

LAY SAFE MINISTRY CLEARANCES POLICY

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Contact: Registrar

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INTRODUCTION:

Our diocese is committed to safe ministry. We affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected and have their views and opinions valued at all times. We commit to our pastoral, insurance, legal, and duty of care obligations; with its goal that all ministries are spiritually, emotionally and physically safe; based on the premise that diocesan parishes, ministries and related activities should be abuse-free and harm-free, person valuing and respectful spaces for ministry to God's glory.

The Anglican Church of Australia has established standards of conduct for church workers to maintain a safe and healthy ministry environment. Our commitment to these standards requires that we conduct screening and training for all persons who intend to engage in lay ministry in the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo.

OUR POLICY AIMS TO:

- Prevent harm to children and vulnerable people
- Reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- Ensure those undertaking ministry within the churches of the diocese are safe
- Demonstrate to the community that our churches are safe places
- Comply with the General Synod *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017*
- Comply with relevant Victorian legislation

WE COMMIT TO:

- Screening and training for all church leaders, workers, employees and volunteers to reduce the risk of child abuse or harm to vulnerable people
- Robust recruitment practices for all church leaders, workers, employees and volunteers
- Regularly training and educating our church leaders, workers, employees and volunteers on child abuse and vulnerable people risks

POLICY SCOPE & COVERAGE:

- This policy applies to all licensed, authorised, paid or voluntary church workers.
- This policy does not apply to persons ordained as deacons, or licensed as clergy, or appointed or elected as the bishop of a diocese

Definitions:

<i>Child</i>	a person who is under the age of 18 years
<i>Child-related work</i>	as defined by the Victorian Working with Children Check Act in Section 7
<i>Church worker</i>	means a lay person: a) who is licensed or authorised by the bishop of a diocese; or b) who is employed by a Church body; or c) who, for payment or not, holds a position or performs a function with the actual or apparent authority of a Church authority or Church body;
<i>Ministry to children</i>	means work of a kind where a person: a) is required to hold a working with children check, or a working with vulnerable people check by reason that the person has contact with a child as part of engaging in a regulated activity; or b) exercises a pastoral ministry which has direct, regular and not incidental contact with children; or c) provides services to children that are ancillary to the exercise of a pastoral ministry within paragraph (b) which involve: (i) contact with children during an overnight activity (such as camps and similar activities); or (ii) close, personal contact with children (such as changing clothes, washing and toileting); or d) supervises the ministry of a person within any one or more of paragraphs (a) to (c); or e) performs a professional standards role; or f) performs a safe ministry role; ¹
<i>National Police Check</i>	means consideration of a National Criminal History Check
<i>National Register Assessment</i>	means whether there is any information about the person entered in the National Register, and if so, consideration of that information
<i>Safe Church Training</i>	means accredited safe ministry training that incorporates the Safe Ministry Training National Benchmarks of General Synod
<i>Safe Ministry Check</i>	means the “Safe Ministry Check - Application for appointment as a voluntary Church Worker aged 18 years and over” form as issued by the General Synod Office of the Anglican Church
<i>Vulnerable person</i>	an individual aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason. ²
<i>Working with Children Check</i>	means an authority to work with children issued under the laws of the State of Victoria









¹ General Synod Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017

² Australian Government Department of Social Services

<https://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/doing-business-with-dss/vulnerable-persons-police-checks-and-criminal-offences>

CLEARANCE LEVELS AND REQUIREMENTS

Table 1 groups clearance requirements into levels according to risk and details the clearance requirements for each level. Examples of roles that form part of each level are outlined in Tables 2 – 4.

TABLE 1: CLEARANCE LEVELS				
Clearance Level	Working with Children Check	National Police Check	Safe Church Training	Safe Ministry Check
A				
B				
EDUCATION				
C				

Factors considered when determining the clearances include:

- Representing the Church in the public sphere
- Level of theological understanding and/or training required
- Individuals acting without clergy supervision
- Access and involvement of children and/or vulnerable people
- Access to significant monies
- Access to private and confidential information
- “Seen” as a leader in the Church by a child or a new person to the Church
- Responsible for parish governance and holds decision making authority
- Requirements of relevant state or diocesan legislation

Code of Conduct

The prescribed Code of Conduct for lay persons is Faithfulness in Service as adopted by the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo.

Working with Children Check

An individual’s Working with Children Check must have the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo listed as a registered organisation for which the person works or volunteers for. An individual must not register their local parish or congregation. Individuals with a Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration that includes a Working with Children Check must link the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo to their VIT registration.

National Police Check

A National Police Check is a Criminal History Assessment processed by an authorised provider. If an individual has obtained a National Police Check for another organisation within the previous three months, it can be provided for the purposes of a Lay Safe Ministry Clearance. Any National Police Checks not processed by the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo will need to be verified with the provider to confirm it is a valid National Police Check.





Safe Church Training

Safe Church Training must be accredited training offered by the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo. If an individual has completed safe church training through another denomination it will be at the discretion of the Ministry Development Officer to assess the suitability of the training for the Anglican Church context in Victoria. Safe Church Training must be completed within three years prior to being appointed, and as soon as practicable but not later than three months after being appointed to undertake ministry to children.




Safe Ministry Check

A Safe Ministry Check will be undertaken using the form prescribed by the General Synod Office of the Anglican Church of Australia. All Safe Ministry Checks will be processed through Kooyoora, the office of professional standards, to maintain confidentiality and independence. This process includes a National Register Assessment and referee checks.


