

Safe People, Places and Programs - Policy

Scope

The policy applies to all people (paid or volunteer) engaged with Churches of Christ in Queensland and its affiliated churches that conduct and/or oversee Child-related activities or engage with Vulnerable Persons as part of their ministries and employment.

For the purpose of this policy:

'The Church' includes Churches of Christ in Queensland, its Employees-including all Ministering Persons and affiliated churches.

'The Elders' refers to the main governing group of an affiliated church, for example either the management committee, board or elders.

Purpose

A safe church begins and ends with the knowledge that God's love is for all people. The Church is called to love all others, but God also has a special concern for the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed.

This policy aims to:

- Embed safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable People in the leadership, governance and culture of The Church.
- Reduce the risk of abuse occurring, especially to Children and Vulnerable People, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur. We have a zero tolerance for any type of abuse and
- Ensure The Church has processes in place to act in an appropriate and timely manner to identify Abuse and/or respond to allegations of Abuse, reports of suspected Abuse or Grooming.

The *Safe People, Places and Programs policy*, processes and associated resources are informed by the requirements of:

- The Australian Human Rights Commission, [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)
- [The Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening\) Act 2000 \(Qld\)](#) (the Act) and the [Working with Children \(Risk management and Screening\) Regulation 2011 \(Qld\)](#) (the Regulation)
- [Work Health and Safety 2011 \(Qld\)](#)
- [The Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Churches of Christ in Qld Constitution](#)
- [The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Research Papers and Final Report](#)
- Other relevant and emerging research and literature reviews and annual audits

In endorsing the *Safe People, Places and Programs policy*, the conference council and the board of churches of Christ in Queensland endorses the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#), and exhorts adherence to the policy and its related documents to ensure alignment with these **Principles**:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

This policy and processes are supported by a suite of tools and forms to assist in implementation and ensure that insurance requirements for conducting safe activities are met. The use of these tools is optional for affiliated churches, however if choosing to use alternate tools or forms it is advised that they must meet the minimum requirements for record keeping, i.e. similar to the tools provided.

Statement of Commitment: Child Safety.

The Church is committed to ensuring that Children are safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all Children, and have a zero tolerance of Child abuse.

Policy

1. Policy Statement

- All Children and Vulnerable People who are involved in any Churches of Christ in Queensland activities, services, events or programs have the right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to providing safe environments where Children and Vulnerable People are cared for, respected, nurtured and listened to.
- Abuse thrives on secrecy. To prevent all forms of abuse across The Church, we are committed to developing and maintaining an open and aware culture.
- The Church clearly affirms its commitment to upholding the law. This includes the requirement to report abuse.

2. Roles and Accountabilities

- Where **The Church** has identified that an Employee or Volunteer has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence against or in the presence of a Child, they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for the role of Employee or Volunteer where they might provide any form of care or services to Children.
 - **All churches and services** will be held directly accountable to their overseeing leadership and ultimately accountable to the Board of Churches of Christ in Qld for their compliance or otherwise with this policy and associated statutory compliance.
 - **Individuals will be held accountable for their actions**, and issues of concern are to be referred for appropriate corrective or legal action on every occasion.
- a) **Churches of Christ in Queensland** will provide *Safe People, Places and Programs Policy* and processes as the Church's 'Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy' in line with the obligations of [the Act](#) and [Regulations](#). Churches of Christ in Queensland employ people whose roles support and promote safe people, places and programs, including:
- to review and update the policy, processes, and related resources annually in line with the requirements of the Act and Regulation,
 - to assist with enquires and audit requests from the Government Regulator, Blue Card Services,
 - to raise awareness, support learning and the development of capacity/training,
 - to provide advice and guidance about planning, managing risk, and responding to incidents,
 - to provide guidance and response to matters with legal consequence and to ensure statutory compliance,
- b) **All Employees and Volunteers** engaged in child-related activities will:
- be subject to screening processes upon entry
 - adhere to **safe people, places and programs policy** and processes

- receive annual induction and training appropriate to their context on:
 - The content and application of this policy and processes.
 - The Safe Church Awareness Workshop/Refresher or equivalent training.
 - Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements.
- keep appropriate records as required
- attend additional supplementary training as required for their role
- be issued with a copy of this policy

c) The Church Elders are responsible for ensuring that this policy is communicated to all Employees and Volunteers in all programs and activities. .

- The Church Elders will annually and formally adopt the *Safe People, Places and Programs policy* as their 'Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy' to meet the requirements of the Act and Regulation. A copy of the [minute](#) will be sent to Churches of Christ in Qld Kenmore Campus.
- Where Church Elders makes the decision to conduct no activities with/for children, the decision should be minuted, a copy of the [minute](#) sent to Churches of Christ in Qld Kenmore Campus and the decision reviewed annually. In such instances, there is no requirement for the Church Elders to hold a blue card for the purpose of their office, nor for blue card details to be maintained in the congregation's [Register of Workers](#).
- The Church Elders are responsible for the oversight of all activities with Children and Vulnerable People within the congregation, and will oversee a local structure which is appropriate for the congregation size, considering availability of suitable leaders, local need and demographic.
- The Church Elders will ensure that agreed processes are followed in the conduct of all activities and ministries with/for Children and Vulnerable People within their oversight.

This includes:

- PEOPLE: selecting, overseeing and supporting Employees and Volunteers
 - PLACES: ensuring venues are safe and in good repair
 - PROGRAMS: reviewing and approving planned activities and programs prior to their conduct
 - PROBLEMS: issues and concerns addressed and relevant information evaluated and acted on
- The Church Elders are responsible to ensure that records of screening, blue cards, training and program approvals are kept. Guidance notes, templates and registers are available on the [website](#). Where a recommended tool or template is not used, the alternate is to provide the same standard of record keeping and adhere to policy and process expectations.
 - The Church Elders may delegate authority to carry out tasks in relation to these responsibilities but ultimately remains responsible for ensuring accurate and correct documentation. All approvals and delegations of authority are to be acknowledged in writing by the person receiving the delegation.

