



COASTLANDS  
CHURCH

# SAFE COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT

Developed with reference and permission from the **Office of  
the Director of Safe Ministry**  
and in partnership with



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| Policy Approved |  |
| Next Review     |  |

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## Introduction

The church is a vibrant and exciting community commissioned by God to display his nature to the world.

This endeavour requires great commitment and mutual responsibility in order that it be an honest and true representation of the message and person of Jesus and the biblical mandate to care for, encourage and equip all those within our care on his behalf towards the fulfilment of their created purpose.

The Church therefore, is to be characterised by truth, discernment, humility, grace and forgiveness as revealed through the bible in the life of Jesus the only perfect man to have lived. The Bible teaches that leaders and teachers must maintain the highest of standards in their conduct and personal lives in keeping with the life of Jesus. While this is our pursuit we recognise that we are not perfect and that sometimes people in their brokenness make choices that do not represent the message and may result in the harm of themselves or others. It is necessary, therefore, to support those who represent Jesus and the biblical mandate, whether employed or volunteering, to maintain the highest standard of conduct and to ensure the building up and safety of all those who engage in the church's ministries and activities. The teaching of children and young people in particular carries significant responsibilities in order to support their wellbeing along with the wellbeing of other vulnerable people in the community.

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## Context

Coastlands International Christian Centre Inc. is an autonomous, local, biblical Eldership governed and led christian church gathering primarily as a congregation on Sundays at Coastlands Community Centre 530 Brighton Road, Brighton SA. We are a multigenerational community of families including children and young people, individuals, families, the disabled and the elderly who sometimes also meet throughout the week for activities in other various locations across the city of Adelaide.

It is a desire that this document would help to bring definition and practical clarity to the processes and procedures of the church as we seek to apply the Gospel of Jesus in a community that truthfully embodies his life and particularly as it upholds the safety of the children, young people and other vulnerable people within.

Jesus taught his disciples that they were not to be like the rulers of the day who exercised power over others for selfish gain. They were to be servants, just as Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve. Throughout his life he brought compassion, dignity and healing to the vulnerable while also bringing accountability and pronouncing judgment on those who use their authority for selfish gain. Coastlands takes seriously its mandate to be a serving community shepherding on behalf of Jesus, exercising discernment, giving mercy, administering care and concern for all people who engage with us. Coastlands is committed therefore to safeguarding the children, young people and vulnerable in our community by actively preventing harm or risk of harm, and by seeking to provide safe activities that support, encourage and equip all people especially the vulnerable.

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## Scope

This blueprint document covers all people (including children and young people) who engage in the Coastlands community, inclusively; regardless of age, ability, background (social, cultural, religious or economic), circumstance or gender. All Children, Young people, families, individuals, the disabled and the elderly are offered embrace by the community where access and equity is available for all. The policy is written with reference to the requirements of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

This blueprint covers all activities operating under the direct instruction of the Coastlands International Christian Centre board of Elders.

Although this document is specifically designed to guide Coastlands in its practical and legislative requirements of being a Child Safe Organisation it's principles and procedures support our approach to creating and maintaining a culture and environment that is a safe place for all people within the Coastlands community. As such, although the majority of the statements within this blueprint refer to 'children and young people' it is the intention of Coastlands church to use this document to guide our operations and interaction with all people in our community and especially the vulnerable. We recognise all people are precious creatures who bear the image of God and must be valued, cared for and supported on his behalf. We are committed to ensuring that all vulnerable people (including children and young people, families, the disabled and the elderly) in our community are informed and involved in decisions that considerably affect them. We recognise the diverse needs of vulnerable people should be taken into account and that their voice be taken seriously and given due weight.<sup>4</sup>

It applies:

- to all employees, volunteers and anyone working on behalf of Coastlands Eldership
- on the church premises
- at functions, excursions, trips or camps organised by the church
- when members of the church community are specifically representing the church.

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## Child Safe Standards

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended 10 child safe standards based on its findings, extensive research and consultation about what makes organisations child safe. Both the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* and the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* require a broad range of organisations including Coastlands Church to provide child safe environments. The SA Department of Human Services seeks to support organisations (including religious organisations) to implement these standards.

The standards work together to emphasise the importance of adopting multiple strategies to address child safety and avoiding an over-reliance on any one strategy. By implementing the standards in our church ministries we can create and maintain a child safe culture. The 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations in extract are as follows:



The child safe standards inform our current Safe Community policies and practices and provide a framework for ongoing review and improvement. It is recommended that church leadership consider how the standards are being implemented specifically and how to improve and develop child safe practices and culture.

# COASTLANDS REQUIREMENTS

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## Responsibilities (of the Board of Elders)

The board of Elders are responsible for complying with the South Australian State legislation of Child Safe Organisations and is ultimately responsible for making sure ministry conducted throughout Coastlands is safe for children and young people.

The board of Elders is responsible to appoint all employees and volunteers within the church and to ensure proper screening, reporting and training requirements are met.

Coastlands is committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all vulnerable people including children and young people in our community.

*Coastlands will therefore:*

- *Adopt and encourage safe community practices by its church workers*
- *Respond promptly to each concern raised about behaviour or activities within the church community,*
- *Offer pastoral support towards healing and wholeness to any person who has suffered harm or risk of harm and*
- *Provide supervision of and pastoral accountability (within the context of the ministries, locations and activities) to any person who has revealed themselves to the eldership team and is known to have harmed a child or another vulnerable person.*

Each board member must have satisfactorily completed Safe Ministry training within the last two years before beginning their work and must complete the training every two years while sitting on the board.

