

LAY SAFE MINISTRY CLEARANCES POLICY

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Introduction

Our diocese is committed to safe ministry. We affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected and have their views and opinions valued at all times. We commit to our pastoral, insurance, legal, and duty of care obligations; with its goal that all ministries are spiritually, emotionally, and physically safe; based on the premise that diocesan parishes, ministries, and related activities should be abuse-free and harm-free, person valuing and respectful spaces for ministry to God's glory.

The Anglican Church of Australia has established standards of conduct for church workers to maintain a safe and healthy ministry environment. Our commitment to these standards requires that we conduct screening and training for all persons who intend to engage in lay ministry in the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo.

Our Policy Aims To:

- Prevent harm to children and vulnerable people
- Reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- Ensure those undertaking ministry within the churches of the diocese are safe
- Demonstrate to the community that our churches are safe places
- Comply with the General Synod *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017*
- Comply with relevant Victorian legislation

We Commit To:

- Screening and training for all church leaders, workers, employees and volunteers to reduce the risk of child abuse or harm to vulnerable people
- Robust recruitment practices for all church leaders, workers, employees and volunteers
- Regularly training and educating our church leaders, workers, employees and volunteers on child abuse and vulnerable people risks

Policy Scope & Coverage

- This policy applies to all licensed, authorised, paid or voluntary church workers.
- This policy does not apply to persons ordained as deacons, or licensed as clergy, or appointed or elected as the bishop of a diocese

Definitions:

<i>Child</i>	a person who is under the age of 18 years
<i>Child-related work</i>	as defined by the Victorian Working with Children Check Act in Section 7
<i>Church worker</i>	means a lay person: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) who is licensed or authorised by the bishop of a diocese; orb) who is employed by a Church body; orc) who, for payment or not, holds a position or performs a function with the actual or apparent authority of a Church authority or Church body;
<i>Ministry to children</i>	means work of a kind where a person: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) is required to hold a working with children check, or a working with vulnerable people check by reason that the person has contact with a child as part of engaging in a regulated activity; orb) exercises a pastoral ministry which has direct, regular and not incidental contact with children; orc) provides services to children that are ancillary to the exercise of a pastoral ministry within paragraph (b) which involve:<ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) contact with children during an overnight activity (such as camps and similar activities); or(ii) close, personal contact with children (such as changing clothes, washing and toileting); ord) supervises the ministry of a person within any one or more of paragraphs (a) to (c); ore) performs a professional standards role; orf) performs a safe ministry role;¹
<i>National Police Check</i>	means consideration of a National Criminal History Check

¹ General Synod Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017

<i>National Register Assessment</i>	means whether there is any information about the person entered in the National Register, and if so, consideration of that information
<i>Safe Church Training</i>	means accredited safe ministry training that incorporates the Safe Ministry Training National Benchmarks of General Synod
<i>Safe Ministry Check</i>	means the “Safe Ministry Check - Application for appointment as a voluntary Church Worker aged 18 years and over” form as issued by the General Synod Office of the Anglican Church
<i>Vulnerable person</i>	an individual aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason. ²
<i>Working with Children Check</i>	means an authority to work with children issued under the laws of the State of Victoria

² Australian Government Department of Social Services
<https://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/doing-business-with-dss/vulnerable-persons-police-checks-and-criminal-offences>

Clearance Levels and Requirements

Table 1 groups clearance requirements into levels according to risk and details the clearance requirements for each level. Examples of roles that form part of each level are outlined in Tables 2 – 4.

TABLE 1: CLEARANCE LEVELS						
Clearance Level	Category	Description	Working with Children Check	National Police Check	Safe Church Training	Safe Ministry Check
1	Lay Licenced Ministry	Lay people undertaking licenced lay ministry and people exploring ordination	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	People working with children	People in child related roles or activities where children are present.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Governance, Administration & Employment	People in leadership roles, serving on committees or performing administrative roles in the diocese or parish.				
	Worship & Ministry	People regularly undertaking a visible role in worship services or performing a ministry representing the church in public				
3	Community services ministries	People undertaking activities in the community who may not be active members of an Anglican Church	✓	✓	✓	

Factors considered when determining the clearances include:

- Representing the Church in the public sphere
- Level of theological understanding and/or training required
- Individuals acting without clergy supervision
- Access and involvement of children and/or vulnerable people
- Access to significant monies
- Access to private and confidential information
- “Seen” as a leader in the Church by a child or a new person to the Church
- Responsible for parish governance and holds decision making authority
- Requirements of relevant state or diocesan legislation

Code of Conduct

The prescribed Code of Conduct for lay persons is Faithfulness in Service as adopted by the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo.

Working with Children Check

An individual's Working with Children Check must have the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo listed as a registered organisation for which the person works or volunteers for. An individual must not register their local parish or congregation. Individuals with a Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration that includes a Working with Children Check must link the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo to their VIT registration.

