

Illawarra Church of Christ

Safe Church Constitutive Documentation Extract:

Charter:

11. Safe Ministry

The Church is committed to being a safe and welcoming community for all, free from abuse or harm of any kind. This applies especially to children and vulnerable people. The Church Board is committed to developing, administering, and maintaining Safe Ministry policy and processes in accordance with Australian laws.

The church is committed to the Churches of Christ NSW&ACT Professional Conduct Protocols. which are embraced by both Board and Ministry Team.

Each Board Member, and each person who works with children on behalf of the Church shall hold a NSW Working with Children Check, verified by the Church Secretary.

Procedures:

13.2 Duties of The Church Board

- I. Receiving concerns and complaints, dealing with them equitably and as needs be, determining the procedure and mechanism for any disciplinary action.

19. CHILD-SAFE AND CHILD-FRIENDLY PROCEDURE

The Illawarra Church of Christ policy for child safety embraces the following NSW State sanctioned principals:

Principle 1: The Church focuses on what is best for children.

Principle 2: All children are respected and treated fairly.

Principle 3: Children's families and communities are welcome and encouraged to participate in the Church.

Principle 4: Children receive services from skilled and caring adults.

For information on these principals see: <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/child-safe-principles>

19.1 Implementation of the Child Safe and Child Friendly Policy

The following shall be undertaken:

- **Definitions:**

Child, Children. Those under the age of 18 including youth, teenagers, adolescents.

Worker: Any person who undertakes duties in a Children's program.

- These processes shall not apply to the activities of the church where children are in the care and, or supervision of their parent or guardian. For this purpose, the guardian is the person who the parent, or legal guardian, has entrusted to care for the child either informally or formally. (for example, a grandparent or family friend).

Explanatory Note: The church will not rely on this provision but rather shall err on the side of caution and meet community expectations. To explain by examples:

- 1. Children attending a church service or a Church Picnic, are in the control of their parents (or themselves) and a church service or picnic is not a children's or youths' program under this procedure.*
 - 2. Children attending a Sunday School in parallel with a church service are in the care of a Children's Program. We will treat a circumstance where children come and go as they please as a Children's Program. Examples are the Breakfast Club or, say, a face painting tent at a fete or market. Here the children are broadly in the care of their parents (or themselves) but while in attendance at the program, it can be argued they are in the care of the program and hence the program will be treated as a church Children's Program.*
- These processes do apply where the church, through its staff, members or congregants engages in the care of children.
 - The church shall not undertake ad hoc children's or youth programs. All programs shall be authorised by the Board Chairman. A register of approved programs shall be maintained. See Appendix 19 - A.
 - Approval for a Program shall not be granted unless a Program Leader is nominated. The Program Leader shall be aware of and agree to uphold the above Child-safe and child friendly Principals, as evidenced by a statement to this effect in the Programs Register.
 - The Program Leader shall nominate those people who will conduct the program (Workers). Only the Program Leader and these Workers may supervise or have significant interaction with children. Adult visitors to a program event shall be monitored by a Worker.
 - Before commencing involvement in the program, the Program Leader and each proposed Worker shall provide the Church Board Secretary (or if none is appointed the Church Board Chairperson) with their full name, their date of birth and their Working with Children number.
 - The Church Board Secretary shall maintain a register of persons with Working with Children Numbers (See Appendix 19B). As persons are added to this list their WWC check shall be verified as legitimate through an online check by the Church Secretary. Paperwork proffered by the worker shall not be accepted as verification. The date of verification and the signature of the verifier shall be included in register. A person shall not act as their own verifier. The maintainer of the WWC register shall verify each registered person periodically.
 - Only persons with a verified WWC number shall be Program Leaders or Workers. The Program Leader shall review the WWC Register to ensure each Worker is verified and shall maintain a Program list of Worker's names and WWC numbers.
 - On each occasion that the Program is being undertaken the Program Leader, or delegate, shall keep a record of each worker involved. To the extent practicable, a list of visitors shall also be kept. Where children are directly handed into the care of the program, a list of children present

is to be maintained. Where children come and go a register of children's names is not necessary.

- To the extent possible and consistent with the Principals listed above there should never be an occasion where a program is underway where only one Worker (and certainly not a visitor) is present with a child or group of children. This will also apply to adolescents who act as workers. This also includes transport of children. However, transport of children is to be avoided.

19.2 Working with Children Processes and Practices

19.2.1 Overview

A Working with Children Check is a prerequisite for anyone in child-related work in NSW. A Working with Children Check includes national police check and review of findings of misconduct involving children. The result is either a clearance or a bar.