The Board of Elders must individually fulfil such other responsibilities as required by the code of conduct in relation to standards for personal behaviour, the practice of shepherding in the community and ensuring the safety of children young people and other vulnerable people in all areas of church life.

The Board of Elders will, at a minimum, review the safe community blueprint policies and procedures once every 5 years as required by the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*. Review of these documents will also occur when:

- new or added risks are identified
- A critical incident occurs
- Concerns are raised about the safety and well being of children and young people in our organisation.

Basic health and safety issues must be monitored in order to avoid obvious hazards on church property, particularly in rooms used by children and vulnerable adults.

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## Safe Community Representatives

The Board of Elders must appoint Safe Ministry Representative(s) for the church. It is desirable (but not essential) for at least one Safe Community Representative to not be a staff member or related to a staff member of the church in order to avoid conflicts of interest in the event of potential reporting.

The Safe Community Team will keep all records of reports made, WWCC currencies and training completed. The Safe Community Representative will also provide an annual report to the Board of Elders and make available to the community during the annual business/finance meeting.

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## Legal requirements

Any person involved in **child-related work** (including all volunteers) must get a Working With Children Check clearance (subject to some exemptions). A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years and therefore child-related work includes ministry to youth. Coastlands must verify employees and volunteers current 'Not Prohibited' WWCC with the SA Department of Human Services Screening Unit via the online portal prior to engaging a person in child-related work to determine whether the person has been cleared to under-take child related work. Coastlands will verify that existing employees and volunteers have renewed and retained their their 'Not Prohibited' WWCC every 5 years.

A failure to undertake screening as required by law could lead to significant fines. It may also potentially form the basis of an action in negligence should there be a reportable incident.

### **What is a Working With Children Check?**

In SA a Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a government screening process overseen by the Department of Human Services Screening Unit. Anyone intending to work with children in SA, including volunteers, must get a WWCC.

The WWCC involves a criminal history check (including convictions, charges and juvenile records) and a review of findings of misconduct. The result is either a clearance (NOT-PROHIBITED) to work with children for five years or a bar against working with children (PROHIBITED).

### **Ministry to Children**

**Any person over the age of 14** who wishes to undertake **ministry to children** must usually:

- Hold a current 'Not Prohibited' WWCC clearance that must then be verified by Coastlands. (Coastlands can initiate this check on your behalf.) With renewal every 5 years.
- Complete a Safe Community Check and submit this for assessment with the Safe Community Representative
- Complete the SafeMinistryCheck Training (online), providing referees and completion of the code of conduct, volunteer agreement and statutory declaration. Followed by a refresher of this course every 2 years.

# RECRUITMENT

## Safe Community Check?

The Safe Community Check is a Coastlands requirement addressing the desire to be above reproach with regard to the laws of the land and the Churches reputation in the community. The Assessment involves the completion of a "Safe Community Check" by the applicant followed by an assessment of the form by the Safe Community Representative. In particular cases, an accompanying interview may also be appropriate in order to clarify and explore responses before approval is given. Although an interview is not required as part of the process it is encouraged as it creates an opportunity for the Safe Community Team or ministry coordinator to have a pastoral conversation with the applicant about godliness and holiness and to talk through any matters that the applicant may have found confronting when completing the form or the Safe Ministry Training.

### When must a person complete a Safe Community Check?

All volunteers (aged 12 years and over) serving in ministry to children in Coastlands need to have undertaken a Safe Community Check and been cleared to work with children **before** they undertake ministry to children.

### Church Worker (Next Gen) Recruitment Requirements: Examples

| Ministry position   | WWCC              | Safe Community Check                   | SafeMinistryCheck Training |
|---|-------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Creche Coordinator/leader   | ✓                 | ✓                                      | ✓                          |
| Creche Helper   | ✓                 | ✓                                      | ✓                          |
| Kids Church Coordinator/leader  | ✓                 | ✓                                      | ✓                          |
| Mid-week kids club Coordinator/leader   | ✓                 | ✓                                      | ✓                          |
| Playgroup Coordinator/leader  | ✓                 | ✓                                      | ✓                          |
| Playgroup helper (not formally appointed to a leadership position)  | ✓                 | ✗                                      | ✗                          |
| Junior Leader in children's ministry aged 12-17   | ✓ 14+             | ✓ Junior version and parent permission | Eldership Discretion       |
| Youth Group Coordinator/Leader  | ✓                 | ✓                                      | ✓                          |
| Casual Helpers (not fulfilling a leadership or teaching role in a children's or youth program and simply assist from time to time)        | ✓                 | ✗ Depending on frequency               | ✓                          |
| Volunteer assisting in an emergency (Eg. to prevent an increased risk to the safety of children on that occasion)                         | ✗ <7 Days         | ✗                                      | ✗                          |
| Parent or close relative of a child or youth, volunteering in a ministry group that their child is a member of or usually participates in | ✗ WWCC Preferable | ✓ If regularly rostered                | ✓                          |

## Junior Assistants

Children (Between the ages of 12 and 17) are permitted to participate as assistants in children's ministry without SafeMinistryCheck training while being supervised at all times by an adult accredited worker who has completed all the above steps. Underage volunteers must have been through a Junior Safe Community Check Assessment and Parent Permission interview and agreed to the Volunteer Agreement with the ministry co-ordinator or eldership representative.

