



Plentylife Anglican Church – St Matthias, Mernda

Child Safe Policy Updated June 2018

Plentylife is committed to child safety.

As a Christian community worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ together, we want to confirm that we are committed to the safety of all children and young people who participate in our community life.

The Bible states clearly that all people are created equal and we are called to serve one another humbly following in Jesus' example. As we are all created in God's image we are motivated to love all humankind and not to discriminate against anyone, on the basis of age, race, gender, language, sexuality, disability or family/social background. Because of our biblical mandate, we seek to protect the safety of all people, especially children and young people without exception.

- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Plentylife is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Plentylife is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- Plentylife has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all of our staff and volunteers.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to promoting within our church:

Due diligence, Integrity, Duty of Care, Transparency, Inclusivity, Teamwork.

This policy applies to paid staff, volunteer staff, missional community leaders, students and all volunteers within Plentylife. For the purposes of this policy, the words 'children' or 'child' refers to anyone under the age of 18.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Make our church a safe place for everyone, especially people under 18 years of age.
- Minimise the risk of abuse.
- Ensure all cases of suspected abuse/misconduct are handled thoroughly.
- Ensure leaders and programs are safe.
- Follow National and State laws around child safety.

We commit to these standards and practices:

Thorough screening of every person who holds a leadership or rostered position in a ministry that has contact with people under 18 years of age.

- All adults working with children in our church are required to have current Working With Children Checks. (This includes those who look to have a role of authority in an upfront capacity)
 - For all ongoing ministries, the WWCC must have our church as a registered organisation.
 - For one-off events the WWCC can be checked online that day.
- Victorian Police Checks will also be required of people in the categories below.
 - A member of staff or an intern.
 - A member of Parish Council.
 - The leader of a team whose ministry is with children (e.g. overall leader of the Youth Ministry or Leader of a pre-school ministry).
 - A leader of a missional community.
 - Has financial responsibilities (e.g. treasurer, offertory counters).
 - Anyone who has an upfront role in our gathered services.
 - Entrusted with sensitive, confidential information.
 - Police Checks will be required at least once every three years.
- Leaders in roles that involve teaching and/or pastoral care of children will be required to sign a Parish Code of Conduct at least once every three years.
 - If the Code of Conduct is updated, leaders will be required to sign a new copy within the next 12 months.
 - Before being appointed these leaders must go through an application process that includes being recommended by two Christian people of good reputation.
- Some ministries may choose to write an extra Code of Conduct/Job Description that is specific to that group's activities.

- E.g. Ministries with disabled children may need some extra guidelines for leaders so that the particular needs of each child are accommodated.
- E.g. Cross-cultural ministries may need their leaders to be extra sensitive to cultural differences.

Training:

- All leaders in a teaching and/or pastoral care role will do initial Diocesan Professional Standards Training and continue with this as provided at least once every three years.
 - This will include receiving the Anglican Diocese's Code of Conduct and Child Safe Policy from the Child Safe Officer.
- All ministry teams leading children will run a short refresher session on Child Safety every year.
- All leaders to read and uphold the 'Electronic Communication' protocols within the Diocesan Code of Conduct.
- Every leader at our church will have a supervisor for their role who will help keep them accountable to our child safety standards.

Communication:

- The Child Safe Code of Conduct from the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne will be available at all our locations for anyone to take a copy of and can also be found online at: plentylife.org.au/safe
- To help children know that we care for them, we will exhibit child-friendly material and statements about our values and standards.
- Regularly let children know who they can talk to if they are concerned about their own safety or the safety of someone else.

Adult/Child Ratios:

- For children aged 1-10, there must be two adult leaders present for all activities.
- Leaders must not be one-on-one with children aged 11+ in private, unseen places.
 - One on one is acceptable in a public place where both people are visible and easily interrupted.
- The following ratios are the minimum requirement:
 - 2 adults to 6 infants
 - 2 adults to 10 children under 3 years old
 - 2 adults to 20 children aged 3 to 5 years old

- 2 adults to 30 children/youth in school age groups.

Driving Children and Youth:

When making transport arrangements for driving children and youth, leaders should take reasonable steps to ensure that:

- all drivers or operators are licensed, responsible, experienced and are not impaired by alcohol or any other mind-altering or addictive substance
- all drivers must have at least a Probationary P2 licence (Green P Plates)
- all motor vehicles and other forms of transport used are registered, third party insured, safe and fitted with appropriate child restraints or safety devices (e.g. seat belts, life jackets)
- church workers are not to be alone with a child (0-18) in a motor vehicle.

Leaders are given authority to:

- Refuse to allow a car to carry young people if the car appears unsafe (e.g. has bald tyres) or fails any of the above conditions
- Refuse to allow a driver to carry young people if the driver appears impaired in any of the above ways or if they fail any of the above conditions

Responding to an Instance of Child Abuse or suspected Child Abuse¹:

Please follow these steps carefully and thoroughly. Even if you have no proof of abuse, a genuine concern is enough to ensure you MUST act.

Communicate your concerns:

- Immediately share your concerns with the Child Safety Officer (identifiable at www.plentylife.org.au/safe) and the leader you directly report to and they will take it to more senior levels of leadership as appropriate. The person you report to will then discuss with you what future actions should be taken.
 - The Senior Minister must be made aware of any situations that are serious or illegal in nature.
 - Examples of who to report to:
 - If you're a team member, report to the team leader.
 - If you're a children's ministry leader, report to the Children's Minister.
 - A Parish Council member would report directly to the Senior Minister.
 - This means it's important that every volunteer knows who their direct report is. If you don't know, keep asking until you get a clear answer.

¹ See the 'Definitions' section for a definition of abuse.