If the outcome is a clearance, the Check is valid for five years and may be used for any child-related work (paid or voluntary) in NSW. Cleared applicants will be subject to ongoing monitoring and relevant new records could lead to a bar and the clearance being revoked.

Before engaging a new, paid, child-related worker, the Church must ensure the worker has a clearance to work with children, by holding a WWC number. The only way to accurately determine a person's clearance status is by verifying their Working with Children Check online; paper evidence of a clearance should not be accepted. As noted, persons who wish to work with children shall be listed in a register held by the church secretary and the validity of each person's number shall be verified online by the Church Board Secretary.

19.2.2 Church Responsibilities

The Church shall:

- Maintain its registration as an employer with Working with Children Check.
- Verify every new paid employee online before hiring them.
- Verify current paid workers and all volunteers who propose to work with children.
- Remove any barred or unauthorised person (a person who does not have a WWC Number) from child-related work

19.2.3 Who needs a Working with Children Check?

Child related work is defined as face-to-face contact with children or work in a child-related role.

The church can be seen to be involved in any, or all, of the following Child-related industry sectors/ activities: Child Development, Clubs or other bodies providing services for children, Early education and childcare, Child Education, Entertainment for children, Religious services, Transport services for children. Youth work.

19.2.4. Exemptions

There are specified exemptions from the Working with Children Check under Part 4, Clause 20 of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013. People covered by these exemptions are not required to have a Working with Children Check:

- Work for a period of no more than five days in a calendar year, if the work involves minimal direct contact with children or is supervised when children are present.
- A visiting speaker, adjudicator, performer, assessor or other similar visitor on a one-off occasion and is carried out in the presence of one or more other adults.
- People under the age of 18.
- Work by an interstate visitor:
 - in a one-off event such as a jamboree, sporting or religious event or tour, if the event is the only child-related work carried out by the worker in NSW in that calendar year and the period of work does not exceed 30 days.
 - who holds an interstate working with children check or is exempt from the requirement to have such a check in his or her home jurisdiction, whose child related work in NSW is for no more than 30 days in any calendar year.

19.2.5 Verifying a child-related worker.

Verification can only be completed online. Letters of clearance cannot be accepted from workers because these documents may be falsified, or the worker may have become barred since receiving their initial clearance.

The process also connects workers to employers, which allows the Office of the Children's Guardian to immediately notify an employer if a worker becomes barred.

19.2.6 Privacy and confidentiality

The Office of the Children's Guardian will maintain a register for Working with Children Checks.

19.2.6.1 Information about a person that may be shared.

The following information about a person contained in this register may be made available by the Office of the Children's Guardian to an employer or proposed employer on request by the employer or proposed employer:

- The Working with Children Check application number of any worker.
- The current Check status of a child-related worker.
- The number, type (volunteer or non-volunteer) and expiry date of a Working with Children Check held by a child-related worker.

The Office of the Children's Guardian must not make this information available unless the request is made in an approved format and contains the particulars required by the Office of the Children's Guardian.

19.2.6.2 Information about an employer that may be shared.

The following information about an employer contained in the register may be made publicly available by the Office of the Children's Guardian:

- the trading name or registered business name of the employer
- the child-related work for which the employer engages a child-related worker
- the postcode or name of the place in which the employer's business is located

- whether any requests for information regarding a Check status were made to the Children's Guardian by the employer within a specified period.

Appendix 19A Register of the Children’s Programs of the Illawarra Church of Christ.

The following Children’s programs are sanctioned by the Church. The designated leaders have affirmed that they have read and will abide by the church “Child-Safe and Child-Friendly Procedures”.

| Program Name | Leader | Telephone # | Date |
|--------------|--------|-------------|------|
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Appendix 19 B: Register of Working with Children Checks

| Name | Position | Address | Date of Birth | WWC Number | Expiry Date | Last Checked By | Date |
|------|----------|---------|---------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|------|
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YOUTH GROUP POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Youth Experience - Skills for life - youth group / ministry

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1. Introduction

Skills for life youth group is committed to providing an open, welcoming, and safe environment for all youth from all backgrounds regardless of class, religion, socio demographics. Children are entitled to be safe and protected.

They have the right to be respected, listened to, and to have their particular needs addressed in a seeding approach utilising Christian values within a non “religious” fun program that uses the word of god throughout its activities. This approach is a non-invasive, 21 century way of countering the damage some organisations using “old church methods” have upon the new generation of youth in the community today. This program aims to provide a forward-thinking option for youth to better their lives while relating to the way of life Jesus intended for them. For

John 14:6 proclaims that Jesus answered “I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.”

So, LOVE is the key.