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## SafeMinistryCheck Training

All employees and volunteers will complete the SafeMinistryCheck training and screening program to the required level or equivalent. Every person undertaking ministry to children must have completed SafeMinistryCheck training (or equivalent) **before** their appointment and this must be refreshed every two years thereafter.

SafeMinistryCheck training is made available through the [www.safeministrycheck.com.au](http://www.safeministrycheck.com.au) website and provides an accessible, appropriate and contextually relevant awareness and training preparing workers to identify, respond to and report potential sources of harm or risk of harm in order to uphold and maintain a safe environment for children and young people.

### **Training will ensure that staff and volunteers**

- are aware and able to recognise when children and young people's wellbeing or safety is being compromised.
- are prepared to act and report their concerns;
- understand that the needs of children and young people who have been harmed may require them to adapt their programs and support accordingly;
- aim to help these children and young people stay connected to church and contribute to their recovery, healing and development of purpose-filled life skills and future success.



# METHODOLOGY AND PRACTICE

## Guidelines for Children's and Youth Ministry activities

The guidelines that follow cover a wide array of issues for children's and youth ministry activities, such as the supervision of activities and their appropriateness, the physical safety of those involved, the importance of parental consent, transportation and trips away, forms of communication with children and youth, as well the issue of meeting up with children or youth outside of programmed events.

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### General principles

**Children and Young People have the right** to be safe, cared for, protected, listened to and supported.

Those recognised and appointed as **Leaders are responsible** for the safety and welfare of the children and Young People in their care.

Authority as a result of positional power, age, maturity, physical size and life experience must be administered with care. **Harm or risk of harm can arise from the misuse of authority** or power.

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### Protective Practices

Three golden rules that are relevant to all of the guidelines:

**Two or More** There should always be at least *two leaders aged 18 years* or over present for all children's and youth ministry events.

**Never Alone** Leaders should not be alone with a child or young person during an activity, and should make sure, as far as possible, that other leaders are not left alone with a child or young person.

**Always Aware** Leaders should be on the alert for people wandering around – a person unknown to the leaders or not part of the children's and youth ministry should not be allowed access to children and youth.

### Working One on One with Children

In the course of caring for children and young people it may, at times, be necessary for staff and volunteers to work one to one with a child. Guidelines for these situations are outlined in the Safe Community Code of Conduct as well as the "Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people".

In these scenarios, four essential guiding rules are:

- make it **authorised** (ensure you have your church leader's approval)
- make it **public** (open and visible space)
- make it **timely** (consider the appropriate time of day and length of time for the meeting)
- make it **purposeful** (addressing a specific wellbeing and/or learning need)

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# 1. Physical Safety of Children

One of the ways that we can protect children at Coastlands is to make sure that they are meeting in a physical environment that is appropriate and safe for them.

Using the following list as an example, consider particularly the suitability of the space, the safety of the space, and the safety measures in place.

## Physical Environment Safety Check List

### **Suitability of the space**

- Are toilet facilities available?
- Is the space appropriate for activities such as games and craft activities?
- Is the equipment being used suitable and appropriate for the ages of those using it? (this is a particularly pertinent question to ask if there is any climbing equipment)
- Is the floor non-slip and splinter-free?
- In regard to areas used by toddlers and preschoolers: Is the area fenced off or contained in a room?
- Is there a designated area for strollers that is available to be used for that purpose?

### **Safety of the space**

- Is the area to be used a safe distance from roads or traffic?
- Is the area far removed from places where people may engage in unsafe behaviour (such as smoking or drinking alcohol)?
- Is any glass installed at floor level safety glass?
- Are all child-height cupboards fitted with child-proof locks?
- Is the heating safe to use near children (i.e. is the source of heat removed away from small inquisitive fingers)?
- Are all electrical wiring, sockets and appliances regularly maintained and in a safe condition? Are all sockets child-proofed?
- In regard to areas that may be used for games and outside play, has the area been checked for items that may pose a potential hazard and such items safely removed (such as broken glass, or discarded needles)?
- Is all furniture in a safe condition and without risk of toppling onto a child (such as any stacks of chairs being at a low height)?

### **First aid and safety measures**

- Is there a fire extinguisher or fire blanket available on-site?
- Is there a specific person in the church who is responsible for checking the first aid kit regularly and replenishing it? Is there a well-stocked first aid kit at the activity site?
- Is there a specific person on-site who is trained in first aid?
- Are all leaders aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures?

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## 2. Supervision of Activities

An important part of providing a safe environment is making sure there are enough leaders present to adequately supervise the activities taking place.

The degree of supervision required will vary according to the nature and environment of the activity, the age and maturity of the children and the size of the group.

In considering the number of leaders required, take into account:

- the age, number, ability and gender mix of the children,
- and the venue, time, duration and nature of the activity.

The suggested supervision ratios for low risk on-site church events would be:

- crèche and pre-schoolers 1:5 (one leader for every five children) and
- primary age 1:7 (one leader for every seven children), after the minimum requirement of 2 adult leaders is met.

