

SAFE SPACES POLICY & PROCEDURE




October 2022

ECC SAFE CHURCHES POLICY

Signatures of Elders to adopt all policies that make up ECC Safe Churches Policy & Procedures including:

- Safe Church Policy
- Procedures for Staff and Volunteers
- Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers
- Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns (NSW)
- Code of Conduct For Staff and Volunteers
- Guidelines for activities with Children and Young People
- Persons of Concern Policy
- Workplace Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Management & Hazard Reduction

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A. Safe Church Policy

Adopted by Elders on 20 October 2022

Commitment

The Church is committed to providing places, services and programs that promote physical, emotional and spiritual health and safety and model the love of Christ to all whom we have contact with, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Purpose

The Church 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;
- provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children, young people and vulnerable adults; and
- meet our legal obligations in relation to:
 - staff and volunteers engaged in Child-related Work and
 - reporting requirements, including Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct, Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct involving a Child, to government authorities.

The *Safe Church Policy* outlines the commitment of the church to principles in various areas. More detail regarding the practical implementation of these commitments is available in the relevant procedures and guidelines.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- all Church Leadership, staff and volunteers;
- all people who are involved in or attend the Church and its programs.

1. Activities and Services for Children at the Church

As a church, we commit to providing spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

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1.1 Church Leadership:

- a. recognise that children and young people are an integral part of the Church and talk about this in services, sermons, training events and meetings;
- b. involve children and young people in the routine of church life where appropriate
- c. consider the needs of children and young people when they make decisions about budgets, buildings, renovations, use of property, décor, or catering; and
- d. encourage children and young people to have input in decisions that affect them by including them in church forums and meetings when appropriate.

1.2 Safe Church Team:

- a. talk with children and young people about the fact that they have the right to feel safe, to be listened to and to have their views respected (including discussing what they should do and who they should approach if they feel unsafe or hurt, or they suspect that someone else is unsafe or hurt); and
- b. ensure their contact details are accessible to children and their caregivers.

1.3 Staff and volunteers:

- a. listen to children and young people and take seriously what they are saying;
- b. talk with children and young people about the kinds of behaviours, attitudes or 'culture' that they would like to promote in their group;
- c. encourage children and young people to have input regarding the content and activities they would like to be part of their group.

Please see the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People* for more detail

2. Staff and Volunteers

2.1 Screening, selection and induction of Staff and Volunteers

- a. The church will undertake appropriate screening processes for all staff and volunteers.

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- b. The church will engage in fair and transparent selection processes for all staff and volunteers.
- c. The church will provide appropriate induction for all staff and volunteers.
- d. All staff and volunteers are to be recruited, selected and inducted in accordance with the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*.

2.2 Training and Resourcing of Staff and Volunteers

- a. The church will ensure that staff and volunteers develop the knowledge and skills to create safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people.
- b. The church will ensure that staff and volunteers have access to information about creating safe spaces and that they all undergo appropriate training regarding the available Procedures, Guidelines and Forms.
- c. The church will support staff and volunteers with adequate resources to enable them to maintain and promote safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people.
- d. The church will implement the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*.

2.3 Standards of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers

- a. The church will provide spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.
- b. The church will expect all staff and volunteers to uphold the *Code of Conduct* which includes expected behaviours for those who engage in ministry with children and/or vulnerable people.
- c. The church will expect staff and volunteers to follow *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*.

Please see the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers* and the *Screening Questionnaire* for more detail.

3. Conflict, Complaints and Concerns

3.1 Responding to Child Protection Concerns

- a. The church will ensure appropriate and timely reporting of all child protection concerns and any complaints relating to child sexual abuse and/or sexual misconduct involving a child in accordance with the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*.
- b. The church will ensure that all child protection concerns and complaints will be reported to the relevant government departments and, if necessary, Police as soon as possible and in accordance with legislative duties.

3.2 Complaint Handling

- a. The Church will respond to complaints in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers*.
- b. Where there is a complaint that a staff member or volunteer has engaged in abuse, including child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct involving a child, the Church will treat the allegation as a serious breach of the *Code of Conduct* and respond in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*.
- c. In the event of receiving a complaint that relates to a minor breach of the *Code of Conduct* or a grievance, the Church may determine to respond to the matter in accordance with the *Procedure for Resolving Conflict*.

Please see the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns and the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers* for more detail.

4. Safe Environments

4.1 Physical Environments

- a. The Church will ensure that physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for all people to be harmed.
- b. The Church will comply with Work, Health and Safety requirements.
- c. The Church will consider the impact of the physical environment on the potential for risk to children and vulnerable people.
- d. The Church will identify and address risks arising from the physical environment in which programs and activities take place.
- e. If the Church has any residential property that is identifiable as being church property, then the Church will ensure that all regular adult occupants of that property obtain and hold WWCC or WWVP clearance for the duration of their residence.
- f. The Church will consider whether any ministries it supports, including overseas ministries, have appropriate child protection practices in place. (This includes consideration of whether supporting orphanages overseas is appropriate).

4.2 Online Environments

The Church will promote safe online behaviour in any electronic communication. Please see the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People* for more detail

5. Risk Management

5.1 Persons of Concern

The Church will manage any person identified as a Person of Concern in the *Persons of Concern Policy*.

5.2 Risk Assessments

- a. The Church will ensure that Ministry Leaders complete and make a record of a risk assessment in relation to any program or activity undertaken at, for or with the Church.
 - for regular activities, the risk assessment will be conducted at least annually and whenever there are significant changes in the program activities, attendance or location.
 - for special activities, the Ministry Leader or Safe Church Team will complete a risk assessment.
- b. The Church will ensure that appropriate and reasonable precautions are adopted to address risks identified as part of a risk assessment. When considering what measures are appropriate, the Church will consider the likelihood of an incident occurring, the seriousness of the consequences and the difficulty of avoiding the risk.
- c. The Church will store risk assessment forms in a secure location for a period of at least 45 years.

6. Third Parties and Affiliated Entities

- 6.1 The church will require any third party (tenant or external party using church property) that provides services to children and/or young people to provide written confirmation of their compliance with the Child Safe Standards at least annually.
- 6.2 The church will ensure that any affiliated entities (any entity or program that is, or is represented as, a ministry of the Church) comply with Child Safe Standards including annual reports to the governance body regarding child safety.

7. Recordkeeping

- 7.1 The Church will retain all written records for a minimum of 45 years, in hard copy and/or electronically in a secure manner.
 - Where records contain, or may contain, sensitive information, they will be kept in a manner that protects confidentiality and will only be accessed by a limited number of authorised persons;
 - Where records are kept in hard copy, they will be held in a secure location with proper consideration of access, and physical conditions; and

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- Where records are kept electronically, they will be monitored to ensure security and ongoing accessibility.

7.2 Records to which this item applies includes, but is not limited to:

- Ministry Information Sheets;
- Staff and Volunteer files;
- Attendance (sign-in/sign-out) sheets;
- Risk assessment forms;
- Safe Church Register;
- Safe Church Concerns forms and any contemporaneous notes regarding reporting decisions;
- Annual Safe Church commitment by third parties and affiliated entities;
- Individual Safety Agreements; and
- Dated copies of any *Safe Church Policy, Procedure, Form* or associated document in force at any time.

Please see the *Privacy Policy* for more detail.

8. Review and Accountability

8.1 Internal Review

The Church will review this policy annually.

8.2 External Accountability

The Church will seek advice from and communicate with the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices Leader in relation to any Reportable Conduct, Child Protection Concerns and/or Complaints against Endorsed Ministers in accordance the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers* and the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*.

9. Definitions

In the *Safe Church Policy* and associated documents, unless the context otherwise requires:

Church means the local church which adopted this *Safe Church Policy* as indicated on the front page of the Policy.

Complaint includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of the Church's *Code of Conduct* or the *Fresh Hope Ministering Persons Code of Conduct* (where applicable). It also includes disclosures made to an institution about any child protection concern.

Creating Safe Spaces means the safe ministry training program offered by Fresh Hope (in conjunction with the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT) or alternative training that is Safe Church Training Agreement approved and has a face-to-face component.

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Disclosure means a process by which a person conveys or attempts to convey that someone is being, or has been abused or neglected. They may be referring to themselves or another person.

Fresh Hope means Churches of Christ in NSW and the ACT.

Governance body means the body designated by the constitution of the church to be responsible for the management of church affairs. This may be the Diaconate, Elders, Board, or the Church Council.

Mandatory Reporting Legislation means

In NSW, the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*.

In the ACT the *Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)*].

Pastoral Staff means any pastor or any Endorsed Minister or any paid or unpaid staff member of the Church who is engaged in pastoral ministry through the Church.

Reportable Conduct Legislation means:

In NSW the *Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)*.

In the ACT the *Ombudsman Act 1989 (ACT)*].

Safe Church Register means the register required to record information relating to:

In NSW staff and volunteers who engaged in Child-related Work and their relevant details in accordance with section 9A of the WWCC Legislation.

In the ACT, staff and volunteers who engaged in a Regulated Activity and all relevant WWVP clearances.

Vulnerable means the state of being unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason, and includes those that suffer disadvantage such as social and financial hardship.

WWCC Legislation means the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*.

WWVP Legislation means the *Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 (ACT)*.

Young person means a person who is 16 or 17 years .



B. Procedure for Staff and Volunteers

Adopted by Elders on 20 October 2022

Purpose

The *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers* sets out a procedure for the thorough recruitment, screening, training and resourcing of all staff and volunteers, particularly those engaged in Child-related Work (within the meaning of the **WWCC Legislation**) or Regulated Activity (within the meaning of **WWVP Legislation**).

Scope

Part 1 of the Procedure applies to Recruitment and Screening of all staff and volunteers within the Church.

Part 2 of the Procedure applies to the Induction of all staff and volunteers.

Part 3 of the Procedure applies to Training and Resourcing of all staff and volunteers.

Part 4 of the Procedure applies to Recordkeeping and Review of documents related to staff and volunteers.

This Procedure should be read in conjunction with the Safe Church Policy and:

- *Screening Check Questionnaires*
- *Safe Church Register*
- *Code of Conduct*
- *Privacy Policy*

1. Recruitment and Screening

Pastoral staff and staff in leadership roles and/or engaged in child-related work or work with vulnerable adults

The screening process for pastoral staff applies:

- to any staff member, who undertakes pastoral work in or on behalf of the church. (This typically includes any role that includes the word 'Pastor' or 'Minister' but may include other roles);
- to any staff member in a leadership role (ie/ considered a 'spiritual officer' of the church);
- to any staff member engaged in child-related work and

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- in addition to any requirements of the Fresh Hope Endorsement Review Group or the Church's Constitution.

Prior to recruitment:

- a. the **position description** will be reviewed and updated if necessary;
- b. the position will be advertised appropriately; and
- c. the position description and/or advertisement will state that any offer of employment is subject to applicants:
 - agreeing to abide by, and upholding, the *Code of Conduct*;
 - completing a *Screening Check Questionnaire*;
 - undergoing a National Police Criminal Record Check; and
 - being eligible for, or holding a current clearance in accordance with **WWCC Legislation** or **WWVP Legislation**.