Northern Beaches Church of Christ loves and values youth as Jesus did. It will be a privilege to teach and instruct our children and contribute to their understanding of the way of life with Gods values like a misty blanket within the whole program so youth from all demographics can feel the love of Christ. And as they enquire, we can then fill their vessels with the gospel as they are ready. We all are aware that whether from a disadvantaged or financially privileged lifestyle without the skills of life and most importantly without Christ’s Love, all is lost eternally so this program is aiming at all youth in the community that may want a void fulfilled, this can be just a lack of confidence, family issues or simply needing a positive peep group due to loneliness or lack of positive role models.

The following information outlines procedures relating to the youth group to ensure the safety and welfare of youth in our care, and to minimise the risk of anything detracting from the mission of proclaiming the good news of Christ.

2. Safe ministry

Northern Beaches Church of Christ has proven to be committed to the physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare and safety of all people, particularly within our own community. And the skills for life program is just an extension of this ethos. So safe ministry practices are essential for a successful project and future growth options.

To ensure the safety of children and vulnerable people in our communities, we will:

- carefully select and screen youth team members
- adopt and encourage safe ministry practices by our team
- provide appropriate safe ministry training for all youth team members
- ensure a clear reporting procedure is in place, and respond promptly to any concerns or complaints
- provide supervision of youth adhering to the church’s safe ministry policy.
- regularly review safe ministry policies and procedures.

This policy is endorsed by the Church Board and a copy is held by the Church Secretary.

This youth group idea meets the definition of 'child related work' under the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act, so all team members are subject to NSW Office of the Children's Guardian mandatory screening and training requirements (volunteers and staff).

The Youth Ministry leader maintains a register of volunteer adults who assist in the ministry and who have a current NSW Working with Children Clearance. In parallel, the WWC check details and their validation is held in the Church Working with Children Register which is maintained by the Church Secretary.

3. Safe Ministry Responsibilities

a. Church Board

The Church Board sets the Child Safe and Child Friendly Procedures of the church. The Board has responsibility to ensure compliance with screening under the legislation. The Church Board is responsible for approving safe ministry policies and procedures and managing (and external reporting where indicated) any child protection issues, concerns, or allegations.

b. Youth group team

- Be familiar with, and provide leadership in line with, North Beaches Church of Christ Procedures, including Child Safe and Child Friendly Procedures.
- Maintain a current working with children clearance (every 5 years) and safe ministry training (every 3 years)
- Ensure youth team maintain a current working with children check clearance
- Provide training and supervision for youth team members
- Provide necessary resources, knowledge and goals.
- Report difficulties, concerns, or suggestions to the ministry leader.

4. Selecting, screening, and training the youth group team

Northern Beaches Church of Christ will ensure all youth team members/volunteers are screened in accordance with requirements in the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 and Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013 BEFORE commencing in any child related role in a volunteer capacity.

The screening and selection process for a youth team staff member or volunteer must:

- Display the desirable characteristics of a positive role model with Christian values
- Be familiar with Northern Beaches Church of Christ Child Safe and Child Friendly Procedure and this Procedure,
- Maintain current safe ministry training

- Consent to and have sound referee checks.
- Participate in ongoing training and support.

NOTE: Desirable characteristics for a youth team member/volunteer include:

A person who has a strong committed relationship with God and model godliness, believes that young people are important to God, respects and loves young people, loves to learn, reliable, works as a team player, wise, uses discernment, open in their actions and behaviour.

4.1 Training

On line training provided through Safe Ministry Training or similar suitable course

(www.safeministrytraining.com.au) will be recommended as it gives a sound understanding as to how to conduct oneself in a youth orientated environment. This process involves the provision of a current working with children number, online verification, online training and the completion of referee checks.

4.2 Guidelines for serving in Youth Group Ministry.

The following information outlines procedures designed to ensure the safety and welfare of youth in our care, and our workers/volunteer. The primary strategy for achieving this is outlined below:

To ensure the safety of our children/youth and volunteers, no volunteer shall be alone with a child or young person, except in an emergency that would warrant completion of an incident report.

At a minimum there shall be at least two youth team worker volunteers present with a child at all times. This principle applies to all activities, all venues, all the time when youth group is operating and applies to and transport to and from a venue.

4.3 Supervision

The Department of Education and Communities recommendations do not require a fixed adult to children ratios for the Primary / Secondary age group for this program

Nevertheless, Skills for life group has identified that it is necessary to nominate a ratio to ensure the needs of the youth are met and this ratio shall be no less than one leader per 10 youth.

There may be a need the ratio to change as to venue, activity, or risk factor to 1:6 Example: future goal of a youth camp or picnic near a water source. Or the needs of the children involved are met re: gender balance, disabilities.