The suggested supervision ratio for low risk on-site events with youth would be 1:10 (one leader for every 10 youth) after the minimum requirement of 2 adult leaders is met.

Where the risks in the activity increase, the supervision should also increase. For example, if leaders were to take primary-aged children off-site to indoor rock climbing, it would be appropriate to reduce the ratio to 1:4 (one leader for every four children). Similarly, if leaders were to take the Year 7 and 8 youth off-site to do indoor rock climbing, it would be appropriate to reduce the ratio to 1:6 (one leader for every 6 youth). This is to account for the high-risk nature of the activity and the fact that it is off-site.

Please note that a junior leader (under the age of 18) does not count as a leader for the purposes of supervision.

The head leader should clearly distinguish the different levels of responsibility between them and other supervisors and ensure that these differences are understood.

In the case of camps and similar activities, there should be at least one adult present who has first aid training.

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### 3. Appropriateness of Activities

Leaders should thoughtfully approach the planning of activities and events and what can be learned through the way they are planned and conducted. Particular attention should be given to the age appropriateness and opportunity for the inclusivity of the whole group present.

To minimise the possibility of children being harmed, leaders should give careful consideration to any activities or games that require children to act alone or in pairs independent of leaders.

#### Audio Visual Content

Leaders are to review in their entirety any media content that they intend to show to children. In assessing whether something is appropriate leaders are to be governed by the age of the youngest child present. Censorship ratings should be kept to G or PG for children up to Year 6, keeping in mind that some G or PG material may still not be appropriate due to the themes it contains.

For youth, leaders should make sure that any elements containing violence, sexual activity, nudity, drug use, coarse language or questionable lifestyle are appropriate for the intended educational purpose or otherwise avoided. Care is to be exercised when choosing material and consulting the recommendations of the Office of Film and Literature Classification. TV shows, films or computer games may have been classified as suitable for youth of a particular age (eg, PG, M or MA classifications), but may be less desirable from a christian safe community perspective. MA rated material will rarely be suitable, and material rated M may or may not be suitable with parental consent.

#### Parental Consent

Children and youth must not be taken away from church premises without the written consent of a parent or guardian. Parents must be kept informed of the place and timing of the event and where possible provided with contact details for the ministry supervisor. If possible, it is recommended to include parents or guardians in a leadership team which includes leaders of both genders.

Parents or guardians should be asked for information about any physical needs (such as allergies), mental health needs (such as depression) or safety needs of the children and youth attending children's and youth ministry activities. (see registration and permission forms below.)

Leaders should never administer medications to a child or young person without the written consent of a parent or guardian.

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### 4. Registration and Permission Forms

Parents should complete a form in which they give details of:

- names, addresses and phone numbers of child and parents,
- name and phone number of a contact person in an emergency situation,
- important medical information, e.g. allergies, disabilities, special diets,
- names of people allowed to collect the child (carefully note if there is a non-custodial parent to whom the child should never be handed over),
- permission for leaders to obtain medical treatment in an emergency.

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## 5. Transportation

It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to arrange transportation to and from children's ministry events for their child, unless another specific arrangement is in place. A child should not be driven anywhere by someone other than the parent for the purposes of a church activity without written permission from a parent or guardian.

When making transport arrangements, reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that:

- All drivers or operators are licensed (green Ps or above), responsible, experienced and are not impaired by alcohol or any other mind-altering or addictive substance, and
- All motor vehicles and other forms of transport used are registered, insured, safe and fitted with age appropriate child restraints or safety devices (e.g. seat belts, life jackets).

Leaders should avoid being alone with a child in a motor vehicle or driving a child home unaccompanied, even with parental permission. If such a situation is unavoidable, the leader should inform another leader of the trip and the reason for it and **contact should be made with the parent or guardian with an expected arrival time and circumstantial transparency.**

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## 6. Accommodation

It is not usually appropriate to have children under the age of Year 5 sleeping over at events. When events involve children aged Year 5 and above sleeping over, ensure that the sleeping accommodation (where possible) is:

- segregated between males and females,
- supervised by more than one person, preferably including a parent or guardian, and ensure (where possible) that those supervising the sleeping accommodation:
- are of the same gender as the children being supervised, and
- do not sleep in close personal proximity to a child, unless they are a parent or guardian of the child.

Leaders should never share accommodation with only one child unless they are a parent or guardian of the child.

Venues should allow for the privacy of all parties to be respected, particularly when changing clothes, washing and toileting. If a leader needs to wash or toilet a child, they should tell another adult what they are doing.

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## 7. Communication

As Christians, all of our relationships are to be conducted in truth and selflessness reflecting the God we serve. Coastlands primarily is a family of families and it is expected that all communication within our community and especially with children will be conducted with that same transparency, respect and preference for one another. You should be aware that those who wish to abuse children, operating with the opposite spirit, may try to cultivate secretive or exclusive relationships through electronic communications. Leaders should take care that their communication with children is appropriate, above reproach and in the full view of relationship with the parents and care-givers who form part of the community in which they lead. Our communication must always be made with intention to represent the truth and grace of the Gospel of Jesus and the eternal love of God.

Practical outworking of this culture will be guided in the following ways:

### **Guidelines for those ministering to children (primary school age and below)**

Communication via mail, e.g., birthday cards or letters of encouragement, is acceptable when done with parental knowledge. Leaders should not contact children by email, social media, video calls, using chatrooms or by any other form of electronic communication. Leaders should not call or text a child on the child's mobile phone.