In addition, for pastoral staff,

- providing evidence of Endorsement by Fresh Hope (or committing to applying to be Endorsed); and
 - agreeing to abide by and uphold the *Ministering Persons Code of Conduct*.
- d. provide evidence that they have completed Creating Safe Spaces training within the past 3 years, or complete the online component and commit to attend face-to-face training within 9 months.
1. Applicants for the position will submit a written application including a resume and an outline of their willingness to commit to the mission and values of the Church.
 2. Shortlisted applicants will:
 - a. complete a *Screening Check Questionnaire*;
 - b. be interviewed by **Church Leadership** or committee appointed by the Church members;
 - c. undertake a National Police Criminal Record Check;
 - d. provide evidence of a current clearance in accordance with **WWCC Legislation** or **WWVP Legislation**; and
 - e. provide a minimum of two references.
 3. Successful applicants will:
 - a. sign and agree to abide by the *Code of Conduct*;
 - b. participate in an induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position, including being given a copy of the *Safe Church Policy* and all Procedures and guidelines; and
 - c. (in addition, for Pastoral Staff) provide evidence that they are an Endorsed Minister by Fresh Hope (or have applied to be Endorsed).

Category 1 - Staff who are not in leadership roles or engaged in child-related work or work with vulnerable adults

The screening process for staff who are not engaged in child-related work or work with vulnerable adults applies:

- to any staff member to whom the screening process in Category 1 (a) does not apply; and
- in addition to any requirements under the Church's Constitution.

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1. Prior to recruitment:
 - a. the **position description** will be reviewed and updated if necessary;
 - b. the position will be advertised appropriately and in accordance with any constitutional requirements; and
 - c. the position description and/or advertisement will state that any offer of employment is subject to applicants:
 - i. agreeing to abide by, and upholding, the *Code of Conduct*;
 - ii. completing a *Screening Check Questionnaire*;
 - iii. undergoing a National Police Criminal Record Check
 - d. provide evidence that they have completed Creating Safe Spaces training within the past 3 years, or complete the online component and commit to attend face-to-face training within 9 months.
2. Applicants for the position will:
 - a. submit a written application including an outline of their willingness to commit to the mission and values of the Church and hold to the Christian faith; and
 - b. submit their Curriculum Vitae, ensuring that information relevant to the particular position is included.
3. Shortlisted applicants will:
 - a. complete a *Screening Check Questionnaire*;
 - b. be interviewed by **Church Leadership** or committee appointed by the Church members;
 - c. provide a minimum of two references.
4. Successful applicants will:
 - a. sign and agree to abide by the *Code of Conduct*; and
 - b. Participate in an induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position, including being given a copy of the *Safe Church Policy* and relevant procedures and guidelines.

Category 2 (a) Volunteers in leadership roles, engaged in child-related work and/or engaged in work with vulnerable adults*

The screening process for volunteers engaged in child-related work or work with vulnerable adults applies to:

- any church leader, deacon or elder (ie/ 'spiritual officer');
- any volunteer involved in ministry to children and/or young people (this may include children's ministry, playgroup, creche, youth ministry, families ministry);
- any volunteer engaged in a role that includes leadership of a ministry area in which children or young people are also part of the ministry team (this may include worship leader, sound/AV coordinator, discipleship coordinator, outreach coordinator etc); and
- any volunteer engaged in ministry to vulnerable adults.*

1. Prior to being appointed, a potential volunteer will:

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- a. be provided with a current position description;
 - b. complete a Screening Check Questionnaire;
 - c. be interviewed by an impartial Ministry Leader;
 - d. sign and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct
 - e. provide evidence that that have completed Creating Safe Spaces training within the past 3 years, or complete the online component and commit to attend face-to-face training within 9 months;
 - f. provide evidence that they hold a current clearance in accordance with WWCC Legislation* or WWVP Legislation (unless the volunteer is aged under 18).
 - g. participate in an induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position, including being given a copy of the Safe Church Policy and relevant procedures and guidelines.
2. Prior to the volunteer commencing in the role the Safe Church Team (or Ministry Leader) will
- a. Verify the WWCC number* (if in NSW and over 18 years of age)
 - b. Provide an induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position, including providing a copy of the *Safe Church Policy* and relevant procedures and guidelines.

*In NSW, the WWCC clearance is only required if the person is engaged in 'child-related work'. In religious organisations, this includes leadership roles (those considered to be spiritual officers) but does not include roles involving ministry to vulnerable adults. A volunteer who is involved in ministry to vulnerable adults but not considered a 'spiritual officer' or involved in child-related work should not be required to obtain a WWCC clearance but should still complete CSS training.

Category 2(b) - Volunteers not in leadership roles or engaged in child-related work nor work with vulnerable adults

The screening process for volunteers not-engaged in child-related work or work with vulnerable adults applies to

- any volunteer who is **not** a Church Leader, Ministry Leader, engaged in child-related work or engaged in work with vulnerable adults. (this may include volunteers on the offering, cleaning or maintenance roster).

1. Prior to being appointed, a potential volunteer will:
 - a. be provided with a current **position description**;
 - b. complete a *Screening Check Questionnaire*;
 - c. be interviewed by the relevant Ministry Leader; and
 - d. sign and agree to abide by the *Code of Conduct*; and
 - e. participate in an induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position, including being given a copy of the *Safe Church Policy* and relevant procedures and guidelines.
2. Prior to the volunteer commencing in the role the Safe Church Team (or Ministry Leader) will:

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- a. Obtain written parental consent for the volunteer to undertake the role suggested (if the volunteer's age is less than 18)
- b. Provide an induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position, including providing a copy of the *Safe Church Policy* and relevant procedures and guidelines.

Category 3 – Supervised volunteers aged under 18

1. The screening process for supervised volunteers aged under 18 applies to:
 - volunteers who are engaged in junior, trainee, support or helping roles which require that the volunteer is supervised at all times.

Where a volunteer is engaged in a trainee, support or helping role but is aged over 18 they will need to be screened in accordance with category 2 as appropriate in order to meet legal requirements.

*The Church may determine that specific 16 or 17-year-olds have sufficient maturity to volunteer without direct supervision, despite being under 18 years of age. These volunteers will be screened and trained in accordance with category 2, including Creating Safe Spaces training. **However, note that there should always be at least one adult leader on-site and participating in the program.***

Please see the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People* for more details on the differences between junior/trainee volunteers and volunteers.

2. Prior to being appointed, a potential volunteer will:
 - a. be provided with a current position description;
 - b. complete a *Screening Check Questionnaire*;
 - c. be interviewed by the Ministry Leader;
 - d. sign and agree to abide by the *Code of Conduct*; and
 - e. participate in an induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position, including being given a copy of the *Safe Church Policy* and relevant procedures and guidelines.
 - f. provide evidence that they have completed Creating Safe Spaces training within the past 3 years, or complete the online component and commit to attend face-to-face training within 9 months, if their role includes working with children or young people.
3. Prior to the volunteer commencing in the role the Safe Church Team (or Ministry Leader) will:
 - a. obtain written parent/guardian consent for the volunteer to undertake the role suggested if the volunteer is under 16 years old (we also recommend getting parent/guardian consent for 16 and 17-year-olds wherever possible);
 - b. provide an induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position, including being given a copy of the *Safe Church Policy* and Procedures; and

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- c. provide an additional briefing on child protection responsibilities and practices, including the procedures and guidelines relevant to their area of ministry.

2. Induction

2.1 All staff and volunteers will be provided with an induction appropriate to their role. This induction will include:

- an overview of general site health and safety expectations;
- operating procedures that apply to relevant equipment;
- the content of the *Code of Conduct* and expectations and appropriate behaviours for staff and volunteers as set out in the *Safe Church Policy*;
- the role description and any reporting structure;
- expectations regarding Creating Safe Spaces training, if appropriate
- an overview of the *Procedures for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers, Conflict Resolution and Responding to Child Protection Concerns*;
- who to contact in the event of any conflict, concerns or complaints; and
- any Guidelines appropriate to their ministry area.

2.2 A record of the induction (including the name of the person giving the induction, the date of the induction and the topics covered) will be kept.

3. Training and Resourcing

3.1 Creating Safe Spaces Training

- a. All staff and volunteers engaged in leadership and/or child-related work and/or work with vulnerable adults will:
 - i. complete Creating Safe Spaces training (or other SCTA approved face-to-face training) at least once every three years; or
 - ii. if they have not attended such training prior to appointment, will complete the online component of the training prior to commencement and commit to attend the face-to-face component within 9 months of commencement.
- b. The Safe Church Team will ensure that information about staff and volunteer attendance at Creating Safe Spaces Training is recorded in the *Safe Church Register*.

3.2 Other training

Church Leadership (or Ministry Leaders) will arrange ongoing staff and volunteer training as required. (This may include in-house training, attendance at conferences such as Collective, Code of Conduct training days and/or attendance at external training opportunities.)

3.3 Resourcing

Church Leadership will ensure that Church programs are adequately resourced with staff and volunteers and have the required equipment for the safe and effective running of the program.

3.4 Supervision

Church Leadership will provide ongoing support and supervision for all staff and volunteers, to ensure they feel valued, respected and fairly-treated, including:

- a. up to date *Safe Church Policy*, guidelines and procedures;
- b. formal or informal support mechanisms, so that staff and volunteers have a clear understanding of who to go to for support and what type of support is available to them (for example, team meetings, counselling, prayer); and
- c. an annual process of position review to provide an opportunity for mutual feedback and encouragement.

4. Recordkeeping and Review

4.1 Recordkeeping

For each staff member or volunteer, the following items should be recorded and kept for a minimum of 45 years.

- a. their written application for the position (if applicable);
- b. their completed *Screening Check Questionnaire*;
- c. all notes relating to the interview and reference checks (if applicable);
- d. notes confirming the content and date of their induction;
- e. signed *Code of Conduct*;
- f. signed *Ministering Persons Code of Conduct* (if required);
- g. a copy of the *National Police Criminal Record Check* (if required);
- h. evidence of verification of their current WWCC or WWVP (if required);
- i. evidence of the date of completion of *Creating Safe Spaces* training (or equivalent SCTA approved training with a face-to-face component); and
- j. records of all other relevant training, incidents, annual reviews, etc

Any items which contain sensitive information (such as *Screening Questionnaires*, *Safe Church Concerns Forms*, investigation notes and reports) must be kept in a manner which protects confidentiality and will only be accessed by a limited number of authorised persons (for example, the current Senior Pastor).

4.2 Safe Church Register

The church must maintain a *Safe Church Register* which records a summary of necessary screening and training for all staff and volunteers.

4.3 Review

- a. Pastoral Staff should engage in eight sessions of Professional Supervision each year in addition to other review processes.
- b. Staff should participate in a formal review process each year. This process should:
 - review the position description and make any necessary amendments;
 - provide an opportunity for mutual feedback and encouragement;
 - identify opportunities for training and development in the following twelve months; and
 - consider involving a committee comprising members of the governance body and any other church members who may be appropriate.
- c. Volunteer positions should be reviewed at least annually to identify areas for support or development and to amend role descriptions where appropriate.



C. Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff & Volunteers Adopted by Elders on 20 October 2022

Purpose

The *Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers* (the **Procedure**) sets out a procedure by which a complaint or information relating to a serious breach of the *Code of Conduct* can be received, investigated and resolved.

