

St Mark's Darling Point

Safe Ministry Policy

1. Overview

As God's Church, we are called to show God's love to all people, especially for the vulnerable. Our churches need to be safe places, free from abuse and misconduct. As a church, we must maintain this duty of care and abide by our legal requirements.

This Safe Ministry policy outlines our responsibilities and commitments to safe ministry along with actions and protocols to ensure our church is a safe place. For more information on these, consult the Anglican Diocese of Sydney's *Safe Ministry Policy*, *Safe Ministry Blueprints*, and the *NSW Child Safe Standards* (see Support Documentation below)

2. Responsibilities and Reporting

Our Responsibilities

- **All leaders** (volunteer or paid) engaged with vulnerable people have a responsibility to maintain their Safe Ministry compliance, to abide by the code of conduct for church workers, and to report any suspected abuse.
- **The Rector** is ultimately responsible for ensuring that this Safe Ministry policy is implemented.
- **The Safe Ministry Representative** (a lay person appointed by the Rector) assists the rector with administering the policy.
- **Employed ministry staff** who oversee ministry to children, youth, or vulnerable people are responsible for the implementation of Safe Ministry practice in their ministry area.
- **Parish Council** is responsible for annually reviewing the implementation of Safe Ministry policy by the Rector and Safe Ministry Representative.

Reporting Concerns or Abuse

The following is a summary. For details, consult the Safe Ministry Blueprints. If in any doubt, leaders must contact the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry (9265 1604) for guidance.

- Any church worker (volunteer or paid) who reasonably suspects that a child is in danger or that a serious crime has been committed (against a child or adult) must report it to the Police.¹
- Where a child is at risk of significant harm, church workers must contact the Child Protection Helpline (13 21 11), or the Police (000) if it is an emergency.
- In the case of misconduct or abuse by a church worker, leaders must also contact the Rector, the Anglican Abuse Report line (1800 774 945), and the Police (where a crime has been committed). If the allegation is against the Rector, leaders must contact the wardens (wardens@stmarksdp.org) instead of the Rector.
- The Rector or Wardens must follow the 'Diocesan Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Unacceptable Behaviour by Clergy and Church Workers in Parishes'. This will typically involve reporting to the Police in the case of a criminal offence, the Anglican Abuse Report line (1800 774 945), and the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry (9265 1604)
- If in any doubt about reporting requirements, seek guidance from the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry (<https://safeministry.org.au/contact/> or 9265 1604). You should also consult the Mandatory Reporter Guide (<https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>)

¹ Unless there is a 'reasonable excuse' not to do so. However, 'reasonable excuses' are defined in the legislation; this is not up to the discernment of the leader. E.g. the offence has already been reported, doing so would put the victim at risk, or it concerns an historical offence and the victim has requested that the offence not be reported. If in any doubt, leaders must contact the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry (9265 1604).

- If anyone has general concerns about the safety of children, young people or vulnerable people, they should contact the Rector.

Defining Vulnerable People

A vulnerable person is defined as child (anyone under 18 years of age) or a vulnerable adult. A vulnerable adult is a person who has difficulty protecting him or herself against harm or exploitation due to:

- disability, age, or illness
- personal circumstances making them in particular need of pastoral support
- different cultural, linguistic or community circumstances
- or survival from childhood experiences of abuse or neglect.

3. Safe Ministry Principles and Actions

Safe Ministry requires attention to three main areas:

- **Appropriate Leadership:** we must ensure that our leaders are screened, trained, and supported.
- **Best Practices:** we must ensure that our ministry practices promote safety, openness, and empowerment for vulnerable people
- **Safe Environment:** we must ensure that our church ecosystem promotes and improves safe ministry and minimises the chance of abuse.

Appropriate Leadership

- **Appoint leaders with appropriate characteristics, screening and training**
 - Provide clear criteria for Christian character and ministry and leadership skills in job descriptions for ministry to vulnerable people.
 - Appoint godly, trusted leaders through a process of observation/recommendation, application, interview, and follow up.
 - Ensure leaders have a Working with Children's Check, Safe Ministry Training, and Safe Ministry Check
- **Supervise and train leaders adequately**
 - Encourage ministry staff to seek external pastoral supervision
 - Provide volunteers with pastoral care and supervision by ministry staff
 - Train volunteers prior to taking on ministry roles and provide continued on the job training.

