

Child Safety Policy

Date first approved by COE: 13 February 2017
Date first Issued: 15 February 2017
Updated: 21 March 2022
Responsible person/department: Ministry Executive.
Prepared by: Executive Minister
Review date: 2024.

1. Introduction – Statement of Commitment

One Church is committed to child safe practice. The care, the safety and the welfare of children are embedded in policies and practices which ensure a commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse. When Jesus uttered his beautiful words, 'let the children come to me and do not hinder them' (Matt 19:14) he set the benchmark for us. We want to continue to be a church where children and families are welcome and participate fully. We want to be an open community where we foster relationships between church members and those of the wider community based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

- We are committed to child safety because it is integral to our mission.
- We are committed to implementing the Victorian Child Safe Standards.
- We want children to be safe, happy, and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
- We have comprehensive policies and procedures for recruiting and managing our people, both staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.
- We will always report any reasonable belief of child abuse to police, child protection and the Commission for Children and Young People.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

2. Definitions

“Child” and **“children”** means people under the age of 18.

Children's and Youth ministry means any activity or program where any of the participants are under 18 and not accompanied by parents or carers authorised by the parents.

Workers are all those who are involved in children's and youth ministry other than in a leadership role, including both staff and volunteers, and includes those under the age of 18.

Leaders are all those in some level of leadership in our church. This includes not only the Ministers, Pastors, Support Staff, Elders, and Ministry Leaders but also those appointed to some level of leadership role in the church and includes those under the age of 18.

(CCVT) Churches of Christ Vic Tas

3. Our Children

We find practical and age-appropriate ways to give participants a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation. We will be accountable and transparent.

We provide a child-friendly environment, allowing people to raise their concerns in an appropriate manner.

We request appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we can care for their physical and emotional needs.

We promote diversity and acceptance in our church, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. We will:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equitably.

Children and their parents are made aware of our Codes of Conduct and are required to abide by them.

4. Responsibility for Safety

Everyone associated with One Church has some responsibility for safety as set out below.

Who	Role in promoting Safe Places
Individuals (participants)	Take personal responsibility for their own and others' safety; raise any issues of concern. Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.
Workers	Be aware of and act in accordance with this policy and it's procedures. Encourage program participants to take responsibility for their own and others' safety and advise how to report any issues of concern.
Leaders	Be aware of and act in accordance with this policy and it's procedures. Carry out responsibilities in accordance with employment contract / position description.
Council of Elders (Church Board)	Take responsibility for what happens in One Church. Identify, assess and control risks, and review the effectiveness of control measures. Ensure appropriate insurance arrangement are in place. Adopt appropriate policies and review them regularly. Ensure the relevant policies are widely communicated and lived out in the church. Ensure the church is compliant with regulatory obligations. Liase for Churches of Christ Vic Tas (CCVT) as needed. Be guided by CCVT as is necessary.

5. Governing Body/ Council of Elders

All people in authority in our church are committed to promoting child safety and are aware that they would be committing a criminal offence if they knew of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and had the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

The Council of elders participates in an awareness-raising workshop regarding safety issues at least annually and conducts an annual self-assessment to identify how we can improve the way we apply the Victorian Child Safe Standards in our organisation.

The governing body makes an annual declaration to CCVT confirming that we comply with the Child Safe Standards or if not, specifying any areas for improvement and what action will be taken, by when, to ensure compliance at a minimum and ideally best practice.

CCVT oversees these declarations.

6. Safety Contact Person

At least one person is nominated as a Safety Contact person. The name and contact details of the Safety Contact Person are provided at the end of this policy and are widely publicised.

7. Our Leaders, Staff and Volunteers

All Workers and Leaders are required to agree to the relevant Code of Conduct and to abide by it.

Leaders, staff, and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the relevant Code of Conduct.

A person cannot be involved in children's ministry unless they have been screened, completed the required training and signed the Code of Conduct.

All staff and volunteers have a clear description of their role in the form of a position description or short statement.

8. Recruitment and Screening

We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety, for both paid and unpaid leadership roles.

We actively encourage applications from women, Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people living with a disability.

We carry out thorough background checking for both paid and unpaid leadership roles.

All Leaders and Workers aged 18 and over are required to obtain a Working With Children Check prior to commencing involvement with children/ youth.

All Leaders and Workers are required to be interviewed and approved by authorised leaders before commencing their involvement with children's / youth ministry. A Working With Children Check must be obtained before commencing involvement with children's / youth ministry unless the authorised leader approves the person on the basis that the Working with Children Check has been submitted and is pending.