The Procedure should also be followed in the event of the Church receiving a complaint or information relating to Reportable Conduct. The Church has an obligation in accordance with Reportable Conduct Legislation to have practices and procedures to deal with Reportable Conduct, including:

- for receiving complaints of Reportable Conduct;
- for dealing with Reportable Conduct allegations; and
- for the receipt, handling and disclosure of information relating to Reportable Conduct and investigations.

Scope

This Procedure applies to all staff and volunteers of the Church.

This Procedure applies to all matters which are a serious breach of the *Code of Conduct*, including complaints relating to:

- In NSW, a Child Abuse Offence, Child Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct involving a Child.

Please note: Endorsed Ministers are subject to:

- this procedure in relation to a complaint of a breach of the *Code of Conduct*, (If an Endorsed Minister is found to have breached the *Ministering Persons Code of Ethics and Conduct* that would also constitute a breach of the church's *Code of Conduct*); and
- the *Fresh Hope Procedure for Complaint Handling* in relation to a complaint of a breach of the *Fresh Hope Ministering Persons Code of Conduct*.

Please note: This Procedure *does not* apply to matters which would more appropriately be dealt with under the *Procedure for Conflict Resolution* (for example, a low-level/minor breach of the *Code of Conduct*).

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If there is any doubt as to whether a complaint or information would fall within the scope of the Procedure, or about any of the steps set out in the Procedure, a church leader should contact the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices Leader on (02) 8573 6000.

The Procedure should be read in conjunction with the *Safe Church Policy* and:

- *Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers*
- *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*
- *Procedure for Conflict Resolution*
- *Privacy Policy*

1. Receiving a Complaint

Anyone can make a complaint or pass on information that relates to a breach of the *Code of Conduct* (including Reportable Conduct) by staff or volunteers of the Church to:

- Church Leadership;
- the Safe Church Team Leader and the Safe Church Team; or
- any staff or volunteer.

Complaints or information may be received verbally, however a written outline of the complaint should be encouraged. In all cases, the Safe Church Team should document all complaints and information received in the Safe Church Concerns Form.

If any person in the Church Leadership or Safe Church Team has an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest regarding a complaint or information, they must be excluded from further consultation and decision-making regarding the matter. A conflict of interest could be an actual, potential or perceived bias towards the subject of a complaint or the complainant. If a majority of people in the Church Leadership or Safe Church Team have an actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest regarding a complaint or information, then external advice should be sought after.

2. Reporting Information

2.1 Determining appropriate reporting process

- a. Any complaint about a staff member or volunteer which may be considered a serious breach of the Code of Conduct should be reported to the Church Leadership. If the complaint or information relates to a member of the Church Leadership then it should not be reported to them, but instead reported to another person in the Church Leadership or the Safe Church Team.

ECC SAFE CHURCHES POLICY

- b. On receipt of a complaint or information that may relate to any form of child protection concern the person that has received the complaint or information is to also follow the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*.
- c. Any person who has knowledge that a serious crime has been committed, whether or not it is related to children, should report that knowledge to the Police.
- d. If a complaint is, or should be, reported to government authorities the Church Leadership will only commence an investigation under this Procedure after consultation with the government authorities that it has been reported to.

2.2 Allegations regarding Reportable Conduct

- a. The Head of Entity (typically either the paid senior pastor or the chair of the church governance body) is obligated to notify the Reportable Conduct Scheme (in NSW, the Office of Children's Guardian, in ACT, the Ombudsman) of Reportable Conduct allegations within a defined timeframe, in accordance with **Reportable Conduct Legislation**.
 - the Reportable Conduct Scheme covers any staff or volunteers who are required to hold a WWCC
 - This notification must be made within 7 business days of receiving the complaint or information (s29(4) of the *Children's Guardian Act (2019)*).
- b. A 'final entity report' must be submitted within 30 days. If it is not possible to submit the final report within 30 days then an interim report must be submitted within 30 days in accordance with s38 of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.
- c. The notification of the allegation to the Reportable Conduct Scheme must be in writing and should include:
 - the name, date of birth and WWCC (or WWVP) number of the person;
 - the name, contact details and head of the relevant entity;
 - details of the allegation;
 - the nature of the relevant entity's initial risk assessment and risk management action plan;
 - if a report to police has been made, the police report reference number;
 - if a report has been made under **Mandatory Reporting Legislation**, the report reference number; and
 - the names of other relevant entities that employ or engage the employee.

3. Risk Assessment

- a) In addition to considering or making a report under section 2 above, the Safe Church Team and Pastoral Staff must conduct a risk assessment relating to the safety of the complainant or any other children or vulnerable people and take reasonable precautions to minimise those risks.

- b) The Church should be careful not to prejudice ongoing criminal investigations and so there may be a need to initiate risk management without alerting the person subject of the complaint.
- c) Subject to the view of government authorities, if the Church has received a plausible complaint (i.e. not clearly false or vexatious) of Child Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct involving a Child and the complaint relates to a staff member or volunteer who is engaged in 'child-related work' (in NSW), then the Church Leadership is to suspend the person from such duties while the complaint is considered in accordance with this Procedure.

4. Appointing a person to handle the complaint

- a) Where a matter is to be investigated under this Procedure, the Church Leadership is to appoint a person to handle the complaint (the Investigator).
- b) In appointing the Investigator, the Church Leadership will avoid conflicts of interest (for example where there may be a close personal relationship between the subject of the complaint and the proposed investigator).
- c) For any matters related to any form of harm or abuse of a child, the Investigator should be an external person (unless this is not reasonably practicable and a suitably qualified and independent internal Investigator is available).
- d) Church leaders should contact the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices Leader on (02) 8573 6000 for assistance in identifying an external Investigator.

5. Providing support

The Church is to ensure that support is provided to both the Complainant and the Respondent, including:

- providing them with a contact person to whom they can direct inquiries about the progress of the complaint;
- offering them a support person; and
- considering providing them with access to counselling and other support services.

6. Investigating the complaint

- a. The Investigator is to investigate the complaint (or concern, or allegation if the investigation arises from information about Reportable Conduct that did not come in the form of a complaint)
- b. In Investigating the complaint, the Investigator is to:
 - act in good faith, without bias and without unreasonable delay;
 - collect and document evidence, including by conducting interviews and taking statements from the complainant and other witnesses; and
 - maintain a record of all relevant evidence obtained and steps taken in the investigation.

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- c. If the matter is related to a Reportable Conduct Allegation, the Investigator is to consider matters in division six of the *Children's Guardian Act (2019)* including:
 - d. the nature of the reportable allegation and any defence;
 - e. the gravity of the matters alleged; and
 - f. whether the reportable allegation relates to conduct that is in breach of the *Ministering Persons Code of Conduct*, the *Code of Conduct* and/or accepted community standards.

7. Putting the complaint to the Respondent

- a. The Investigator is to put the complaint in writing to the person whose conduct is subject of the complaint (the Respondent).
- b. In doing so, the Investigator is to:
 - set out the complaint with sufficient detail for the respondent to understand the complaint;
 - state the part of the *Code of Conduct* that is alleged to have been breached;
 - set out the potential adverse outcomes for the respondent in the event that there is a finding that the respondent breached the *Code of Conduct*; and
 - provide the Respondent with an opportunity to respond to the complaint in writing and within a stated time frame not exceeding 2 weeks.

8. Putting any further adverse information to the Respondent

If, in the course of the investigation, further adverse information is brought forward in relation to the Respondent, the Investigator will:

- advise the Respondent in writing of the further adverse information; and
- provide the Respondent the opportunity to respond to the information.

10. Investigators findings

- a. The Investigator must provide a written report which sets out:
 - the complaint;
 - the part of the *Code of Conduct* that is alleged to have been breached;
 - their finding(s);
 - the evidence relied upon to make the finding, including the response of the respondent (if any) to the complaint; and
 - a finding about whether the complaint is sustained or not sustained, using the "balance of probabilities" as the standard of proof (for matters relating to child protection concerns, reference should be made to Reportable Conduct Legislation)
 - possible outcomes or consequences that the Church Leadership may consider implementing

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- b. If the matter relates to an allegation of Reportable Conduct the Investigator should ensure that the report also sets out
- c. information about the facts and circumstances of the reportable allegation;
- d. the findings after completing the investigation including an analysis of the evidence and the rationale for the finding(s),
- e. a copy of any written submission made by the employee or volunteer
- f. any copies of documents in the relevant entity's possession that are relevant to the report, including transcripts of interviews and copies of evidence.
- g. The Investigator's Report will be provided to the Church Leadership.
- h. A summary of the Investigator's Report (considering both confidentiality and procedural fairness) will be provided to the Respondent along with:
- i. an invitation to respond in writing to the Church Leadership within a defined timeframe
- j. written notice of the possible consequences if the Investigator's Report is accepted by the Church Leadership. This may include suspension, termination from duties for volunteers, termination of engagement for staff. It may also require notice to the Police, Ombudsman and/or the Office of Children's Guardian, which may impact WWCC clearance

11. Determination of Complaint and Outcomes

- 1 The Church Leadership is to consider the report of the Investigator and to decide whether to accept the finding put forward by the Investigator.
- 2 In doing so, the Church Leadership is to consider all relevant material available.
- 3 If the Church Leadership makes a determination that a complaint is sustained and the *Code of Conduct* has been breached, they are to determine an outcome for the respondent, which may include, but is not limited to:
 - termination of employment/engagement;
 - suspension from employment/engagement for a period of time; and/or
 - imposing conditions on the employment/engagement.
- a. If the Church Leadership does not accept the Investigator's finding(s), the Church Leadership should decide whether there is another available finding on the basis of the evidence presented to it, and record written reasons for departing from Investigator's finding(s) (and if relevant, propose an outcome for the respondent as above).

12. Communication of Outcome

- a. The respondent will be informed in writing of the:
 - determination of the complaint
 - any consequences arising from the determination
 - the reasons for the decision
- b. The person who raised the complaint will be informed of the outcome of the complaint.

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- c. If the matter constitutes a **Child Abuse Offence** or other serious criminal offence, a report must be made to the local police station (unless a report has already been made).
- d. If the matter is Reportable Conduct, the 'Head of Entity', must notify the Reportable Conduct Scheme (in NSW, the Office of Children's Guardian) in accordance with Reportable Conduct Legislation, including the:
 - e. Investigator's Report;
 - f. any deviation made by the Church Leadership from the Investigator's finding(s), including reasons for the deviation; and
 - g. the proposed course of action in response.
- h. In NSW, if the matter relates to a finding that a staff member or volunteer has engaged in a **Child Abuse Offence**, Child Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct involving a Child, the Church is to make a report to the NSWOCG in accordance with WWCC Legislation. The respondent should be provided with written notice of this report having been made.

Church leaders may seek advice from the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices Leader on (02) 8573 6000 to ensure that the determination and outcome is consistent with the evidence gathered.



D.Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns

Adopted by Elders on 20 October 2022

Purpose

The **Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns** (*the Procedure*) sets out a procedure to follow when a complaint or information about any form of child protection concern is received. In NSW this includes a Child Abuse Offence, Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct involving a Child, or that a child is at Risk of Significant Harm.

The Church and its staff and volunteers have legal obligations to report certain information to government authorities, this includes duties under the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), *Ombudsman Act 1974* (NSW), *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW) and the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.

Some of these duties apply to the church as an organisation or to church leaders, some of the duties apply to individuals. In some circumstances, failing to report knowledge of child abuse incidents to NSW Police may be a criminal offence. This *Procedure* has been developed to address all relevant duties in a way that is both thorough and practical.

