

SAFE CHURCH POLICY – AFFILIATED CHURCHES

This policy is provided by Churches of Christ in Queensland (CofCQ) to all affiliated churches for their adoption as their *Safe Church Policy*. Adoption of this policy on an annual basis and its continual implementation by the Affiliated Church Leadership is required to ensure:

- A culture of safety is maintained in each affiliated church;
- That the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* that resulted from the recommendations made by the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* are embedded in each affiliated church;
- That affiliated churches are compliant with legislation relating to reporting harm and protecting children and vulnerable people; and
- That affiliated churches meet their insurance requirements in the area of children and vulnerable people.

This policy should be read in conjunction with any associated guidelines, checklists and templates provided by CofCQ to assist affiliated churches in its implementation. Affiliated churches are encouraged to request assistance or advice in relation to the implementation of this policy from CofCQ (churchsupport@cofcqld.com.au).

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 1.1 Underlying this policy is the acknowledgement that a safe church begins and ends with the knowledge that God's love is for all people. The church is committed to the Biblical call to care for the vulnerable and acknowledges God's special concern for the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed.
- 1.2 This policy aims to reduce the risk of abuse and harm occurring and to ensure that the church has processes in place to act in an appropriate and timely manner to identify abuse or harm and respond to allegations or disclosures of abuse or harm.
- 1.3 This policy is designed to fulfil the church's responsibility and accountability under relevant State and Federal laws.
- 1.4 This policy and any processes / procedures / tools associated with its implementation, represents the church's Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy in line with obligations under legislation.
- 1.5 This policy responds to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations that resulted from the recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- 1.6 This policy applies to all people (paid or volunteer) engaged in any capacity with the programs of the church.
- 1.7 There are specific requirements for people (paid or volunteer) that conduct and/or oversee programs that are child-related activities or engage with / involve vulnerable persons as part of their ministries and employment.
- 1.8 This policy is mandatory and binding upon those selected below:

☐ All

☐ Children Youth and Families	☐ Seniors Living	☐ Housing Services	☐ Integrated Communities
☐ Churches of Christ Foundation	☒ Mission	☐ Corporate Services	☐ Council
☐ CEO and Board		☐ Executive Group and Senior Leadership	

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Commitments

- 2.1 The church does not tolerate abuse or harm to children or adults.
- 2.2 The church is committed to providing safe environments where all people, especially children and vulnerable people, are listened to, respected and their views sought in relation to their safety.
- 2.3 The church commits to fulfil responsibilities under State and Federal law to provide safe places, protect vulnerable people, and to report harm and abuse.
- 2.4 The church will actively seek to prevent abuse and harm of children and vulnerable people, including maintaining an open and aware culture, treating all concerns and allegations raised seriously, not minimising the impact of abuse and harm on the victim, and promptly responding to all concerns and allegations.

Screening and Training Volunteers and Leaders

- 2.5 The church will screen and train all staff, leaders and volunteers involved in any ministry / program / activity of the church via a safe ministry training course approved by CofCQ (currently Safe Ministry Check). This will include:
 - Completing the training course/s relevant to their role at the church.
 - Signing a *Code of Conduct*.
 - Completing a self-disclosure statement.
 - Providing two referees who can attest to their suitability to work with children or vulnerable people.
 - Providing Working with Children Check details (Queensland Blue Card or Exemption Card) for verification if their role involves working / serving to provide services to children.
- 2.6 The church will outline the roles and responsibilities of leaders and volunteers and provide appropriate supervision and accountability.
- 2.7 The church will nominate a minimum of two Safe Ministry contacts and communicate who they are to the church.
- 2.8 The church will respond immediately to any concerns about the suitability of volunteers and leaders revealed either through the screening process in Safe Ministry Check, or through any other means such as verbal or written communication or observed behaviours. This response will include suspending the individual from their role while the concerns are investigated and may result in disciplinary action including termination. The church will keep appropriate records and maintain confidentiality and privacy. The church may also contact CofCQ's Mission or Safeguarding team for advice.
- 2.9 Where the suitability of a volunteer or leader cannot be satisfactorily determined by the Church Leadership, the church will ensure that person is not involved in child-related activities in any way.
- 2.10 The church will ensure all staff, leaders and volunteers who work / serve to provide services to children, conduct activities with children or make decisions relating to children have valid Blue Cards or Exemption Cards and that they are linked to the church via the Blue Card Services organisational portal. Where staff, leaders and volunteers work with children, they will not commence that work until they have a valid Blue Card.

Programs and Property

- 2.11 The church commits to providing safe and accessible programs that are suitable for those attending including conducting and approving annual risk assessments for all programs and specific risk assessment for high-risk activities.
 - The church should give due consideration to:
 - activities undertaken;
 - the suitability of the venue, equipment and facilities;

- safe supervision;
- appropriate toileting practices for children;
- inclusion of children and vulnerable people and people living with a disability;
- transportation and driver suitability;
- workplace health and safety legislation;
- parent or guardian permission; and
- confidentiality of records kept.

