

## INTRODUCTION

### Context Of PresSafe System

Unfortunately, child abuse does occur. It is a criminal act, often perpetrated by a family member or person known to the child. The Presbyterian Church of Queensland has a duty of care to provide a safe environment for children, both biblically [John 13:34] and legally [Child Protection Act 1999; Working With Children (Risk Management & Screening) Act 2000; Work Health & Safety Act 2011]. PCQ has adopted the 'Ten Child Safe Standards' recommended by *The Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*.

### Serving Within PCQ Ministries

As someone serving in a ministry to children within the Presbyterian Church of Queensland (PCQ) you are required to undertake training in how to keep children safe from harm. Whether you serve regularly in a ministry program or are serving on a more limited basis you will need to:

- Have a current, positive Working With Children Check (or be exempt) OR if WWCC is not required, an individual must not be a Restricted Person.
- Undertake an interview
- Complete the appropriate **annual** PresSafe Training
- Complete a PresSafe Agreement (Under 18s will need to complete this with their parents)
- Be approved by Session or the relevant Committee.

## PresSafe Code Of Conduct

Employees and volunteers serving in Children's Ministry in the Presbyterian Church of Queensland accept a position of trust. This requires a commitment to carry out their role in accord with the [Doctrines of the Church](#) and the values stated in the [National Safe Ministry Framework](#). To create a child safe culture where children are protected from abuse and harm, all employees and volunteers are expected to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct in their interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years. The consequences of breaching this Code of Conduct are taken seriously and may result in removal from all involvement in Children's Ministry.

### I will:

#### Responsibilities

- Become familiar with and act in accordance with the Safe Ministry with Children Policy and Safe Ministry with Children Procedures for Sessions and Committees at all times.
- Model and champion child safe policies and practices and make decisions that will support a child safe culture.
- Exercise appropriate duty of care for all participants.
- Respect the authority of leaders and strive to carry out all relevant roles in accordance with reasonable directions.
- Complete training as required by the Church in relation to Children's Ministry roles.
- Use appropriate resources for training in ministry.
- Contribute, where appropriate, to the Church's policies, discussions, learning and reviews about child safety and wellbeing.
- Carry out my role in accord with the doctrines and values of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland.

#### Character

##### *In accord with Scripture:*

- Demonstrate courtesy, consideration, and good judgement in all aspects of personal life and relationships and always strive to act above reproach with integrity and good character.
- Engage only in lawful activity.
- Treat all people with respect and dignity regardless of age, culture, gender, religious affiliation, or personal circumstances.

# PresSafe Code Of Conduct Continued

## Working with Children

- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well.
- Treat all children with respect, using appropriate language and take notice of a child's reactions to the tone of voice and manner.
- Always ensure another adult is within sight when conducting one-to-one interaction.
- Create an environment that promotes and enables children's participation and is welcoming for all children and their families.
- Involve children in making decisions about activities, policies and processes that concern them, where appropriate.
- Identify and mitigate risks to children's safety and wellbeing as required by the Church's risk management processes.
- Only engage in appropriate actions and activities with children.
- Comply with the Church's protocols on communicating with children.
- Comply with the Child Protection Act 1999, Working With Children (Risk Management & Screening Act 2000, Work Health & Safety Act 2011 and the Church's policies and procedure on record keeping and information sharing.

## Responding To Harm

- Respond to any concerns or complaints of child harm or abuse promptly and in line with the Church's policy and procedure on internal and external reporting.
- Report all suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse as required by the Child Protection Act 1999, by other relevant legislation, and by the Church's policy and procedure for reporting.
- Understand that any perpetration of harassment, verbal, psychological or emotional harm or neglect, physical or sexual abuse or exploitation is unacceptable and will be treated seriously and sensitively and must be reported in accordance with the Church mandatory reporting Policy and Procedures.

