



## Safe Church Policy

(Incorporating the Victorian Child Safe Principles)  
V2 ADOPTED WADCorp 17/07/2018

### Introduction

This Safe Church policy was developed in consultation with members of the Safe Church Committee, under the auspice of the Wangaratta Anglican Diocesan Corporation (the Corporation). It recognises and incorporates the Victorian Child Safe Principles.

### *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*

The Wangaratta Anglican Diocesan Corporation 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.

### *Adopting this policy*

Once adopted by the Corporation, this policy applies across the Diocese. Each parish will also formally adopt this policy through its Parish Council. A copy of the minute from the Parish Council meeting where adopted will be forwarded to the Registrar and the Diocesan Safe Church Officer.

## **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. 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;
- 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 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 church workers, 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 church workers, in paid or voluntary roles, before they are appointed and/or commence in the role. (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.
  - A Position Description or duty statement will be provided for each position prior to appointment and as part of the recruitment process, whether that position is paid or voluntary, clergy or laity, in churches, parishes or diocese.
- ◆ Adequate training:
  - We require that all leaders and others holding designated roles in the diocese or parishes, whether paid or voluntary, attend SCTA endorsed (or equivalent) safe church training within their first year and attend a refresher workshop at least every three years.
  - We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific training as required.
  - We will ensure SCTA-competent trainers are available within the Diocese to support the SCTA training and practice model.
- ◆ Code of Conduct
  - We have a Code of Conduct for all church workers, including volunteers, setting out boundaries of behaviour and expectations of interactions with children and vulnerable adults.
  - All church workers, including volunteers, will agree to follow the Code of Conduct.
  - Codes of Conduct also apply to young children and older children respectively, 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 church workers.
  - All church workers 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 information will be collected, stored and used in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles.

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 undergo a risk assessment process by the organising committee or designated leader.

A Safe Church Officer (or Team) will be appointed by each Parish Council to ensure the maintenance of a safe environment and safe events. The Safe Church Officer (or 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, and ensure that all policies and procedures relating to the safety of children and vulnerable adults are complied with.

All church workers, including volunteers, will be made aware of their obligations under the “Failure to disclose” and “Failure to protect” laws through one or more of the following: formal orientation program; SCTA training; safe church noticeboards; safe church resource kit; Diocese of Wangaratta website (safe church section).

### ***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 allegations 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.
- We will meet our obligations under the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- All clergy in the Diocese are licensed by the Bishop and are therefore subject to the standards and expectations of the Diocese in regards to risk management and safe church requirements, regardless of which state they reside or serve in. All parishes in the Diocese, whether in NSW or Victoria, will report through the Diocesan Director of Professional Standards and the Bishop in the event that a reportable incident occurs.

## Definitions

<b>Abuse</b>	Abuse includes but is not limited to: physical abuse, emotional abuse, family violence, elder abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, neglect, bullying, spiritual abuse, financial abuse.
<b>Bishop</b>	The Bishop of the Diocese of Wangaratta
<b>Church Worker</b>	Lay persons who are employed or hold a position or perform a particular function within the Anglican Church of Australia. Church workers might be paid or voluntary.
<b>Child</b>	A person who is under 18 years of age.
<b>Clergy</b>	Any priest or deacon licensed by the Diocese or holding a Permission to Officiate within the Diocese.
<b>Failure to disclose</b>	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)
<b>Failure to protect</b>	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)
<b>Leader</b>	Anyone who has any appointed role as a leader, whether paid or voluntary, within a congregation, church, parish or diocese including the Bishop, Registrar, the Chancellor, Advocate, Deputy Advocate, Trustees of the Diocese of Wangaratta, members of Bishop in Council, Directors of the Diocesan Corporation, rectors, priests in charge, parish and diocesan employees, parish council office holders and others as identified. A leader can be clergy or laity.
<b>Misconduct</b>	An act or behaviour that breaches the requirements, limitations or expectations applicable to clergy or a church worker of the Diocese/parish; unacceptable or improper behaviour by clergy or a church worker; deliberate violation or disregard of a law or standard applicable to clergy or church workers.
<b>Orientation</b>	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 or duty statement, code of conduct, organisational policy framework, work health and safety requirements, training requirements, limitations of authority and other requirements as identified.

**Safe Church Officer/Team** The person or people 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
  - Privacy Statement – Safe Church
  - Communication Policy
  - Electronic Communication Guidelines
  - Lay Authorisation Guidelines
  - Risk Management Policy (to be developed)
- Resources
  - Duty of Care Handbook *Melbourne*
  - Information for people thinking about making a complaint *Melbourne*
  - Information for people responding to a complaint *Melbourne*
  - Safe Church Resource Kit (under development)
- 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
  - Code of Good Practice for Clergy
- 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
  - Victorian Child Safe Standards
  - NSW Child Safe Principles
  - Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme
  - Victorian Statutory Duty of Care for Organisations

## Distribution – Policy

- Bishop
- Registry staff
- Trustees
- All ministry units
- Licensed clergy
- Parish councils
- Clergy with Permission to Officiate
- Synod
- Director of Professional Standards
- Area Deans
- Archdeacons
- Diocesan Safe Church Officer
- Parish Safe Church Officers
- Members of the Safe Church Committee
- Director of Vocations
- Ordination candidates
- Recruitment material
- Orientation 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 August 2019.**

This policy will be reviewed annually. 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.

Version History:

Version	Adopted
V1	22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2017, Wangaratta Anglican Diocesan Corporation
V2	17 <sup>th</sup> July 2018, Wangaratta Anglican Diocesan Corporation