



Safe Church Policy

Prepared by	Safe Ministry Coordinator
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Reviewed by	Safe Ministry Coordinator
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Safe Church Policy

Commitment

Orange Evangelical Church is committed to providing programs that model the love of Christ to all whom we have contact with. We seek to promote physical, emotional, and spiritual safety for everyone, with particular care given to vulnerable people.

Purpose

Orange Evangelical Church has adopted the *Safe Church Policy* to:

- help us live out our biblical mandate to love our neighbour (Mark 12:30-31).
- provide a framework to inform the provision of safe programs and to minimise the risk of abuse and harm.
- meet our legal obligations under State and Federal law to protect children and vulnerable adults.
- Implement the Child Safe Standards

The *Safe Church Policy* outlines the principles Orange Evangelical Church is committed to upholding. More detail regarding the practical implementation is available in the relevant procedure documents.

Governance

The Overseers of Orange Evangelical Church take responsibility for reviewing these principles regularly and ensuring they are embedded in the organisation's culture at all levels.¹

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- all OEC leadership, including paid staff and volunteers
- all people who are involved in or attend the Church and its programs

¹ As per Child Safe Standard 1.

1. Recruitment, Induction and Training

Orange Evangelical Church (OEC) is committed to ensuring all leaders (paid or volunteer) are screened, appropriately trained, and supported.

No one with a criminal record of child or domestic abuse, molestation or similar offences is allowed to be involved in children's or youth ministry or in any other leadership role at OEC

All leaders working with vulnerable people should be regular participants at an OEC congregation. After a six-month period of attendance, they may be considered for volunteering.

If leaders are working with children or youth, they must have a verified Working with Children Check (renewed every five years) and complete an Ansvr approved Safe Ministry Training course (renewed every three years) prior to volunteering.

Leaders must agree to and sign the *Code of Conduct* prior to volunteering and provide two referees who can confirm the proposed leader is suitable to work with vulnerable people.

Team Leaders are responsible for the induction and ongoing training of volunteers with regard to safe practices specific to their ministry area.²

2. Safe Programs and Risk Management

OEC is committed to ensuring our programs and events are physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe and appropriate for those attending. Careful consideration will be given to the activities chosen, the venue, safe ratios of supervision, appropriate toileting practices, transportation, work health and safety, parental or guardian permissions and confidentiality of records kept. Detailed information relevant to each ministry area can be found in the *Safe Church Guides*.

OEC will ensure that risk assessments are made by relevant leaders for any regular or special program / activity undertaken at or for the church. OEC will consider the likelihood of an incident occurring, the seriousness of the consequences and the difficulty of avoiding the risk. The *Safe Ministry Risk Management Procedure* document provides more detail about this process.

If an individual attending OEC has been identified as a person of concern, the Safe Ministry Contacts will undertake a risk assessment and coordinate a response.³

² As per Child Safe Standard 5 & 7.

³ As per Child Safe Standard 8.

3. Reporting Concerns

OEC is committed to creating a culture where people feel safe to speak about inappropriate behaviour without fear of being rejected, ridiculed, or subjected to any form of victimisation.

Any member of church or the broader community may report concerns or incidents that relate to the safety of a program or a leader's behaviour. Avenues to make a report will be made clear on the website (<https://www.oechurch.org.au/>), on safe ministry documents and at regular intervals in the church newsletter. This information will also be made accessible to children and youth.

Team Leaders will take responsibility to address minor breaches of the *Code of Conduct*, as described by the *Responding to Breaches of the Code of Conduct (Disciplinary Policy)*. The Safe Ministry Contacts will respond to major breaches according to the guidelines in the *Safe Ministry Incident Management Process*. This includes reporting any criminal activity to the Police and allegations of abuse to the relevant government authorities in accordance with legislative duties. Throughout this process OEC will strive to protect the confidentiality, dignity and well-being of all individuals involved. Any child-related issues will be managed with a focus on the interest of the child.⁴

4. Recordkeeping

OEC is committed to keeping reliable and comprehensive safe ministry records. These will be kept indefinitely, in hard copy and/or electronically in a secure manner. The records will be kept in a way that protects confidentiality and will only be accessed by authorised persons.

The *Safe Ministry Record Keeping Procedure* has more detail about the information that is required to be kept and who is responsible for ensuring this occurs.⁵

5. Third Parties

OEC will require any third party (external party using church property) that provides services to children and/or young people to provide written confirmation of their compliance with the Child Safe Standards at least annually.

⁴ As per Child Safe Standard 6.

⁵ As per Child Safe Standard 10.

Safe Ministry Contacts

Ed Springer	0419 277 408	ed@oechurch.org.au
Karina Blanch	0438 698 496	karina@oechurch.org.au
Chris Holding	0404 110 238	chris@oechurch.org.au
Kerryn Hanratty	0408 724 801	kerryn@oechurch.org.au
Baden Bogdanovs	0405 109 635	bbogdanovs@gmail.com
Rachel Crane	0404 209 238	rachel_k_morgan@yahoo.com

Relevant Legislation

Crimes Act 1900

Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)

Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)

Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW).

Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021 (NSW)

Related Policy and Procedure Documents

Code of Conduct for Volunteers, Overseers and Ministry Staff

Code of Conduct (Ministry Staff)

Responding to Code of Conduct Breaches (Disciplinary Policy)

Safe Ministry Incident Management Process

Safe Ministry Risk Management Procedure

Safe Ministry Record Keeping Procedure

Safe Church Guides

Definitions

In the *Safe Church Policy* and associated documents, unless the context otherwise requires:

complaint includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of Orange Evangelical Church's *Code of Conduct*.

disclosure means a process by which a person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused or neglected.

Mandatory Reporting Legislation means the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*

Reportable Conduct Legislation means the *Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)*

vulnerable means the state of being unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason, and includes those that suffer disadvantage such as social and financial hardship.

WWCC Legislation means the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*.