4.5 Registration and permission forms

Parents or guardians of youth will be required to complete registration forms which include relevant medical information and emergency contact details. The forms should include name and age of the youth.

Guardians/Parents are to sign children in and out of the youth group or offsite activities and have a feedback box present for group appraisal.

This provides the opportunity for helpers to provide a handover or feedback to parents/guardians, and to discuss any issues or concerns.

Volunteers and visitors shall also sign-in and out of activity sessions.

4.6 Personal care

Assisting and encouraging independence is an important aspect of providing personal care, particularly where it is possible for the child to perform the task for themselves. The following procedures have been designed to assist in this regard:

- Primary / secondary youth are to go with a friend of the same gender to the closest toilets if off site. Leaders/helpers will monitor the time children are away from the group.
- In the case of youth with special needs any special requirements will be identified in discussion with the parents before the youth is left in care.

4.7 Unsettled / upset youth (disciplining and resolution)

Conflict resolution training and policy will be necessary for youth group volunteers so disputes will be handled in a safe ethical manner. Often the best policy is open communication and debriefing to come to a resolution between parties involved.

A Skills for Life youth group member must accept that as a helper it is NOT acceptable to:

- raise your voice loudly (unless it is to warn of immediate danger)
- berate or humiliate a child
- use personal insults or references to personal traits i.e., 'you are a'
- physically restrain a child (unless to protect or avoid an accident)
- use any form of physical contact as a disciplinary measure e.g., smacking.

4.8 Activities and games

Youth learn from the way events are organised and conducted. Activities that emphasise gender, physical, intellectual or ethnic differences should be assessed for their appropriateness. Games involving physical contact especially between older children shall be assessed to ensure the level and type of contact is appropriate and is not likely to offend or embarrass more sensitive participants.

Considerations when planning a program for a youth event will include the following:

- Does the game or activity encourage self-confidence, cooperation, teamwork, and inclusion while meeting the goals set?
- Is the activity appropriate for all youth represented in the group IE: Non-religious but addressing the purpose of Christ/the word of God.
- Is the activity safe, fun and meets a purpose?

Activities will involve participation of fellow church role models:

Example: Cooking lesson to provide for church or Friday nights by an older role model.

Self-confidence and Innovation activities:

Example: Mirror Art; draw themselves as god sees them (Portrait) The youth look at the mirror but draw with their opposite hand to their main hand without looking at the paper.

(Psalm 139: 14 – I praise you because I am fairly and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well)

- Ensuring sufficient supervision is present to ensure safety, facilitate inclusion, and behaviour moderating.
- That any visual materials used are suitable for age group.

4.9 First aid and emergencies

The following strategies are employed to ensure safety:

- A registration form is completed to identify allergies, special food requirements, other special needs.
- For youth activities where the parents or carers are not on site, the list of emergency contact details will be retained in case of an emergency.
- For the wellbeing of other children, children who are unwell with contagious illnesses are unable to attend youth group events. Where it becomes obvious when youth are unwell the emergency contact will be called for the youth to be taken home
- At least one volunteer or worker rostered on must be a qualified first aid provider and always have access to a mobile phone and first aid kit in case of emergencies. The first aid kit is to be maintained and accessible at all times
- a written record will be made in relation to any incident.
- Whether any follow up action is or was required e.g., medical attention this shall be recorded.
- Whether circumstances resulting in the incident requires action to be taken to avoid a similar incident occurring again. In the event of a significant injury, parents/ guardian will be asked to attend immediately if they are onsite, or phoned if offsite.

4.10 Communication and Multi- media

Use of communication media should be:

- Limited to administrative or logistical content. E.g., a reminder about an event, or change of event time.
- Open communication. E.g., a group email to participants.
- Made with the approval of the Team Leader.
- Relate only to the activities of group.

Records of communication should be retained in keeping with legislative record keeping requirements.

Youth activities may have a public Facebook page which workers can utilise to engage with youth as this communication is open and allows parents to freely view all content.

No photos are to be posted on Facebook unless parents have given written consent (via a general permission form).

Photos posted on Facebook will be classed as 'advertising'. Security settings of any Facebook page must be set to restrict non-administrators from posting photos. Content will be regularly reviewed by the Program Leader who shall also be the page administrator

The Program Leader must ensure no bullying or inappropriate communication occurs between young people on the Facebook site. Anything inappropriate will be removed and, if necessary, a person can be 'blocked' from the page.

4.11 Physical contact

Our first option for affirming a child or young person should be verbal responses and appropriate attention. It is important to recognise the opportunity to teach children/youth appropriate levels of physical contact for the settings we are in, and that there is a greater need for formality in a group setting than they may be familiar with in a family context.

