

Presbyterian Church of Queensland

Safe Ministry with Children Policy

To be read in the light of [PCQ Code Rule 13.73, Regulation 110](#)
[Clause 11](#) and [GAA Code of Discipline 3.12 and 5.01\(a\)](#)

The Presbyterian Church of Queensland [The Church] is committed to keeping children safe because it is impelled by the Bible's teaching on protecting the vulnerable and glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ.

This policy reflects the Church's understanding of its biblical and legislative responsibilities and is informed by the Church's historical theological framework.

The Church recognises its duty of care and responsibility for the welfare of all persons within the church including children (persons under 18 years). The Church is committed to ministering to children, young people, and vulnerable adults in an environment that seeks to protect them from physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual harm.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to inform all employees and volunteers of their obligations; to their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and to provide guidance on the processes and procedures that aim to ensure children's safety and wellbeing.

Scope

All employees and volunteers, have a duty to create a safe environment for children, i.e., safeguarding them from harm including neglect, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse within the Churches children's ministry programs, events, and activities.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers or anyone working on behalf of the Church and applies to all ministries directed to children.

Our Values

Each person is created in the image of God and has intrinsic worth and value; children are no exception to this and in fact require even more care because of their vulnerability.

Both Old and New Testaments instruct parents and the broader faith community to nurture children and view them as a blessing from God. Jesus exhibits his value and care of children by publicly welcoming them and honouring them.

The Church values and cares for children as an expression of our faith in Jesus Christ and the sacrificial love he displays for all people.

The foundation for how we are to treat the children under our care is informed by the following Christ-centred values:

- Sacrificial Love
- Servanthood
- Humility
- Gentleness
- Respect

Roles and Responsibilities

Who	Roles and Responsibilities
Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing the implementation of this Policy and associated procedures and Safe Ministry with Children Code of Conduct. • Initiating, developing, and amending child protection procedures. • Ensuring appropriate information, training, instruction, monitoring, auditing and resourcing is available to maintain an environment that is safe for all persons, particularly children. • Ensuring an appropriate person or body is appointed to oversee the implementation of this Policy and associated procedures. • Ensuring that all ministers and other ministry workers remain compliant with Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000. • Establishing a mechanism by which the Church ensures that it is reliably informed on issues of child sexual abuse and child safety including prevention, policies and procedures and complaint handling. • Providing mechanisms whereby all allegations of child sexual abuse will be referred to the person or body appointed by the Assembly to provide oversight of any such allegation. • Overall responsibility for Children’s Ministry.
General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall governance of this policy and associated procedures, including an annual review in consultation with the Director of Christian Education and the Safe Ministry with Children Risk Management Officer. • Implement and maintain the necessary administrative procedures required under legislation and this policy. • Approval of procedures including the Safe Ministry with Children Code of Conduct for interacting with Children. • Ensure compliance of all Ministers and Accredited Ministry Workers required under Working with Children legislation and this policy.
Director of Christian Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of PresSafe Training. • Overall oversight of Child Safety, PresSafe implementation, and Risk Management compliance across Christian Education Presbyterian Youth and Kids (PYK) ministries. • Oversight of CE PYK Ministries.
Safe Ministry with Children Risk Management Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide oversight of the Safe Ministry with Children Policy and Procedures. • Assessing and approving high risk activities and special events in relation to ministries directed to children. • Liaising with police, child safety services and other external bodies regarding child safety concerns. • Providing advice and training in relation to PresSafe.

PCQ PresSafe Compliance Officer (PCQ Employees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administering PCQ employees' compliance with the Church's child and youth management system (PresSafe) including blue card, and safe ministry policy and procedures.
Assistant to the Director of Christian Education (Youth and Children's Ministry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equip, support, and encourage Presbyterian Youth and Kids (PYK) ministries across Queensland. Management of camps, conferences, training days. Providing advice and training in relation to PresSafe. Provide advice and assistance to ensure compliance with PresSafe and Risk Management policies.
Assistant to Director of Christian Education (Training and Development and PYK Support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Content Management (pressafe.org.au). Assisting with PresSafe email communication to Ministers, Session Clerks, and Ministry Coordinators. Developing documentation and forms relating to PresSafe. Review and develop training for PresSafe. Online distribution of PresSafe training (LMS). Providing advice and training in relation to PresSafe.
Presbytery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversight of Sessions in relation to compliance with the Safe Ministry with Children Policy and Code of Conduct. Oversight of all employees responsible for children's ministry in terms of the Code of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland. Confirm that all new appointees and called Ministers are PresSafe compliant prior to them commencing duties. Ensure all instructions of the Assembly are observed.
Kirk Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing and overseeing PresSafe within the Charge. Approve all children's ministry programs, activities or events in the Charge, and ensure that all high risk activities are also approved by the Child Safety RMO. Approve all volunteers involved in the delivery of children's ministry programs, activities, or events in the Charge. Approve any social media platform related to children's ministry in the Charge, and appoint a moderator of each approved platform. Ensure the ongoing PresSafe compliance of voluntary leaders involved in children's ministry in the Charge. Respond to breaches of the Code of Conduct by people involved in children's ministry in the Charge. Respond to allegations of harm or abuse as required by the reporting protocol. Ensure all records pertaining to children's ministry in the Charge, and particularly those relating to allegation/harm, are kept for a minimum of 45 years. Ensure compliance with all Church and civil legislation concerning children's ministry in the Charge.