All electronic communication must be with the child's parent or guardian. On the rare occasions when a leader might need to speak to a child on the phone for ministry purposes, the leader is to call the child's parent to explain why he or she is calling. Only then, with the parent's permission, should the leader speak with the child. The leader should be conscious of keeping the conversation with the child short.

### **Guidelines for those ministering to youth (high school age)**

Communication via mail, e.g., birthday cards or letters of encouragement, is acceptable when done with parental knowledge. However, for most young people in our society today, electronic communications are a part of daily life and a key way of engaging socially. New social media platforms and apps are being developed every day, and no one policy can hope to keep up with the ever-changing landscape. There are 10 key principles to guide leaders in their communication with young people.

Recommendations about the sort of contact that is likely to be appropriate at different ages:

| Type of contact                                   | Primary school Students                                       | Years 7–9 Students  | Years 10–12 Students  |
|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Phone Calls</b>                                | Only with parental permission and only for ministry purposes. | To be avoided. Preferable to call the parent and ask permission to speak with the young person. | Reasonable phone contact for ministry purposes permissible. Long conversations to be avoided.                   |
| <b>Text Messages</b>                              | ✗   | For logistical purposes only. Group message with parent.  | For logistical purposes and encouragement. Group message with parent preferable.                                |
| <b>Email</b>                                      | ✗   | For logistical purposes and encouragement. CC parent and another leader.                        | For logistical purposes and encouragement. CC parent and another leader to avoid misunderstandings and secrecy. |
| <b>Social Media</b><br>(Facebook, Instagram, etc) | ✗   | Use discretion and keep in mind the 10 key principles below.                                    | Use discretion and keep in mind the 10 key principles below.  |
| <b>Video Calls</b><br>(FaceTime, Zoom etc)        | Only with parental permission and in a group setting only.    | Only with parental permission and in a group setting only.                                      | Inform parents (where possible) and only meet online in a group setting only, not one to one                    |

## TOP COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

### 1. ABOVE REPROACH

Communications should always be above reproach, both in terms of the content and the way it is communicated. Leaders should ask themselves: if this communication were to be made known to all of the church, would they consider it to be appropriate? Leaders ought to be sensitive to the impact of the words and images used, to avoid offence or miscommunication. They must never use flirtatious, sexually suggestive, explicit or offensive language or images. Leaders ought also to be conscious of how things might be received or perceived. They should be careful that the circumstances of their communication do not suggest that their relationship with a young person is inappropriate by, for example, communicating regularly or late at night. Even if a leader's motives are pure, misunderstandings can arise.

### 2. IN PERSON IS BEST

Face-to-face interactions are the best way to build relationships with youth. Leaders should not use electronic communications for matters that are pastorally sensitive, emotionally charged or that require a back-and-forth conversation. In those cases, it's much better to have a conversation in person. If a young person initiates a pastoral conversation with a leader using electronic communications, the leader should ask if they can talk about it with the young person the next time they see them.

### 3. BE TRANSPARENT

It is important for leaders to be transparent in all communications. Leaders should aim to keep communications public and brief. Long or intense conversations by electronic means should be avoided. If a young person initiates a conversation like that, leaders should consider how to redirect it to a more transparent forum or include other people in the conversation. That might mean talking face to face or including another leader in the communication with the young person's permission. At the very least, the leader should let their ministry leader know so that nothing is going on in secret. Leaders should also keep any emails, text messages or conversation threads with youth, in case an accusation is ever made or a misunderstanding arises.

### 4. DON'T INITIATE SOCIAL MEDIA FRIENDSHIPS

There is a power imbalance that exists between leaders and the youth they are ministering to. That power imbalance might make it difficult for a young person to say 'no' when a leader initiates a friendship on social media by, for example, sending a Facebook friend request or following them on Instagram. For that reason, it is best for a leader not to initiate, though a leader might choose to accept if the young person initiates a friendship.

### 5. SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Wherever possible, leaders should communicate electronically with groups rather than individuals. The best practice when sending emails or text messages is to include multiple youth or another leader in the message. When using social media for ministry purposes, closed groups should be used where possible (for example, Facebook) and youth should be directed to the group rather than to a leader's individual account if possible.

### 6. BUILD UP THE CHURCH

When posting on social media, leaders should think carefully about the impact of what is being communicated on the entire church community (including children, youth and the vulnerable). It is important to remember that leaders are often seen as representing the church. Leaders ought to consider how they can build up the church community, and avoid being divisive, showing favouritism or making others feel excluded or inferior.

### 7. RESPECT OTHERS

Leaders should be careful to observe confidentiality and privacy in electronic communications, for example, not publishing the names, contact details or other personal information of people online.

### 8. BE TRUTHFUL

A leader should never hide their identity or pretend to be someone else. Electronic communications that seek to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else should not be used in ministry in any circumstances.

### 9. KNOW THE DIGITAL TERRAIN

When using social media, leaders should be aware of and comply with the terms of use, age restrictions, privacy options and controls for each site prior to using it in ministry.

### 10. REPORTING ONLINE ABUSE

Laws regarding mandatory reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children and youth apply equally to the digital world.

