



Anglican Diocese of
Wangaratta

Lay Clearance and Authorisation Guidelines 2022

Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta - Lay Clearance and Authorisation Guidelines

CONTENTS

Purpose of the Guidelines	1
Context	2
Key Terms	3
Clearance and Authorisation Process	7
Submissions and notifications	7
Confirmation of appointment	8
Roles and Requirements	9
Liturgical and Worship Roles	9
Pastoral and Community Ministries	10
General Ministry	10
Children's and Youth Ministries	11
Parish Administration	11
Elected Parish Roles	12
Diocesan Administration	12
Ad Hoc Roles	139
VIT Registration	13
Appendix	14
Principles underpinning decision making regarding requirements	

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

The Diocese of Wangaratta is committed to ensuring all members of the Church have opportunities for ministry and participation in the life of the Church within a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment.

These guidelines aim to provide a clear structure and processes for lay clearance and participation. Historically, many of these lay roles have not required verification or certification for those undertaking the roles, however, to ensure we meet all current legislative and other requirements relating to Safe Church some changes have been introduced.

The guidelines identify the types of roles that are currently in place or might be in the future across the Diocese and the clearance and authorisation requirements for each.

Clearance and/or Authorisation depending on the role can include all or some of the following:

- Licensing by the Bishop
- Police checks
- Working With Children Checks
- Safe Church Training
- Agreeing to in writing and adherence to a Code of Conduct which will be age applicable
- Accepting a Position Description

The above requirements will vary depending on the type of role.

These guidelines apply to lay people only. There are separate recruitment, authorisation, clearance, and professional standards processes in place for clergy.

CONTEXT

From 2017, all religious organisations in Victoria must comply with the legislation that brought in the Victorian Child Safe Standards. This also requires a statutory organisational duty of care. In 2017-2018 recommended standards were also released in NSW and nationally which are consistent with the compulsory standards set by Victoria.

These standards arose from reviews in Victoria and nationally which revealed significant levels of abuse of children within institutional settings. These inquiries were:

The Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations,

and

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

As the abuse was able to occur at such levels due to systemic failures, the standards and other related new legislation seek to compel organisations to embed more robust systems and processes in order to protect any children under the care of or engaging with the organisations. Any religious organisation that fails to implement these protective systems, including rigorous screening procedures, will be guilty of breaching legislated standards.

The Anglican Church of Australia has also established minimum Safe Ministry (Safe Church) standards, in response to the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

In meeting the Victorian legislated standards and Anglican Church requirements, the Diocese should also be consistent with the recommendations arising from the Royal Commission and the principles for child safe organisations as set by the NSW government.

The Lay Clearance and Authorisation Guidelines for the Diocese of Wangaratta have been developed with the various State and Church requirements in mind. The more robust screening procedures included in the Guidelines are essential for the diocese to meet its legal obligations and provide a safe place for all children and other vulnerable people.

KEY TERMS

Church Workers

A Lay person who is employed (e.g., Youth Minister) or holds a position (e.g., Parish Councillor) or performs a particular function/role (e.g., Pastoral Visitor) in the Diocese of Wangaratta within the Anglican Church of Australia. The term, “Church Workers” includes those who are volunteers.

If you are a church member who is not employed by the Anglican Church of Australia and you do not hold a position or perform a particular function within the Church, essentially, if you attend church services and are not involved in other ways, you are not considered to be a church worker for the purposes of these guidelines.

Church Worker Summary

The Church Worker Summary (CWS) is a simpler alternative to the Safe Ministry Questionnaire, to be used for roles that have low levels of responsibility.

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct sets out the broad expectations and responsibilities for all people involved in the organisation. The Diocese of Wangaratta has five Codes of Conduct. They are for:

- Clergy
- Church Workers
- Adults involved in the Church
- Young Children
- Older Children

The Codes of Conduct are important tools for supporting Safe Church standards and practices.

Faithfulness in Service

The primary Code of Conduct for all clergy and church workers across the Diocese. This was amended in 2019 to reflect Diocesan legislation

Lay Clearance and Authorisation Cycle

The Lay Authorisation and Clearance Cycle for the Diocese of Wangaratta is three years. The elected roles of Church Wardens, Parish Councillors and Parochial Nominators roles are determined at the Parish Annual Meetings every third year. Other roles, not covered in the Parish Governance Act, may be appointed at varying times throughout each year in the three year cycle. It is strongly recommended that the majority of new appointments are confirmed in line with the annual meeting schedule for efficiency of notification and clearance processing. In all cases, the clearance cycle is three years unless otherwise stated in the relevant role documentation.

