



Safe Church Policy

Commitment

Penrith Church of Christ is committed to providing physical, emotional, and spiritual environments that are safe and secure for all Church people including vulnerable people and children. Through the functioning of the *Safe Church Procedures*, we aim to reduce the risk of harm occurring to people associated with the Church. We are committed to a caring and responsible approach and will respond appropriately should any suspicion, allegation, disclosure, or complaint of misconduct or abuse occur. In making this commitment, we acknowledge the shared responsibility of all people associated with the Church.

This Safe Church Policy enables the Church to live out its mission in ways that keep people safe, especially in ministries with children and vulnerable adults. Implementation of this policy, along with accompanying procedures, ensures our Church leadership (ELDERS) meets their responsibilities and be compliant with Australian legislation and the various safeguarding policies and guidelines of the Churches of Christ. It ensures that a framework of practices exist to minimise harm to children and vulnerable adults, that programs are organised so they are accessible to all, that any concerns are reported appropriately, and remain compliant with legislative requirements.

Penrith Church of Christ is committed to implementing the Child Safe Standards (as outlined by the Office of the Children's Guardian) and commits to a continual improvement process which ensures compliance with this policy and that it is amended in response to changes in legislative requirements. The Child Safe Standards can be found here [Child Safe Standards](#)

Child Safe Standards

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| 1. Leadership and Culture | 2. Children's Participation |
| 3. Families and Communities | 4. Equity and Diversity |
| 5. Suitability of Workers | 6. Complaint Handling |
| 7. Knowledge and Skills | 8. Physical and Online Environments |
| 9. Continuous Improvement | 10. Policies and Procedures |

WE WILL THEREFORE:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct, and the misuse of positional power;
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled thoroughly;
- Ensure that leaders and participants of ministries are safe;
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with Penrith Church of Christ Code of Conduct and Safe Church Procedures.

Legal Framework

Penrith Church of Christ is committed to providing a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children, young people and vulnerable adults and will comply with current Government legislation relating to:

- **Mandatory Reporting Body.** We acknowledge the obligations of mandatory reporting and being a reporting body within NSW. Penrith Church of Christ requires all disclosures from vulnerable people including children and young people to all Team Leaders/Pastors to be reported using processes provided by the Disclosure/Self Harm Form. All suspected cases of child abuse or neglect will be notified to relevant government authorities, including the State Police.
- **Child Sexual Abuse.** As child sexual abuse is a criminal offence, any individual who is aware of a potential criminal offence will be obliged to report what they know to Police (e.g. NSW Crimes Act, section 316).
- **Registerable Sex Offenders.** We will maintain a zero-tolerance approach to registerable sex offenders as it poses an unacceptable risk. Those who are registerable sex offenders are not permitted to take part in any leadership role of Penrith Church of Christ services, programs, ministries, activities or events where there is contact with children and vulnerable people. Church Leadership will ensure that any registerable sex offender is closely monitored on an ongoing basis.

Purpose

Penrith Church of Christ has adopted this *Safe Church Policy* to:

- Help us live out our biblical mandate to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:30-31);
- Implement the Ten Child Safe Standards as is required by the Office of the Children's Guardian. A copy of these standards is available in the Church office or found online at the Office of the Children's Guardian website. [Child Safe Standards](#)
- Provide for and promote the care, protection and wellbeing of vulnerable people. This is inclusive of the elderly, people with disabilities, young people and children in a manner that recognises their right to engage and participate in a safe and stable environment. The right to be protected from harm, and to maximise opportunities to realise their full potential is of paramount importance.
- Provide for and promote the provision of services that foster the health, developmental needs, spirituality, self-respect and dignity of vulnerable people. This will be inclusive of young people and children. This will occur by ensuring that person(s) responsible for vulnerable people within the Church are appropriately trained to perform their responsibilities.
- Promote caring attitudes and responses towards vulnerable people including children or young people. This will ensure appropriate nurture, care and protection is understood, the risks to a vulnerable person's wellbeing are quickly identified, and any necessary support, protection or care is promptly provided.
- Promote and recognise the need to strengthen, preserve and promote positive relationships between individual people and church leaders, mentors and spiritual advisors.
- Provide and promote a Safe Church culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work, volunteer or access Penrith Church of Christ programs, services or managed facilities.

- Ensure all prospective ministry leaders having contact with children/youth in a Penrith Church of Christ program, will have the appropriate screening to work with children according to standards set by the NSW Commission of Children and Young People.
- Ensure all ministry leaders attend a recognised safe church training workshop and **undertake a refresher workshop every three years.**
- Ensure that a Risk assessment is completed before any program is undertaken.
- Ensure that privacy is maintained in all circumstances and that information is only shared with relevant parties.

Response to Allegations of Risk of Harm and Serious Misconduct

- All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to our Safe Church procedures. We will listen to and believe children who raise concerns. Subsequent investigation will be undertaken without bias.
- We will ensure that Safe Church procedures are clear and appropriate in responding to any allegation of abuse.
- Where a leader has an allegation of misconduct or abuse made against them, support will be provided for both alleged victims and perpetrators to seek appropriate assistance for a just and fair resolution.
- We will understand the processes of responding to disclosures of all forms of abuse and harm.
- We will encourage that appropriate training is available to recognise and respond to indicators of abuse and receive support for all involved in the disclosure.
- We will create an environment that allows people to raise their concerns without fear.
- Where necessary, we will obtain appropriate information relating to ministry participants, including health and family situation, to ensure that appropriate care is given for physical and emotional needs.
- We will be aware in our approach of all ministries to be inclusive of all people. This may include adapting our church programs to suit individual needs. Appropriate training will be provided where required for relevant personnel.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- all Church Leadership, Ministry Leaders, church partners, staff and volunteers;
- all people who are involved in the Church and its programs or ministries;

There will be an ongoing commitment to training and support for church leadership and ministry leaders.

The oversight of this Policy is delegated to the Penrith Church of Christ Operations Team, reporting as necessary to the Elders and the implementation is the responsibility of the Safe Church Team.

Recommended by OPS team 12/10/22