Scope

This Procedure applies to all staff and volunteers of the Church.

If you have any doubt as to whether a complaint or information would fall within the scope of this Procedure, or about any of the steps set out in this Procedure, contact the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices Leader on (02) 8573 6000.

The Procedure should be read in conjunction with the Safe Church Policy and:

- *Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*
- *Safe Church Concerns Form*

1. Receiving a complaint or identifying a child protection concern

A child protection concern may include concerns regarding:

- a child at Risk of Significant Harm,
- a Child Abuse Offence,
- Child Sexual Abuse,
- Sexual Misconduct involving a child,
- Physical abuse of a child,
- Serious neglect of a child,
- Behaviour which may psychologically harm the child,
- Inappropriately personal or intimate communication and/or behaviours which may constitute grooming,
- Exposure of a child to Domestic and Family Violence, or
- Any other reason for concern.

A child protection concern may be received:

- from a child who has been directly involved;
- from an adult who has been directly involved (including personal disclosures of wrongdoing);
- from another person with information about a child or adult;
- from another organisation with information about a child or adult;
- from staff or volunteers who have concerns based on their observations and interactions with one or more children or adults.

If someone raises a concern or reports an allegation:

- DON'T promise not to report the information
- DON'T ask leading questions
- DON'T attempt to assess the validity of the concern, or seek to investigate any allegation yourself
- DO clarify information reported to you if appropriate (for example, 'Can you tell me more about that?')
- DO assure the person that appropriate action will be taken
- if a child, DO reassure them that they are not at fault and that they will not be in trouble for sharing this information

If a staff member or volunteer has a concern about a child's wellbeing but have not received any specific information they may report the concern using the *Safe Church Concerns Form*.

2. Consider whether there is an immediate danger to a child

Where there is an **immediate** danger to a child

- contact the Police immediately on (131 444 or 000) and report the information;
- follow any instructions given by the Police;
- address any immediate safety needs of others present; and
- organise support for the person who has disclosed the complaint or information.

3. Internal Reporting

3.1 Complete Safe Church Concern Form

If a staff member or volunteer has or is notified of a child protection concern they should complete a *Safe Church Concerns Form* as soon as possible. This form should include relevant details of the concern, contact information, and the signature of the person completing the form.

3.2 Notify the Safe Church Team

- If a staff member or volunteer has or is notified of a child protection concern they must inform the Safe Church Team as soon as possible. The Safe Church Team is responsible for ensuring the church fulfils its legal obligations and ensuring that all concerns are managed appropriately.
- If there is any delay before the Safe Church Team can be contacted, the individual should consider whether it is necessary to report their concerns to external government agencies as outlined in step 4 below. They may contact the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices Leader on (02) 8573 6000 for advice.
- Staff and volunteers should ensure they do not discuss any concerns raised with the accused person at this point in time. Doing so may impede future investigation processes.
- If the concern raised would create a conflict of interest for a member of the Safe Church Team consider contacting the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices Leader on (02) 8573 6000 for advice.

4. External Reporting to Government Agencies

4.1 Safe Church Team responsibilities

The Safe Church Team should

- ensure all necessary reports are made. Reports to different government agencies is required for different purposes and therefore multiple reports may be required.

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- keep detailed contemporaneous notes of all information and steps taken.
- should also follow all relevant steps outlined in *the Procedures for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*.

4.2 Report Risk of Significant Harm to Department of Communities and Justice (formerly known as FACS or DOCS)

- If the Safe Church Team determine that there is a child at Risk of Significant Harm then they are to make a report as soon as possible to the NSW Child Protection Helpline via 132 111 or an e-report.
- If there is any doubt whether a concern would be considered a Risk of Significant Harm then the Safe Church Team should complete the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) at <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg>.
- If the MRG results in 'Immediate Report to the Child Protection Helpline', make a report as soon as possible via 132 111 or an e-report.
- The MRG result may suggest other actions be taken. Please contact the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices Leader on (02) 8573 6000 if any assistance is required.
- The Safe Church Team should keep a copy of the MRG report for their records.

Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)

27 Mandatory reporting

(1) This section applies to—

(a) a person who, in the course of his or her professional work or other paid employment delivers health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children, and

(b) a person who holds a management position in an organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children.

(c) a person in religious ministry, or a person providing religion-based activities to children, and

(d) a registered psychologist providing a professional service as a psychologist.

(2) If—

(a) a person to whom this section applies has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, and

(b) those grounds arise during the course of or from the person's work, it is the duty of the person to report, as soon as practicable, to the Secretary the name, or a description, of the child and the grounds for suspecting that the child is at risk of significant harm.

23 Child or young person at risk of significant harm

(1) For the purposes of this Part and Part 3, a child or young person is at risk of significant harm if current concerns exist for the safety, welfare or well-being of the child or young person because of the presence, to a significant extent, of any one or more of the following circumstances—

(a) the child's or young person's basic physical or psychological needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met,

(b) the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care,

(b1) in the case of a child or young person who is required to attend school in accordance with the Education Act 1990—the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive an education in accordance with that Act,

(c) the child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated,

(d) the child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm,

(e) a parent or other caregiver has behaved in such a way towards the child or young person that the child or young person has suffered or is at risk of suffering serious psychological harm,

(f) the child was the subject of a pre-natal report under section 25 and the birth mother of the child did not engage successfully with support services to eliminate, or minimise to the lowest level reasonably practical, the risk factors that gave rise to the report.

(2) Any such circumstances may relate to a single act or omission or to a series of acts or omissions.

4.3 Report Child Abuse Offences to Police

- If the Safe Church Team considers that a Child Abuse Offence may have been committed they must report this to the NSW Police regardless of whether the victim of the alleged abuse wants this report to be made.
- The requirement to report to NSW Police includes both recent incidents and allegations of historic abuse. The Safe Church Team should notify the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices Leader on (02) 8573 6000 of any allegations of a Child Abuse Offence.
- Failing to Report a Child Abuse Offence to NSW Police without a reasonable excuse may be considered a Concealing Child Abuse Offence which is punishable by up to two years imprisonment.

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Concealing Child Abuse (Failure to Report) Offence

If an adult fails to report a Child Abuse Offence to the NSW Police this may constitute a Concealing Child Abuse Offence under s316A of the Crimes Act if they:

believe, know or reasonably ought to know that a Child Abuse Offence has been committed against another person; and

believe, know or reasonably ought to know that they have information that might be of material assistance to the NSW Police in securing the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of the person who has committed that offence; and

do not have a 'reasonable excuse' not to report the information.

Reasonable excuses for not reporting to Police may include

If you believe (on reasonable grounds) that the information is already known to Police;

If you have made a Report/ to another government body such as Department of Communities and Justice, Ombudsman or the Office of the Children's Guardian

If the alleged victim is no longer a child and you have reasonable grounds to believe that the person does not want the information reported to Police;

If you have reasonable grounds to fear for the safety of the alleged victim or any other person (other than the offender) if the information is reported to Police

4.4. Report Allegations of Reportable Conduct to the Office of Children's Guardian

Under section 66(2) of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*, churches may nominate a Head of Entity for the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. The Head of Entity would typically be either the paid senior pastor or the chair of the church governance body. The Head of Entity may choose to delegate responsibilities under the Reportable Conduct Legislation to the Safe Church Team in accordance with section 65 of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.

In the event of receiving any allegations that any staff or volunteer who is required to hold a Working With Children Check has engaged in Reportable Conduct, the Head of Entity must:

- notify the Reportable Conduct Scheme (administered by the Office of the Children's Guardian) as soon as practicable, but within a maximum of 7 business days from receiving the complaint or information (see Section 2.2 of the *Procedures for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*).
- As soon as practicable, conduct an investigation or appoint a suitable person to conduct an investigation regarding the reportable allegation (see Section 6 of the *Procedures for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*).
- Provide a written Interim Report to the Reportable Conduct Scheme within 30 days of receiving information about the Reportable Allegation

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(see Section 11 of the *Procedures for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*).

Children's Guardian Act 2019

20 Meaning of "reportable conduct"

Reportable conduct means the following conduct, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the conduct has been commenced or concluded—

- a sexual offence,
- sexual misconduct,
- ill-treatment of a child,
- neglect of a child,
- an assault against a child,
- an offence under section 43B or 316A of the *Crimes Act 1900*,
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

5. Accountability Measures

5.1 Report back to person making initial notification

- As soon as is practicable (no longer than 48 hours after notification), the Safe Church Team must inform the person completing the initial *Safe Church Concerns Form* of what action they have taken including any reports made and the 'report number' for reports to NSW Police or the NSW Child Protection Helpline.
- If the Safe Church Team determines that it is not necessary to make a report to NSW Police, or the NSW Child Protection Helpline, the person who completed the initial *Safe Church Concerns Form* may choose to make a report to NSW Police, or the NSW Child Protection Helpline themselves in order to ensure that they have not breached s316A of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), or obligations under the Mandatory Reporting legislation.

5.2 Report to Fresh Hope

If a Child Protection Concern has been reported to any government agency the Safe Church Team should advise the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices via email on admin@freshhope.org.au of the matter for filing in Fresh Hope's confidential records, and to seek confirmation that the matter has been managed appropriately.

6. Recordkeeping

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The Safe Church Concerns Form, Mandatory Reporters Guide report (if completed) and detailed notes of action taken in relation to any Child Protection Concern must be kept secure for a minimum of 45 years.

7. Advice and Support

If you have questions about whether a report should be made please contact the Fresh Hope Safe Ministry Practices Leader on (02) 8573 6000 for advice, guidance and support.



E. Code of Conduct For Staff and Volunteers

Adopted by Elders on 20 October 2022

Purpose

The Church is committed to creating safe spaces where people can be confident that they will be cared for, nurtured and encouraged as they grow and at the same time, protected from spiritual, physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

As part of this commitment, staff and volunteers are required to sign and abide by this *Code of Conduct*. In recognition that we are all on a journey to sanctification, if an individual's circumstances are such that they are unwilling or unable to align themselves with any part of this code of conduct, the church leaders reserve the right to consider endorsing them.

The *Code of Conduct* sets out the following:

- the ministry commitments of staff and volunteers
- minimum behavioural standards and appropriate boundaries required of staff and volunteers;
- the obligation of staff and volunteers to comply with Safe Church Policy and Procedures; and
- the steps to be taken in the event of a potential breach of this Code.

The *Code of Conduct* seeks to reflect the biblical call to godliness and faithfulness in ministry (e.g. 1 Timothy 3) but it is not intended as a replacement for the Bible as a fundamental guide for faith and practice.

Scope

The *Code of Conduct* applies to all staff and volunteers aged 16 and over.

The Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with the Safe Church Policy and:

- Procedure for Staff and Volunteers
- Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns
- Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers
- Procedure for Conflict Resolution

Staff and Volunteers are encouraged to:

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Nurture their own relationship with God:

- join regularly in the life and ministry of the Church;
- study and reflect on the Scriptures in private and in groups;
- pray regularly in private and in fellowship with and for the people and ministry of the Church; and
- give of your time to the work of the Church, as an expression of our gratitude to God.