Lay Ministry

As servants of God every Christian has a role to play in the ministry of the Church. Traditionally, we have often thought of ministry as that which is performed by ordained clergy, or the smaller number stipendiary lay ministers. Today there is a much broader understanding of what ministry is and very

much includes those who do not believe that they have a call to serve through ordained ministry. Accordingly, there are many other opportunities to serve in ministry. These can include in governance and leadership roles in the parish or diocese, through pastoral or liturgical roles, or in other support functions in the life of the Church.

Police Check

National Police Record Checks search for criminal history within Australia for an individual. Following a Police Check a National Police Check Certificate is issued that lists any criminal history a person may have. The certificate details any court outcomes that can be disclosed, from any state or territory in Australia, along with pending charges. The certificate won't include any restricted court outcomes.

The Diocese of Wangaratta requires Police Checks for all clergy and for some lay ministry roles.

Police Checks can be applied for online through the police service in the State where a person normally resides or through other national services. Police Checks can be obtained through the following options:

- Victoria Police <https://www.police.vic.gov.au/national-police-records-checks>
- NSW Police https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/online_services/national_police_check
- CV Check cvcheck.com
- Australia Post auspost.com.au/police-checks
- checked.com.au
- National Crime Check nationalcrimecheck.com.au
- Equifax Equifax.com.au/fit2work

Prices for a Police Check will vary depending on which organisation a person applies through and whether a person is applying for employment or voluntary purposes.

For those applying for a police check through Victoria Police, a discount will apply for those who are volunteers, not those who are paid for their roles. When asked for the CV number please use CVF 4446 and for the organisation, write in Diocese of Wangaratta. Your local priest can be named as a representative of the Diocese.

Where a Police Check is a clearance requirement, the Diocese of Wangaratta will accept Police Checks for up to 3 months from the date of issue. A Police Check issued more than three months prior will not be accepted and a new Police Check must be obtained.

In the Diocese of Wangaratta, a Police Check, if required, must be provided prior to commencement in the specified role. Once in a role, a new Police Check must be provided every three years.

If a Police Check has not already been provided during the current clearance cycle and an additional or new Church role is commenced that requires one, a Police Check issued no more than 3 months prior must be provided. However, where a Police Check has already been provided as part of clearance requirements in that cycle, and an additional role is commenced that also requires a Police Check, no new Police Check is required during that clearance period.

The responsible organisation (parish or diocese) is encouraged to pay for or subsidise Police Checks for voluntary positions. Where a position is remunerated, the individual employee is expected to cover the cost of the Police Check.

Police Check certificates will be noted as received, however, certificates are not to be stored in hard copy or electronic form. A certificate must be returned to the individual who has provided it or destroyed/deleted.

Where a Police Check contains an adverse report, the matter will be referred to the Diocesan Director of Professional Standards who will evaluate if the offence history is relevant to the role being undertaken and recommend a response.

The Diocese will accept a current registration card from the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) in lieu of a police check.

Position Description

Model position descriptions currently exist for some positions across the Diocese and others are under development. Further Position Descriptions will be available in time. Each Position Description sets out the expectations and responsibilities of the roles described. This provides clarity for the person undertaking the role and those they are working with.

Referee Check

A referee check involves contacting a person's nominated referees to verify that they are suitable and safe for the role or roles they are seeking to undertake. The General Synod Safe Ministry Questionnaire requires that two referees be nominated. In the Diocese of Wangaratta anyone in a role that requires completion of a Safe Ministry Questionnaire who has been in the parish for 2 years or less will require formal referee checks to be conducted and documented.

The parish priest or Parish Safe Church Officer will conduct the referee checks. The outcome of the check will be recorded on the Diocese's Referee Check Record form and a copy provided to the Registry. Should an unsatisfactory result arise from any referee check, the matter will be referred to the Director of Professional Standards (DPS) for further investigation. The DPS will determine whether the subject of the check is suitable to undertake the role/s in question.

Safe Church Training / Safe Church Awareness Workshop

The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia has determined benchmarks for safe church training, with all dioceses expected to have a suitable training program in place. The Diocese of Wangaratta is a signatory to the Safe Church Training Agreement (SCTA) which provides a multi-denominational national training program including Safe Church Awareness Workshops (SCAW) and Safe Church Refresher Workshops (SCRW). Training is provided across the Diocese several times a year. SCTA training provided in other areas and by other denominations is open to anyone wishing to register.