### AND FINALLY, USE COMMON SENSE!

There may be exceptional circumstances that arise from time to time, and common sense might dictate that a leader deviates from their usual practice when it comes to electronic communications. In those situations, leaders must be transparent and above reproach and, where possible, should seek advice from their ministry leader.

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## Online Environments

Just as we do with physical gatherings we must ensure that online environments are safe and minimise the opportunity for harm to occur (Standard 8 of the Child Safe Standards).

Many of the principles that govern how we conduct safe ministry face to face will apply to the online world as well, however there are some specific things to bear in mind.

### **Maximise transparency**

- Only communicate with children online at the regularly programmed times e.g. Friday night youth group or Wednesday afternoon kid's club.
- Let parents and carers know when and how you will be interacting online with their children and what rules are in place. Get parental permission for communicating with primary aged children and ensure parents are fully informed for high school aged children.
- Communicate expectations and rules about online interactions and meetings to the children in the group, including how leaders are to interact with them. In particular, children need to be aware that leaders must not be contact them privately or arrange online gatherings other than the advertised usual times.

### **Social Media**

- Youth group members, their friends and parents must be directed to the **church or youth group's official social media account** (not the individual leader's personal account).
- The official account must be administered by two or more leaders, ideally at least one of each gender, to ensure greater transparency in communication and to moderate the content.
- Do not use social media platforms in leader to youth interactions that delete posts, messages, images or comments or that allow for anonymity.

### **Video Conferencing**

- **Video conferencing meetings must be run on church owned accounts (not the individual leader's personal account).**
- When meetings are run online through video conferencing platforms the same principles that apply to our safe community in person will largely apply online. Two or more leaders must always be present during the meeting and where that is not possible the meeting should be recorded.
- As in the face to face gathering children and youth need to be supervised by responsible leaders during online meetings. Disabling private chat functions and ensuring a leader is regularly checking in on any small group breakout rooms (or the like) will ensure that participants are not able to engage in inappropriate communication or conduct during the gathering.



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## Photographs and Videos

Leaders must not take photos of children or youth without parental consent and should only use photos in accordance with the purposes for which that consent was given.

Do not photograph any child or youth who has asked not to be photographed.

Photos of children and youth should focus on small groups rather than individuals:

- Do not identify in writing the people in the photograph, eg tagging on social media.
- All children must be appropriately dressed when photographed (e.g. not in swimsuits or pyjamas).

Embarrassing or offensive photos or videos must not be either taken or shared.

Parental permission must be sought before posting photographs or videos of children and youth online. Privacy is of utmost importance and care should be taken to protect children and youth from having their personal information being displayed on a social networking site or church website.

Generally, videos should only be used to showcase or advertise ministry-related events and activities.

When video of services or activities are distributed or streamed on the web or via other broadcast media, signs should be posted that indicate the service is being or will be broadcast.

If you engage a volunteer to take official photographs at a church event it should be clearly stated in writing the role and tasks of the photographer and that in undertaking these tasks the photographer assigns the rights of copyright in the photos to the Safe Community Representatives and the Board of Elders to hold on behalf of Coastlands. This will prevent the photographs from being used in other publications and contexts without proper consent.

# REPORTING

## Reporting Obligations regarding Child Harm or Risk of Harm

Chapter 5 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (Safety Act), requires all employees of, and volunteers in an organisation formed for religious or spiritual purposes to the Department for Child Protection if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child is, or may be at risk and this suspicion is formed in the course of their work, as soon as is reasonably practicable after forming the suspicion.

This is a legal obligation which carries a penalty if the individual fails to comply.

New laws in the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 came in to effect on 1.6.2022 which state that:

- *section 64A* failure to report child sexual abuse (carries a maximum penalty of 3 years imprisonment) and
- *section 65* failure to protect a child from sexual abuse (carries a maximum of 15 years imprisonment).

Section 18 of the Safety Act states that a child or young person will be 'at risk' if:

- they have suffered harm, or there is a likelihood they will suffer harm being of a kind against which ordinarily they should have been protected,
- there is a likelihood they will be removed from the State for the purpose: of a medical procedure that would be unlawful in South Australia (including female genital mutilation) or of taking part in a marriage that would be void or invalid under the *Marriage Act 1961* or of taking part in an activity that would be illegal in South Australia
- their parent or guardians are unable or unwilling to care for them, have abandoned them, cannot be found or are dead
- they are of compulsory school age and are persistently absent from school without explanation
- they are homeless or of no fixed address.

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## Reasonable grounds

Reasonable grounds to form a suspicion that a child or young person may be at risk may include:

- when a child or young person tells you they are at risk or have been harmed
- when your own observations of a particular child or young person's behaviour and/or injuries lead you to suspect they are at risk, or harm is occurring
- when a child or young person tells you that they know of someone who is at risk or has been harmed (they may possibly be referring to themselves)
- when you hear about risk or harm to a child or young person from someone who is in a position to provide reliable information, perhaps a relative or friend, neighbour or sibling of the child or young person.

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## Meaning of harm

Section 17 of the Safety Act defines 'harm' to mean physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

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## Types of risk and harm

### Domestic or Family Violence

A child or young person whose parent(s) or carer(s) are involved in a violent or abusive relationship that is persistent and/or severe may be at risk or suffer harm.

### Physical harm

The child has suffered or is at significant risk of suffering serious physical trauma or inflicted injury due to the actions of their parent or carer. An injury is considered 'inflicted' if it was alleged to be caused wilfully or as a result of punishment.