**TABLE 2:
CLEARANCE LEVEL A**

Working with Children Check	National Police Check	Safe Church Training	Safe Ministry Check
			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any roles undertaking ministry to children or young people • People in liturgical or worship roles • People seen to be in a position of responsibility during a service (eg. at the front of the church, speaking, wearing robes, at the altar, carrying liturgical items) • People who may be understood to be representing the Church in public • People who may be viewed as a leader by a new person or child • People who carry out functions unsupervised by clergy • People in parish council roles who are responsible for parish governance and decision making about safe church matters 			
Roles include (but are not limited to):			
Licensed, authorised or paid church workers undertaking paid ministry to children			
Church workers undertaking voluntary ministry to children			
Child Safety Officer/COVID Safe Officer			
Children's or Youth Group Leader, Coordinator, Worker, Playgroup Coordinator, Helper or Assistant			
Director, Coordinator, Adult Member, Organist, Pianist, Musical Accompanist of a choir, music, dance or acting group that includes youth or children			
Person in charge of Sunday School or other education program, Sunday School or other education program teacher or worker			
Sidesperson/Welcomer engaged in 'child-related work' and with vulnerable people			
School's Ministry			
Children's Talk in worship service			
Bus Driver for children			
Camp leader			
A volunteer, salaried or otherwise remunerated paid lay person, who engages in 'child-related work' other than specified above			
Member of Bishop in Council, Diocesan Executive, Finance Committee, Diocesan Trustee			
Synod Representative, General Synod Representative			
Cathedral Canon			
Churchwarden, Parish Council Member, Parish Secretary & Treasurer			
Parish Office Secretary/Office Helper			
Lay Reader/Lay Preacher			
Worship Leader/Service Leader/Lay Leader			
Vergers, Crucifers, Servers, Acolytes, Lay Eucharistic Assistants, Communion Assistants			
Liturgical master of ceremonies			
Sunday Intercessions			
Small Group leader where children who are not accompanied by their parent are present (includes Bible group, prayer group, fellowship group)			
Home Pastoral Care Visit Leader, Coordinator or Visitor, Home Communion			
Parish care worker or nurse			
Op Shop Manager or Coordinator, Worker, Helper, Volunteer or Assistant			
Community Meals Leader, Coordinator, Worker, Helper or Assistant			
Morning Tea or Catering Coordinator/Hospitality/Catering Team/Morning Tea helpers			
Candidate for Selection conference for Holy Orders			
Theological exiting student intending to seek ordination			
Theological student doing a youth or children's practicum			
A person undertaking a safe ministry role			

**TABLE 3:
CLEARANCE LEVEL B**

<i>Working with Children Check</i>	<i>National Police Check</i>	<i>Safe Church Training</i>	<i>Safe Ministry Check</i>
			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles engaging with vulnerable people • Roles that do not have direct engagement with children or young people but may have incidental contact with children • Roles that are part of adult only groups or programs • People who may handle significant amounts of money or confidential information 			
Roles include (but are not limited to):			
Music Leader/Choir Coordinator/Musician/Choir Member – adult only group			
Bible Study Leader/Small Group Leader – adult only group			
Offertory/Collection Counter			
Eucharistic Assistant/Communion Assistant - services without children			
Groundskeeper/Landscaper			
Property & Maintenance			
Cleaners			
Sidesperson/Welcomer in adult only services			
Multimedia Operator			
Director, Coordinator, Organist or other musical accompanist of an adult choir or music or dance or acting group that does not include children			
Bus Driver for adults			
Aged Care Facility Pastoral Care Leader, Coordinator, Worker, Helper, Assistant or Visitor			
Any salaried otherwise remunerated paid lay person who does not engage in 'child-related work'			

**TABLE 4:
LEVEL C: EDUCATION**

<i>Working with Children Check</i>	<i>National Police Check</i>	<i>Safe Church Training</i>	<i>Safe Ministry Check</i>
			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All active members of church congregations 			

**TABLE 5:
CLEARANCE REQUIREMENTS RENEWALS**

<i>Clearance</i>	<i>Renewal period</i>
Working with Children Check	5 years
National Police Check	5 years
Safe Church Training	3 years
Safe Ministry Check	5 years

Handling of disclosures

If any of the screening processes returns a reportable disclosure, it will be notified to Kooyoora and the Bishop. Kooyoora, in conjunction with the Bishop, will determine the suitability of the applicant for their intended ministry taking into consideration the seriousness of the reported disclosure and the ministry role to be undertaken.

Policy Responsibility

Bishop in Council is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

Related Documents: Internal

- Anglican Diocese of Bendigo - *Child Safe Policy*
- Anglican Diocese of Bendigo - *Safe Church Policy*
- Joys and Responsibilities
- Faithfulness in Service – Code of Conduct
- Uniform Professional Standards Act 2016

Related Documents: External

- General Synod *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017*
- General Synod *Safe Ministry Training Benchmarks*
- Victorian Government *Working with Children Act 2005*
- Victorian Government *Betrayal of Trust* report 2013
- Victorian Government *Child Safe Standards*
- Commission for Children and Young People – *Reportable Conduct Scheme*
- Commonwealth Government *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – Final Report*

Authorisation

Approved by Bishop in Council 11 May 2021

Policy History
Lay Ministry Guidelines 2013
Lay Authorisations and Required Checks Policy 2016