Safe Church Awareness Workshops are designed for all congregational members, all ministry leaders, and children, youth, and family program leaders. Completion of the endorsed Safe Church training is a requirement for all licensed clergy and most lay ministry roles. The responsible organisation (parish or diocese) is encouraged to pay for or subsidise the Safe Church Training fees, where possible.

This training is valid for 3 years and requires a refresher course when that period has expired.

Safe Ministry Check

A standardised form developed by the Anglican Church of Australia General Synod office. This forms part of the clearance processes for some church workers (non-clergy) and includes a declaration of an individual's history relevant to involvement in a Church role. (A clergy-specific version is also required for all clergy.)

Working With Children Check

Each State in Australia has a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) program and related legislation. They aim to enable organisations to protect children (or in some states, other vulnerable people) through screening of employees and volunteers. The Checks are mandatory for people engaged in organisations or roles that provide services to children or where children are likely to be involved. They look at relevant information from national criminal records over a person's lifetime as well as reports from courts or other relevant agencies and departments.

The checks are issued free for volunteers and a fee applies where the person is employed or self-employed in a relevant role. For a new Victorian WWCC, the fee is \$126.50 and \$93.60 for a renewal. In NSW the fee for employees is currently \$80.00¹ A Working with Children Check is valid for five years but might be revoked if something occurs to invalidate the Check. Refer to appropriate website for the current fees.

For more information of Working with Children Checks relevant to the Diocese of Wangaratta go to:

- For those engaged in work or relevant roles in Victoria - <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>
- For those engaged in work or relevant roles in NSW - <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check/apply>

In the Diocese of Wangaratta, a Working with Children Check, if required, must be provided prior to commencement in the specified role OR evidence provided that the WWCC application has been submitted.

All Working with Children Checks will be verified by the Diocesan Safe Church Officer, except if the Working with Children Check is from NSW, where it must be verified by the Parish concerned.

If an individual has an existing WWCC originally issued for the purposes of undertaking a role with a different organisation, as well as checking to ensure it is still valid, the WWCC official record must be updated by the individual to reflect the new employing or responsible organisation (i.e., the parish and the diocese).

If an individual is deemed to be unsuitable to be issued with a WWCC, or if the WWCC becomes invalid during the period of issue, the Director of Professional Standards should be consulted to determine the most appropriate course of action.

¹ December 2020 These fees may change periodically. Please check the Victorian With Children Check website: <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply> For NSW: <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check/applicant/help-to-apply-renew-and-update>

A current Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) card will be accepted by the Diocese in lieu of a Working with Children Check. When used in place of a WWCC the currency of the VIT registration must be checked annually. The registration status can be verified through the VIT website - <https://www.vit.vic.edu.au/search-the-register>.

Please note:

New notification requirements apply to Victorian Institute of Teaching registered individuals from 1 September 2019.

VIT registered teachers and early childhood service workers... must notify the Victorian Institute of Teaching of any child-related work they do outside of their school or early childhood service based position (whether paid or voluntary) where they are using their VIT Card for the purposes of a Working with Children Check and or Police Check. The Diocese of Wangaratta is the outside of school based organisation.

If a teacher's VIT registration is suspended or cancelled, VIT may notify the organisations listed that the teacher exemption no longer applies.

To notify VIT of their other child-related work, teachers must complete the online 'Teacher notification' form. This form must be completed annually before the renewal date.

To access the form, go to <https://service.vic.gov.au/services/teachers-notifications/>

This applies to anyone undertaking child or youth related work in the Diocese of Wangaratta who has submitted a VIT card in lieu of a WWCC.

CLEARANCE AND AUTHORISATION PROCESS

Submissions and notifications

Each parish will submit an annual notification to the Registrar that includes any new appointments to roles in the parish arising from, or at the time of, the parish annual meetings (including elected positions). Additional submissions can occur throughout the year as new appointments are made; however, it is recommended that the majority of new appointments are confirmed in line with the annual meeting schedule for efficiency of notification and clearance processing. Notifications must be submitted using the relevant forms as provided by the Diocese and must include supporting evidence for any roles requiring certification such as Police or Working with Children Checks, or relevant qualifications. For roles requiring a Bishop's Licence, any supporting evidence (as required) must be submitted before the relevant licence/s can be issued.

Parishes are responsible for ensuring that all individuals nominated for roles in the parish have the relevant valid checks or other certification and have completed the Safe Ministry Questionnaire or Church Worker Summary where appropriate.