## PresSafe Code Of Conduct Continued

### I will not

- Engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child.
- Abuse children or cultivate relationships in order to initiate or cloak abuse of children.
- Engage in any activity that is likely to harm a child.
- Develop inappropriate relationships with particular children that could be seen as favouritism or special treatment.
- Engage in any contact with a child that is secretive (whether physical, through electronic media, or in any way.)
- Discriminate against any child or their family members.
- Disclose personal or sensitive information about a child, including images of a child, unless the child and their parent or legal guardian consent.
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children.
- Provide assistance to children to do things of a personal nature that they can do for themselves, such. as going. to the toilet or changing clothes.
- Show or provide children with access to inappropriate images or material.
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse.
- Have a romantic relationship with a young person in the program, activity, or event.
- Get drunk or use illicit drugs.
- Be under the influence of alcohol or other substances or be impaired by prescription medication whilst serving in this capacity.

### If I believe that this Code of Conduct has been breached by another person in the Church, I will:

- Act to prioritise the best interests of children.
- Take actions promptly to ensure that children are safe.
- Report any concerns to the Minister or Ministry Coordinator promptly.
- Follow the Church's policies and procedures for receiving and responding to complaints or concerns.
- Comply with the Child Protection Act 1999 if relevant, and with the Church's policy and procedure on internal and external reporting.

## CHILDREN & YOUTH RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

We have a compliant Child and Youth Risk Management System (PresSafe). All PCQ activities you are participating in require parental permission and will have undergone a risk assessment and all activities and leaders have been approved by the Session of the local PCQ church or relevant Committee. It is important that safe procedures are followed. If you have any concerns about the activity or program you are a part of, please contact the Ministry Coordinator or Minister.

## RECOGNISING CHILD ABUSE AND HARM

Child abuse is any act that harms a child's physical or emotional health or development. It is frequently a pattern of behaviour by an adult or peer. The following table contains some general information that may help you identify abuse. This information will not cover every circumstance, so be aware of anything unusual or out of character for the child. Indicators may have other causes not related to abuse, nevertheless share any concerns/observations with your Ministry Coordinator or Minister.

# RECOGNISING CHILD ABUSE

Type Of Abuse	Key Indicators
<p><b>Physical Abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hitting &amp; shaking</li> <li>• Burning or scalding</li> <li>• Bruises or fractures caused by excessive discipline</li> <li>• Poisoning</li> <li>• Giving children alcohol, illegal drugs or excessive medication</li> <li>• Domestic and Family Violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corresponding injuries</li> <li>• Unexplained or hidden injuries</li> <li>• Fearful or nervous</li> <li>• Aggressive OR passive behaviour</li> </ul>
<p><b>Psychological or Emotional Abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scapegoating</li> <li>• Persistent Rejection or hostility</li> <li>• Constant yelling, insults or criticism</li> <li>• Cultural affronts or racism</li> <li>• Teasing and bullying</li> <li>• Witness to Domestic or Family Violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low self esteem</li> <li>• Unexplained mood swings</li> <li>• Aggressive OR passive behaviour</li> <li>• Anxious</li> <li>• Attention seeking</li> <li>• Sudden underachievement</li> <li>• Age inappropriate behaviours</li> <li>• Developmental delays</li> </ul>
<p><b>Neglect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not providing a child sufficient food, housing, clothing, sleep, hygienic living conditions, health care, and adequate supervision</li> <li>• Leaving a child under 12 y.o. unattended for an “unreasonable time”</li> <li>• Children missing school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent hunger or malnutrition</li> <li>• Poor hygiene</li> <li>• Inappropriate seasonal clothing</li> <li>• Medical needs not met</li> <li>• Unsupervised for long periods</li> <li>• Withdrawn or aggressive</li> <li>• Indiscriminate with affection</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual Abuse or Exploitation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner.</li> <li>• Exposing a sexual body part to a child.</li> <li>• Exposing children to sexual acts or pornography</li> <li>• Making obscene phone calls or remarks to child.</li> <li>• Sexual relations with child under 16 y.o.</li> <li>• Grooming activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genital injury</li> <li>• Sexually transmitted disease</li> <li>• Anxiety or depression</li> <li>• Persistent and age-inappropriate sexual activity or behaviours</li> <li>• Regressive behaviour (eg bedwetting)</li> <li>• Preoccupation with sexual matters</li> <li>• Secretive relationships with adults or children.</li> <li>• Self injurious or delinquent behaviour</li> </ul>

## Mandatory Reporting

The PCQ has a policy of **mandatory reporting**. If you suspect child sexual abuse or significant harm such as neglect, physical abuse, domestic violence or psychological harm has occurred to a child who is part of the children's ministry **YOU MUST REPORT THIS**. Your involvement in a children's ministry program requires you to uphold this policy.

