



Communication Policy

ADOPTED WADCorp 14/12/2017

Introduction

Communication in its many forms is essential for sharing and providing information to and between church members. Our communication will be timely, appropriate and related to church matters only.

We need to be mindful of the positional power dynamic that exists between those in leadership and vulnerable people who take part in church programs. With the prevalent use and reliance on electronic media, the risk of breaches of personal privacy and unlawful behaviour is increased.

The Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta has adopted a Safe Church Policy and seeks to protect those who interact with or take part in its activities.

The scope of our policy

The Communication Policy applies to all church leaders/workers, parish members and volunteers associated with the Diocese of Wangaratta or ministry units within the Diocese, and includes all forms of communication including verbal, written, electronic communication (websites, email, sms, social media) as well as the distribution or production of photographs between church members.

Specific restrictions and guidelines are in place to govern all electronic communication with children. (Refer to the Electronic Communication Guidelines.)

Responsibility

The Diocesan Corporation of the Diocese of Wangaratta is responsible for implementation and review of this policy.

This policy aims to:

1. Maintain integrity and safety of all church members, the Diocese and parish organisations, by establishing clear boundaries in communication, particularly in interactions with children and vulnerable people. We will not knowingly transmit, retrieve or store any communication that is:
 - discriminatory or harassing;
 - derogatory to any individual or group
 - obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic;
 - defamatory or threatening;
 - breaches an individual's right to privacy;
 - in violation of any licence governing the use of software;
 - for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to our code of conduct; or
 - breaches copyright or intellectual property law.

2. Provide a level of consistency and safety in all our communication ensuring communication is aligned to the values of the Church and Safe Church principles.
3. Encourage relevant, lawful, appropriate and respectful information sharing.

Roles & Responsibilities

Church leadership will:

- use a range of tools to communicate with our members within communication guidelines;
- ensure all our communication protects members' privacy, maintains clear boundaries and ensures that bullying, harassment, exploitation of vulnerable people doesn't occur;
- encourage people in leadership roles within the church to oversee communication where practical, to ensure no offensive content or photos will be published;
- not tolerate abusive, discriminatory, intimidating or offensive statements and remove or block these where possible. In some instances, monitoring of electronic communication will occur on church related matter;
- report any inappropriate use of communications, electronic or other forms, to the Director of Professional Standards or the Registrar;
- encourage family-friendly and positive content in all our public & member communication;
- seek feedback from church members to improve our communication processes.

What we ask our members to do:

- We expect our members to conduct themselves appropriately, especially when communicating in writing or using electronic communication to share information with other members or posting material on the internet or public websites related to church matters or events. Remember that all social media is a public comment.

Written and Electronic communication:

- should be restricted to church related matters;
- must not intimidate, humiliate or bully another person or cause unnecessary offence;
- must not be misleading, false or injure the reputation of another person;
- should respect and maintain privacy of members;
- must not bring the Church into disrepute; and
- Organisers of child or youth focused programs, services or activities must seek written consent from a parent or legal guardian every 12 months using the Parental Consent Form.

Non-compliance

Church leaders/workers, parish members and volunteers may face disciplinary action for sending inappropriate written or electronic communication, posting online content and comments that is unlawful or in any way contrary to the Diocesan Codes of Conduct, or engages in any other form of communication that is in breach of this policy.

Where a criminal offence is believed to have occurred, the matter should be reported to the police.

Related documents

- Policies and Guidelines:
 - Privacy Policy
 - Safe Church Policy
 - Privacy Statement (Safe Church)

- Electronic Communication Guidelines
- Lay Authorisation Guidelines
- Risk Management Policy
- Resources
 - Duty of Care Handbook *Melbourne*
 - Parental Consent Form
- 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
 - Other Codes of Conduct
- Legislation – External
 - Offence (Vic) – Grooming
 - Offence (Vic) – Failure to Protect
 - Offence (Vic) – Failure to Disclose
 - Statutory Duty of Care for Organisations (Vic)
 - Working with Children Checks (Victoria)
 - Victorian Child Safe Standards
 - NSW Child Safe Principles
 - Reportable Conduct Scheme (Vic)
 - 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
-

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.