- 2.12 The church commits to providing safe facilities, including:
- conducting an annual fire evacuation practice;
 - conducting an annual fire safety review;
 - maintaining facilities and equipment in good repair; and
 - conducting an annual property maintenance review.

Complaints, Concerns and Input

- 2.13 The church is committed to creating a culture where everyone feels safe to raise concerns regarding behaviour and safety.
- 2.14 The church will provide and communicate appropriate and accessible ways for all people involved in the services, ministries or programs of the church to give input, raise concerns, be heard and be informed. This will include specific consideration of how children and vulnerable people can be afforded these opportunities.
- 2.15 The church will respond promptly to all concerns and complaints raised regarding behaviour and the safety of people, facilities, equipment and programs, including keeping records and maintaining confidentiality and privacy.
- Concerns and complaints regarding the safety of programs, facilities / equipment or an individual's behaviour will be dealt with by the Safe Ministry contacts or Church Leadership / Governing Group of the church.
 - Concerns or allegations involving suspected, disclosed (current) or historical abuse or risk of harm to children will be reported to the Queensland Police Service in accordance with the *Queensland Criminal Code*, or Department of Child Safety Regional Intake Service .
 - If a perpetrator of alleged abuse or harm to children is associated with the church in any way, the Church Leadership will inform CofCQ's Safeguarding Response Group (SRG) within 48 hours via safeguarding@cofcqld.com.au

Persons of Concern

- 2.16 When the church becomes aware that a Person of Concern is connected with their services, ministries or programs, the Church Leadership will report to CofCQ's SRG within 48 hours via safeguarding@cofcqld.com.au.
- 2.17 A person who fits the definition of a Person of Concern in CofCQ's *Persons of Concern Policy* and/or is not eligible to hold a Blue Card will not be employed, volunteer or be in any decision-making role in relation to services provided to children or vulnerable people at the church.
- 2.18 In accordance with the CofCQ *Persons of Concern Policy*, SRG's recommendation, in addition to 3.17, may include but not be limited to:
- Excluding the Person of Concern from the church facilities, services, ministries and programs;
 - Providing alternative ministry for the Person of Concern; or

- Where there is capacity within the church and if agreed with CofCQ, managing the Person of Concern's interaction with the church under a Safety Agreement.

3. PRINCIPLES

Roles, Responsibilities and Accountabilities

- 3.1 This policy is supported by roles and responsibilities in adherence to the following:

Staff

- 3.2 Responsible for abiding by the statements laid out in this policy, using its procedures and supporting documents to guide their practice.

Endorsement and Approval

Policy Review Priority	Accountable	Responsible	Consulted	Informed
☒ High	☒ Board	☒ CEO	Via Quality Compliance Coordinator	All workforce
☐ Medium				
☐ Low				

- 3.3 Once adopted by an affiliated church, the Church Leadership (e.g. Board, Elders, Management Committee, staff) of the church is responsible for ensuring this policy and appropriate supporting processes and procedures are embedded in the church culture and operations at all levels.
- 3.4 Where required, the church will contact CofCQ Mission team staff for assistance or advice in relation to the implementation of this policy by the church.

Compliance, Monitoring and Review

- 3.5 This policy is reviewed yearly, or sooner where relevant legislation is updated or the company position changes.
- 3.6 This policy is mandatory and binding upon
- the Board of Churches of Christ in Queensland;
 - CEO;
 - Affiliated churches (once adopted).
- 3.7 Breaches to this policy may result in investigation, disciplinary action, and reporting to the Executive / Board.

Reporting and Records Management

- 3.8 The church will provide confirmation to CofCQ's Mission team that this policy has been adopted by the Church Leadership on an annual basis.
- 3.9 Records regarding training and screening of leaders, Blue Cards, complaints and concerns, and program risk assessments will be maintained confidentially and in accordance with privacy requirements.
- 3.10 CofCQ staff must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy in a recognised Churches of Christ in Queensland record keeping system.

4. DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Term	Definition
Abuse or Harm	Child abuse is an action or inaction that causes injury, death, emotional harm or risk of harm to a child. There are four forms of child abuse - physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Harm is the detrimental impact on the child caused by the abuse. QFCC Child Protection Kit for Professionals.
Accountable	The person who has ultimate ownership of a policy. Ownership cannot be transferred.
Affiliated Church	A Church of Christ which has been admitted into membership of Churches of Christ in Queensland (CofCQ) as a member congregation pursuant to CofCQ's constitution.
Child/Children	Any person under the age of 18 years. Often the term 'young person' is used to describe an older child even though legally they are still a child.
Child-related Activities	Any services or programs directed mainly towards children or any activities conducted mainly involving children.
Child Sexual Offence	A child sexual offence is an offence of a sexual nature committed against a child and includes: — Indecent treatment of a child — Carnal knowledge with or of a child — Rape — Incest — Grooming a child (or their parent or carer) — Making child exploitation material — Maintaining a sexual relationship with a child Learn more about child sexual offences .
The Church	The affiliated church adopting this policy.
Church Leadership	The governing group of the church as per the church constitution – may be variously referred to as the Elders, Board, Management Committee.
CofCQ	The Churches of Christ in Queensland Group of Entities including Churches of Christ in Queensland, Churches of Christ Care, Churches of Christ Housing Services Limited and all Churches of Christ in Queensland subsidiary entities.
Consulted	The people who contribute valuable subject matter expertise to the development/review of the policy.
High-Risk Activities	High-risk activities are activities defined as high risk by the church's insurer and may include: jumping castles, motor races, motor rallies, motor speed tests, canyoning, caving, rifle/firearms, shooting, aircraft, hang gliding, parachuting, para gliding, white water canoeing/kayaking/rafting, scuba diving, dune buggies, vertical and horizontal bungee jumping, hot air ballooning, gladiator games, unsupported rock climbing, go karts, motocross, martial arts or boxing activities, fireworks, pyrotechnics, high or low ropes courses, horseback riding. Churches should check with their insurer.
Informed	The people expected to remain informed and knowledgeable of the policy.