Statement of Commitment

The Church's Policy, Procedures and Protocols are informed by the Church's understanding of its biblical responsibilities, legislative requirements, and the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).

The Church is committed to:

1. Child safety and wellbeing

The Church has clear biblical and legislative responsibilities to protect children within our care. PresSafe, the Church's system of policies, procedures and training relating to safe ministry with children, has been developed to ensure we fulfil both these responsibilities.

The Church is committed to embedding child safety and wellbeing in its organisational leadership, governance, and culture to ensure the safety and holistic wellbeing of all children involved in its children's ministry programs, activities, and events. The Church takes child protection and safety seriously and therefore has policies and procedures in place which seek to safeguard children from harm including emotional, physical, neglect, and sexual abuse. The Church will not tolerate any form of child abuse or sexual exploitation.

The Church commits to the following actions:

- I. In policy, in practice, and in making decisions, the Church will seek to embed child safety across all children's ministry programs, activities, and events.
- II. All levels of the Church will commit to child safety, will model and champion child safe policies and practices and will make decisions that will support a child safe culture in the organisation.
- III. The Church's governing bodies will facilitate the implementation of child safe policies and practices and will set clear accountabilities.
- IV. The Church will adopt and implement a [Safe Ministry with Children Code of Conduct](#) that provides guidance on the Church's values and standard of behaviour expected of all people involved in Children's Ministry.
- V. The Church will develop, implement, and review strategies that aim to prevent and mitigate risks to children and young people.
- VI. The Church will support employees and volunteers to understand their obligations on record keeping, information sharing and external reporting.

2. Taking children's input seriously

The Church acknowledges children's God-given value and promotes an environment where children can give their input and be taken seriously on matters that affect them.

The Church commits to the following actions:

- I. Inform children and their families about how they can give their input on matters that affect them.
- II. Create discipleship communities where children and young people are welcomed and find a sense of belonging as they are supported and encouraged in their Christian faith.
- III. Provide access to age-appropriate resources to educate children and their families on the prevention of sexual abuse and other forms of abuse.
- IV. Ensure employees and volunteers are trained to recognise signs of harm including neglect, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and to support children to express their views and raise their concerns.

3. Involving families and communities

Families have the primary responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children and are most aware of their children's primary protective networks. Families also exist in the context of broader communities of influence. It is important that the Church hears from families and communities in relation to child safety within its ministries.

Keeping children safe is a natural and logical outworking of our commitment to Christ. Parents and guardians entrust their children to us and the programs we run, and so we are committed to keeping children safe in partnership with their families.

The Church commits to the following actions:

- I. Support the participation of families in decisions that affect their children.
- II. Communicate openly with children and families about the Church's child safe approach and make sure that relevant information is accessible.
- III. Welcome input and feedback from children, families, and communities for consideration in developing and reviewing the Church's child safety policies and practices.
- IV. Keep families and communities informed about the Church's child safety operations and governance.

4. Respecting all children

The Church acknowledges the God-given value and individual characteristics of children. The Church welcomes all children to participate in its gatherings and ministries.

The Church commits to the following actions:

- I. Recognise that children and young people have diverse circumstances and backgrounds.
- II. Ensure that information, support, and complaints processes are accessible and easy to understand for children and young people.
- III. Care for children and young people from diverse and vulnerable backgrounds.

5. Ensuring that staff are suitable and supported

The Church will screen all prospective leaders for their suitability to work in children's ministries before they are appointed.

Anyone involved in children's ministry within the Church must:

- Be committed to the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Uphold the Church's policies and procedures to safeguard children from harm.
- Have zero tolerance of child abuse or sexual exploitation of any form.
- Complete the PresSafe Selection Process and remain compliant.

The Church commits to the following actions:

- I. Ensure that recruitment, referee checking, and screening processes for employees and volunteers include an emphasis on child safety and wellbeing.
- II. All Ministers and other ministerial type appointments under [Rule 13.73](#) to hold as a necessary pre-condition to their initial and ongoing appointment a [Positive Blue Card Notice](#)

and agree to adhere to church policy, procedures and the [Code of Conduct](#) and undergo training in Child Safety.

- III. All Elders, managers, employees and volunteers involved in children's ministry are to hold, as a necessary pre-condition to their initial and ongoing appointment or engagement in any role or work, in any such capacity a Positive Blue Card Notice or exemption (unless exempt under legislation) and agree to adhere to church policy, procedures and the code of conduct when working with children and undergo training in child safety. (see Rule 13.73) Those elected to a role may not commence their position until such time as they have received a Positive Blue Card Notice or exemption.
- IV. All children's ministry employees and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting of allegations or concerns.
- V. Ongoing employee support, supervision, and people management will include a focus on child safety and wellbeing.