### Neglect

Physical neglect is characterised by the caregiver's failure to provide basic physical necessities, such as safe, clean and adequate clothing, housing, food and health care.

Supervisory neglect is characterised by absence or inattention and can lead to physical harm or injury, sexual abuse or, in an older child, permitting criminal behaviour.

Supervisory neglect includes abandonment where a child or young person is left alone for more than a developmentally appropriate time frame.

### Psychological or Emotional harm

"Emotional abuse is defined as abuse that occurs when a person is subjected to behaviours or actions (often repeatedly) aimed at preventing or controlling their behaviour, with the intent to cause them emotional harm or fear through manipulation, isolation or intimidation".<sup>7</sup>

### Spiritual Harm

Spiritual abuse is defined as the mistreatment of a person by actions or threats when justified by appeal to God, faith or religion. It includes:

- using a position of spiritual authority to dominate or manipulate another person or group;
- using a position of spiritual authority to seek inappropriate deference from others;
- isolating a person from friends and family members; and
- using biblical or religious terminology to justify abuse.

## Sexual abuse and 'grooming'

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity or behaviour that is imposed on a child or young person by someone else. Sexual abuse occurs when someone in a position of power uses that power to involve the child or young person in sexual activity.

Grooming occurs when a person tries to form a bond or a friendship with a child to gain their trust and create opportunities to start, maintain and hide their sexual abuse of the victim.

## Harassment

Harassment is unwelcome conduct, whether intended or not, in relation to another person where the person feels with good reason in all the circumstances offended, belittled or threatened. Such behaviour may consist of a single incident or several incidents over a period of time.

## Substance abuse and mental health concerns

A pattern of substance abuse can impair the parent or carer's ability to provide for a child or young person's basic needs and maintain regular routines for school attendance, bedtimes and social commitments.

Parental or carer intoxication can also significantly impact on their responsiveness and sensitivity to a child's emotional needs.

# Suspicion and Disclosure

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## Voluntary Notifiers.

Everybody has a moral responsibility to make a report where they suspect a child or young person is, or may be at risk. People without a legal obligation to notify (voluntary notifiers) can follow the same steps to make a report as mandated notifiers.

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## Disclosure by a child or young person

When a child or young person tells you that they have been placed at risk, they may be feeling scared, guilty, ashamed, angry and powerless. You in turn, may feel a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, anger and, sometimes, disbelief.

It is important for you to remain calm and in control, and to reassure the child or young person that they have done the right thing by telling somebody about what is happening. Let them know that you are willing to listen and that you want to try to help. It is important that you respond to the child or young person appropriately.

You should:

- listen carefully
- tell them that you believe them
- reassure the child or young person that it is not their fault they have been placed at risk
- tell the child or young person that you are pleased to have been told.

When talking to the child or young person it is important that you:

- don't make promises that you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone
- never push them into giving details. Your role is to listen to what they want to tell you. Do not ask leading questions or attempt to investigate what has been said.

## Reporting and Responding to Harm or Risk of Harm

It is the responsibility of any employee or volunteer of Coastlands, who in the course of their work or volunteering suspects on reasonable grounds or becomes aware that a child has been or is at risk of harm to advise the Department for Child Protection of your suspicions of risk or harm by contacting the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) by phone, or online. on 13 14 78, or SA Police on 000 if a child is at immediate risk..

- as mandated notifiers, the person who identifies the harm or risk of harm will be responsible for making the report. In cases involving Aboriginal Children and young people, support is provided by Yaitya Tirramangkotti - an Aboriginal team, via the CARL number. non-mandated notifiers of Coastlands are encouraged to make voluntary reports about harm or risk of harm to a child or young person
- the notifier will be guided by the relevant authority (Department for Child Protection/SA Police) about how to proceed after a notification

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## Reporting your Suspicions

**Always call 000 in an emergency.**

You must advise the Department for Child Protection of your suspicions of risk or harm by contacting

**the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) by phone, or online.**

**13 14 78**

**<https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse/report-child-abuse-or-neglect>**

The CARL phone line is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week. All serious concerns must be reported via the report line and not via the online reporting system. Serious concerns include when you suspect a child or infant is in imminent or immediate danger of:

- serious harm
- serious injury
- chronic neglect

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## Information required by CARL

It is not essential that notifiers have all the information contained on this list before making a report. However, the more information that is provided to the CARL, the better informed the response will be to the child/ren of concern.

### **Details of the child or young person and their family:**

- children, siblings and parents
- full name (including any other surnames they are known by)
- date of birth or age
- current address, phone number
- school
- ethnicity (aboriginal, kinship group, non-English speaking)
- alleged perpetrator's name, age, address, relationship to the child/ren, current whereabouts
- current whereabouts of the child who is, or children who are, of concern
- details of when the next expected contact with the alleged perpetrator will occur (if they are not living together).

### **Notifier details:**

- your full name, job title and agency (if applicable), address and phone number
- your relationship to the child/ren of concern
- the type of contact that you have with the family and how frequently
- whether you are working with the child or the family, and if so, in what capacity.

### **Details of concerns:**

- specific details about the allegations
- if the child disclosed, what did they say and what was their emotional presentation?
- who saw or heard what and when?
- size and location of injuries if any, with descriptions of any bruising
- whether the child has been seen by a doctor and if so, doctor's name and contact number
- describe any caregiver behaviour that is of concern, including how often and how severe
- describe any behaviour by the victim(s) that is of concern, including how often it occurs.