- The Diocesan Child Safe Code of Conduct requires Diocesan Profession Standards (Koorooya) to be notified as part of this process, after consultation with the Child Safety Officer
- If you are unsure whether the situation is a criminal matter, in conjunction with the Child Safety Officer, report to the police for guidance.
- If the situation you are concerned about is criminal in nature then the Police MUST be contacted. This can be done in consultation with the Child Safety Officer you report to but no criminal activity, proven or suspected, must be left out of the hands of the police.

***"Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence."*²**

- If your concern is about the person you report to directly (they are the abuser), then take your concerns to the person who **they** report to.
 - If your concern is with a junior staff member, speak to a senior staff member.
 - If your concern is with a senior leader at our church (e.g. The Senior Minister, Warden or Parish Council Member) you may need to go beyond our church structures to ensure the situation is dealt with. Under those circumstances, please read the "How to make a complaint" section below.

Things to consider:

- If you believe the child is in imminent risk of harm then you, and the Child Safety Officer, must act immediately. Seek advice from senior church leaders and the police if you are unsure how to act.
- It's important that, at all steps in your response, you work hard to keep strict confidentiality within our church leadership structures so as to protect the dignity of the victim and the person being accused.
 - At some point, serious abuse situations may need to be made public but this should always been done in consultation with senior staff and the Parish Council/Wardens.
- If your concern has arisen from a specific incident, fill in an Incident Report Form available onsite or at plentylife.org.au/safe

What if the issue has not been dealt with?

- If your concern has not been acted on appropriately please report to the Director of Professional Standards directly (see details below).

How to make a complaint

This information is intended to help you if you wish to make a complaint, have been or are being abused or harassed by clergy (ordained staff), church staff or a Parish Council member, including Regional Bishops, in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.

The Director of Professional Standards responds to all complaints of misconduct including sexual, physical, spiritual or emotional abuse by Clergy or Church leaders. The Director is as independent as possible from the Diocese but is paid by the Diocese.

² justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence

The first step in making a complaint is to call the recorded information line at any time to Koorooya LTD on **1800 135 246**. All information provided to this service is strictly confidential. The person taking a message on this number will ask you to give a name and your phone number or address so that the Director can contact you as soon as possible. Alternatively, you can write to the Director:

**Director of Professional Standards
Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
PO Box 329
Canterbury VIC 3126**

Mark your envelope Confidential

The aim is to solve complaints as quickly as possible. There are different ways of dealing with complaints - informally, formally or referring the matter to another Church professional standards body or to a child protection authority or to the Police.

What is the legal framework for our Child Safe Policy?

This policy reflects legislation and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

National Legislation

- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children "Protecting Children is Everyone's Business" 2009 – 2020 (Commonwealth of Australia)

State Legislation

- ***Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*** (Vic.)
- ***Working With Children Act 2005*** (Vic.)

How will this policy be implemented and reviewed?

The Staff are responsible for day-by-day implementation as well as other key volunteers as appropriate. Parish Council is responsible for review.

- Staff and Parish Council should review this policy every year.
- All updates are to be made in plain English so as to be easy to understand for young people.
- New staff are to be thoroughly educated in our Child Safety policies and practices at their induction.

This policy is to be made publicly available onsite and online.

Once a year, our Sunday gathered service is to have a focus on Child Safety that includes practical examples of how these policies might need to be put into action.

Definitions:

- **Abuse** includes but is not limited to:
 - Physical Abuse
 - Emotional Abuse
 - Family Violence
 - Sexual Abuse

- Grooming
- Neglect
- A **diocese** is a region-based grouping of churches under the authority of an archbishop and bishops. Our church is part of the 'Anglican Diocese of Melbourne'.
- **Parish Council** is a group of elected volunteer leaders who oversee the operation and administration of a church. The Senior Minister leads the Parish Council.
- **Wardens** are members of Parish Council but have extra responsibilities around things like staffing, finance and property.
- A **Senior Minister** might under some circumstances be called a **Vicar** or **Priest in Charge**.
- A **child** is any person under 18 years of age.
- A **church worker** is defined in the Professional Standards Act (2009) as follows:

Church worker means a person who is or who at any relevant time was:

1. (a) a member of the clergy;
2. (b) a lay minister;
3. (c) a church warden or vestry member, whether elected by the general meeting of a parish or appointed by the vicar or appointed by the vestry or the vicar to fill a vacancy;
4. (d) a treasurer appointed by the churchwardens;
5. (e) a person aged 18 or more years holding in a congregation or parish or in the

Cathedral the role position or office described below or carrying out in substance the duties inherent in that role position or office—

1. (i) Children's group leader or co-ordinator;
2. (ii) Creche leader or co-ordinator;
3. (iii) Director or co-ordinator of the choir or other music group;
4. (iv) Director or co-ordinator of music;
5. (v) Home visit leader or co-ordinator;
6. (vi) Nursing home visit leader or co-ordinator;
7. (vii) Organist or pianist;
8. (viii) Salaried or otherwise remunerated lay person;
9. (ix) Superintendent or other person in charge of a Sunday school or other educational programme;
10. (x) Youth group leader or co-ordinator;
6. (f) a person employed or appointed by a Church body (other than a person referred to in paragraph (e)) within a class of persons prescribed from time to time by the Archbishop-in-Council in a protocol; or
7. (g) any other person holding a position or performing a function, whether voluntarily or for payment with the actual or apparent authority of a Church authority or Church body, within a class of persons prescribed from time to time by the Archbishop-in-Council in a protocol—

- resident in the Diocese or holding a licence or permission to officiate or other authority from a Church authority but excludes a bishop subject to the jurisdiction of the Special Tribunal of the Church;

PROTECT

Protecting children & young people
from abuse is our responsibility