**If the disclosure or suspicion of harm relates to child sexual abuse, please report this first to Police (131 444)**, then the PresSafe RMO and PCQ General Manager. This is in keeping with legislative changes in 2021 that make it a criminal offence if child sexual abuse is not reported directly to the Police. (QLD Criminal Code Section 229BB and Section 229BC, which pertains to reporting protocols.) Our organisational policy reflects the 2021 legislation changes, so that any allegations against paid staff or volunteers within PCQ must first be reported to Police.

You do not need to have proof to report any concerns you have about the safety of a child.

**Indicators** that represent reasonable grounds to report a suspected offence include:

- **A child or young person discloses** that he or she has suffered or is suffering non accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.
- **Someone else advises you** that a child or young person has been physically, emotionally, sexually abused or neglected.
- **Your own observations** of the child or young person's physical condition or behaviours lead you to reasonably suspect that the child or young person has suffered or is suffering non-accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.

**All people involved in children's ministry should:**

- Remain alert to any indicators of abuse or harm;
- Pay close attention to changes in a child's behaviour;
- Make written notes in a non-judgmental and accurate manner;
- Assure children under your care they can come and talk to you.

# Responding To Disclosures

In the event that a child discloses harm or abuse to you, your response to their disclosure is very important. If a disclosure is made to you, or you have a suspicion of harm or abuse, then you will need to follow the procedure below.

## 1. DANGER

If a child is in immediate danger, call Police on 000 followed by immediate advice to the PresSafe Risk Management Officer (RMO) on 0499 599 741

## 2. SUPPORT

If a child is disclosing abuse or harm, remember to:

<b>LISTEN</b>	Remain calm and listen attentively with sensitivity. No leading questions.
<b>REASSURE</b>	Reassure the child they have done the right thing in telling you.
<b>RESPECT</b>	Protect their identity & avoid promises you are not able to keep.

Make sure the child is aware that you need to report the disclosure to help keep them safe.

## 3. REPORT

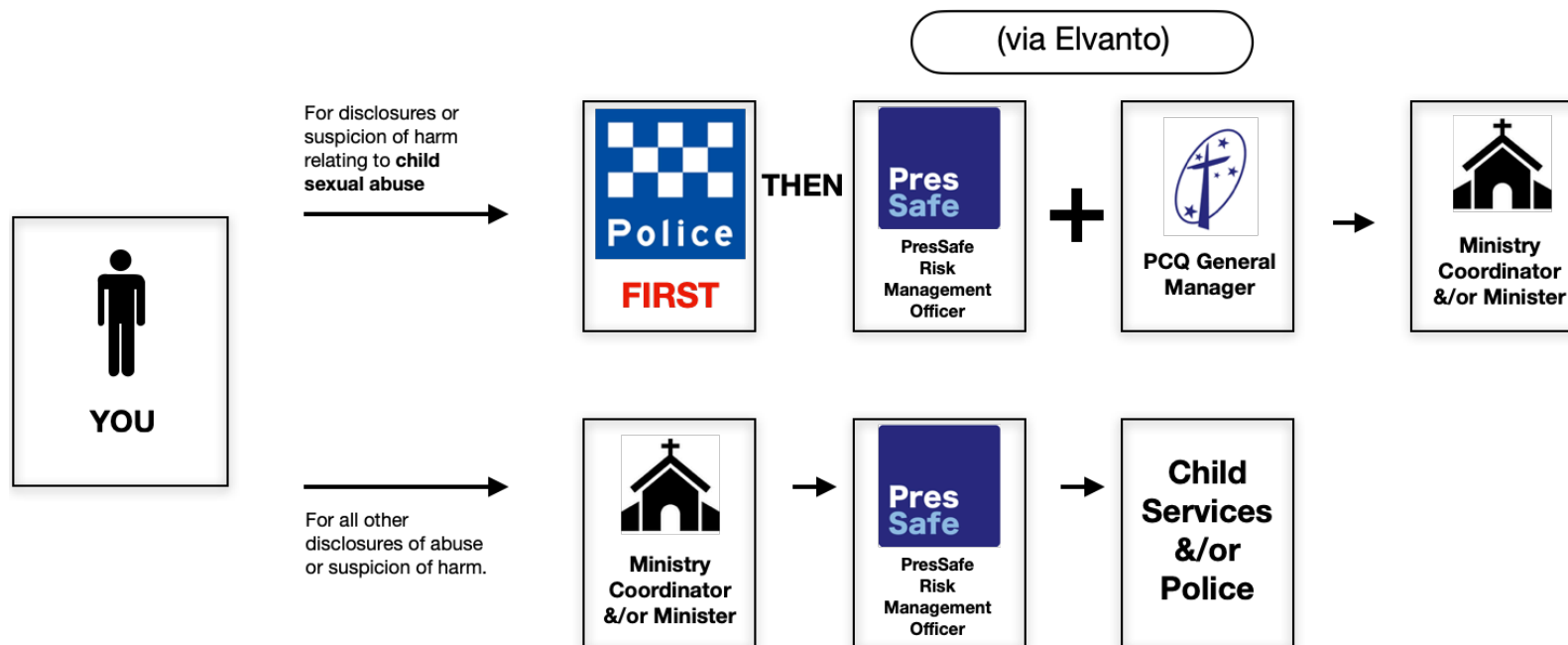
**Report the suspicion or disclosure to your Ministry Coordinator or Minister as soon as possible.** They will liaise with the RMO. If a suspicion or disclosure relates to a Ministry Coordinator or Minister, the matter is to be reported directly to the RMO.