Nurture healthy relationships:

- seek to model Godly relationships with other Christians;
- treat others with respect;
- be mindful of impact of ministry commitment on those around you (including family);
- strive to reflect the love of Jesus in your interactions at church and life beyond ECC programs;
- demonstrate accountability for conduct and choices;
- maintain professional and ethical interactions with other staff and volunteers;
- acknowledge the strengths and abilities of others within the church family, while recognising areas for growth within your own skillset and development within the context of the church family;
- treat every program participant fairly and equitably;
- support and encourage participants and church members at ECC in their spiritual growth and walk with Jesus Christ;
- refer individuals requiring greater pastoral or professional care to more senior members of the pastoral care team, and seek help [from the Safe Church Team or a Pastor](#).

Staff and Volunteers commit to:

As a staff member/volunteer of the Church, I will:

- a. uphold and abide by the *Safe Church Policy*;
- b. respond to reasonable directions from the person with responsibility for the ministry I am involved in;
- c. communicate with integrity, including wise and accountable use of electronic communication and social media platforms, in accordance with *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*
- d. uphold confidentiality and respect the privacy of others (the exception being where there is a legal obligation);
- e. report concerns about misconduct and/or abuse according to the Church's *Safe Church Policy* and relevant procedures;
- f. disclose all relevant information as part of completing the *Screening Check Questionnaire*;

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- g. disclose to the Church Leadership if I am investigated for any criminal offences or have any knowledge of serious unlawful activity within the church context;
- h. act with sexual purity, meaning I will express my sexuality in healthy and God directed ways;
 - recognise that it is inappropriate to access any type of pornographic material and, if I struggle with this addiction, I will seek professional help;
 - ensure that romantic interactions are mutually consensual;
 - recognise, consider and be mindful of not taking advantage of power imbalances in intimate relationships.
- i. act with financial integrity, including:
 - having accountable and transparent systems in place for financial matters;
 - not seeking personal advantage or financial gain from our position (other than in wages, recognised allowances and deductions).
- j. avoid ongoing counselling of people with whom I have pastoral relationships; and
- k. make alternative arrangements for pastoral ministry for any person with whom I may develop a romantic or intimate relationship.

As a staff member/volunteer of the Church, I will not:

- a. knowingly make false, misleading or deceptive statements or accusations, including gossip;
- b. engage in bullying or harassment towards others;
- c. perpetrate any form of violence or abuse (emotional, psychological, spiritual, physical, sexual or financial) towards others in my personal, professional and spiritual life;
- d. take or use property belonging to others or the church without express consent, including intellectual property (copyright);
- e. use, possess or be under the influence of excessive alcohol use or prohibited substances at any time while working/volunteering at ECC.

I understand that if there is a complaint against me relating to a breach of this Code of Conduct:

- a. and it is a plausible complaint relating to Child Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct involving a child, the Church may ask me to step aside from my duties while the complaint is being considered; and/or
- b. if the complaint relates to serious misconduct and/or abuse (including Child Sexual Abuse) it will be reported to relevant government authorities in accordance with relevant legal requirements; and/or
- c. I agree to participate in any process initiated under *the Procedure for Resolving Conflict, Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers* and/or *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns* and agree to be bound by the outcomes of any such process, which may include termination of my

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employment/engagement as a staff member or volunteer with the Church.

If I am a Pastoral staff member, I:

- a. agree to uphold and be bound by the Fresh Hope *Ministering Persons Code of Conduct*;
- b. understand that a breach of the Fresh Hope *Ministering Persons Code of Conduct* will be considered a breach of this *Code of Conduct*;
- c. (if I am an Endorsed Minister) agree to participate in, and be bound by the outcomes of, any process initiated under the Fresh Hope *Procedure for Handling Complaints*.

I, _____ have read and agree to be bound by and uphold, the Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers.

Signature

Date

NOTE: the staff member or volunteer should receive a copy of this *Code of Conduct* and the Church should retain the signed and dated copy of the *Code of Conduct* for at least 45 years.



F. Guidelines for activities with Children and Young People

Adopted by Elders on 20 October 2022

Purpose

The Church has adopted these *Guidelines for activities with Children and Young People* 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;
- provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children and young people; and
- Protect both child and leader.

These guidelines outline the expectations of leaders, and the underlying framework of all policies relating to the protection and safety of all people under the age of 18 in the Epping Church of Christ (ECC) programs.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- All ministry and volunteer leaders, both above age 18 and under age 18;
- All people who attend the Church and its programs;
- All people who care for children and young people.

These Guidelines are to be read in conjunction with ECC's *Safe Church Policy*, and ECC's *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*.

1. Underlying Principles of the Guidelines

Risk management

It is not possible to eliminate all risk from activities. However, we have a responsibility to be aware of possible risks and to take appropriate action in response. This is what a risk assessment involves. Identify possible risks and consider how likely they are, how serious they are and how difficult they are to avoid. For example, a risk of minor injury or inconvenience does not require as much precautionary action as a risk of serious injury.

Never alone

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As a general rule, ECC staff and volunteers should never be alone in private (outside of line of sight of another person) with any child or young person, unless they are family members. This protects the child or young person from risk of harm, and it also protects the leader. This rule is applicable for Church programs and social contact outside of Church programs.

Exceptions may be made for family or domestic arrangements, which are distinct from any role at the Church, such as babysitting, if this is authorised by the parent or guardian responsible.

Accountability

Procedures and systems help staff and volunteers to avoid difficult situations with children and young people. This protects the children and young people and also protects the leaders. When making decisions about activities involving children and young people it is important to maintain accountability, this often takes place through visibility (for example clear panels in doors) and communication (for example documented reporting procedures). Documenting any potential incident as soon as possible provides both accountability and protection for those involved.

Awareness

Although ECC has procedures in place, it is important for everyone involved in ministry with children or young people to maintain an awareness of potential risks and issues.

Ministry with children and young people involves building relationships of trust, but staff and volunteers should also be aware of the potential for healthy relationships to be misunderstood as an inappropriate grooming relationship. Similarly, staff and volunteers should remain alert to potentially dangerous grooming behaviour by any other staff or volunteers.

2. Leader Participant Ratios

2.1 Leaders over the age of 18

- a. For all programs involving participants under the age of 18, there is to be a minimum of 2 trained leaders per program.
- b. For programs with 16 or more participants under the age of 18, leaders are to maintain a ratio of 1:8, or 1 trained leader to every 8 participants under the age of 18.
- c. In programs with multiple sections or rooms, there is to be one further trained leader to assist in case of emergency, or to assist with any issues that arise throughout the program.
- d. Whenever possible, there should be at least one male and one female leader.
- e. Leader ratios apply across the whole room, not to individual small groups, e.g. a room with a ratio of 2 leaders to 14 kids can safely split into 2 groups of 7 kids with one leader each.

2.2 Leaders under the age of 18

- a. Leaders under the age of 18 do not count towards leader ratios, rather they count as assistant leaders.
- b. This does not preclude them from preparing and running a part of the program. It instead requires a trained leader over the age of 18 to supervise their actions during the program to ensure safety is maintained.
- c. A 16 or 17 year old may be considered to become a trained leader. In this instance, parental permission is to be obtained before an individual undertakes full leadership responsibilities. This includes the individual completing *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers, Part 1 Category 2(a)*.
- d. Leaders aged 16 or 17 should not lead groups of their own peer group and there should always be at least one adult (over 18 years) leader involved in any program or activity.

3. Attendance, Permission and Roll-Keeping

Attendance

- a. Attendance is to be taken at the start of the program every time it occurs.
- b. All programs with participants under the age of 18 are to have a procedure that records attendance, a check-in and check-out procedure, and a means of identifying the responsible adult to check-out a child.
- c. All participants under the age of 18 are to be checked in and checked out at the start and conclusion of every running of a program by an approved person.
- d. All leaders present need to be recorded on the attendance.
- e. All attendance records must be kept digitally for a minimum of 45 years.

Permission

- a. All ministry programs involving participants under the age of 18 are to collect Ministry Information Forms for all relevant participants in ministry within 1 month of the commencement of the ministry's calendar year.
- b. Ministry Information Forms are to be stored securely in digital form for a minimum of 45 years.
- c. Information on the Ministry Information Forms, including Emergency Contacts, Dietary Requirements and Medical Conditions are to be easily accessible by the relevant ministry leader.
- d. Photographs and Videos are not to be taken of any child unless explicit permission has been obtained from the parent/guardian of the participant
- e. Any information not found on a Ministry Information Form that is needed for an event later in the calendar year is to be collected with a specific form for that information.

4. Driving

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Licences and Drivers

- a. In the case transport is needed for a program involving participants under the age of 18, all drivers must have a full, valid New South Wales licence.
- b. Drivers with a Provisional Licence (P-Plater) may drive participants under the age of 18 if the passengers are members of the driver's family, and explicit permission is granted by the appropriate parent/caregiver.
- c. Provisional Licences have certain restrictions placed on them. These restrictions are to be considered if Provisional Licence drivers are being used to transport participants under the age of 18 to a program. These restrictions include:
 - Between 11 pm and 5 am, P-Plate drivers may not have more than one passenger under 21;
 - Detailed restrictions on the cars they are legally allowed to drive;
 - P-Plate drivers may not use mobile phones while driving, **even if** the phone is connected via Bluetooth or a hands-free device.

Time Alone in Cars

- a. No leader is to be alone in a car with a participant under the age of 18. The only exception to this is family members or a prearranged domestic arrangement between the appropriate parent/guardian and ministry leader.
- b. In extraordinary circumstances where leaving a participant under the age of 18 alone places the participant at a greater risk of harm than driving them home alone, the time in the car should be as short as possible.
- c. In this case, additional safety measures need to be taken. These may include:
 - the staff member or volunteer receives explicit permission from the child's parent or carer for the specific occasion;
 - a phone call is placed to another leader and maintained throughout the journey (where legal to do so)
- d. If it has been necessary for a staff member or volunteer to spend time alone in a car with a child or young person then the situation and the circumstances giving rise to the situation should be recorded and the Safe Church Team and Ministry Leader should be notified.

5. Bathroom Use

- a. Nappy change tables are provided in the bathrooms and in the chapel cry room. Nappies must be changed by a parent or an authorised family member.
- b. If a child does not toilet independently, a parent or authorised family member must accompany the child to the bathroom.
- c. Children who toilet independently must be accompanied to and from the bathroom by a leader of the same gender. Leaders must not physically accompany children into the bathroom, but need to remain within earshot.
- d. Where children use toilets during an excursion, the toilets must be checked by a leader for any hazards or unsuitable risks as per the risk assessment.

6. Overnight Activities

At present, we do not believe overnight activities are plausible and as such have not prepared guidelines for this section. As the likelihood of an overnight activity occurring increases, we shall prepare this section accordingly.

Where there are activities involving overnight accommodation, consideration should be given to some of the additional risk factors involved, including:

6.1. Transport arrangements

- a. Record all transport arrangements
- b. Record all leaders transporting
- c. Attendance records

6.2. Sleeping Arrangements

- a. Record all sleeping arrangements
- b. Leaders responsible for certain sections: record who is responsible for what
- c. Two leaders per section
- d. Context specific
- e. Attendance records

6.3. Bathroom Configurations

- a. Site specific: have a plan for the site safety and instruction on activities
- b. List of activities recorded
- c. All leaders involved recorded
- d. Risk assessment needed
- e. Context specific

6.4. Third party involvement

- a. Check child safe policies there
- b. Record all details of booking

6.5. Physical safety of external locations

- a. Risk assessments
- b. List of activities
- c. Context specific

All records for this section must be kept for a minimum 45 years

7. Social Contact

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1. In person communication outside of Church activities

Fruitful Christian ministry with children and young people involves healthy, appropriate relationships. This can at times involve contacting them outside of Church programs and can include meeting in-person. However, it is important that relationships between staff/volunteers and children/young people are transparent, and that parents, families and program leaders are appropriately informed and have given permission for this contact.

