

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF RIVERINA



SAFE MINISTRY & CHILD SAFE POLICY

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1. Preamble

- a) Jesus Christ said, "Love your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and love your neighbour as yourself." These commands guide our behaviour in our relationships and provide the basis for the establishment and exercising of safe activities and events, run in safe environments in an abuse-free Christian community.
- b) All Diocesan parishes, ministries and entities should be abuse-free and harm-free, person-valuing and respectful spaces for ministry to God's glory.
- c) This policy outlines the policy statement commitments, responsibilities, and protocols in Safe Ministry.
- d) It is our Child Protection Policy towards compliance with the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct legislation.

2. Purpose

This Safe Ministry and Child Safe Policy aims to:

- a) assist in fostering relationships between members, and those of the wider community, based on the teachings of Jesus Christ;
- b) help prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults;
- c) assist to establish and maintain safe and supportive environments;
- d) ensure that any cases of alleged abuse, neglect, grievances and complaints are handled in a consistent, unbiased and thorough manner and manage all conflicts of interest; and
- e) assist with compliance with relevant safety legislation (see section 7).

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Parishes and Mission Districts associated with the Diocese including:

- a) All clergy and other Church Workers whether paid or voluntary, ordained or lay,
- b) Boards, Councils and Committee members.

4. Policy Statements

- a) The Diocese is committed to spiritual, emotional and physical safety and well-being, acknowledging that all people at church have a right to feel and be safe, and to experience life-giving, harm-free interactions at our church and in our programs.
- b) We express this commitment through our Canons, Ordinances, Policies, Protocols and Guidelines which include:
 - (i) safe and adequate screening, training, supervision (codes of conduct) and resourcing of Church Workers.
 - (ii) procedures and practices for responding to all grievances, incidents, accidents, child protection concerns and other Professional Standards allegations.
 - (iii) just and caring responses for those who have been abused by Church Workers.

- (iv) appropriate management of any person onsite who pose a known risk (including spiritual, physical, financial, emotional and sexual risks) to others' health and safety.
 - (v) keeping secure & long-term records of Safe Ministry documentation.
 - (vi) ongoing improvement of our Safe Ministry policies and protocols.
- c) In relation to our ministry with Children (0-17yrs of age) we commit to:
- (i) child safety and wellbeing in a way that recognises children's rights including to a safe environment, and the right to be protected from harm.
 - (ii) a zero-tolerance for child abuse, racism and all forms of mistreatment.
 - (iii) the participation and empowerment of children by involving them in relation to decisions that impact them, and inviting their feedback.
 - (iv) sensitivity and consideration of all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as any person with a disability or vulnerability.
 - (v) the role of parents and caregivers and the broader community in child protection, and will engage with them to provide feedback.
 - (vi) ensuring all Church Workers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to preventing, identifying, responding to and reporting child abuse and harm.
 - (vii) child-focused responses to complaints of child abuse. These will be taken seriously, reported, properly investigated, and responded to with the child's best interests.
 - (viii) providing for and promoting a child-safe culture in physical and online settings.
- d) It is a serious breach of this policy should any person included in the scope of this policy (section 3) contravene this policy, related protocol, or any regulation in law, in relation to the safety and protection of people, especially children and vulnerable people.

5. Responsibilities and specific roles under this policy

General Responsibilities

- i. The Clergy, Church Wardens and Parish Council are responsible for ensuring that, as far as is reasonably practicable, people accessing ministries, and events comply with the WHS legislation.
- ii. All Church Workers are to take all reasonable and practicable steps to avoid risks of physical and psychological harm to members of the church and wider community arising from their involvement in any ministry.
- iii. All Church Workers must adhere to ordinances, policies, protocols and processes of the Diocese.
- iv. All persons on church property or engaging in church programs and activities must do all that is practicable to keep themselves and others safe and not engage in unsafe actions.

Bishop

- i. Is the Head of Entity for Reportable Conduct matters
- ii. Is the Church Authority as defined by the Professional Standards Ordinance in relation to all licenced Church Workers
- iii. Oversees and implements Safe Ministry Policy and Protocols at Diocesan level
- iv. Licenses and appoints Church Workers upon successful Safe Ministry Clearance.

Diocesan Council

- i. Acts as the Safe Ministry Authority of the Diocese in compliance with the Canon for Safe Ministry to Children 2017, adopted by the Diocese in 2018
- ii. Approves all Safe Ministry related policies and protocols for the Diocese
- iii. Ensures office holders have adequate resources for the implementation of the Safe Ministry Policy and Protocols
- iv. Appoints members of the Diocesan Tribunal, Professional Standards Board and Professional Standards Committee
- v. Ensures that Safe Ministry implementation is a standing item on the Diocesan Council agenda.
- vi. Oversees regular review and improvement of all Safe Ministry and Professional Standards related documentation and systems.