The Diocese will record and track all clearance requirements and advise parishes when clearance items are due for renewal. Parishes might also opt to track the status for their lay workers if they have the capacity to do so in line with Australian Privacy Principles.

Some positions must be licensed by the Bishop of Wangaratta, whilst some require endorsement by the Bishop. Other positions are appointed, elected, or endorsed at the parish level. Details of requirements for each role are included in Appendix One.

The Diocese recognises that there may be limited circumstances where it would be reasonable to grant an exemption for an individual from one of the authorisation requirements. Exemptions will only be granted where exceptional circumstances can be shown and applications for exemption must be accompanied by a risk assessment and, if applicable, a risk management plan. Applications for exemption will be assessed by the Exemption Review Panel appointed by the Bishop. Applications for exemption can only be submitted by the parish on behalf of the individual concerned, using the Diocese's exemption request form.

Where a role is deemed to “require” or “not require” a particular check it is understood here that this is the minimum standard. The Bishop, Incumbent or Parish Council can, at their discretion, require checks other than those stipulated by Canon, law or Diocesan Policy where this is deemed necessary.

Confirmation of Appointment

Most roles require written confirmation of appointment by way of one of the following methods:

- Authorisation issued by the Bishop
Providing an indication of the scope/limitations/duration of the role
- Letter of appointment
Including any statements of expectations associated with the role, relevant codes of conduct, etc.
- Employment contract
Consistent with standard HR practices

ROLES AND REQUIREMENTS - SUMMARY

All roles have been assessed against a number of criteria (see Appendix One) with four key factors used to determine the authorisation and other requirements. The four factors were:

- Whether the role involved leadership or culture change responsibilities
- The level of likely or possible contact with children
- The level of responsibility attributed to the role
- The degree to which the role could be perceived as representing the church

The authorisation level, and clearance and training requirements as identified in the role review are summarised below.

Where one person undertakes multiple roles the requirements for that person at that time will be as indicated for the highest clearance level applicable to that person's roles.

Where a role is not specified in the Lay Authorisation and Clearance Guidelines, a Working with Children Check and National Police Check are required with a letter detailing the nature of the role to be sent to the Diocese of Wangaratta Safe Church Officer.

Liturgical and Worship Roles

ROLE	AUTH'N LEVEL	WWCC	POLICE CHECK	SAFE CHURCH TRAINING	CLEARANCE LEVEL
Lay Reader, Lay Minister ² Adult Bible Study Leader	Bishop's Authorisation	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
Enquirer Ordinand	Bishop's Authorisation	Yes	Yes	Yes	• SM questionnaire • National Register Check
Server ³	Local appointment	YES	NO	YES	• Church worker summary
Intercessor Bible Readers	Local appointment	NO	NO	NO	• None required
Eucharistic Assistant	Local appointment	YES	NO	NO	• Church worker summary
Choir Member, Musician (over 18 yrs old) Bell Ringer	Local appointment	YES	NO	YES	• Church worker summary
Music Leader Choir Coordinator Tower Captain	Local appointment	YES	NO	YES	• SM questionnaire

² Includes, Lay Reader, Lay Preacher, Worship Leader, Liturgical Pastoral Assistant

³ includes Crucifer, Acolyte and Thurifer.

Stipendiary Music Director Stipendiary Musician	Local appointment	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
Sidesperson Usher Welcomer	Local appointment	NO	NO	NO	• Church worker summary
Collection Collector or Counter	Local appointment	NO	YES	NO	• Church worker summary

Pastoral and Community Ministries

ROLE	AUTH'N LEVEL	WWCC	POLICE CHECK	SAFE CHURCH TRAINING	CLEARANCE LEVEL
Pastoral Care Visitor ⁴	Bishop's Authorisation	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
Spiritual Directors, Advisors	Bishop's Authorisation	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
Mission Outreach Worker, Coordinator	Bishop's Authorisation	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire

General Ministry

ROLE	AUTH'N LEVEL	WWCC	POLICE CHECK	SAFE CHURCH TRAINING	CLEARANCE LEVEL
Verger	Local appointment	YES	YES	YES	• SM Questionnaire
Sacristan	Local appointment	NO	YES	NO	• Church worker summary
Coordinator of Ministry Volunteers ⁵	Local appointment	Yes	Yes	Yes	• SM Questionnaire
Op shop worker	Local appointment	NO	YES	NO	• Church worker summary
Community meals, catering, event worker	Local appointment	NO	NO	NO	• Church worker summary
Community services program worker	Local appointment	YES	YES	YES	• SM Questionnaire