Staff and volunteers, when meeting with a child or young person, should:

- a. have parental or guardian consent, where practicable;
- b. meet with them in a public place (for example, a café) in line of sight of other people;
- c. not have children or young people alone in their home, or visit children or young people alone in their home when no other adult is present; and
- d. make a record of the time, location, duration and circumstances of any face-to-face meetings with any child or young person.

2. Telephone and online communication outside Church programs

For many Church programs, telephone and online communication are a useful tool for building community and pastoral care and support. However, telephone and online communication may be used by those seeking to harm children, young people and vulnerable people. Telephone and online communication may be used to test or step over relational boundaries. We need to be mindful of the positional power dynamic that exists between staff and volunteers and the children and young people under their care.

3. Contact with all children and young people

- a. where possible and practical, parents will be informed of any possible telephone or online communication with children and young people;
- b. staff and volunteer leaders must not engage in any telephone or online communication that:
 - constitutes unlawful discrimination;
 - is harassing, threatening or derogatory;
 - is obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic;
 - is inappropriately personal or intimate;
 - attempts to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else; or is defamatory.

4. Contact with primary-aged children

- a. *Telephone contact:* staff and volunteers should first contact parents and then, if appropriate, speak with the child. If the child answers the phone the staff member or volunteer should ask to speak to the parent first and explain

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to the parent why they are calling. Staff and volunteers should never call a primary-aged child on the child's mobile phone (unless there is a serious emergency relating to the safety and wellbeing of the child).

- b. *SMS (or other messaging service) contact:* must be limited to conveying information about Church programs.
- c. *Online contact:* must be limited to conveying information about Church programs. Staff and volunteers should never communicate directly (privately or one-or-one) with primary-aged children on a social networking site.
- d. *Email contact:* must be limited to conveying information about Church programs. More significant conversations should be held in person.
- e. *In-person contact outside of programs:* It is never appropriate to meet primary-aged children socially without written or verbal permission from their parents or carer. It is also important to ensure that a leader is never alone with a child (see the principles above).

5. Contact with children in Years 7 and 8

- a. *Phone contact:* staff and volunteers should first contact the parents or carer of the child and then, if appropriate, speak with the child. If the child answers the phone the staff member or volunteer should ask to speak to the parent first and explain to the parent why they are calling. Staff and volunteers should never call a child in Year 7 to 8 on the child's mobile phone (unless there is a serious emergency relating to the safety and wellbeing of the child).
- b. *Email contact:* should be limited to conveying information about Church programs and basic encouragement. More significant conversations should be held in person.
- c. *In person contact outside of programs:* It is never appropriate to meet children in Years 7 & 8 socially without written or verbal permission from the parents and discussing it with your ministry supervisor first.
- d. *Private video calls (zoom/facetime) are not appropriate for children in years 7 & 8.*
- e. *SMS (or other messaging service) contact:* must be limited to conveying information about Church program
- f. *d. Online contact:* Caution must be used when participating with children via social media. You must maintain transparency and be accountable for what you say. You must also take care with the message you intend to communicate through both the words and images you use as it may be perceived differently by those who view it. Staff and volunteers should consider limiting social media contact with children in years 7 & 8, however, if social media contact is made with children in years 7 & 8 the following guidelines are recommended:
 - Limit contact to group discussions that can be read by others.
 - Consider gender dynamics. For example, you should never have a group discussion where the group of students are all of the opposite gender (for example a male leader should not have an online chat with four of the year 8 girls).

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- The history of the chat should be kept. Staff and volunteers should not communicate using social media which cannot be retained.
- Consider privacy settings which prevent personal contacts from seeing or interacting with child contacts connected to your ministry.
- Ensure any text is beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.
- Ensure all photos are beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.
- Private contact or conversations with children in years 7 & 8 should be limited to conveying information about Church programs and basic encouragement.

6. Contact with young people in years 9-12

- a. *Phone contact*: Phone contact is permissible.
- b. *SMS (or other messaging service) contact*: is permissible and can include conveying information about Church programs and encouragement (e.g. praying for you this week). Messages should be retained for accountability.
- c. *Email*: can include logistics and private conversations. If possible, more significant conversations should be held in person. Messages should be retained for accountability.
- d. *In person contact outside of programs*: Leaders may meet with same gender students or in mixed groups in public places (e.g. a café). Parents and the relevant ministry leader should be informed of this meeting ahead of time.
- e. *Private video calls (Zoom/Facetime)* are not appropriate, however, group video calls may be appropriate in some circumstances (e.g. small group bible study context).
- f. *Online contact*: Caution must be used when participating with young people on social media. You must maintain transparency and be accountable for what you say. You must also take care with the message you intend to communicate through both the words and images you use as it may be perceived differently by those who view it.
- g. If social media contact is made with young people in years 9 – 12 the following guidelines are recommended:
 - Ideally, communicate through group discussions that can be read by multiple people.
 - Consider gender dynamics. For example, you should never have a group discussion where the group of students are all of the opposite gender (e.g. a male leader should not have an online chat with four of the year 9 girls).
 - The history of any chat should be kept. Staff and volunteers should not communicate using social media which cannot be retained.

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- Consider privacy settings which prevent personal contacts from seeing or interacting with child contacts connected to your ministry.
- Ensure any text is beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.
- Ensure all photos are beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.



G. Persons of Concern Policy

Adopted by Elders on 20 October 2022

Scope

This process describes the unique aspects involved in providing safe ministry to Persons of Concern and the establishment of Safety Agreements, including where appropriate support (e.g. monitoring persons / accountability groups).

A Person of Concern ('POC') is:

- a person who has pleaded guilty to, has been convicted of, or has admitted to having committed, a sexual criminal offence; or
- a person who is currently charged with a sexual criminal offence; or
- a person who is currently under investigation for sexual abuse; or
- a person who has been the subject of a prior allegation of sexual abuse which has not been appropriately investigated; or
- a person who has been disciplined as a pastor (credential holder) or a church worker within the Church because of sexual misconduct, or who has been refused ordination, employment or appointment in the Church because of an adverse risk assessment arising from sexual misconduct; or
- a person who has been disciplined by another organisation for sexual misconduct; or
- a church worker against whom allegations of sexual misconduct are currently being dealt with under Church disciplinary procedures; or
- a person who is receiving, or has received, treatment for disordered sexual behaviour; or
- a person who is considered to be a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults because of an adverse risk assessment relating to sexual misconduct; or
- a person who has exhibited persistent sexual boundary wandering; or
- a person who is deemed to be a risk in terms of physical or emotional harm to members of the church.

Note: Sexual Abuse for the purposes of this document is defined as: any assault or abuse of a sexual nature, any type of molestation, indecent exposure, sexual

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harassment or intimidation, whether such act is the subject of criminal investigation or not.

Disclaimer: This process does not indemnify the agency/ministry if a known offender were to reoffend in the church context and a resulting legal suit took place.

Committed to Safe Ministry in our Ministry.

We are committed to life-giving ministry that is free from abuse and harm. We understand that we have pastoral, duty of care, legal and insurance obligations. Our goal is that all our ministries are spiritually, emotionally and physically safe.

We acknowledge that from time to time a situation may arise where a person of concern has been worshipping and been involved, or wishes to worship and be involved, in our church.

Working towards a permanent individual Safety Agreement is one method of addressing the pastoral, organisation, duty of care and other safety issues that arise where there is a person of concern who is or wishes to attend services and activities at our church.

Prior to working towards any formal Safety Agreement, the local church senior leaders and the personal of concern must acknowledge:

- the common law duty of care the governance board has for the safety of all people involved at church, including Work Health and Safety legislation which necessitates safe physical and emotional work places for workers and persons on site,
- governance board and pastors share the responsibility of duty of care, i.e. to provide safe environments for all people in the church,
- that there is no one type of Person of Concern, therefore we will use individual Safety Agreements,
- that there is a high level of community feeling and fear about sexual abuse,
- that there are survivors of abuse in congregations, and we seek to care for them effectively,
- the issues of forgiveness and a Person of Concern's right to privacy,
- not all local churches, nor will every Person of Concern, have the capacity to enter into a formal Safety Agreement or a formal 'agreement' to act in safe ways in community,
- the personal responsibility the Person of Concern will need to continue to take,
- that this is a permanent arrangement,

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- the need for annual renewal and review,
- that this process does not indemnify the church if a known sexual offender were to reoffend in the church (against a person at church) and a resulting legal suit took place,
- the need for support, training, establishment, and oversight in this process.

This approach to ministry with Person of Concerns has as its heart the church's mission and commitment to provide a safe place for all people, including children, to grow and shine. At the same time, Christian communities can be one of the few places where past abusers (sexual and violent) can be the recipients of God's forgiveness.

We acknowledge, that forgiveness does not mean immunity from temptation to reoffend or the removal of all barriers to the exercise of ministry. The forgiveness and grace of God, mediated with supervision and clear guidelines through a local church, can be a vital part of a healing journey. It must be acknowledged that a Safety Agreement is not a form of punishment or judgement upon the Person of Concern. Instead, a Safety Agreement should be viewed as a Strategy to help keep the Person of Concern above reproach and directed away from temptation.

A person of concern, or the church goers may not appreciate that the person may pose a risk to the safety of children and vulnerable adults. While demonstrating genuine compassion and justice, we must take steps to protect all people at church from the risk of harm.

With all these complex issues to consider in safe ministry to Persons of Concern, experienced professionals play an oversight, supervision and monitoring role in ministry with all Persons of Concern.

Guiding Principles Associated with this Procedure

The principles used to implement safe ministry to Persons of Concern includes:

Rigour – we require that all Persons of Concern wanting to be part of a worshipping community embrace the process outlined in this protocol.

Life-long accountability – we need to be able to show that we have done all we can to ensure that Persons of Concern are ministered to appropriately and children and vulnerable adults are protected from harm.

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Responsibility – the Person of Concern is responsible to engage safely in community. This included taking full responsibility for past actions including past offending, and to commit fully to upholding all standards put in place as part of this process.

Assisted – The local church acknowledges it may not have the expertise to manage this process alone, and as such, is ready to call in external expertise where needed. The church will seek assistance in providing education and support for those who will be providing accountability for the person, and may need to work with external professionals, such as those in the criminal justice system and forensic psychologists to ensure proper risk management of the person.

Steps in the Process

Step 1: Identification

It is important to exercise care in the identification of Persons of Concern. Information can be derived from many different sources: the person; friends or relatives of the person; victims or their friends and family; the media; government authorities such as the police or parole board; members of the church; anonymous sources. It is essential that accurate information is obtained. The identification of a person must not be based on rumour or innuendo.

Step 2: Notification to Fresh Hope or other external Expert.

In all such circumstances the first step is to notify the relevant Safe Ministry Practices Leader at the Fresh Hope office or refer to a suitably experienced practitioner in this area. This person should be independent of the church, and herein referred to as the Case Manager. A formal engagement between the Case manager and the local church will be required.

