



# Safe Church Policy

(Incorporating the Victorian Child Safe Principles)  
ADOPTED WADCorp 22/2/2017

## Introduction

This Safe Church policy was developed in consultation with members of the Safe Church Sub-committee of the Strategic Planning Operational Team and the Administrative Review Taskforce, under the auspice of Bishop in Council. It recognises and incorporates the Victorian Child Safe Principles.

The policy was approved by Bishop in Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017.

### *The scope of our policy*

This policy applies to all church leaders, workers and volunteers associated with the Diocese of Wangaratta or ministry units within the Diocese.

### *Responsibility*

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

### *This policy aims to:*

- minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of positional power;
- ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly, timely and with compassion;
- ensure that all activities and programs are conducted safely;
- ensure that all leaders are appropriately screened, trained and supervised; and
- ensure that all people are respected and valued.

## **Our commitment to ensuring a safe church for all**

The Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta, including all ministry units within the Diocese, has zero tolerance for abuse. We believe that all people, including children and vulnerable adults, have the right to be respected and valued and to feel emotionally, physically and spiritually safe at all times.

We are committed to providing a safe, respectful, welcoming and positive environment for children and adults from all backgrounds.

The Diocese and each ministry unit will:

- undertake ongoing reviews of all Safe Church and related policies, procedures and information to ensure these remain relevant and effective;
- aim to have clear and well communicated processes that empower children and vulnerable people in the Diocese;
- implement and maintain clear and well communicated processes for responding to or reporting matters of concern; and
- provide clear processes for staff, clergy, church leaders, volunteers or church members to provide feedback on the Safe Church Policy and any associated documentation and procedures.

The Diocese is a signatory to the Safe Church Training Agreement (SCTA) through the National Council of Churches in Australia, and is committed to the delivery of safe church training in accordance with the recommendations of the SCTA.

### ***Recognising the rights and needs of children***

The Diocese of Wangaratta is committed to supporting and protecting all children, particularly those identified as being at greater risk - children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), and those with a disability. All children have a right to be respected and heard, to have the opportunity to shape their lives, and to feel safe, comfortable and encouraged. All children have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

We will create a child-friendly environment, allowing people to raise their concerns in an appropriate manner.

This policy and related processes and information were developed in conjunction with youth ministry teams in the Diocese in order to appropriately recognise and meet the specific needs of children and their families.

### ***Valuing diversity***

The Diocese is committed to upholding the rights of every person, regardless of age, race, religious or cultural background, disability, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, or family/social background, and will not tolerate discrimination by staff, clergy, church leaders, volunteers or church members. Diversity provides a richness to our community that is greatly valued. We aim to make sure all people feel safe and comfortable whilst involved in any church activity and will respond appropriately to any reports of discrimination.

## ***Recruiting and supporting staff and volunteers***

The Diocese is committed to maintaining best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of employees, including all clergy, church leaders and people involved in the delivery of support functions in a ministry, administrative or other capacity in the Diocese or any church or parish in the Diocese, whether paid or voluntary.

- ◆ Safe recruitment:
  - We will screen all prospective leaders and other employees, including volunteers, before they are appointed (i.e. relevant working with children's check, police check or other background checks as required).
  - We will meet all Professional Standards clearance requirements for clergy prior to appointment.
  - We will provide a Position Description for each position prior to appointment and as part of the recruitment process, whether that position be paid or voluntary, clergy or laity, in churches, parishes or diocese. Positions might include: registrar, accounts manager, administration assistant, media/communications manager, senior clergy, other priest, deacon, parish council member, church warden, parish secretary, parish treasurer, area dean, archdeacon, lay leaders, lay assistants, youth leader or others as identified.
- ◆ Adequate training:
  - We require that all leaders attend SCTA endorsed (or equivalent) induction training within their first year of leadership and attend a refresher workshop at least every three years.
  - We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific training as required.
  - We require all leaders and other employees to complete an induction process within two weeks of commencement.
  - We will ensure SCTA-competent trainers are based within the Diocese to support the SCTA training and practice model.
- ◆ Code of Conduct
  - We will adopt and implement a Code of Conduct for all employees, including volunteers, setting out boundaries of behaviour and expectations of interactions with children and vulnerable adults.
  - All employees, including volunteers, will agree to follow the Code of Conduct.
  - A Code of Conduct will also apply to children, setting out their rights and responsibilities when engaging in church activities.
- ◆ Ongoing supervision and support
  - We commit to ongoing training, supervision and support for our employees.
  - All employees will have access to current legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and have an understanding of those that relate to their particular roles.

### ***Risk management***

The Diocese has ultimate responsibility for managing and mitigating risk, but each ministry unit and church worker shares in that responsibility. Risk management will occur at the level of the individual, church, parish and diocese.