⁴ Includes Nursing Home, Hospital and Home Communion Visitors

⁵ Includes a coordinator for op shops, community meals, catering teams, Community service programs and other events

Bus driver, transportation	Local appointment	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
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Children's and Youth Ministries

ROLE	AUTH'N LEVEL	WWCC	POLICE CHECK	SAFE CHURCH TRAINING	CLEARANCE LEVEL
Children's Ministry Worker, Coordinator	Bishop's Authorisation	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire • National Register Check
Youth Leader	Bishop's Authorisation	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire • National Register Check
Playgroup Worker, Coordinator	Bishop's Authorisation	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire • National Register Check
School's ministry, religious education	Bishop's Authorisation	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire • National Register Check

Parish Administration

ROLE	AUTH'N LEVEL	WWCC	POLICE CHECK	SAFE CHURCH TRAINING	CLEARANCE LEVEL
Parish Council Secretary	Local appointment (elected/ appointed)	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
Parish Treasurer	Local appointment (elected)	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
Parish Groups Office Holder (Treasurer or Chair)	Local appointment	NO	YES	NO	• Church worker summary

Communications Officer	Local appointment	YES	NO	YES	• Church worker summary
Office Administration, Reception	Local appointment	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
Grounds, Property, Maintenance and Cleaners	Local appointment	No	NO	NO	• Church worker summary
Flower Arranger	Local appointment	NO	NO	NO	• None required

Elected Parish Roles

ROLE	AUTH'N LEVEL	WWCC	POLICE CHECK	SAFE CHURCH TRAINING	CLEARANCE LEVEL
Warden	Local appointment (elected)	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
Parish Councillor	Local appointment (elected/ appointed)	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
Nominator / Supplementary Nominator	Local appointment (elected)	NO	NO	NO	• Church worker summary

Diocesan Administration Roles

ROLE	AUTH'N LEVEL	WWCC	POLICE CHECK	SAFE CHURCH TRAINING	CLEARANCE LEVEL
Safe Church Officer (Diocese and Parish)	Bishop's Authorisation	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire • National register check
Diocesan Safe Church Committee Member	Diocesan Endorsement	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire • National register check
Diocesan Committee Member (other than safe church committee) ⁶	Diocesan appointment (elected / appointed)	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire

⁶ Includes lay members of Bishop in Council, Executive Committee, Property Committee and Mission Action Planning Committee

Vocational Discernment Panel Examining Chaplains	Bishop's Authorisation	YES	YES	YES	• SM questionnaire
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Ad Hoc Roles

For people doing a role similar to any of the roles listed above **as a once-off/ad hoc arrangement**, where the individual doesn't already hold a recognised regular role or roles within the organisation, **the clearance requirements should be identified through a formal risk management assessment of the event or program.**

Examples of ad hoc roles might be:

- Visiting choir for a one-off event
- Cooking the BBQ at a fete
- Setting up the marquee for a church-run stall at a community market

In these situations, the risk management plan for the special service, fete or market will take into account the safety of children and adults and set out requirements to ensure safety. Formal clearance requirements would only need to be met for the **ad hoc role** if the event/program risk assessment has identified this as essential for security or safety purposes.

VIT registration

The revised clearance model (from *day month* 2021) will accept a current VIT card in lieu of both police check and Working with Children Check. Please refer to the Key Terms section (Police check and WWCC entries) of this document for more information.

Version 3 of the Lay Clearance and Authorisation Guidelines was approved and adopted by Bishop in Council March 2022

APPENDIX -

Principles underpinning decision making regarding requirements

- A Safe Ministry Questionnaire (SMQ) is required for anyone in lay ministry, children's ministry, pastoral and mission, safe church, and leadership roles. Some roles in historically high-risk areas also require the SMQ, as well as roles assessed as likely to come into contact with children and vulnerable people that may be largely unsupervised.
- Any role needing Bishop's Authority or endorsement requires completion of the SMQ.
- Police checks are required where the role involves driving or handling money or property, or where the role has any authority over money or property, or where the role is conducted in someone's home or other place of residence. Positions of authority/leadership require a police check. All paid employees of the diocese or a parish also require a police check.
- Those roles identified as being low across all four assessment criteria are not required to submit any clearance documentation.

Note – letters of appointment, where indicated as required, are to include any statements of expectations associated with the role, and reference relevant codes of conduct, policies, etc.