Step 3: Interim Safety Agreement

As soon as practicable an interim Safety Agreement shall be offered to the Person of Concern to ensure the safety of all parties during the establishment of an Individual Safety Agreement.

These measures are particularly relevant in cases where the Person of Concern is currently under investigation, which may be ongoing for a period of months or years.

Step 4: Decision to proceed (Meetings to help decision making)

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A series of meetings are conducted between the Case Manager, local church governance board and appointed office holders, and also with the Person of Concern.

These meetings have an educational, and fact-finding purpose. The decision to proceed is to be made by the local church board.

Step 5: Assessment Phase for both Person of Concern and the church

Both the church and the person will be assessed for risks and readiness to enter into safe ministry with the person. This may include forensic assessment of the person of concern.

An assessment of the local church's Safe Ministry practices will also occur.

Step 6: Establishment Phase for the Safety Agreement

The Case Manager will develop an Individual Safety Agreement with input and approval of the church board. In cases where the Individual Safety Agreement states there is to be a Monitoring or Support (Accountability) Group, the Case Manager will establish and provide induction training for the Support Group.

The Safety Agreement may include, but is not limited to:

- Time frames where the Person of Concern may be in attendance, and where they may go
- The demographic of people/individuals whom they may engage with
- The other events/programs they may attend
- Areas within the ministry where they can participate or volunteer (keeping in mind that some volunteer roles will be considered as a position of trust amongst attendees, and should therefore be allowed with much caution)
- Physical spaces where the Person of Concern may never go
- The individual leaders who confidentially hold the Person of Concern accountable to the Safety Agreement
- Guidelines of social media usage as a gesture of good intent by the Person of Concern

The Individual Safety Agreement must be signed by a representative of the local church, the Person of Concern and the Case Manager.

Step 7: Notify Insurer

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Inform your insurer of the Safety Agreement that is in place.

Step 8: Ongoing Support and Review

An annual review of each Person of Concern's Individual Safety Agreement will be carried out. The Case Manager may provide support where necessary.



H. Workplace Health and Safety

Adopted by Elders on 20 October 2022

Our Church recognises its moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe and healthy work environment for everyone.

All people at church will endeavour to do nothing to place themselves or others at risk of emotional or physical injury or illness.

The church senior leadership (board of management) will endeavour to:

- Provide a safe workplace including a safe site and ministry programs
- Ensure compliance with legislative requirements and standards
- Provide workers (volunteers and paid) and contractors with information, instruction, training and supervision for their safety
- Provide support that will assist workers in maintaining their psychological and physical health
- To implement Work Health and Safety policies and procedures
- Actively promote and be involved in the implementation of those policies and procedures

Church workers (volunteer and paid) are responsible for:

- Following all health and safety policies and procedures
- Reporting all hazards identified to the Health and Safety team
- Complying with reasonable instructions
- Not behaving in a wilful or reckless manner

The church is committed to encouraging consultation and cooperation between pastors, church administrators, employees and voluntary workers. It will involve all parties in workplace changes likely to affect their safety, health and welfare.

Workplace Rehabilitation Procedure

Employees who sustain a work-related injury are entitled to assistance in the workplace. To ensure workplace rehabilitation is effective, it is expected that all employees will be supportive of and committed to the rehabilitation program.

To facilitate this process, rehabilitation will commence as soon as practicable after the injury, with the approval of the injured worker's treating doctor.

Suitable duties are provided as an integral part of this process. The goal, through an individualised rehabilitation plan, is to return the injured worker to their normal duties.

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A team approach to rehabilitation will be used, with cooperation, consultation and confidentiality being key requirements for all persons involved.

To ensure ongoing effectiveness, this procedure will be regularly reviewed and improved.

Health & Safety responsible positions

For each workplace there are several positions of responsibility in relation to WHS operations. These are not full-time positions and should be sourced by trusted, responsible employees. Each local church must have a Safety Team, who, depending on the number of employees, may have the following roles: WHS Officer, Chief Warden, first aid officer. Again, check your state requirements on the relevant Work Cover websites.

Responsibilities of workers at a workplace

Each state and territory legislation has guidelines for employee responsibilities. In general terms here are some good practice guidelines. If in doubt, please use your State or Territory WHS website for more information about employee responsibilities. To comply with the instructions given for the Workplace Health and Safety at the workplace by the employer at the workplace and, if the workplace is a construction workplace, the principal contractor for Workplace Health and Safety at the workplace.

- For a worker – to use personal protective equipment if the equipment is provided by the worker's employer and the worker is properly instructed in its use;
- Not to wilfully or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided for the Workplace Health and Safety at the workplace.
- Not wilfully place at risk the Workplace Health and Safety of any person at the workplace;
- Not to wilfully injure him or herself.

Make sure you:

- Follow methods of work you have been trained in;
- Let your employer or Workplace Health and Safety representative know of any symptoms such as pain and discomfort that you think is caused by your work;
- Make suggestions to your employer about how tasks could be arranged to break up repetitive work.

Responsibility of Others

Visitors to workplaces must obey health and safety directions applied at the workplace. Principal contractors should; ensure the orderly conduct of all work at the construction workplace to the extent necessary: - to ensure Workplace Health and Safety at the workplace; and to assist the discharge of Workplace Health and Safety obligations of an employer or self-employed person. To ensure that persons at the workplace are not exposed to risks from: something that has been provided

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for the general use of persons at the workplace for which no other person owes a Workplace Health and Safety obligation; or a hazard at the workplace for which no other person owes a Workplace Health and Safety obligation, to ensure that workplace activities at the workplace are safe and without risk of injury or illness to members of the public at or near the workplace; to provide safeguards and take safety measures prescribed under a regulation made for principal contractors.

1. Health and Safety information

Manual Handling Procedure

Manual Handling means any activity requiring force by a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any object. Everyone's manual handling capacity is different and depends on their individual ability to handle a load.

Risk Assessment: To reduce manual handling injuries, employees should be encouraged to: assess the size, shape and weight of the load to be moved; whether gloves or protective equipment will influence handling; determine where it is to be placed; how far it will be moved; and decide how it will be handled.

Consider the following strategies, if lifting is required: decide on the best position, clear path and try to face in the direction you will be moving; get a secure grip on the object being handled: the grip helps make manual handling safe; wherever possible, a comfortable power grip with the whole hand should be used rather than a hook or precision grip with fingers only; and make sure you have a firm footing so you don't slip while lifting. Pull the load in close to the body: for lifting in particular, it is important to have the centre of gravity of the load close to the body to prevent excessive stress on the back and to use the strongest muscles of the arms to hold the load; it is important to minimise the effects of acceleration by lifting smoothly, slowly and without jerking; and keep your spine in its natural alignment (maintain normal curves) and avoid twisting whilst lifting. Lift the object by bending your knees, not your back, keeping the load close to your body throughout the lift.

- It is advisable that all leaders are to be briefed in safe lifting techniques annually

Working at Heights Procedures

Control measures protecting a person from the risk of falling from a height should be in place before any work at height commences.

Several control measures to protect persons from the risk of falling from a height when carrying out work at that height are listed in order of preference: erecting a physical barrier; providing personal fall protection; a measure to "catch" a person after the person has fallen.

Footwear, which minimises the risk of slipping, should be worn when working where there is a risk of falls from heights. Consideration should be given to the surface being worked on. Safety helmets worn by persons should be fitted and attached to the person's head so that it remains in place should a person be arrested in a fall.

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When using ladders ensure that they are in good working order and used for the purpose for which they were designed, check safety labels on the ladder from the manufacturer for correct usage.

Hazardous Substance Management

The Safety Team is responsible for:

- Consulting with managers, supervisors, and employees on hazardous substances and the level of compliance with policies, procedures and work practices etc.;
- Ensuring that hazardous substance management is included in the hazard workplace inspections;
- Conducting ongoing training and educational sessions;
- Compiling and maintaining a hazardous substance register; and
- Ensuring risk assessments are conducted on hazardous substances
- Ensure copies of Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are readily available at the point of use.

Safety Data Sheets (SDS)

The supplier of a substance must provide a copy of the current SDS when first supplying the substance to the organisation and/or when requested. Every hazardous substance has an SDS. SDS's are to be read and understood by the workers and reasonable steps are taken to ensure the SDS is not changed other than by the manufacturer or importer.

The information below will assist you in understanding a little more about material safety data sheets.

What are they? Sheets containing important safety, first aid and other information on any chemical sold, under a trade or chemical name.

- Where do I get them? From the manufacturer of the product who is obliged by law to provide them.
- When should I get them? Now. All hazardous goods used in the workplace must be accompanied by an SDS.
- How do I get them? Telephone or fax the supplier who will post you one or fax it to you.
- How will I know I've got the right document? If the document covers the areas listed below you have procured an SDS.
- Product Identification: Name of Product, description, supplier's name and telephone number.
- Composition: Chemical name, ingredients and impurities.
- Emergency Information: Fire, spill, over exposure.
- First Aid: Inhalation, ingestion etc.
- Storage: How to handle, special containers, incompatible substances, transport.
- Physical Data: Boiling point, melting point, etc.

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Hazardous Substance register: When compiling a hazardous substance register a survey should be conducted on all substances in the workplace. Once all substances are identified, the SDS's are to be obtained; a copy of all SDS's should be located with the Hazardous Substance register; and the register is to be made available to all staff.

Labelling: In the event of de-canting a substance into smaller containers, the supervisor is to ensure a label is affixed to a hazardous substances container. The label is to be in English and state the substance's product name, risk and safety phrases (e.g. Keep away from heat).

If the hazardous substance is transferred from one container into a second container, the container must be labelled stating: the substance's product name; substance's risk and safety phrases; and relevant warning signs/information.

Unlabelled Substances: All substances should be labelled. If containers are not labelled and the contents are not known, mark the container – "Caution do not use: unknown substance". Store container away from other substances, and if not identified, contact the local Waste Management Branch of the Department of Environment for appropriate disposal procedures.

Storage: The supervisor is to ensure that the storage of hazardous substance is in accordance with the SDS. If appropriate storage facilities are not available, the substance should not be purchased unless the material can be store at an alternative approved storage site. Correct signage should also be displayed where hazardous substances are stored.

Handling: Supervisors are to ensure that: the requirements set out in the SDS are followed; decanting is to be conducted using the method in the appropriate SDS; Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is provided where it is not practicable to prevent or reduce exposure by other ways; other control measures such as ventilation equipment that is implemented, is maintained as required; regular monitoring is conducted where it is required; and prohibited substances are not used in the workplace.

Disposal: Surveys/inspections should be conducted at all workplaces to identify the hazardous substances used and stored at the workplace, and to identify the products no longer required which should be disposed of; the relevant SDS of each hazardous substance identified for disposal should be reviewed to establish the appropriate disposal method.

Containers of hazardous substances should not be washed out in areas where there is a possibility of waste solution entering a storm water drain or natural watercourse.

Transporting Hazardous Substances: Supervisors are to ensure that hazardous substances are transported correctly when they are required within workplace according to the SDS.

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Employees are to: Follow the procedure for hazardous substances; read the SDS of a hazardous substance before using any of the substance; use the appropriate PPE when handling substances; and report any concerns they may have with any hazardous substances.