**If the disclosure or suspicion of harm relates to child sexual abuse, please report this directly to Police on 131 444.** This action is required by law to be undertaken as soon as reasonably practicable, and our organisational policy reflects this requirement. The RMO, General Manager, or your Ministry Coordinator or Minister can provide you with logistical support to make this report (e.g., you can ask for clarity on reporting requirements or assistance with reporting to the police.)

If you are **under 18**, please notify your Ministry Coordinator or Minister immediately as they will take on the responsibility for reporting to Police.

Once you have notified Police, the next step is to submit a [Child Safety Report](#) via the PCQ [Safe Ministry with Children](#) web page. Your Ministry Coordinator or Minister can assist you with the Child Safety Report. This report notifies the PresSafe RMO and the General Manager who will then contact you about your report.

The next step, after you have contacted Police and submitted a [Child Safety Report](#) to the RMO & General Manager, is to then notify your **Ministry Coordinator or Minister** about the disclosure or suspicion of harm, if you have not already done so.



*NB: Please report directly to the authorities if you have any concerns that the reporting procedure is not being followed by your Ministry Coordinator or Minister.*

If any allegation is against an individual in PCQ ministry, the RMO and the General Manager will liaise with Police who will advise on suspension of the individual in accordance with their investigation. This process exists to help keep the privacy of the victim and ensures that any future legal proceedings resulting from the allegation are not jeopardised.

#### 4. DOCUMENT

Document the disclosure or suspicion, as soon as you are able. This will be entered in Elvanto by your Ministry Coordinator or Minister. For a disclosure, please include the following:

- Names, times, locations of matter disclosed.
- Any first person statements.
- Any questions asked.
- Actions taken after the disclosure.

Do not attempt to investigate or mediate - the RMO will liaise with Police. Investigation is the role of the police and other authorities and by doing so you may interfere with any subsequent investigation.

## 5. PROTECT

You must protect the identity of the victim. Do not discuss the situation with **anyone** who is not part of this official process. This includes discussing the suspicion or disclosure with any other families or individuals who may be involved. For example, if the allegations are made by a child against a peer, do not confront this person or mediate with their family. This is not your role.

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## CONCLUSION

If you have any questions about policy or procedures regarding child safety at your church please discuss these with the Ministry Coordinator or Minister at your church. You can also raise these with the RMO or Safety Administrator. If there is an emergency, please contact Police or an appropriate first responder.

[www.pressafe.org.au](http://www.pressafe.org.au)

PresSafe RMO - Helen Underwood	0499 599 741
PCQ General Manager - Phil Strong	0432 210 856
Director of Christian Education - Stuart Hoadley	0407 408 067
PresSafe Training & Support - Kate Mitchell	0419 110 130

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