



# SAFE CHURCH POLICY

<b>Prepared by</b>	Safe Ministry Coordinator
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMITMENT AND PURPOSE.....	2
GOVERNANCE .....	2
SCOPE.....	2
1. RECRUITMENT, INDUCTION AND TRAINING.....	3
2. SAFE PROGRAMS AND RISK MANAGEMENT.....	3
3. REPORTING CONCERNS.....	4
4. RECORD KEEPING .....	4
5. THIRD PARTIES .....	4
SAFE MINISTRY CONTACTS .....	5
RELEVANT LEGISLATION.....	5
RELATED POLICY AND PROCEDURE DOCUMENTS.....	5
DEFINITIONS.....	6



## COMMITMENT AND PURPOSE

The Overseers of Orange Evangelical Church have established this policy to express our commitment to safeguarding vulnerable people involved with Orange Evangelical Church.

This document outlines the underlying principles that guide our approach and the strategies being implemented to embed a safeguarding culture in the organisation at all levels.<sup>1</sup> Because of the changing nature of our world and our organisation, we commit to regularly reviewing and updating this policy to ensure its ongoing effectiveness, relevance and fulfilment of any State and Federal laws to protect children and vulnerable people.

We are committed to the biblical call to actively prevent harm and abuse and ensure the safety and equity of everyone involved in our organisation with special concern for vulnerable people who face a higher risk of mistreatment. This includes children and young people, Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders, people identifying as LBTQI, the elderly, people with disabilities, and those who experience mental health challenges.

It is important that all people involved in our organisation (including vulnerable people and children) are informed about their rights, participate in decisions which significantly affect them, and have their concerns taken seriously. We also want families and communities who are involved in our organisation to be informed and involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable people. All people are encouraged to appropriately express their cultural backgrounds, and racism will not be tolerated within the organisation.

## GOVERNANCE

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

## 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

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<sup>1</sup> As outlined in the NSW Child Safe Standards <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/children-and-young-people/our-commitment-to-child-safety/the-child-safe-standards.html>

## 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 an approximate 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.<sup>2</sup>

## 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 the youth and children ministry areas can be found in the *Safe Church Guides*. For ministry with adults who have intellectual disabilities, this is outlined in the *Jesus Club: Safe Ministry Regarding Vulnerable Adults* document. Special Religious Education teachers must refer to the Department of Education policies.

The OEC Administrator will ensure that risk assessments are made by relevant leaders for any regular or special program / activity undertaken at or for the church. The likelihood of an incident occurring, the seriousness of the consequences and the difficulty of avoiding the risk will all be considered in compliance with the OEC *Work, Health and Safety Policy*. In addition, The *Child Safe Risk Management Plan*, overseen by the Safe Ministry Coordinator will address the prevention of children being exposed to physical, psychological and sexual abuse, ill-treatment and neglect.

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<sup>2</sup> As per Child Safe Standard 5 & 7.

If an individual attending OEC has been identified as a person who poses a risk of harm to a child, the Safe Ministry Contacts will coordinate a response, following the *Person of Concern Guidelines*.<sup>3</sup>

### 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 communications. 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 Procedure*. 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.<sup>4</sup>

### 4. RECORD KEEPING

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.<sup>5</sup>

### 5. THIRD PARTIES

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

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<sup>3</sup> As per Child Safe Standard 8.

<sup>4</sup> As per Child Safe Standard 6.

<sup>5</sup> As per Child Safe Standard 10.

## SAFE MINISTRY CONTACTS

Ed Springer	0419 277 408	<a href="mailto:ed@o church.org.au">ed@o church.org.au</a>
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## 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 Procedure

Person of Concern Guidelines

Safe Ministry Record Keeping Procedure

Safe Church Guides

Jesus Club: Safe Ministry Regarding Vulnerable Adults (2016)

Work, Health and Safety Policy

Child Safe Risk Management Plan

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## 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)*.

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