



Creating Safer Churches – Keeping children and vulnerable people safe

Date active: Revision B, updated 29th April 2016

Introduction: These guidelines have been developed by the National Leadership Team (NLT) to strengthen both the policy and implementation of practices that keep children and vulnerable people safe in A2A Churches and associated Ministries.

These guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the A2A Ministry Manual and specifically complement but not supersede the A2A Code of Conduct, affiliation policy, credentialing policy and guidelines for working with children contained in that document.

These Guidelines are divided into two categories:

- those considered to be legal, biblical and/or moral imperatives, denoted by the word “**shall**” must be implemented, and
- those considered as good practice, denoted by the word “**recommended**”, are nevertheless strongly recommended.

A2A Pastors and leaders already have an obligation to be compliant with their relevant working with children checks and working with children policies. In light of the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse, no pastor can be expected to carry out their duties without some form of compliance and accountability. These guidelines are part of a proactive response to strengthen how working with children policies and practices are implemented in A2A Churches and associated ministries.

Guidelines:

- 1) As part of the annual Pastors credential renewal process you **shall** provide a copy of your current working with children check which applies for the state that you minister in. ([for the relevant legislation and state and territory screening programs click here](#)).
- 2) All active credentialed ministers **shall** undertake training in child protection practices every 3 years at a minimum as one of the conditions for your credentials to be renewed. The level of training required for the different minister credential categories and your role differs is summarised in the table below.

	Working With Children Check	Online Training. Foundational training in safe working with children practices required every 3 years (<i>ChildSafe e3learning online module or approved equivalent</i>)	Working with Children Workshop. Further comprehensive training which covers the role and responsibility of a co-ordinator and leader within a ministry environment.
Ordained Minister	Yes Mandatory	Yes Mandatory	Yes Mandatory
Local Minister	Yes Mandatory	Yes Mandatory	Yes Mandatory (<i>exemption will apply if the Minister's role does not work with children / youth in any way</i>)
Specialised Minister	Yes Mandatory	Yes Mandatory	Not required (<i>unless working with children /youth</i>)
Retired Minister	Yes Mandatory	Not required (<i>unless working with children /youth</i>)	Not required (<i>unless working with children /youth</i>)

A2A is partnering with ChildSafe (a harm prevention charity) who will assist us with both the compliance and training aspects to implement safe practices.

The foundational training **shall** be ChildSafe's e3learning platform which is delivered via an online learning module on a user pay basis (currently \$25 per training session payable directly to ChildSafe). Upon completion of this training which takes

approximately 90 minutes to complete, a certificate of completion will be issued and completion will be noted by A2A.

The more comprehensive training **shall** comprise a face to face training full day workshop or approved similar, and builds on the foundational team member training you would have completed online, ensuring that the culture and principles of a safe church for children and vulnerable people are established by the Pastors of your local church. Cost will be \$45 per person payable to A2A and include lunch on the training day.

For both levels of training, previous training a Pastor may have received will be considered by A2A as appropriate if the credentialed Pastor can demonstrate that the content is equivalent to that provided by the material delivered by ChildSafe and provide details of when and who conducted the training. In any event, training will need to be renewed every 3 years at a minimum.

- 3) All A2A churches are to nominate a 'Working with Children Risk Management Officer' (which may or may not be a credentialed Pastor) who is designated to implement your local church working with children policy in your ministry context. This does not lessen the role and responsibility your local church board or you as a credentialed A2A Pastor carries, but does nominate a point leader to oversee the compliance, implementation and training in relation to working with children in your local church.

It is **recommended** that in your local church board a second person within your church leadership / governance structure is nominated as an alternate person that suspected cases of child abuse could be reported to should a potential conflict of interest exist with the Working with Children Risk Management Officer.

It is **recommended** that your 'Working with Children Risk Management Officer' (if they are not an A2A credentialed Pastor), also attend the comprehensive full day training provided by A2A (cost applicable \$45 each).

- 4) As is required under the A2A Ministry Manual, leaders of churches or organisations affiliated with A2A and ministers credentialed by the Movement have a responsibility to ensure that their churches or organisations have policies and procedures in place that outline working with children policies and procedures which include:
 - i. A statement of commitment to the principles of safe and supportive service environments
 - ii. A code of conduct

- iii. Recruitment, selection, training and management strategies that encourage best practice and enhance the safety and well-being of children and young people.
- iv. Policies and procedures for handling disclosures and suspicions of harm
- v. Policies and procedures for the occasions where there might be a breach of the organisation's child and youth risk management strategy, and
- vi. A planning process for high risk activities and special events
- vii. Policies and procedures for compliance with any relevant State based regulations
- viii. Strategies for communication and support for all stakeholders including children and young people.

A2A **recommends** that all churches and organisations affiliated adopt their working with children policy based on any of the following approved 'model' policies:

- i. Ansvar Insurance Sample Prevention of Abuse Client Protection Policy.
- ii. Institute of Community Director's / Moores Legal Child Protection Policy. [Template available here \(in the values policy sub-section\).](#)
- iii. ChildSafe Child Safety policy (particularly relevant if your church or ministry adopts all of ChildSafe's SP3 framework and resources). (Available in the resource tab, RMO sub section of the ChildSafe safety management online system that all credentialed Pastors will have access to).
- iv. A2A example Working with Child policy available from the Members area on the [A2A website](#).

These 'model' policies are provided in good faith as a guide for local churches but it is noted that it is still the local church board that is legally responsible for ensuring the compliance and implementation of a sound working with children policy within your local church context.

To ensure compliance and good practice in this area, all churches and associated organisations **shall** provide A2A the declaration at the end of this document regarding the status of their documented child protection policy. This declaration is also becoming a common request from insurers).

- 5) As a requirement of your local church or associated ministries reporting process, all breaches of your working with children policy **shall** include notifying the A2A Working with Children Risk Management Officer via a written report submitted to info@a2a.org.au within 7 days of the incident.

6) As noted in the A2A Ministry Manual working with children guidelines, Leaders of churches within the Movement **shall** ensure that appropriate insurance has been taken out and is in place that will compensate in the event of-

i. Physical injury

ii. Molestation from people not known to be sex offenders

Note: Molestation / sexual abuse cover **shall** specifically be listed as an area of coverage protection as part of a church's public and products liability protection. It is common for insurers to have a known offender's molestation / sexual abuse exclusion clause attached to any such policy which needs to be noted and carefully considered by a local church board as a church will not be covered in some situations if a known offender reoffends and a church has been negligent in its duties.

It is **recommended** that every church seek expert advice and consult their insurer to assess the risks in their context. As a guide, the level of insurance coverage to specifically cover molestation / sexual abuse should cover a claim up to \$5,000,000 in any one instance or in the aggregate.

DOCUMENTED CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

DECLARATION FORM

Church/ Ministry name	
Mailing address	
Senior / Lead Pastor	
Working with Children Risk Management Officer	
Telephone number	
Email address	

I hereby declare that our church/ministry have implemented a Documented Child Protection Policy and our local church board is aware of A2A's Working with Children policy on these matters including the requirement to also advise A2A of any incidents. *(A copy of your child protection policy document may be requested by A2A and our insurers should it be required.)*

The objective of this policy is to ensure that our church or ministry takes all possible steps to ensure the protection of children against all forms of child abuse. This policy gives an overview of the responsibilities of staff members and volunteers in our church or ministry in the protection of children and vulnerable people.

We aim to create 'child safe' environments, both internally and externally, where children are protected, and where staff and volunteers are skilled and competent in meeting their protection responsibilities.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

(To be signed by the Senior / Lead Pastor or Working with Children Risk Management Officer)

Date: _____