be organizing. A man with a beard and a woman with her hair in a bun are looking at the notes. In the background, other figures are visible, some standing and some sitting, suggesting a larger group activity. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues and teals, with the sticky notes providing a vibrant contrast. A thick, white, wavy line runs vertically along the left side of the image.

ACTIVITY 2

WHAT WOULD YOUR ORGANISATION
NEED TO HAVE ALREADY BUILT?

THE 10PM MESSAGE

A 15-year-old in the cast messages you privately at 10pm:

"Was I flat in the Act 2 number?"

Write the reply you would actually send. Two minutes.

Swap with your neighbour. Find one thing you'd change.



WHAT WOULD NEED TO EXIST ALREADY?

One scenario per table. 10 minutes.

01

Which of the four risks are in play?

02

What would need to exist already? Where would it be written?

03

What would you change on Monday?



THE TIGHT VENUE

Scenario A

Show week. Two dressing rooms and a corridor. A cast of 34 includes nine children aged 10 to 15 and a young adult ensemble aged 18 to 22. The director wants the kids to share a room with the young adults. A parent objects.

What would your organisation need to have decided, written down and told people before tonight, so this doesn't become a fight on opening night?

THE HELPFUL ADULT

Scenario B

A long-standing member is wonderful with the kids. Lifts, costumes, running lines, always the one who stays late. Parents love him. You notice he spends a lot of one-on-one time with one 11-year-old and has started messaging her directly to "check in about lines". Nothing has been alleged.

How would your organisation make it possible to raise this without it being an accusation? What would your code of conduct already say about lifts, one-on-one time and direct messaging?



EVERY MESSAGE IS A ROOM

Scenario C

Your production runs on a WhatsApp group the stage manager set up on her own phone. It includes three 15 and 16 year olds. Adults DM kids about calls and costume. Someone raises a concern about something an adult said to a young member privately.

What can you hand to police or the OCG? Who controls the group when the SM leaves? What would a comms policy for your company need to say?



THE CONCERN IS ABOUT THE PRESIDENT

Scenario D

A young member tells a chorus member that the president, who is also directing, makes her uncomfortable, has commented on her body during costume fittings and asked her to stay back alone. Your reporting procedure says "report to the president or a CSO". Both CSOs were appointed by the president and one is his partner.

What has to be true about how your organisation is set up for this child to be safe?



STARTING FROM ZERO

Scenario E

A 40-year-old society with no written child safety policy, no CSO, WWCCs "sort of" collected, and a junior production in twelve weeks. The committee has given you one meeting's worth of goodwill.

What do you do in the first 90 days, in what order, and how do you keep it going after the show closes?



THE DISCLOSURE AT THE AFTER-PARTY

Scenario F

Closing night, 11:40pm. A 14-year-old, upset, tells the assistant choreographer that a cast member aged 17 has been pressuring her to send photos. Both are your members. Her parents arrive in twenty minutes.

What does your organisation need in place so the adult in that moment knows what to do and what not to do?





WHEN YOU BECOME AWARE

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE



I DON'T WANT TO GO HOME TONIGHT

Pairs. One of you is Priya, 12. One of you is the adult.

Priya's only line: "I don't want to go home tonight."

Sixty seconds. Then swap.

FIVE GOLDEN RULES

Listen

In their words. No leading questions. No promise of secrecy.

Don't investigate

Hear it. It is not your job to decide if it is true.

Record

Their words, who, when, where, who else was there.

Report

To the CSO or president, straight away.

Don't discuss

Only with people who need to know.

Anyone in danger? 000 first.

WHO DO YOU CALL?

Immediate danger or a crime	Police 000
Child or young person at risk of significant harm	Child Protection Helpline 132 111
Allegation against a member of your organisation	Office of the Children's Guardian 02 8219 3600
Online - images, grooming, sextortion	eSafety Commissioner esafety.gov.au/report

Support

Lifeline 13 11 14	1800RESPECT 1800 737 732	Blue Knot 1300 657 380	Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800	Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636	Bravehearts 1800 272 831
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WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

One thing you'll do differently, not a whole policy.

Agenda item · verify the WWCCs · name the Show CSO · ask a young member

KEEP THE CARD. NOTHING IS COLLECTED.



andrewyager.com

THANK YOU

**SLIDES AND EVERY LINK: ANDREWYAGER.COM
BEAMS.ORG.AU/CHILDSAFETY**