Specific guidance relating to the oversight of activities with Children and Vulnerable People is provided in [Overseeing safe people, places and programs](#).

3. Code of Conduct

- A **code of conduct** will be agreed to by all people in paid or voluntary positions conducting and overseeing Child-related activities, regardless of gender, age, cultural background or role.
- The conduct of all individuals engaged in activities with Children and Vulnerable People shall be free from Abuse including neglect, emotional, psychological and spiritual abuse; Grooming behaviour and sexual abuse.
- Leaders must ensure Children are made aware of their rights and of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and its consequences.
- All individuals within The Church, including Children, should be encouraged to adopt the same behaviours outlined in a code of conduct so that the culture of safety is embedded and developed.

4. Confidentiality and Privacy

The Church abides by legal and ethical obligations in relation to protecting and upholding the confidentiality and privacy of all Employees, Volunteers and Participants.

5. Safety and Protection

To reduce the risk of abuse occurring and to ensure that a compassionate and suitable response is taken should abuse occur, The Church will:

- Adhere to all relevant State and Federal legislation.
- Maintain up-to-date reporting and recording processes, including escalation procedures for handling allegations of Abuse.
- Store all records relating to an allegation of abuse in a secure environment in perpetuity.
- Ensure all Employees and Volunteers have access to information on recognition of Abuse and receive training relevant to their roles.
- Ensure that all people engaged in Child related activities and those overseeing such programs within The Church, both paid and Volunteer have undergone the relevant suitability checks and positive notice requirements prior to providing services to Children and Vulnerable People.

6. Inclusion and Participation

- Adults cannot guess what is important for Children or Vulnerable People they should ask them and listen to the answer.
- Community expectation is that all people who participate in Church activities will be safe.
- Particular attention should be paid to the needs and views of Children and Vulnerable People from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those with disability.

7. Addressing Concerns

Any processes to respond to complaints and concerns should be child focused.

The Church actively encourages the reporting of all Abuse including Sexual Abuse and is committed to building an environment where either a victim or Employee, Volunteer or Participant feels able to report such Abuse.

- Any disclosures by a person of Abuse, reports of suspected Abuse or Grooming or other related details provided will be **documented promptly** and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.

- Where a disclosure of Abuse has been made, the person who receives the disclosure will:
 - Treat disclosures, suspicions or knowledge of Abuse seriously and not attempt to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim.
 - Report to Statutory Authorities and Church Officials immediately.
 - Assure the person that their disclosure is being taken seriously and that they are correct in reporting the incident.
 - Maintain confidentiality.
 - Not undertake their own investigation of the allegation
 - Churches of Christ in Queensland will be responsible for any and all notifications to the insurance company.
 - See [FAQs Reporting Abuse](#) for more information
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Definitions

Abuse – can consist of one or more of, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Elder Abuse** – a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. It can take various forms such as physical, psychological or emotional, sexual and financial abuse.
- **Physical Abuse** – any non-accidental use of force that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment and may include being slapped, kicked, burned, bitten, cut, punched, bruised or improperly physically restrained.
- **Sexual Abuse** – any assault or abuse of a sexual nature, sexual molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation, whether such act is the subject of criminal investigation or not.
- **Emotional Abuse** – occurs when a person is subjected to behaviours or actions (often repeatedly) aimed at preventing or controlling their behaviour with the intent to cause them emotional harm or fear through manipulation, isolation or intimidation. Behaviours may include:
 - Insulting, bullying, ignoring, manipulating, rejecting, isolating, terrorising or other extreme acts in the vulnerable person’s presence.
- **Financial Abuse** – is the illegal or unauthorised use of a person’s property or money and may include:
 - Misappropriation of money, valuables or assets,
 - Forging signatures on cheques,
 - Denial of access to personal assets,
 - Accessing a person’s funds electronically and/ or
 - Unauthorised or forced changes to legal documents, such as an Enduring Power of Attorney.

Child/Children – any person under the age of 18.

Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy – IS this *Safe People Places and Programs policy* and processes supported by a suite of tools and forms provided and reviewed regularly.

This Policy is to be formally and annually adopted by The Elders of the affiliated church.

The Church –. Churches of Christ in Queensland and it’s employees and Affiliated churches

Church Officials – See *The Elders*

The Elders- refers to the main governing group of an affiliated church, for example either the Management Committee, Board or Elders. It also includes the conference council of Churches of Christ in Queensland for the overseeing of ministering persons employed by Churches of Christ in Queensland.

Employee – any person employed by The Church.

Grooming –actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with the child, and sometimes the family or community, to lower inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with a child. Grooming is a criminal offence in Queensland.

Ministering Persons - means a Minister, any person who undertakes the role of Minister on a voluntary basis, and any other person employed to undertake, or engaged to undertake, Pastoral Duties.

Neglect / Abuse – is a deficit in meeting basic needs, including the failure to provide adequate health care, supervision, education, clothing, nutrition and/or housing as well as their physical, emotional social and safety needs.

Participant – all congregational members, visitors or any other person who associates with the Church.

Services – means all programs and activities, including church, community and care services provided by the Church.

Statutory Authorities – Police-Child Protection Unit, Department Child Safety, Youth and Women. see [Reporting Abuse FAQs](#)

Volunteer – any unpaid person over the aged of 18, who freely offers to take part in an activity, program or task to assist the Church.

Vulnerable People – any person who is or may be in need of social support and/or community care services by reason of intellectual or other disability, age or illness.