6. Child focused complaint systems

The church acknowledges that to be effective, processes to raise concerns and complaints about the safety of children need to be accessible, understood by children and young people, families, employees, and volunteers and be taken seriously.

Having implemented an appropriate Child focussed complaint system, the Church commits to the following actions:

- I. Maintaining an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, employees, and volunteers; approaches to dealing with different types of complaints; breaches of relevant policies (including Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report).
- II. Maintaining a complaint handling process that is clear and easily understood by children and young people, families, employees and volunteers.
- III. Taking seriously all complaints and responding to them promptly and thoroughly.
- IV. Maintaining policies and procedures that address notification of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities.
- V. Complying with reporting/notification, privacy, and employment law obligations.

7. Staff knowledge, skills and awareness

It is vital that all those within our churches, including elders, paid staff, volunteer leaders and helpers, understand their own responsibilities in keeping children safe in every children's ministry program, activity and event.

All those involved in delivering a children's ministry program, activity or event must complete training in [PresSafe](#) policies and procedures.

We have legal obligations in how we keep children safe in Australia, including compliance with the [Child Protection Act 1999](#), the [Working with Children Act 2000](#), and the [Work Health & Safety Act 2011](#).

The Church commits to the following actions:

- I. Provide initial and ongoing training and support to employees and volunteers to enable them to effectively implement the Church's child safety policy and procedures.

- II. Provide initial and ongoing training and information to employees and volunteers to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people.
- III. Provide initial and ongoing training and information to employees and volunteers to respond effectively to issues of child safety and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- IV. Provide initial and ongoing training and information to employees and volunteers to understand safe and unsafe environments for children and young people.

8. Safe physical and online environments

The Church acknowledges that physical environments and online behaviour can impact on the safety of children. The Church will conduct risk assessments and take steps to mitigate risk by considering physical environments, evaluating high risk activities, and making online behavioural expectations clear.

The Church commits to the following actions:

- I. Assisting employees and volunteers to identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections, and learning opportunities.
- II. Training employees and volunteers to know their obligations in using online environments in accordance with the Church's Code of Conduct and policy and procedures.
- III. Requiring employees and volunteers to conduct risk management of high-risk activities and special events to ensure the safety of children and young persons.
- IV. Requiring that third parties providing facilities and services have policies that ensure the safety of children and young people.

9. Review of child safe policies and practices

The Church is committed to continuous improvement of the delivery of child safe practices and will regularly review policies and procedures.

The Church commits to the following actions:

- I. Monitor the implementation of child safe policies and procedures and review.
- II. Review all incidents and reports to identify causes and trends, manage risks, identify systemic issues and improve our child safe policies and practices.
- III. Communicate the findings of reviews to relevant people.

10. Documenting policies and procedures

Documenting policies and procedures ensures consistent application of child safe practices across the Church. The Church will provide policy, procedures and management systems to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

The Church commits to the following actions:

- I. Address all national child safe principles within our policies and procedures.
- II. Document our policies and procedures in easy to understand language.
- III. Develop policies and procedures with consultation.
- IV. Promote compliance with policies and procedures.
- V. Support employees and volunteers to understand and implement policies and procedures.

Definitions

At risk	Refers to children, young people and families whose circumstances are causing concern for the safety and/or welfare of the child or young person.
Child abuse and neglect	The World Health Organization defines child abuse and neglect as ‘all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power’.
Children	Individuals under the age of 18, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Harm	The <i>Child Protection Act 1999</i> (Qld), Section 9, defines harm to a child as any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing, regardless of how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect or sexual abuse or exploitation. Harm can be caused by a single act, omission or circumstance; or by a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
Notification	A notification is a report made to a government child protection department alleging child abuse/neglect, child maltreatment or harm to a child. These reports can be made by individuals or organisations.

Legal Framework

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

National Guidelines

[National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031](#)

[National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)

Relevant legislation

[Child Protection Act 1999](#)

[Work Health & Safety Act 2011](#)

Working with Children Checks

[Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening Act\) 2000](#)

Related organisational policies and procedures

[Code of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland](#)

[Procedures to Assist Sessions and Committees](#)

[PresSafe Agreement](#)

[PCQ PresSafe Code of Conduct](#)

[PresSafe Training](#)

[PCQ Child Safe Reporting](#)

[PresSafe Procedures for Reporting Abuse](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

Websites

[Presbyterian Church of Queensland](#)

[PresSafe](#)

Policy status and review

This policy was adopted by the Commission of Assembly and granted further interim authority on: **27 February 2024.**

For more information or assistance with this policy contact the PCQ General Manager or the Safe Ministry with Children Risk Management Officer.

This policy is to be reviewed on an annual basis and the review will be led by the Safe Ministry with Children Risk Management Officer.