Diocesan Boards and Committees

All Diocesan Boards and Committees must take steps to ensure that those involved in their activities understand and are familiar with this Policy and comply with it.

Professional Standards Director

- i. Manages risks in relation to adverse findings in clearance records and holds them securely
- ii. Implements Professional Standards Ordinances, Diocesan Care and Assistance procedure, Policy for Safe Ministry to Persons of Concern, and the National Register Canon
- iii. Assists with review and improvement of all Safe Ministry and Professional Standards related documentation and systems.

Rector / Priest-in-Charge

- i. Appoints lay Church Workers with appropriate Safe Ministry checks
- ii. Reports all concerns in relation to risk of harm and any known Persons of Concern to the Professional Standards Director
- iii. With Parish Council, implements Safe Ministry Policy and Protocols within the Parishes and Mission Districts

Parish Council

- i. Ensures that Safe Ministry implementation is a standing item on the Parish Council agenda
- ii. Ensures a link to the Policy and Safe Ministry protocols and guidelines can be easily found on their parish website
- iii. On an annual basis, reminds all members of the Parish or Mission District of the spirit, intent and procedures associated with this policy and their responsibilities within it

Church Wardens

- i. Oversee the implementation of Safe Ministry checks.

6. Active Participation for children, families and communities

- i. Child-related policies and procedures are easily accessible on our website and offline for everyone who accesses our services and events, including children, parents, carers and community members.
- ii. Children, parents and carers from diverse backgrounds and circumstances are encouraged to provide feedback on our child-related policies and procedures, including our Child Safe Code of Conduct that describes acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours and our Child Safe Risk Management Plan.
- iii. We provide opportunities for children to provide feedback to our management, board or committee on what makes them feel safe, supported and included.

7. What this policy covers specifically in relation to children

Transporting Children

Transporting children is the responsibility of parents or carers.

Social media use and online communication

Church Workers must never communicate privately with children online or on social media. Any necessary online communication should include the child's parent or carers in the correspondence.

Photography, use of images, recordings and the use of AI

Photos and videos of children can only be taken with the permission of parents or carers. Parents and carers must also approve any images used on any social media channels. It is unacceptable for Church Workers to take photos or videos of children, other than their own, on personal devices, or to share images without permission.

The use of Artificial Intelligence ("AI") to take, create or edit any photographs, images or recordings of children is strictly prohibited.

Physical Contact

Physical contact with children should be kept to a minimum. Everyone involved in the organisation is expected to have healthy physical boundaries with children.

Gifts and Benefits

Church Workers must never give gifts to children, or bestow benefits of any kind, unless they have direct permission from the child's parents or carers.

Out of hours contact with children

It is unacceptable for Church Workers to participate in the lives of children outside the organisation without a valid reason. Professional boundaries with children in our care must be maintained at all times.

Church Workers must disclose to their Parish or Mission District Clergy, any out-of-hours contact they have with children in their care. If the Church Worker is part of the Clergy of the Parish, then they must disclose such information to the Bishop. Should the Clergy or Bishop deem the contact unsuitable, they should report it to the Professional Standards Director for further guidance.

Illness and injury management

Injuries must be reported to the group leader or first aid officer on duty. First aid must be administered in a safe space within lines of sight of other adults.

8. Reporting requirements for different types of concerns or incidents

Our Safe Ministry and Child Safe Reporting Policy sets out the requirements and procedures for complaints, allegations and reports, and external reporting obligations. It can be accessed at: [Safe Ministry and Child Safe Policies and Forms - Anglican Riverina](#)

9. Other child related documents

The following documents can be accessed on our website: [Anglican Riverina](#)

- Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- Diocesan Due Diligence Protocol 2023
- Code of Conduct – Faithfulness in Service, Standards for Ministry (extract)
Section 5. CHILDREN – Standards
- Child Safe Risk Management Plan

10. Canons, Ordinances, Protocols, Guidelines, and Resources for Policy Implementation

- a) Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017 ([Safe-Ministry-to-Children-Canon-2017.pdf](#))
- b) National Register Canon 2008
- c) Professional Standards Ordinance 2022
- d) Professional Standards Protocol 2022
- e) Diocesan Discipline Ordinance 2022
- f) Diocesan Code of Conduct (Faithfulness in Service)
- g) Safe Ministry Training Program

11. Legislation

The following legislation is particularly relevant to Safe Ministry:

- i. NSW Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
- ii. NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- iii. Work Health and Safety Act, 2011 (NSW)
- iv. NSW Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013
- v. NSW Crimes Act 1900 (in particular, Failure to report child abuse & Failure to protect)
- vi. NSW Children Guardian Act 2019 (includes Reportable Conduct Scheme and Child Safe Standards)
- vii. NSW Civil Liability Act 2004
- viii. Aged Care Act 1997 (Commonwealth)
- ix. National Privacy Act 1988
- x. National Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (includes Positive Duty to Prevent Sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace laws)

12. Publication, communication and engagement

Our Safe Ministry and Child Safe Policy and other child safe documents can be found on our website at [Safe Ministry and Child Safe Policies and Forms - Anglican Riverina](#). We also send out a printed copy with all new registrations. Anyone involved in our community can request a copy via email at any time. We send out regular email reminders to our community about our safe ministry and child safe documents and invite feedback whenever one of our organisation's related documents is due to be reviewed.

