

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

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Contact: Registrar

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Introduction

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 also live in a country that legislates for people's safety.

God calls his body to minister to vulnerable people. God identified classes of vulnerable people who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (Ex. 22:21-22, Deut. 10:17-19, Jer. 22:2-4, James 1:27)

Our policy aims to:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled thoroughly
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued
- Ensure that our people and communities safety allows them to grow, thrive and fully function as faithful Christians.

We commit to:

a) Safe recruitment of leaders, church workers and volunteers

- We will screen all prospective leaders in ministries, before they are appointed. (ie. relevant working with children's check/police check and other background checks as required).
- We will have a minimum church attendance policy for all prospective volunteer leaders.

b) Adequate training of leaders

- We require that all leaders complete Safe Ministry Training and complete refresher training every three years.
- We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific training as required.

c) Continued supervision of leaders

- We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders.
- All leaders will agree to follow our Parish Code of Conduct – Joys and Responsibilities and Faithfulness in Service.

d) Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious ministry misconduct

- Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- Our organisation takes all allegations seriously. All complaints are directed to Kooyoora which operates according to the Professional Standards Uniform Act. The Director of Professional Standards can be contacted at Kooyoora on **1800 135 246**.
- Where a leader has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them we will cooperate with Kooyoora to provide support to complainants and respondents and follow the processes according to the Professional Standards Uniform Act managed by Kooyoora.

e) Safe environments in our ministry programs

- We will service participants as servants of Christ, commit to the good news of Jesus and lead in spiritually non-abusive ways.
- We will give participants a say in the programs and activities in which they participate by; fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation
- We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs and assist them thrive.
- All leaders will discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates for establishment and maintenance of safe environments in our church.
- A Safety Team will be appointed by Parish Council to ensure the maintenance of a Safe Church community. At a minimum: Workplace Health & Safety risk, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures must be reviewed and records maintained.
- Ministry Coordinators are to complete a written ministry approval process, at a minimum annually. The process of written accountability, where the senior church leaders approve the conduct of a program or events that is to take place in the church/organization name.

Definitions

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Kooyoorra: is an independent organization who manages professional standards matters for the Diocese of Bendigo under the Professional Standards Uniform Act

Leaders: includes Rectors, Parish & Diocese employees, Parish Council office holders and others as identified. Anyone who has any appointed role as a leader within a congregation and is not limited to licensed clergy.

Safe Environment: discharges duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including e.g. spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.

The Safety Team: is a group appointed by Parish Council with responsibility for the oversight of the implementation of the Workplace Health and Safety and Safe Ministry Policy and supporting documentation and processes in local churches/organisations. The aim of a Safety team is to share the workload. Accountability for safety is the responsibility of Parish Wardens.

Minimum Church attendance: as per Parish Administration Act 2010 (Electoral Roll Clauses 3.4 & 3.5) that is, for the last three months has participated in worship and the life of the Parish.

Ministry Coordinators: Oversee a group of programs and or events in the church, for example the children and youth leaders. This is a role that should be undertaken by a senior church leader eg. priest/pastors, elders, deacons as it contains significant positional power.

Professional Standards Uniform Act: refers to Synod legislation adopted by the Diocese of Bendigo

Safe Leaders: has been through a recruitment process, understands the responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team player.

Safe Ministry program: all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned. These programs have had permission to proceed from Parish Council.

Program (Event) Leader: responsible for a team and programs. They jointly recruit team members and complete safety management plans for their individual programs.

Safe Church Training: Safe Church Training provided by a diocesan endorsed training provider

Policy Scope & Coverage

The Safe Church Policy applies to all church leaders/workers and volunteers associated with the ministry in our church

Policy Responsibility

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

Related Documents: Internal

- Child Safe Policy
- Safe Communication Policy
- Electronic Communication Guidelines
- Lay Safe Ministry Clearance Policy
- Code of Practice for Congregations - Joys and Responsibilities of being a Christian in this Parish
- Code of Good Practice - Faithfulness in Service
- Professional Standards Uniform Act
- Parish Administration Act
- Safe Church Training Program

Related Documents: External

- Betrayal of Trust – State Government Victoria
 - Failure to Disclose offence
 - Failure to Protect offence
 - Grooming Offence
- Working with Children Checks – State Government Victoria
- Victorian Government – Child Safe Standards
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Approved by Bishop-in-Council:

1 August 2015

<i>Policy History</i>	
<i>Policy created</i>	August 2015

<i>Policy reviewed</i>	May 2022
<i>Policy amended</i>	May 2022