



Theatre Network NSW

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Theatre Network NSW CODE OF BEHAVIOUR to prevent sexual harassment and abuses of power in our industry: a living document to which we encourage ongoing review

The following code is based on the [Royal Court Theatre's Code of Behaviour](#) from the UK and published in response to our theatre sector's demand and hope for culture change to prevent sexual harassment and abuses of power. We thank those in other industries and cultures who have led the way in not only condemning but actively preventing abuses of power.

Published by Theatre Network NSW as a living document to which we encourage our sector to respond to, this code has been developed as an initiative of the NSW Theatre Producers Working Group which includes members of [whyareyouwinkingatme](#) and MEAA's National Performers' Committee. As a living Code of Behaviour we expect sector revision and addition of this code.

TNN would also like to acknowledge and refer those in our industry to MEAA's Sexual Harassment, Misconduct & Bullying in Theatre survey which closed only last week (17 November) and which we expect will shed light on our industry's prevention of and response to bullying and sexual harassment. TNN also notes the Confederation of Australian State Theatres (CAST) joint statement from its members condemning sexual harassment and abuse.

Our theatre industry is broad and ambitious: It encompasses intimate and rigorous personal systems of drama training and apprenticeship. Our work takes place in offices, auditions, rehearsals, back stage, late at night, in bars and parties and in public. Our industry includes commercial producers and theatres, not for profit and publicly funded organisations, touring companies, state companies and small to medium and independent companies, venues, festivals and more. These all come with different contexts and resources. This code of behaviour has been developed to work, like so many of us in the industry, across this diversity.

This code is not intended to serve as a substitute or blanket template for each organisation's own sexual harassment policy, and Theatre Network NSW encourages its members to create sexual harassment policies properly crafted to suit their own individual needs and requirements.

The issue of sexual harassment, abuse and predation goes far beyond the question of the traumatising of its victims. It's an industrial issue about work safety.

Alison Croggan, 8th November 2017, witnessperformance.com



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This Code of Behaviour is underpinned by three types of action identified in the Royal Court Theatre's Code and other responses to this issue. They are:

Responsibility, Raising Awareness, Reporting

1. Taking Responsibility

- Sexual harassment and abusive behaviour must be called out, straight away, even if it is awkward to do so. Although openly identifying unwanted behaviour can be difficult and may cause discomfort, any such discomfort is not our fault. Examples of language that should be used in circumstances of unwanted behaviour may include: "That is not appropriate – it makes me feel uncomfortable." Empower yourself and others, and stand up against harassment and abusive behaviour.
- Everyone in our industry has a responsibility to stand against harassment and abusive behaviour, and to stand up for others who experience harassment and abusive behaviour. No one is alone or should feel alone.
- Abuses of power can happen across diverse gender and working relationships. Include male / female / cis / trans / non-binary colleagues in the conversation. Sexism and sexual harassment is not only "women's business".
- Those with power must take responsibility for that power. They must not use it abusively over others who are in more vulnerable positions. If you are unsure whether you are in a position of power or vulnerability ask yourself these questions: Why am I doing this? Do I feel comfortable doing this? What impact will doing this have on me or on the other people around me?
- Recognise the boundaries between work and social spaces in our industry. Any ambiguity between these boundaries must not be exploited.
- Interrogate the stories and representations we put on stage. It is the responsibility of our industry to represent the world. We must take responsibility for the representations we put on stage, and must strive for equality.
- We must push for gender parity and cultural representation on all levels, including the following: recruitment, remuneration, leadership, governance, programming, curating, storytelling, directing and performing.

Active Policies and Clear Procedures: Every company and arts organisation **must** have a sexual harassment and bullying policy that is active and accessible to all. This policy is 'active' in the sense that it is understood by all staff and freelancers and provides clear examples and processes for everyone to follow. A policy needs to speak to the organisation's scope of practice and recognize particular areas of risk and responsibility.



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This policy should have a clear reporting structure and any reports must be acted on with immediacy.

For further information and advice go to: Effectively preventing and responding to sexual harassment: A Code of Practice for Employers, can be found at www.humanrights.gov.au. For further assistance on sexual harassment issues, employers can contact the Australian Human Rights Commission or their state or territory anti-discrimination agency.

Sexual harassment is a process of attrition, a spectrum of behaviours that go all the way from unwanted and uninvited sexual communication (speech, emails, texts, environment) to touching, to assault, to violent rape. And it's complex: emotional manipulation is a huge part of it, shame and complicity are part of it. Human beings are complex. And addressing it is also complex. No amount of public relations from major companies will substitute for honest accounting and responsibility, for policies that not only address this problem but which are actively used to stop it. If it isn't addressed properly, no motherhood statements about inclusion are worth the pixels they're written in.

Alison Crogan, 8th November 2017, witnessperformance.com

2. Raising Awareness:

- Facilitate more robust conversation about harassment and abusive behaviour between theatre schools and industry, in order to provide students (in acting, stage management, management, technical, directing, writing, producing) with the freedom to be confident, empowered and appropriate at all times.
- Recognise that although theatre work can and should be challenging, experimental, exploratory and bold, the creative space must be a safe space. Discuss this Code of Behaviour or other industry codes and policies in your workplace and with colleagues and peers to build a stronger awareness and sense of responsibility in our industry. Include sexism and sexual harassment in workplace health & safety conversations.

3. Reporting:

- Logging inappropriate behaviour (including harassment and abusive behaviour) is important, even if no further action is taken. Logging all complaints and reports may assist in identifying patterns of inappropriate behaviour.
- Reporting structures must be available to everyone in our industry either through a company or through our industry agencies and support services.
- Fill out an incident report. Use existing systems to express and articulate the issue. Review these systems to ensure that they fit the scope, risks and diversity of the company/organisation.
- Reporting must be acted on with respect and immediacy.



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Some suggested codes of behaviour that we adhere to:

- It is never appropriate to consider or portray sexual harassment as a compliment.
- It is never appropriate to send sexually unsolicited explicit emails or text messages to colleagues.
- It is never appropriate to comment about a person's private life or the way they look.
- It is never appropriate to sexually objectify anyone's body in any way in any place, including in a rehearsal room, theatre or other place of work. These places must be safe places for everyone.
- It is never appropriate to direct insults or taunts of a sexual nature.
- It is never appropriate for someone in a senior role to ask a person in a junior role to work outside hours in a private home or hotel.
- It is never appropriate for an actor to be made to feel vulnerable during the course of their work, including through nudity, undress or costuming.
- It is never appropriate to initiate unwanted intimate physical contact, including kissing, brushing up against someone, touching, fondling or hugging.
- It is never appropriate to push people to share their personal experiences to deepen the work. If such an experience is voluntarily shared by someone, it is to remain confidential and within the trust of the working room.
- It is never appropriate to ignore either an informal or formal report of bullying, sexual misconduct, or harassment.
- It is never appropriate to downplay or make light of someone else's concerns of harassment or misconduct.
- It is never appropriate to behave in any way that may be considered to be an offence under criminal law, such as physical assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault, stalking or obscene communications.

If you would like to add to this code of conduct please write to director@tnn.org.au