13. Terminology

Terminology for Safe Ministry is found in related Canons and Ordinances (see section 10 above), this policy should be read in conjunction with these Canons and Ordinances.

Abuse or harm from misconduct in the church means that whilst being a member of a church in this Diocese or attending a church event or ministry program in this Diocese or engaging with Diocesan personnel within the context of their professional or vocational role, the person has suffered physical, sexual, emotional, harassment, bullying or spiritual abuse or harm caused by unjustified or unjustifiable comments or behaviour. This includes harm occurring as the result of Reportable Conduct or other serious misconduct by a Church Worker, as defined in Reportable Conduct legislation (NSW) or by Diocesan Ordinance.

To be specific, harm or abuse can be:

Psychological abuse (also known as emotional abuse)

This includes bullying, threatening and abusive language, intimidation, shaming and name calling, ignoring and isolating a child, and exposure to domestic and family violence.

Physical abuse

This includes physical punishment, such as pushing, shoving, punching, slapping and kicking, resulting in injury, burns, choking or bruising.

Sexual abuse

This includes the sexual touching of a child, grooming, and production, distribution or possession of child abuse material.

Grooming

This is a process where a person manipulates a child or group of children and sometimes those looking after them, including parents, carers, teachers and leaders. They do this to establish a position of 'trust' so they can then later sexually abuse the child.

Misconduct

This is inappropriate behaviour that may not be as severe as abuse but could indicate that abuse is occurring and would often be in breach of an organisation's Child Safe Code of Conduct. This could include showing a child something inappropriate on a phone, having inappropriate conversations with a child or an adult sitting with a child on their lap.

Lack of appropriate care

This includes not providing adequate and proper supervision, nourishment, clothing, shelter, education or medical care.

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

Child related role (ministry to children) means work of a kind which requires holding a working

with children check, or a working with vulnerable people check by reason that the person has contact with a child as part of engaging in a regulated activity; or

- a) exercises a pastoral ministry which has direct, regular and not incidental contact with children; or
- b) provides services to children that are ancillary to the exercise of a pastoral ministry within paragraph (b) which involve:
- c) contact with children during an overnight activity (such as camps and similar activities); or
- d) close, personal contact with children (such as changing clothes, washing and toileting); or
- e) supervises the ministry of a person within any one or more of paragraphs (a) to (c); or
- f) performs a professional standards role; or
- g) performs a safe ministry role;

Child Safe Standards means the 10 child safe standards as legislated in the Children's Guardian Act 2019, the regulator is the Office of the Children's Guardian.

'Contact' means physical contact, oral communication (whether face-to-face or by telephone), written communication or electronic communication (which includes email, instant messaging, social media and video chats); (*Definition from the Safe Ministry to Children Canon*).

Church Worker means a person undertaking any ministry:

- a) who is licensed or authorised by the Bishop of a diocese; or
- b) who is employed by a Church body; or
- c) who, for payment or not, holds a position or performs a function with the actual or apparent authority of a Church authority or Church body;
- d) may be lay (i.e. non-ordained) or ordained.

Clergy person: means an ordained person.

Licensed Church Worker, a person who holds a Bishop's licence.

Parish means a Parish or Mission District as defined by the Diocesan Governance Ordinance 2025.

Reportable Conduct legislation: means in NSW The Children's Guardian Act 2019 No 25 Part 4

Safe Ministry Authority: has the same meaning as the Canon for Safe Ministry to Children, in this Diocese, Diocesan Council is the Safe Ministry Authority.

Safe Ministry Coordinator: means a person who is responsible for the communication and administration of the Safe Ministry Policy in a Parish or Mission District. S/he is the local contact for the Diocesan Safe Ministry Officer. It is a role that may be undertaken by a member of Parish Council or appointed by the Parish Council.

Stored as confidential: means the documents are to be stored in a **locked cabinet or electronically with appropriate security** that may only be accessed by authorised persons e.g. Rector, Diocesan Safe Ministry Officer and Safe Ministry Coordinator.

Non-child related role, any paid or volunteer role in a parish in ministries that do not directly minister to children.

14. Review

Diocesan Council shall review this policy every three years or as required for good practice and changes to relevant legislation.