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Review Priority: HIGH

Institution	Churches of Christ in Queensland group of entities as defined by the term Organisation as well as any affiliated member churches.
Organisation	Churches of Christ in Queensland Group of Entities including Churches of Christ in Queensland, Churches of Christ Housing Services Limited and all Churches of Christ subsidiary entities.
Person of Concern	A Person of Concern is a person whose presence or interaction with CofCQ and their current or historical behaviour and/or actions, create a risk of a child sexual offence being committed. A Person of Concern includes, but is not limited to a person who: — has pleaded guilty to, been convicted of, or has admitted to a child sexual offence and/or is on the Queensland Child Protection Offender Registry or the equivalent from another Australian state, territory, or international jurisdiction; or — is currently charged with a child sexual offence; — has been the subject of an allegation or complaint of a child sexual offence which is subject to an ongoing police investigation.
Program	Any ministry, program or activity carried out under the oversight or auspice of the church, whether on their property or elsewhere. This includes any and all church services, social groups, bible studies, home / cell / life groups, children and youth programs etc. Consideration should also be given to online ministries undertaken in the name of the church or by representatives of the church.
RACI	A matrix describing the participation by various roles in completing tasks or deliverables in support of business processes.
Responsible	The person who implements the process and monitors compliance.
Safe Ministry Check	Online program for training and screening leaders and volunteers. https://safeministrycheck.com.au/
Safe Ministry Contacts	Person/s nominated in Safe Ministry Check as the Safe Ministry contact/s for an affiliated church.
SRG	CofCQ's Safeguarding Response Group.
Subject Matter Expert	The person/s with definitive sources of knowledge who contribute their expertise to enhance organisational efficiency.
Vulnerable Persons	A person who is unable to care for themselves or they are unable to protect themselves from being exploited or harmed because of an illness, mental health, trauma or because of a disability, or because of their age (elderly or under 18).

5. RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Category	Related Reference Document(s)
Related Churches of Christ in Queensland Policies	Person of Concern Policy
Related Legislation, Industry Standards and Care Standards	National Principles for Child Safe Organisations Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld) Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (Qld) Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 Working with Children (Risk management and Screening) Regulation 2011 (Qld)
Related Churches of Christ in Queensland Procedures, Supporting Documents and references	Governance Principles Churches of Christ in Queensland Constitution Resources to assist in affiliated churches in implementing this policy can be found at https://www.cofc.com.au/churches/church-resources/safe-churches

6. FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The church, a congregant or a member of the public may provide feedback about this document by one of the following mechanisms:
- Email churchsupport@cofcqld.com.au
 - Phone 1800 193 438 (Church Support Hotline)

7. APPENDIX – ADOPTION BY AFFILIATED CHURCH

To ensure a culture of safety, embed the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*, comply with the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*, each affiliated church is required to annually formally adopt (or reaffirm) the *Safe Church Policy*, and to record a statement of adoption and commitment in the Governing Group (church leadership) meeting minutes.

Suggested wording for the Governing Group meeting minutes:

“..... [Name of Church] is committed to providing safe places where people are cared for, nurtured and sustained and commits itself to the care, protection and safety of all people, particularly children and those who are vulnerable. We commit to ongoing compliance with requirements of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011, and adopt the Safe Church Policy. We will ensure the implementation of the requirements of the policy to ensure we meet our legislative requirements.”

Please send the following confirmation to churchsupport@cofcqld.com.au

“The Governing Group members of [Church Name] on [x date] agree to adopt and implement the *Safe Church Policy* and have recorded this in our minutes.”

8. REVIEW AND APPROVAL DETAILS

Review	Details
Policy Author and Position	Joanna Lee, Operations & Fundraising Manager
Consulted	Donna Savill, Executive General Manager, Mission Steve Drinkall, Mission Development Manager Vicki Marney, Regional Engagement Partner Samantha Patterson, Child Safe Practice Lead Sally Anne Keynes, Legal Officer
Authority Approval	Date of Meeting
Endorsed by Executive Group	3 April 2025
Endorsed by Council	20/08/2025
Approved by Board	05/08/2025
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Original version date	15/05/2019
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Next review date	20/08/2026