Appropriate physical contact should be brief and may include:

- high five
- handshake
- patting the child on the head, hand, back or shoulder in affirmation
- open hugs (side by side, not face to face)

Inappropriate contact includes:

- kissing a child, or encouraging a child to kiss you
- extended hugging
- touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume
- any physical contact that may even potentially be interpreted or construed as being sexual in nature or overtone

- anything that could give the impression of favouritism or an inappropriate special relationship.

In case of an emergency or danger behaviour, there may be a need for physical restraint of a child or young person. In this instance, the group leader must be informed of the circumstances of the incident as soon as possible, and it may be necessary to complete an incident report form.

4.12 Transportation and Off-Site Events

When planning an offsite activity involving youth, a risk assessment will be completed following the process below:

Only youth with completed permission forms will be able to participate in the activity/event or transportation. Supervision ratios will be met with reference to the risk assessment for the event. The following should be taken on all offsite activities:

Emergency contact details of all attendants

At least one mobile phone and first aid kit

Where possible it will be the responsibility of parents to arrange transportation for their children to and from. Where it is necessary for children/youth to be transported in private vehicles by volunteers there shall be two volunteers present at all times.

It is an obligation of to ensure all people attending events are safe, however personal arrangements made before and after church events by parents/carers/church members in relation to transporting children and young people are not subject to the requirements performed above.

4.13 Parent/ Guardian/ public feedback procedure

On occasions parents, carers, or other people involved in church may raise a concern relating to a matter involving their child, the content of the program, or some other point of concern that does not relate to a 'risk of harm' situation.

In this instance it is the policy of skills for life youth group to:

- Listen carefully.
- Receive the feedback willingly - do not dismiss the person's concerns or be defensive.
- Be sure you are clear about what aspect of the situation has caused concern.
- Confirm you will advise the relevant person involved.

In some instances, it may be necessary to:

- Defer the conversation until after children have been collected and/or until the youth group leader can be part of the conversation.
- Ask the ministry worker to document the relevant information or make their own record.
- Seek advice from, or escalate the matter to, the pastoral team if necessary.
- Report back to the parent or guardian as part of addressing the issue.
- Facilitate changes to safe ministry procedures if indicated.

4.14 Child abuse or risk of harm

Church workers whether paid or voluntary have implied authority over children because of their position, greater age, maturity, physical size, and life experience. Abuse arises from a misuse of authority or power. Due to this inherent imbalance of power children are incapable of giving valid consent to abuse. Child abuse is any act of omission or commission that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development. Abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, bullying, spiritual, or neglect. It is important that every person involved in ministry is aware of the definitions of child abuse and the indicators of abuse, and when and how to report these concerns. At Northern Beaches Church of Christ this information is provided via, provision of written reports with ongoing supervision and support.

There may be times where a child or young person discloses information directly to you in your role as a ministry worker that raises concerns about their safety, welfare, or wellbeing. It is important you are aware of how to manage this situation in case it occurs. The following information provides a helpful guide:

- DO listen and stay calm (avoid displaying strong reactions).
- DON'T ask more questions than are necessary to be clear about what the child is telling you.
- DO reassure the child, let them know you are glad they told you, and that you are going to get help about what to do next.
- DO report to your ministry leader as soon as possible.
- DO write a record of what the child said and what you said as soon as possible.
- DON'T discuss the matter with anyone other than your ministry or Senior Minister)
- DON'T notify or raise the matter with parents or caregivers - this is not your role

(This information was, in part, provided by disclosure of risk by a child/young person guideline from the <http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/youthworks> website and

Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/links

Confidentiality is an important aspect of relationships with children and young people; however, it is important that we make it clear that there are limitations. There are times when you will have a responsibility to report information that has been disclosed to you, even though this may breach confidentiality.

This includes:

- When a person is in danger.
- When a person threatens to harm themselves or others.
- When a criminal offence may have been committed.

The role of a skills for life youth group volunteer is to notify and discuss concerns with the Team Leader as soon as possible, especially where there are current and immediate concerns for the

safety, welfare, and wellbeing of a child. Their role in reporting abuse or risk of harm generally ceases once they have provided all necessary information (written then verbal) to the Team Leader. The Team Leader in conjunction with the Senior Minister will evaluate the information and risk to the child and determine an appropriate course of action for the following reasons:

- The process allows the church management hierarchy to evaluate the information to determine if they come to the same conclusion.
- The process allows people with detailed knowledge about child protection reporting to collaboratively determine the necessary course of action

The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 will be always adhered to by the skills for life youth group.