

Safe Ministry Policy

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Purpose

Our Policy:

- a. guides our work in establishing and maintaining safe environments for all people, including children and young people;
- b. underpins our biblical mandate to: Love the Lord your God with your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40);
- c. promotes and provides for the provision of services that foster the health and safety of all (People) who access our church (Place) and/or programs;
- d. ensures that all workers (paid and volunteer) associated with our church fulfil their pastoral, organisational and duty of care responsibilities; and
- e. ensures compliance with legislation, and also with the intention of the legislation, as it relates to protecting people, particularly the vulnerable (including children).

Scope

This Policy applies to all those associated with our church including:

- a. all workers, including paid employees, volunteers and members of boards;
- b. as specified herein, guests or hirers of the church and its facilities;
- c. as specified herein, contractors, subcontractors, delivery persons or others engaged to provide services; and
- d. as specified herein, those who access our site and/or programs.

Policy statements

As a church we are committed to spiritual, emotional, and physical safety and well-being:

- a. we acknowledge that all people at church have a right to feel and be safe, and to experience life-giving, harm-free interactions at our church and in our programs.
- b. we acknowledge the need for sensitivity and consideration of all people of Aboriginal, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as any person with a disability.
- c. we commit to the welfare of all people through the implementation and ongoing improvement of our Safe Ministry Framework which includes:
 - i. safe and friendly environments where people are listened to, feel safe, accept challenges, develop faith and grow in connection with God and others.
 - ii. safe and adequate recruitment, training, supervision, support, and resourcing of our workers
 - iii. appropriate and expedient responses to all incidents, accidents, child protection and/or safe ministry (misconduct and abuse) concerns
- d. in relation to children (0-18 years), we acknowledge the primary role of parents and caregivers as well as the role of children in child protection and will actively engage with children and caregivers, inviting open communication and feedback as part of our procedures and interactions.
- e. in relation to children, we acknowledge the shared responsibility of the whole community for child safety and welfare, including caregivers and our workers,

and as such we will actively promote the role of parents and caregivers and the wider community in the shared responsibility of child safety

- f. It is a serious breach of this policy for any worker in our church to contravene this policy, any related procedure, or any regulation in law, in relation to the safety and protection of children and the vulnerable.

Responsibilities

All people at church are to:

- a. be respectful of all people's boundaries, especially of children and the vulnerable, respecting the rights of all people at our church to safe and friendly interactions and ministries,
- b. foster and encourage the participation and empowerment of all people in staying safe,
- c. take all reasonable care for their own health and safety,
- d. take reasonable care that their actions do not adversely affect others health and safety,
- e. comply with all reasonable instructions from the church leadership,
- f. comply with church policies, procedures and directives from the leadership as communicated, including the code of conduct relevant to role/position,
- g. report all child protection and other safe ministry (misconduct and abuse) concerns, allegations or incidents immediately to the Safe Ministry Officer/s, and
- h. report all incidents or hazards to the Health & Safety Officer (or to a Team Leader) as soon as practicable.

Specific responsibilities

In addition to the general responsibilities under this policy the following office holders and those associated with Hills Church have the following specific responsibilities:

Local Board of Administration (LBA)

- a. primary duty of care, to ensure so far as is practicable the health and safety of all persons involved in the organisation,
- b. endorse the Safe Ministry Framework (Framework),

- c. assign responsibilities for the management of the Framework,
- d. monitor and review the implementation of the Framework,
- e. ensure disclosures of harm are reported to all relevant regulatory bodies and
- f. fulfil relevant legislative 'head of agency roles' (and equivalent in State based reportable conduct schemes) in child protection related investigations.

Pastoral and Administrative Staff

- a. maintain a positive, safe and friendly God-honouring culture,
- b. overall responsibility for implementation of the Framework, and
- c. regular reporting to the Governance Board in relation to implementation of the Framework.

Ministry Leaders

- a. implementation of this policy and related procedures as applicable to their ministry program/events,
- b. monitor workers who they oversee to ensure workers are acting safely and according to policy and procedure,
- c. provide reasonable instruction to workers regarding the provision of safe environments,
- d. report to Safe Ministry Officer any suspicions, allegations, incidents or potential breaches of the relevant code of conduct, and
- e. identify and report all risks and hazards to Health & Safety Officer/Team for treatment.

Safe Ministry Officer/Team

- a. implementation of the procedures in relation to responding to Safe Ministry concerns, including child protection,
- b. tasks as directed by the LBA,
- c. receive reports of incidents and/or concerns of risk of harm in relation to children or workers,
- d. maintain secure records in relation to the Framework, and
- e. regular reporting to leaders.

Health & Safety Officer / Team

- a. write and implement WHS policies, including privacy policy and evacuation procedures,
- b. keep WHS on the agenda at meetings of the LBA and church leadership,
- c. receive notifications of hazards/incidents such as serious events and dangerous incidents from workers and visitors,
- d. notify incidents such as serious events and dangerous incidents within a prescribed period to the appropriate office holder/s e.g. board,
- e. address health and safety concerns within reasonable time frame, and
- f. undertake a site safety audit at regular intervals (minimum 2 times per year).

Workers (paid and volunteer)

- a. uphold all church policy and procedures,
- b. report to Safe Ministry Officer any suspicions, allegations, incident or potential breaches of the relevant code of conduct, and
- c. identify and report all risks and hazards to relevant officer holder for treatment.

Caregivers of children and vulnerable adults

- a. provide all information as necessary to ensure the safety of the person in their care,
- b. provide feedback to church leadership.

All people at church (children and adults)

- a. participate in safe and respectful ways,
- b. have a say (e.g. talk to any of their leaders when feeling unsafe),
- c. report any unsafe behaviour of others, and
- d. abide by all reasonable instructions given by church leaders.

Safe Ministry procedures

As part of our Policy, we will implement the following procedures for the establishment and provision of safe environments and interactions at our church:

- a. Framework implementation procedure
- b. Participation and inclusion of children and caregivers

- c. Record keeping
- d. Recruitment procedures
- e. Training and resourcing of workers
- f. Supervision of workers
- g. Safe environments
- h. Responding to child protection concerns
- i. Responding to Safe Ministry concerns about adults
- j. Responding to incidents
- k. Resolving misunderstandings and conflicts
- l. Workplace investigation (Disciplinary)

These Procedures are found in our Safe Ministry Framework Documentation.

Definitions & terminology

(found in Framework Appendix)

Policy approval & review

This Policy was revised and updated to reflect current legislative requirements (see Safe Ministry Framework Appendix).

It was approved by the church governing body and adopted for use by our church on 12 March 2024.

The Policy and procedures will be reviewed at least every 2 years, or as often as necessary, in order to remain compliant with new legislation.

Any proposed changes will be submitted to the governing body of our church for approval at a properly convened meeting for approval before being adopted and implemented.