National Police Check

A National Police Check is a Criminal History Assessment processed by an authorised provider. If an individual has obtained a National Police Check for another organisation within the previous three months, it can be provided for the purposes of a Lay Safe Ministry Clearance. Any National Police Checks not processed by the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo will need to be verified with the provider to confirm it is a valid National Police Check.





Safe Church Training

Safe Church Training must be accredited training offered by the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo. If an individual has completed safe church training through another denomination it will be at the discretion of the Ministry Development Officer to assess the suitability of the training for the Anglican Church context in Victoria. Safe Church Training must be completed within three years prior to being appointed, and as soon as practicable but not later than three months after being appointed to undertake ministry to children.





Safe Ministry Check

A Safe Ministry Check will be undertaken using the form prescribed by the General Synod Office of the Anglican Church of Australia. All Safe Ministry Checks will be processed through Kooyoora, the office of professional standards, to maintain confidentiality and independence. This process includes a National Register Assessment and referee checks.

**TABLE 2:
CLEARANCE LEVEL 1: LAY LICENCED MINISTRY**

Working with Children Check	National Police Check	Safe Church Training	Safe Ministry Check
			
Lay people undertaking licenced lay ministry and people exploring ordination			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay Licensed Ministers and Remunerated Ministry Workers • Ordination Candidates/Seekers (laypersons exploring ordination) 			




**TABLE 3:
CLEARANCE LEVEL 2: LAY VOLUNTEERS**

Working with Children Check	National Police Check	Safe Church Training	Safe Ministry Check
			
A: People working with children	B: Governance, Administration & Employment	C: Worship & Ministry	
<i>People in child related roles or activities where children are present.</i>	<i>People in leadership roles, serving on committees or performing administrative roles in the diocese or parish.</i>	<i>People regularly undertaking a visible role in worship services or performing a ministry representing the church in public</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any person who is engaged in 'child-related' work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of Bishop-in-Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship Leader 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children & Youth Ministry Workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of a Diocesan Corporation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay Preacher 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's group leader, coordinator, helper or worker (including Sunday Schools, youth groups and playgroups) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of Trusts Corporation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay and Spiritual Directors 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Talk in worship service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed Diocesan Lay Offices: Registrar, Chancellor, Advocate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liturgical Assistants 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of Synod or General Synod 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eucharistic Assistants 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bus driver of children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the Cathedral Chapter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sidespeople/Welcomers 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theological student doing a youth or children's practicum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any Professional Standards positions/committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sacristans 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School's Ministry, Religious Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Church/Child Safety Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verger, Crucifer, Server, Acolyte 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Administrative Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Music Leader/Choir Coordinator/Musician/Choir Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Churchwarden, Parish Council Member, Parish Secretary & Treasurer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bible Study Leader/Small Group Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals with keys to church property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bible Reader/Lay Reader Intercessions Evangelism or outreach program Pastoral Care Coordinators/Visitors

Note: The roles listed under each category are not an exhaustive list but are an example of the types of roles that would fit under each category

**TABLE 4:
CLEARANCE LEVEL 3: COMMUNITY SERVICES MINISTRIES**

Working with Children Check	National Police Check	Safe Church Training	Safe Ministry Check
			
People undertaking activities in the community who may not be active members of an Anglican Church			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community meals coordinators/volunteers Op Shop coordinators/volunteers Foodbank Parish run emergency relief program 			

**TABLE 5:
CLEARANCE REQUIREMENTS RENEWALS**

Clearance	Renewal period
Working with Children Check	5 years
National Police Check	5 years
Safe Church Training	3 years
Safe Ministry Check	5 years

Handling of disclosures

If any of the screening processes returns a reportable disclosure, it will be notified to Kooyoora and the Bishop. Kooyoora, in conjunction with the Bishop, will determine the suitability of the applicant for their intended ministry taking into consideration the seriousness of the reported disclosure and the ministry role to be undertaken.

Policy Responsibility

Bishop in Council is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

Related Documents: Internal

- Anglican Diocese of Bendigo - *Child Safe Policy*
- Anglican Diocese of Bendigo - *Safe Church Policy*
- Joys and Responsibilities
- Faithfulness in Service – Code of Conduct
- Professional Standards Uniform Act

Related Documents: External

- General Synod *Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017*
- General Synod *Safe Ministry Training Benchmarks*
- Victorian Government *Working with Children Act 2005*
- Victorian Government *Betrayal of Trust* report 2013
- Victorian Government *Child Safe Standards*
- Commission for Children and Young People – *Reportable Conduct Scheme*
- Commonwealth Government *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – Final Report*

Authorisation

Approved by Bishop in Council 14 May 2024

Policy History
Lay Ministry Guidelines 2013
Lay Authorisations and Required Checks Policy 2016
Lay Safe Ministry Clearances Policy 2021
Lay Safe Ministry Clearances Policy 2024