

1.1 Safe Church Policy



WHY A POLICY?

God's word calls us to minister to vulnerable people. God identified classes of vulnerable people who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (Ex 22:21-22, Deut 10:17-19, Jer 22:2-4, James 1:27).

We affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times.

We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety.

Our policy has been developed to help us live out our Biblical mandate and our responsibilities under Australian legislation.

POLICY AIMS:

- to minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power.
- to ensure that all cases of suspected abuse, ministry misconduct, and grievances are handled in a fair and just manner, i.e. afford all parties natural justice (also known as procedural fairness).
- to ensure that leaders and programs are safe.
- to ensure that all people are respected and valued.

POLICY DEFINITIONS

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years. Young persons are a special class of child (ages 16-17years)

Safe Environment: discharges duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including e.g. spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.

The Safety Team: is responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the WHS & Safe Church Policy and supporting documentation and processes in local churches/organisations.

Approval for Ministry: a written process of accountability, whereby a Ministry Co-ordinator reviews safety plans for a program and grants permission for that program to proceed under the church/organisation's name.

Ministry Coordinators: Oversee a group of programs and or events in the church, for example the children and youth leaders. This is a role that should be undertaken by a senior church leader eg pastors, elders, deacons as is it contains significant positional power.

Safe Leader: has been through a recruitment process, understands responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team player.

Safe Ministry Program: all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned. These programs have had permission to proceed from a ministry co-ordinator

Program (event) Leaders: responsible for a teams and programs. They jointly recruit team members and complete safety management plans for their individual programs.

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

The Safe Church Policy applies to all staff members and volunteer workers in our church.

POLICY STATEMENTS

We commit to the:

a) safe recruitment of leaders.

- We will screen all prospective leaders in our ministries, before they are appointed. (ie. relevant working with children's check/vulnerable people/police check).

- We will have a minimum church attendance policy for all prospective volunteer leaders.

b) adequate training of leaders.

- We require that all leaders attend a Safe Ministry Induction (or SCTA endorsed) workshop, or complete the online training modules, preferably within their first year of ministry, and attend a refresher workshop or online training program every 3 years.

- We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific training as required.

c) continued supervision of leaders.

- We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders.

- All leaders agree to follow our Leader's Code of Conduct.

d) responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious ministry misconduct.

- All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, accord to our procedure.

- Where a leader has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them we will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate denominational help for a just and fair resolution.

e) safe environments in our ministry programs.

- We will serve participants as servants of Christ, commit to the good news of Jesus and lead in spiritually non-abusive ways.

- We will afford participants, including children, a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by; fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation.

- We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.

- All leaders to will discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates for establishment and maintenance of safe environments in our church.

- A Safety team will be appointed to establish and maintain: WHS, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures.

- Team Leaders are to complete a written ministry approval process annually.