Electric Safety (General procedures)

Employers have an obligation to ensure electrical work is performed safely. Electrical work must only be undertaken by licensed electrical workers. They must follow the guidelines of their industry to ensure all those onsite are safe.

Ensure that all electrical equipment is properly safety tagged and in good working order, via a safety audit.

Inspect tools and equipment regularly. Ensure they are maintained in good order.

Ensure the insulation of insulated tools and insulated covers are maintained in good order and suitable for the work situation. Work from a safe position that would require a deliberate movement to contact directly energised conductors or parts.

Always warn others of known hazards. If possible rectify the problem immediately, e.g. turn off mains power. Contact an electrician to arrange for it to be fixed and take appropriate action to ensure safety in the meantime.

Working in the Sun Procedure

Virtually all people in Australia are at risk of skin cancer. However, fair-skinned people, particularly those who freckle or who never tan or tan poorly, are more at risk.

Providing shade or scheduling outdoor work to hours other than the middle of the day is the simplest solution. Where this is not practicable, steps to ensure minimum effects are gained from working in the sun e.g. wear the most appropriate clothing to complete your task, wear a wide brim hat, wear eye-protection, application of sunscreen lotion (SPF30+ or greater), and constantly drink water to ensure the body is kept adequately hydrated during the day.

Handling and Disposal of Sharps Procedure (General)

The term "sharps" means pointed or cutting implements that are capable of inflicting a penetrating injury.

Steps involved with the safe handling and disposal of sharps once located: protective gloves should always be worn; use a set of tongs or similar item to pick up the sharp; dispose sharp into a puncture resistant sharps container; check for any more sharps in the vicinity; place puncture resistant sharps container in the nearest collection wheelie bins, or other authorised disposal facilities as available from time to time. Wheelie bins are collected by waste removal contractors and

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disposed of safely. Sharps should never be: bent; broken; or re-sheathed, as these are unsafe practices and are common causes of sharps injuries.

Noise and Visual Management Procedure

It is important that safe visual and auditory care is provided for leaders and those attending programs as part of the church.

Noise is unwanted sound which may cause damage to hearing. The amount of damage caused by noise depends on the total amount of exposure received over time. Measurement of Noise Exposure is expressed as: the noise exposure for a workday in Daily Noise Dose (DND); the "loudest noise", is called a peak level. Exposure to a noise level of 85dB(A) over an 8-hour period amounts to a DND of 1. Long-term exposure to a DND of less than 1 does not result in permanent hearing loss.

- Auditory care: consideration is to be given to auditory comfort when setting volume levels of audio equipment; volume of audio equipment during church events should be kept at less than 85 decibels (Additional information on impact of noise may be found at www.hearing.com.au).
- Visual Care: effective lighting is to be used during all church events; faulty lights are not to be used during church events; faulty light globes and fittings are to be brought to the notice of the Church Safety Team and are to be replaced as soon as practicable.

Use of Church Facilities

To assist with the management of your organisation, it is important to remember that there can also be risks associated with the design, maintenance and safety of indoor and outdoor environment. Areas that you may wish to address includes: poor lighting, unsafe watercourses, lakes, boundary fences and gates; the positioning of shrubbery and toilet blocks; and the late collection of children in poorly/unlit car parks.

Building Access: The Church will check that the building is safe and easily accessible, e.g. easy to open wide doors; clear and visible signage; reduced hazards, or if hazards remain they are highlighted. Use the Housekeeping Checklist to help assess your buildings annually.

Issuing Keys to Buildings: The Church Business Manager/Administrator will be responsible for maintaining a register of all persons to whom a key/security code has been issued. These records are to be held in the Church Office and be available to insurance company and/or police in event of request from those parties following any break-ins etc.

Hiring Church Property: Before hiring out Church property the following process is to be followed: Ensure any property or equipment to be hired is well maintained and free of known defects (e.g. flooring in good condition, power-points, cables and electrical equipment in good repair.)

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Make sure that you understand the purpose for which the property is being hired. Do not hire the property to groups that do not meet the Church's standards. Do not hire the property for a purpose that could substantially increase the risk of damage to the property, or result in injury to other people accessing the building.

It is the hirers responsibility for cleaning, behaviour and any damage they may cause, that they are responsible for any of their own property they may bring on to the Church's property. Ask for written evidence of Public Liability insurance and keep a copy of it on file (Certificate of currency from the hirer's insurer).

Where possible a Church employee or member should be responsible for opening and closing the area hired.

Notify the Church's insurer of any claim submitted or potential claims, which arise from the hiring of the property.



I. Risk Management & Hazard Reduction

Adopted by Elders on 20 October 2022

Our Commitment

- 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 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 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.
- Ministry Coordinators are to complete a written ministry approval process annually.

Team leaders should work with the Health & Safety Team to ensure that all individual programs risks have been considered and risk management steps implemented.

Use this information and the tables as a guide to assist in preparing your Approval for Ministry. Where deciding upon activities for your ministry it may be useful to ask yourself the following:

- Could this be classified as a high-risk activity?
- Is there a high likelihood for damage or trauma (physical, emotional and/or spiritual)?
- Does the benefit of this activity outweigh the possible risks that may be involved?
- Can the activity be changed to reduce the possible risks?
- Are there critical incident and emergency procedures in place if required?

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- Does the ministry or church have suitably trained and qualified people to address critical incidents or emergencies?
- Would the activities be covered by your insurance?

What is Risk?

Risk is the exposure to the possibility of such things as economic or financial loss or gain, physical damage, injury or delay, as a consequence of pursuing or not pursuing a particular course of action. The concept of risk includes the; perception that something could happen, likelihood of it occurring and consequence if it does occur.

These risks might include: workplace/church health and safety (include hazards), financial and administrative, property, delivery of services, public liability, litigation and/or public relations.

What is Risk Management?

Risk management is the process of managing your church's exposure to potential liabilities. It does this by identifying risks in order to prevent them or reduce them, and by providing funds to meet any liability if it occurs.

It can be a useful exercise to do a risk assessment for your ministry/program at least annually. This does not replace a Hazard Identification. The Risk Assessment looks at what might happen, whereas Hazard Identification looks at what is present at the venue at a specific time.

Considers five key areas:

- How likely is this risk?
- What is the consequence should it occur?
- What is the overall level of risk?
- What does this level of risk require to be managed appropriately?
- How adequately are we managing this risk?

Descriptions and Ratings

Likelihood, i.e. what are the chances the risk situation will occur during your ministry/program?

Very likely: Occurs routinely and can be expected to occur

Likely: Occurs often and a good chance to happen

Moderate: Should occur at sometime

Unlikely: Could possibly occur at some time

Very unlikely: Could possibly occur but would be in exceptional circumstances

Consequence, i.e. What harm could result if the situation occurred?

Insignificant: No likely injuries to person, no property damage, no financial loss, no effect on reputation, no disruption to the ministry/program, aims/goals still achieved

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- Minor: First Aid treatment for person, minor property damage, small financial loss, little impact on reputation, little disruption, most aims/goals achieved
- Moderate: Medical treatment to self or others, significant property damage, intervention by outside agency needed, significant financial loss, some damage to reputation, moderate disruption to ministry/ program, some of the aims/goals achieved
- Major: Extensive injuries or permanent impairment likely, major property damage, significant outside intervention, major financial loss, significant damage to reputation, major disruption to ministry/ program, most of the aims/goals not achieved
- Intolerable: Permanent impairment or death, property damage irretrievable, permanent intervention required (organisational leadership), financial cost leading to closure, irretrievable damage to reputation, ministry/program unable to be continued, none of the aims/goals achieved

Level of Risk (matrix)

Likelihood Consequence	VERY UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	MODERATE	LIKELY	VERY LIKELY
INTOLERABLE	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
MAJOR	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
MODERATE	Medium	Medium	High	High	Extreme
MINOR	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
INSIGNIFICANT	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High

Responses to the level of Risk Key

Risk rating Description of how to respond (manage the risk)

- Low: Regular monitoring — risk management strategies (Hierarchy of Control Measures) used likely to be sufficient to manage the risk
- Medium: Adapt usual risk management strategies, and monitor progress
- High: Identify management plan for specific risks, continuous monitoring by leaders
- Extreme: Considerable attention will be needed to manage unique needs of the risk situation

2. Hazard Reduction

A hazard is a source of danger that could result in an accident if undue care is not exercised.

Where risk assessment considers things that might be a risk or go wrong during a ministry activity, hazard identification and control measures relate to actual hazards that are present prior to the commencement of a ministry activity.

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Where a hazard is identified, it is important to decide upon one or more measures that can be used to control or eliminate the hazard. These measures are referred to as *Hierarchy of Control* measures. The table below provides an overview of the elimination or control measures that may be used to address a hazard, along with some descriptions that may be aligned with each measure.

Hierarchy of Control Measures

Elimination or control measures	General description
Eliminate the hazard	Remove the hazard. Change the activity or stop using it
Substitute the hazard	Replace the activity, material, or equipment with a less hazardous one
Isolate the hazard	Isolate the hazard from the person at risk; isolate through distance.
Use engineering controls	Change the physical characteristics of the environment (with additions or subtractions) to remove or reduce the risk
Use administrative controls	Establish procedures and safe practices
Use personal protective equipment	Use appropriately designed and properly fitted equipment and clothing

There are numerous ways to record hazards and control measures that have been implemented. The template on the following page may be used as one way of keeping written records of hazards and measures used.

5. Food Preparation and Storage Practices

Receiving food

Keeping food safe starts from the moment that the food arrives:

- Check that your food suppliers are supplying safe food.
- Ensure that perishable food arrives in a refrigerated food vehicle, and check the temperature of deliveries when they arrive. Then transfer to the correct type of storage.
- Dry goods, dry ingredients or canned foods should be in good condition, without torn packaging or heavily dented cans.

Preparing food

- Use separate utensils, including cutting boards and knives, for raw food and cooked food. If this is not possible, thoroughly wash and sanitise equipment before using it.
- Wash all fruit and vegetables in clean water before using them.
- Don't use food from damaged packaging.
- Don't let raw food come into contact with cooked food to avoid cross contamination.

Handling food

- Cooked, or ready-to-eat food shouldn't be handled with bare hands. Use tongs, spatulas, spoons, or disposable gloves.
- Raw food to be cooked can be handled with bare hands.
- Change disposable gloves every hour and/or when they tear and/or when you change tasks.

Cooking and heating

- Thaw frozen food before cooking in microwave or at the bottom of the refrigerator.
- Never put thawed food back in the freezer.
- Cook thawed food immediately after thawing.
- Cook all foods completely, especially red meat, fish and chicken.
- Reheating: bring to the boil and simmer for a minimum of 5 minutes before serving (or microwave using manufacturer's guidelines)

Storing food

Temperature: meat, dairy or fish (not already processed by heat) are high-risk foods.

Store at the correct temperature, frozen (hard) at -15°C or cooler or refrigerated at 5°C or cooler.

Time: Don't keep food in storage for too long. Record dates, 'first in - first out' rule. Food should be out of refrigeration for a maximum of four hours.

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Displaying food

- Wrap or cover all food on display. Tag or label food trays, not the food.
- Refrigerated displays must be 5°C or cooler and hot displays 60°C or hotter.
- Don't use hot display equipment to reheat food.

Transporting food

- Keep cold by using insulated containers such as an Esky™ with ice or cold blocks.
- Food which is to be served hot should be transported cold and heated at the event.