



## Creating Safer Churches - Keeping children and vulnerable people safe

Date active: Revision C, updated 14th February 2017

### 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. **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 training shall be ChildSafe’s e3learning platform to co-ordinator level which is delivered via online learning modules on a user pay basis (\$25 for the initial training session**

payable directly to ChildSafe. Costs as at the date of this policy, subject to change). Upon completion of the co-ordinator training, a certificate of completion will be issued and completion will be noted by A2A. For all levels of training, previous training a Pastor may have received may 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.

	Working With Children Check	Online Training. Training in safe working with children practices required every 3 years (ChildSafe e3learning online module or approved equivalent)
Ordained Minister	Yes Mandatory	Yes Mandatory
Local Minister	Yes Mandatory	Yes Mandatory
Specialised Minister	Yes Mandatory unless entire scope of ministry activities are overseas	Yes Mandatory

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 as at the date of this policy, subject to change).

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:
  - A statement of commitment to the principles of safe and supportive service environments
  - A code of conduct
  - Recruitment, selection, training and management strategies that encourage best
  - Practice and enhance the safety and well-being of children and young people.
  - Policies and procedures for handling disclosures and suspicions of harm
  - Policies and procedures for the occasions where there might be a breach of the organisation's child and youth risk management strategy, and
  - A planning process for high risk activities and special events
  - Policies and procedures for compliance with any relevant State based regulations

- 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:

- ANSVAR Insurance Sample Prevention of Abuse Client Protection Policy.
- Institute of Community Director's / Moores Legal Child Protection Policy. Template available here (in the values policy sub-section).
- 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).
- 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).**

- 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](mailto:info@a2a.org.au) within 7 days of the incident.
- 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-
  - Physical injury
  - 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 base level of insurance coverage to specifically cover molestation / sexual abuse should at the minimum cover a claim up to \$1,000,000 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: \_\_\_\_\_

7. In accordance with the Recommendations to all Religious Institutions in Australia from the Royal Commission into Institutionalised Child Sexual Abuse, every affiliated church or associated ministry should implement the 10 Child Safe Standards identified by the Royal Commission. The Child Safe Standards are:
1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture
  2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
  3. Families and communities are informed and involved
  4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
  5. People working with children are suitable and supported
  6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused
  7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
  8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
  9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
  10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.
8. Every affiliated church or associated ministry develop mechanisms through which they receive advice from individuals with relevant professional expertise on all matters relating to child sexual abuse and child safety. This should include in relation to prevention, policies and procedures and complaint handling. These mechanisms should facilitate advice from people with a variety of professional backgrounds and include lay men and women.
9. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should ensure that religious leaders are accountable to an appropriate authority or body, such as a board of management or council, for the decisions they make with respect to child safety.
10. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should have a policy relating to the management of actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise in relation to allegations of child sexual abuse. The policy should cover all individuals who have a role in responding to complaints of child sexual abuse.
11. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should be provided with age-appropriate prevention education that aims to increase their knowledge of child sexual abuse and build practical skills to assist in strengthening self-protective skills and strategies. Prevention education in religious institutions should specifically address the power and status of people in religious ministry and educate children that no one has a right to invade their privacy and make them feel unsafe.
12. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should make provision for family and community involvement by publishing all policies relevant to child safety on its website, providing opportunities for comment on its approach to child safety, and seeking periodic feedback about the effectiveness of its approach to child safety.
13. Each affiliated church or associated ministry should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, are subject to effective management and oversight and undertake annual performance appraisals.
14. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should require that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, undertake regular training on the institution's child safe policies and procedures. They should also be provided with opportunities for external training on best practice approaches to child safety.

15. Every affiliated church or associated ministry's code of conduct and policies should explicitly and equally apply to people in religious ministry and to lay people.
16. Every affiliated church or associated ministry require all people in religious ministry, leaders, members of boards, councils and other governing bodies, employees, relevant contractors and volunteers to undergo initial and periodic training on its code of conduct. This training should include:
  1. What kinds of allegations or complaints relating to child sexual abuse should be reported and to whom
  2. Identifying inappropriate behaviour which may be a precursor to abuse, including grooming
  3. Recognising physical and behavioural indicators of child sexual abuse
  4. That all complaints relating to child sexual abuse must be taken seriously, regardless of the perceived severity of the behaviour.
17. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should upon receiving a complaint of child sexual abuse, ensure an initial risk assessment is conducted to identify and minimise any risks to children.
18. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should require that, if a complaint of child sexual abuse against a person in religious ministry is plausible, and there is a risk that person may come into contact with children in the course of their ministry, the person be stood down from ministry while the complaint is investigated
19. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should apply when deciding whether a complaint of child sexual abuse has been substantiated is the balance of probabilities.
20. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should apply the same standards for investigating complaints of child sexual abuse whether or not the subject of the complaint is a person in religious ministry.
21. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should in relation to any person in religious ministry who is the subject of a complaint of child sexual abuse which is substantiated on the balance of probabilities, having regard to the principles in, or who is convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse, should be permanently removed from ministry. Religious institutions should also take all necessary steps to effectively prohibit the person from in any way holding himself or herself out as being a person with religious authority.
22. Every affiliated church or associated ministry should permanently removed from ministry relation any person in religious ministry who is convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse.
23. Every affiliated church or associated ministry where it becomes aware that any person attending any of its religious services or activities is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse, or has been convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse, the religious institution should:
  1. Assess the level of risk posed to children by that perpetrator's ongoing involvement in the religious community
  2. Take appropriate steps to manage that risk.
24. A2A will maintain a register which lists any incident reports or claims in relation to child sexual abuse detailing the
  1. Date of the alleged incident
  2. Name and address of the person who is the subject of the complaint
  3. Nature of the incident / complaint

4. Details of any resolution re the incident / complaint
  5. Details of action taken
25. A list of all credentials holders shall be reviewed by the National Leadership Team annually to ensure that both initial and ongoing working with children training requirements are met.
26. Religious institutions such as schools or child care services that are associated with A2A or A2A affiliated churches should report their compliance with the 10 Child Safe Standards to A2A.