We will afford participants a say in the programs and activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation, in order to ensure these activities meet the needs of participants.

We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.

All leaders will discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates, as provided by the diocese or otherwise recommended, for the establishment and maintenance of safe environments.

All events, activities and programs will be planned, with thought given to the risks associated with them. As a minimum, all events, activities and programs will have undergone a risk assessment process.

A Safe Church Team will be appointed by each Parish Council to ensure the maintenance of a safe environment and safe events. The Safe Church Team will monitor, record and respond appropriately to issues of Workplace Health and Safety, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident management and emergency procedures.

All employees, including volunteers, will be made aware of their obligations under the "Failure to disclose" and "Failure to protect" laws.

### ***Reporting and responding***

- Each ministry unit and the registry will publicly display the statement of commitment along with information on reporting processes.
- All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, or other forms of abuse, according to our procedures and as required by law.
- We will listen to children and other vulnerable people who raise their concerns, take their concerns seriously, respond with respect and compassion, and take appropriate action.
- We will ensure that procedures are clear, appropriate and effective for responding to allegations of abuse.
- Where a leader has an allegation of misconduct made against them we will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate help for a just and fair resolution.

## Definitions

Abuse	Abuse includes but is not limited to: physical abuse, emotional abuse, family violence, elder abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, neglect, bullying, spiritual abuse, financial abuse.
Child	A person who is under 18 years of age.
Clergy	Any priest or deacon licensed by the Diocese or holding a Permission to Officiate within the Diocese.
Employee	Employees include all clergy, church leaders and people involved in the delivery of support functions in a ministry or administrative unit of the Diocese, including a church or parish, whether paid or voluntary.
Failure to disclose	This offence “applies to all adults, not just professionals who work with children. Any adult who holds a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child... must report that belief to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse for not reporting.” (Department of Human Services)
Failure to protect	This offence “applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.” (Department of Human Services)
Induction	The initial delivery and acknowledgement, at commencement of a role, of the requirements and expectations associated with the role being undertaken, including review and acceptance of the position description, code of conduct, organisational policy framework, work health and safety requirements, training requirements, limitations of authority and other requirements as identified.
Leader	Anyone who has any appointed role as a leader within a congregation, church, parish or diocese including rectors, priests in charge, parish and diocesan employees, parish council office holders and others as identified. A leader can be clergy or laity.
Misconduct	An act or behaviour that breaches the requirements, limitations or expectations applicable to an employee of the Diocese or a particular role; unacceptable or improper behaviour by an employee of the Diocese; deliberate violation or disregard of a law or standard applicable to an employee of the Diocese.
Safe Church team	A group appointed by a Parish Council responsible for oversight of local implementation and management of Safe Church policies and procedures.
Safe Program	A program or event whereby all risks have been assessed and activities thought through and planned.

## Related documents

- Policies and Guidelines:
  - Privacy Policy
  - Communication Policy
  - Electronic Communication Guidelines
  - Volunteer Management Policy
  - Lay Authorisation Guidelines – structure and process
  - Risk Management Policy
- Resources
  - Duty of Care Handbook *Melbourne*
  - Information for people thinking about making a complaint *Melbourne*
  - Information for people responding to a complaint *Melbourne*
  - Event planning template
  - Risk assessment tool
  - Standard Operating Procedures Manual
- Legislation and associated protocols / guides - Internal
  - Parish Administration Act
  - Episcopal Standards Act
  - Professional Standards Regulations 2010
  - Professional Standards Amendment Act 2010
  - Power and Trust in the Church *Melbourne*
  - Protocol for complaints of misconduct against church volunteers (2013)
  - Clearance for Ministry protocol *Melbourne*
  - Faithfulness in Service *General Synod*
  - Code of Good Practice
- Legislation – External
  - Offence (Vic) – Grooming
  - Offence (Vic) – Failure to Protect
  - Offence (Vic) – Failure to Disclose
  - Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (mandatory reporting)
  - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## **Distribution – Policy**

- Registry staff
- Trustees
- All ministry units
- Licensed clergy
- Parish councils
- Clergy with Permission to Officiate
- Synod
- Director of Professional Standards
- Area Deans
- Archdeacons
- Director of Vocations
- Ordination candidates
- Recruitment material
- Induction material (clergy, paid staff and volunteers)
- Public, via the diocesan website

## **Distribution – Statement of Commitment**

Diocesan website, Diocesan noticeboard, Advocate, parish websites, parish noticeboards, parish newsletters

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## **Review of this policy**

**This policy is scheduled for review in February 2018.**

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months. The annual review process will provide an opportunity for staff, volunteers and members of the church community to contribute.

A review will also occur in the event that any incident arises that is in breach of this policy to identify if any aspects of the policy should be amended to make sure it remains relevant, accessible and effective.