



Plentylife Anglican Church St Matthias, Mernda

Child Safe Policy

1. Rationale

- 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 vulnerable 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's 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. While children and vulnerable people are the focus of this policy, our biblical mandate is that we seek to protect the safety of all people without exception.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, in the same way that we support our volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We have zero tolerance of child abuse. 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 through early identification, reduction and removal of risks.
- Plentylife is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on the Child Safe standards, codes of conduct and policies that Plentylife adheres to, and the responsibilities associated with volunteering in or leading activities that fall under these policies.
- Plentylife has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all of our staff and volunteers.
- We support and respect all people, including children, our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal people, the cultural safety of people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for people with a disability.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

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- The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to building within our church community:
 - 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.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Make our church a safe place for everyone, especially children and vulnerable people.
- Minimise the risk of abuse.
- Ensure all cases of suspected abuse/misconduct are handled thoroughly.
- Ensure leaders, our place and programs are safe.
- Follow national and state laws around child safety.

3. Standards and Practices

We commit to these standards and practices:

- 3.1. Thorough screening of every person who holds a leadership or rostered position in a ministry that has contact with children.
- 3.2. All adults working with children in our church are required to have current Working With Children Checks (WWCC). This includes all leaders and members who undertake roles on the service roster where they are required to present from the front.
 - For all ongoing ministries, the WWCC must have Plentylife as a registered organisation.
 - For one-off events the WWCC can be checked online that day.
- 3.3. People in the categories below will be required to provide Victorian Police Checks at least once every three years.
 - A member of staff or an intern.
 - A member of Parish Council.

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- 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.
 - Anyone who has financial responsibilities (e.g. treasurer, offertory counters).
 - Anyone who has an upfront role in our gathered services.
 - Anyone entrusted with sensitive, confidential information.
- 3.4. 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 Parish 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.
- 3.5. 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.

4. Training

- 4.1. All staff 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. These can be found online at: <https://plentylife.org.au/wp-content/uploads/1804-Child-Safe-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>
- 4.2. All volunteers will attend Child Safe training on an annual basis and have read the Diocesan Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safe Policy, Plentylife Child Safe Policy and Faithfulness in Service. These can be found online at: <https://plentylife.org.au/children-youth/>
- 4.3. All leaders are to read and uphold the 'Electronic Communication' protocols within the Diocesan Code of Conduct.
- 4.4. Every leader at our church will have a supervisor for their role who will help keep them accountable to our child safety standards.

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5. Communication

- 5.1. The Child Safe Code of Conduct from the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne is available online at: <https://plentylife.org.au/children-youth/child-safety/>
- 5.2. To help children know that we care for them, we will exhibit child-friendly material and statements about our values and standards.
- 5.3. We will regularly let children know who they can talk to if they are concerned about their own safety or the safety of someone else.

6. Adult/Child Ratios

- 6.1. Leaders must not be one-on-one with children in private, unseen places at any time.
- 6.2. Leaders can be one on one with children aged 11+ but only in a public place where both people are visible and easily interrupted.
- 6.3. Leaders must not be one on one with children aged 10 and under.
- 6.4. The following ratios are the minimum requirement:
 - 1 leader to 4 children aged 0-3 years old
 - 1 leader to 11 children aged 3 to 5 years old
 - 1 leader to 15 children in school age groups
- 6.5. In addition to minimum ratio requirements being met, for activities involving children aged 1-10 there must be two adult leaders present.

7. Online Gatherings and Activities

- 7.1. Leaders are to ensure at least one parent or guardian is available to supervise their children while engaging in online activities.
- 7.2. At least two leaders must be present online for all child or youth based activities or gatherings.
- 7.3. The Diocesan *Guidelines for Online Ministry with Children and Youth* are attached to this document in Appendix 2.

8. Driving Children and Youth

- 8.1. When making transport arrangements for children, leaders should take reasonable steps to ensure that:
 - all drivers are licensed (at least at the Probationary P2 licence level), responsible, experienced and not impaired by alcohol or any other mind-altering or addictive substance

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- parental permission (via text or email) is obtained if children are to be driven by a Probationary P2 licensed driver
- all motor vehicles and other forms of transport used are registered, third party insured (as minimum), are safe and fitted with appropriate child restraints or safety devices (e.g. seat belts, tethered child seats, life jackets)

8.2. Church workers are not to be alone in a motor vehicle:

- at any time with a child primary school aged or under
- with a secondary aged child without written parental consent.

8.3. 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

9. First Aid

All missional community activities must have at least one attending volunteer who holds this level of first aid training, however, two attending volunteers with this level of training would be preferable when possible. All staff are expected to keep their first aid and CPR qualifications up to date.

10. 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.

10.1. Communicate your concerns:

- Immediately share your concerns with the Child Safety Officer (identifiable at <https://plentylife.org.au/children-youth/child-safety/>) 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:
 - Missional community leaders report to the Missional Community Coach and Senior Minister.
 - Children’s ministry leaders report to the Children’s Minister.

¹ See Appendix for a definition of ‘abuse’.

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- Parish Council members report directly to the Senior Minister.
- This means it is important that every volunteer knows who their direct report is. If you do not know, keep asking until you get a clear answer.
- The Diocesan Child Safe Code of Conduct requires Diocesan Profession Standards (Koorooya Ltd) 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 any criminal activity, proven or suspected, must be reported to the police.
- If your concern is about the person you report to directly (that is, they are the alleged 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 will need to go to Koorooya Ltd to ensure the situation is dealt with. Under those circumstances, please read the 'How to make a complaint' section below.
- **Note:** '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

10.2. 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, Koorooya Ltd and the police if you are unsure how to act.
- It is important that, during each step of 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, Koorooya Ltd and the Parish Council/Wardens.
- If your concern has arisen from a specific incident, fill in an Incident Report Form available onsite or at <https://plentylife.org.au/children-youth/child-safety/>
- What if the issue has not been dealt with?

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

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

11. 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.

The first step in making a complaint is to call the Koorooya Ltd recorded information line at any time 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**

Note: 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.

12. The Legal Framework for our Child Safe Policy

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

National Framework

- *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009 – 2020* (2009)
Commonwealth of Australia

State Legislation

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

13. Implementation and Review of this Policy

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

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- 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.

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Appendix 1: Definitions

Abuse: Abuse includes but is not limited to:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Family Violence
- Sexual Abuse
- Grooming
- Neglect

Child/Children: Any person/group of people under 18 years of age.

Church worker: 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 member of the clergy;
2. a lay minister;
3. 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. a treasurer appointed by the churchwardens;
5. 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—
 - a. Children’s group leader or coordinator;
 - b. Creche leader or coordinator;
 - c. Director or coordinator of the choir or other music group;
 - d. Director or coordinator of music;
 - e. Home visit leader or coordinator;
 - f. Nursing home visit leader or coordinator;
 - g. Organist or pianist;
 - h. Salaried or otherwise remunerated lay person;
 - i. Superintendent or other person in charge of a Sunday school or other educational program;
 - j. Youth group leader or coordinator;

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6. a person employed or appointed by a Church body (other than a person referred to in the previous point) within a class of persons prescribed from time to time by the Archbishop-in-Council in a protocol; or
7. 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
8. 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;

Diocese: 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: A 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.

Warden: Wardens are members of Parish Council but have extra responsibilities around things like staffing, finance and property.

Senior Minister: A Senior Minister might, under some circumstances, be called a **Vicar** or **Priest in Charge**.

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