9. Training and Supervision of People Involved in Children and Youth Ministry

Everyone who is involved in children's / youth ministry must undergo training in child safety, including how to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse, how to detect potential signs of child abuse and how to report any concerns appropriately.

We want all leaders, staff, volunteers, parents/carers and children and others involved with our activities to be willing and able to raise any safety concerns in accordance with our Child Safety Reporting Procedure.

We require the Chair of our Council of Elders, the Senior Minister, Executive Minister, Accredited Ministers, the Safety Contact Person, and the persons responsible for children's ministry and youth ministry to attend a NCCA Safe Church Awareness Workshop before commencing in their role and to attend a refresher workshop every 3 years.

Those leaders are responsible for ensuring that all leaders and workers involved in any serving role with children's ministry or serving in the church in some way, have also been provided with the following before commencing in their role and every then every 3 years:

- Child Safe Awareness training, which includes implementation training – covering this policy, our Child Safety Reporting Procedure, and a discussion of how we apply the Victorian Child Safe Standards in our organisation.

We provide ongoing training, supervision and support for all people who are involved in children's / youth ministry.

10. Responding to Complaints and Concerns

Allegations, concerns, and complaints

We work to ensure all children, families, staff, volunteers, and others involved with our activities know what to do and who to tell if they are concerned about any behaviour towards themselves or others.

Our church takes all allegations seriously and will investigate where appropriate, in accordance with regulatory requirements as well as Churches of Christ Vic. Tas. (CCVT) policy on Investigating Complaints of Misconduct.

We will communicate with the CCVT Safe Places Coordinator before investigating.

Reporting

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels in accordance with our Child Safety Reporting Procedure.

Our Child Safety Reporting Procedure recognises that in Victoria:

- all adults have an obligation to report information to the police if they have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16; and
- any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

11. Reportable Conduct

It is the duty of the Head of a religious organisation to report 'reportable conduct' to the Commission for Children and Young People.

There are 5 types of 'reportable conduct':

- sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child

The Head of the organisation constituted by One Church is the Rev. Tim Horman and/or the Rev. Roger Bentley.

The Head of the Entity has a duty under the Act to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of reportable allegations and take further specified action.

It is essential to the effective operation of these arrangements that those exercising leadership positions at One Church observe the requirements for Reportable Conduct Scheme. Failure to do so will put at risk due compliance with the requirements of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act by One Church.

If any person associated with the church suspects an offence under the 5 types of Reportable Conduct, you must notify the Rev. Tim Horman and the Rev. Roger Bentley within three days of learning of that offence.

12. Mandatory Reporting

One Church will adhere to all the regulatory requirements of mandatory reporting.

People in religious ministry are included as mandatory reporters to Child Protection.

A person in religious ministry is a person appointed, ordained, or recognised as a religious or spiritual leader in a religious institution.

A religious institution is an entity that:

Operates under the auspices of any faith, that provides activities, facilities, programs, or services of any kind through which adults interact with children.

There are no exemptions for religious organisations.

When is a child in need of protection?

- A child may need protection if they have experienced or are at risk of significant harm, and their parents have not protected or are unlikely to protect them from that harm. Significant harm may relate to:
- physical injury
- sexual abuse
- emotional or intellectual development
- physical development or health
- abandonment or parental incapacity.

Mandatory reporters are required to report in relation to significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse. They may choose, as can anyone, to report in relation to other types of significant harm.

To make a report use the appropriate Child Protection number and notify the Rev Tim Horman and the Rev Roger Bentley who will inform the Commission and Children and Young People.

13. Record-keeping and Privacy

The church will keep records of Working with Children Checks, and of all allegations of abuse and other safety concerns. All records are securely stored.

We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected in accordance with the church's Privacy Policy.

14. Risk Management

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks in both physical and online environments.

15. Regular Review

We conduct an annual self-review of safety in our church.

This policy will be reviewed every year and following significant incidents if they occur.

We will ensure that families and children can contribute.

Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

16. Child Safety Contact Person(s)

- **Rev. Tim Horman (Senior Minister)**
- **Rev. Roger Bentley (Executive Minister / Designated Safety Contact Person)**
- **Ps. Jody Drew (Children and Family Pastor)**
- **Ps. Claire Bentley (Youth Pastor)**

P. 03 8878 2500

E. safechurch@one.org.au

17. References

- Victorian Child Safe Standards <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/child-safe-standards>
- Commission for Children and Young People www.cryp.vic.gov.au
- Australian Human Rights Commission (National Child Safe Principles) <https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles>
- Churches of Christ Vic.Tas.
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)
- Children Youth and Family Act 2005 (Vic)