



Small children are important - these events show that the community values children. I appreciate that something special for children has been created and shows children are valued. - parent attending festival with 2 children

GUIDELINE 1 CREATE A PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK WITH CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE

Quality children's programming provides a supportive framework for parents of young children. People and organisations working with young children need to know why they are working with and for children. This guideline encourages cultural leaders to position children firmly at the centre of all development, implementation and review activities. Parents place high value on programs, events and experiences especially designed for children and those that recognise children as beings with agency. The concept of agency entails children of any age experiencing their civic presence as a positive force in the world.

Some elements to consider when developing a philosophical framework include:

- Childhood is a changing construct, different from previous generations, demanding grounded approaches connected to children's lived experiences
- Children are diverse, active citizens participating in and contributing to the social and cultural landscape now
- Early childhood is a period of rapid kinaesthetic, cognitive, social and aesthetic development which can be influenced by quality, creative, holistic experiences.

This is a great opportunity for them to be able to talk in the audience. I think that it is probably the most important thing for us, that he can come, it goes dark, he can squish closer, and that it's quite a child-friendly performance.

- parent with child, after The Red Tree performance

Designed for children to feel comfortable to touch and explore, which makes it very easy for parents too. - two carers discussing the outdoor activities and space

GUIDELINE 2 SUPPORT PARENTS AS PIVOTAL IN THE LEARNING COMMUNITY



It is parents who introduce their children to the value of the arts, and provide the foundations of their knowledge, attitudes and appreciation. However parents do not necessarily have expertise in the arts, and appreciate the support provided to assist them in introducing their young children to the arts. Carefully planned support strategies that assist them to enter the arts experience are highly valued. They welcome support and opportunities that provide them with information on how to interact with their children in a cultural environment.

Parents who are seeking quality arts experiences for their young children should expect that responsive public organisations and venues will:

- Make transparent and easy-to-access information available for parents about the philosophy, aims and objectives driving the creation of work, programs and/or festivals
- Develop marketing and educational materials that allow children, teachers, parents and carers to engage in any number of ways, according to age, abilities, levels of interest and experience
- Create support materials such as suggestions for activities, web pages and parents' workshops that assist parents to learn with their children prior to, during and after arts experiences
- Keep costs within an affordable range, and include free events, to ensure access for all
- Conduct research with parents that builds knowledge of how they support and grow their children's engagement in the arts.

Suggestions, outline and content was very helpful - helped me to understand the performance. The information was specific and not dumbed down. - mother discussing notes and support materials provided

Plenty of good QPAC staff and volunteer help,
and people to take part with the children.

— grandfather with two grandchildren



Workshop leaders are all very
good at communicating with
little kids — parent attending with
young child

GUIDELINE 3 ACKNOWLEDGE CULTURAL LIFE AS A COLLECTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Healthy communities respect children, and are built on partnerships between institutions and parents and carers. Opportunities emerge for new learning and better understandings, when adults work together in the interests of the children in a community. Collective action around children's public experience of the arts can be rewarding not only for children but for all participants. Out of the Box involved over 800 adults, including artists, arts workers, security guards, volunteers and students from universities. Parents strongly value the range of people involved to assist them in navigating the space, in engaging in performances and other activities. When adults from various backgrounds and fields come together to produce a child-centred environment, children learn from the social cohesion that is modelled.

As a collaborative and collective community it is important to:

- Welcome children, their parents and carers by identifying and removing barriers to participation by children and their parents and carers
- Support children's rights and agency through providing space and resources for children in planning and delivery
- Take public responsibility for children by being more responsive to children's needs and interests in all facets of human endeavour
- Enshrine children in policies that position children, their parents, teachers and carers as active participants and contributors to culture and communities now.

My child was really taken with the dances and music - different from anything
seen before.
— parent discussing *The Island*, and the indigenous dance



My child absorbs everything - these experiences become a part of who he is, he grows up with an understanding of community - with respect.

— parent, at forum

GUIDELINE 4 TAKE A FUTURES PERSPECTIVE

Researching arts and cultural development activities for, with and by children can bring new understandings about the shaping of current and future cultures. The challenge is to engage a larger percentage of the population not only as arts audience members, but also as hands-on participants in making, creating, and performing artworks through local civic networks. In this approach, priority is given to developing a sense of belonging, connectedness, cultural expression and memory.

Although the role of the arts has been significant for the preservation of Australia's heritage it is important to realise that they play a significant role in the shaping of current and future cultures. Children are important contributors to community and cultural life. Parents seeking educational advantage for their children realise the importance of the arts in their children's lives. To thrive in the twenty-first century, it is not enough to leave school with excellent examination results. Today's children will be working in jobs that have not yet been created. They will have to be lifelong learners - resilient and resourceful, imaginative, creative and logical, collaborative and inquisitive (Claxton, 2002).³

The arts, and arts festivals, provide important pathways for children as they connect with the wider community. Through arts activities children come to understand themselves, their interactions with others in their community, their culture and the wider world. Arts policy makers, curators and programmers should aim to:

- Depict current, critical themes and content, events and ideas in abstract and aesthetically sophisticated ways
- Assist parents and their children to identify with the broader social issues affecting their present and futures
- Evoke a wide range of emotional, aesthetic and creative responses
- Recognise that parents and children have multiple ways of seeing and experiencing and cater for this diversity.

³ Claxton, G. (2002). Building learning power: helping young people become better learners. Bristol: TLO Limited.