Best Practices

- **Abide by the Safe Ministry Guidelines and Code of Conduct**
 - Implement Safe Ministry policy, blueprint, and code of conduct in every ministry to vulnerable people
 - Communicate the Safe Ministry policy, blueprint, and code of conduct when onboarding leaders and review annually.
- **Respond to complaints, misconduct, and abuse quickly and transparently**
 - Have a clear and accessible complaints procedure, communicated on our website, in our WCU, and on our weekly bulletins.
 - Respond to accusations swiftly according to the Diocesan Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Unacceptable Behaviour by Clergy and Church Workers in Parishes
 - Pastorally care for any victims of abuse, with reference to the Sydney Diocese Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme
- **Keep clear and accurate records relating to Safe Ministry**
 - Use the Elvanto database and OneDrive to keep records of past and present leaders, their ministries, and their Safe Ministry training, WWCC, and Safe Ministry Checks.
- **Empower vulnerable people**
 - Involve children and vulnerable adults in decisions that affect them

- Ensure that programs are accessible and inclusive

Safe Environment

- **Embed safe ministry in institutional leadership, governance and culture**
 - Maintain documented policies and procedures to ensure safe ministry
 - A Safe Ministry Representative is to ensure compliance by the minister to this policy and to maintain records.
 - Regularly communicate this policy and/or relevant Safe Ministry practices with parents, youth, kids, and vulnerable people.
- **Review and improve implementation of safe ministry standards and practice**
 - Hold a quarterly Safe Ministry review meeting involving the Rector (or his delegate), relevant ministry staff, and the Safe Ministry Representative
 - The Rector (or his delegate) and the Safe Ministry Representative to provide an annual Safe Ministry report to Parish Council. A Safe Ministry Report is to be included in the agenda of the first meeting of the newly appointed Parish Council after the AGM. Any actions should be noted and, securely and safely stored for future reference.
 - Encourage children, families, and vulnerable adults to provide feedback on safe ministry practices.
- **Minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur in our physical and online environments**
 - Wardens and Parish Council to regularly consider how our properties and online spaces can minimise the opportunity for abuse.

4. Support Documentation

NSW Legislation

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- Children's Guardian Act 2019
- Crimes Act 1900

Anglican Diocese of Sydney ordinances and policies

- Safe Ministry Policy
- Faithfulness in Service (Code of Conduct)
- Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020
- Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017
- Diocesan policy for dealing with allegations of unacceptable behaviour

The Anglican Diocese of Sydney's Safe Ministry Policy

The Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney is committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all people, particularly within its own community. To ensure the safety of children and vulnerable people in our communities, the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney, in conjunction with the Anglican Church of Australia, will -

- carefully recruit and train its clergy and church workers,
- adopt and encourage safe ministry practices by its clergy and church workers,
- respond promptly to each concern raised about the behaviour of its clergy and church workers,
- offer pastoral support to any person who has suffered abuse, and
- provide supervision of and pastoral accountability (within the context of the ministries, locations and activities of the parish) to any person (who is a member of a congregation and) who is known to have abused a child or another vulnerable person.

NSW Child Safe Standards

Standard 1: Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture

Standard 2: Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved

Standard 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account

Standard 5: People working with children are suitable and supported

Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused

Standard 7: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training

Standard 8: Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur

Standard 9: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved

Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe

A comprehensive outline of the standards and their core components can be found at the NSW Office of Children's Guardian website, along with a number of other resources. These are accessible from <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-scheme/implementing-child-safe-standards>

Other Relevant Links

- Safe Ministry Blueprints for churches and specific ministry areas: <https://safeministry.org.au/blueprints/>
- Safe Ministry Training: <https://safeministry.training/>
- Safe Ministry Check: <https://safeministry.org.au/safe-ministry-check-information/>
- Faithfulness in Service Code of Conduct: <https://safeministry.org.au/faithfulness-in-service-code-of-conduct/>
- NSW Working with Children Check: <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-for-a-working-with-children-check>
- Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme: <https://safeministry.org.au/pastoral-care-and-assistance-scheme/>

November 2023