### **Other details:**

- whether the parents are separated
- if any family court orders are in place and if so, what they relate to
- if the custodial/non-custodial parent has a partner provide her or his name
- what is known about the functioning of the family
- domestic violence
- drug/alcohol use or abuse
- violence to people outside of the family

- relevant health factors
- extended family or other support networks
- child care arrangements
- nature of involvement with any agencies
- mental health problems and/or
- physical or intellectual disability.

**Further details:**

- are the parents or carers aware a report is being made?
- have you, as the notifier, given any expectations of action to the child or young person?

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## Following a notification

To determine if departmental intervention is warranted, an initial assessment of the reported concerns is made by CARL. The assessment is based on the following:

- the immediate safety of the child or young person (ie, is the child in imminent danger?)
- the alleged harm
- the alleged abusive incident(s) or neglectful condition(s)
- the likely risk of future harm
- the age and vulnerability of the child or young person
- the behaviours or characteristics of the parent or caregiver
- the protectiveness of the parent or caregiver
- the access the alleged perpetrator has to the child or young person
- any previous history the family has with the Department for Child Protection.

Where it is assessed that the concerns meet the criteria for a child protection response, CARL will make a recommendation to the responsible Department for Child Protection Office regarding the type of response that the report should receive and how quickly the investigation, assessment or other response should be commenced.

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## Safe Community Representatives

Coastlands Safe Community Representatives are available to provide support and counselling to those who have made a report to CARL

Safe Community Representatives

Andrew Hill - [andrewh@coastlands.org.au](mailto:andrewh@coastlands.org.au)

Trina Whittaker - [trinaw@coastlands.org.au](mailto:trinaw@coastlands.org.au)



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## Incident Management and Follow Up

The Safe Community Incident Management Process<sup>7</sup> will guide the Safe Community Representatives in the processing of the concerns and reports and may include reporting any criminal activity to Police. Coastlands Eldership will require an internal report to be made following Reports to CARL. In certain incidents (as outlined in the Incident Management Process) the Safe Community Representative will appoint an Independent Investigator to investigate allegations of inappropriate behaviour.

The Safe Community Representatives will respond with timely and appropriate support of the child or young person concerned to ensure their safety and well-being by referral to appraise services. A commitment to the support of each member of the community by the church leadership team will pursue a redemptive outcome where possible and appropriate disciplinary action where necessary as determined in consultation with the Department for Child Protection or the SA Police.

# COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW

## Policy Review

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The policy is written with reference to the guiding principles and requirements of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Coastlands Eldership will, at a minimum, review the policies and procedures once every 5 years as required by the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* to ensure its currency and to guide priorities, improvements and/or changes in programs and services offered.

The Coastlands Eldership may review these documents at anytime in response to new risks or in the event of relevant incident or concern within the organisation. Coastlands will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with Department of Human Services each time the policy is review and updated.

### Review, Approval and Reference Documents

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Version   | 3.1  |
| Policy Approval Date                            | January 2023   |
| Next Review Date                                | January 2028   |
| Related Legislation and Regulatory Requirements | UN Conventions of the Rights of the Child<br>Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)<br>Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)   |
| Cross sector Guidelines (SA)                    | National Principles for Child Safe Organisations<br><br>Child Safe Environments: principles of good practice<br><br>Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people<br><br>Managing allegations of sexual misconduct in SA education and care settings<br><br>Responding to problem sexual behaviour involving children and young people: guideline for staff in education and care settings<br><br>Mandatory Reporting Guide - NCCD |

|                   |   |  |               |
|-------------------|---|--|---------------|
| Related Documents | <p>Coastlands Staff and Volunteer Safe Community Check (18+, Junior Assistant)<br/>Sweeper and Marshal Role Description</p> <p>Coastlands Staff and Volunteer Statutory Declaration</p> <p>Code of Conduct</p> <p>Safe Community Risk of Harm Details (form)<br/>Safe Community Incident/Concern Management Process<br/>Critical Incident Response (form)<br/>Coastlands Incident/Injury Report (form)<br/>Coastlands Behavioural Concern/Complaint (form)</p> <p>Mandatory Notification Procedure (form)<br/>Coastlands Mandatory Notification Record (form)</p> <p>Risk Management Procedure (form)<br/>Risk Assessment (form)</p> <p>Off-Site Activities Approval (form)</p> <p>Safe Community Enduring Permissions Emergency and Medical Info (form)<br/>Safe Community Online Meetings Permission (form)</p> |  |               |
| Responsibility    | Eldership Team  |  |               |
| Written By        | Andrew Hill   |  |               |
| Approved by       | Eldership   |  | February 2023 |

Coastlands Church acknowledges the **Anglican Diocese of Sydney** as the copyright owners and authors of the '*Safe Ministry BluePrint*' and thanks the **Office of the Director of Safe Ministry** for its permission to use this document as a reference in the writing and producing of the Coastlands Church Safe Community Blueprint. The original title of this documents is [Safe Ministry BluePrint]. It can be downloaded from [www.safeministry.org.au](http://www.safeministry.org.au)

Coastlands Church has used extracts of the original document and modified language to comply with its own context, governance, legal and juristic specific purposes.