

# Clergy On Call

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



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A copy of this Policy will be uploaded to Safe Ministry Check accessible through our organizations website located at [www.clergyoncall.org](http://www.clergyoncall.org)

## INTRODUCTION

Clergy On Call is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. This Child Protection Policy Works in conjunction with our Safe Ministry Policy, Incident Management Process, Code of Conduct and Safe Ministry Check software @ [safeministrycheck.com.au](https://safeministrycheck.com.au) We have zero tolerance for child abuse. Clergy On Call is thereby committed to complying with the following ten Child Safe Standards introduced by Child Safe Organisations Act 2024,

1. **Leadership and culture**
2. **Children and young people are empowered**
3. **Family and community engagement**
4. **Equity and diversity**
5. **People working with children are suitable and supported – Screening, recruitment, and supervision are in place.**
6. **Processes to respond to complaints**
7. **Staff knowledge, skills and awareness**
8. **Safe environments**
9. **Continuous improvement**
10. **Policies and procedures support child safety**

These minimum standards introduced by the Qld Government and Child Safety Qld which set out the compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children and young people (or are used by children and young people), to help protect them from harm.

Clergy On Call is deeply committed to promoting and protecting the interests, wellbeing, and safety of all children and young people who engage with our services. We have **zero tolerance for child abuse** in any form. Every member of our organisation — clergy, volunteers, and staff — shares responsibility for creating a culture that prioritises the safety and empowerment of children.

We are committed to embedding the **Ten Child Safe Standards** introduced by the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* into all aspects of our governance, operations, and pastoral practice.

## **1. Leadership and Culture**

Clergy On Call fosters a child-safe culture led by our senior leadership team.

- Our leaders model ethical behaviour, transparency, and accountability in all interactions with children and families.
- Child safety principles are embedded in our strategic planning, decision-making, and service delivery.
- We maintain an open culture that encourages staff and volunteers to raise concerns without fear of reprisal.
- Regular reviews ensure that leadership continues to promote safety and wellbeing as a core organisational value.

## **2. Children and Young People Are Empowered**

We recognise children as active participants in their own safety.

- We listen to and respect the voices of children, encouraging them to express concerns or ideas freely.
- Age-appropriate education and materials are provided to help children understand their rights and what constitutes safe and respectful behaviour.
- Feedback from children and young people informs program design and service improvement.

## **3. Family and Community Engagement**

Families and communities are vital partners in safeguarding children.

- We actively involve parents and guardians in our child safety initiatives and decision-making.
- Regular communication channels (e.g., newsletters, meetings, online updates) keep families informed of our policies and practices.
- We collaborate with community and faith-based networks to strengthen shared child safety responsibilities.

## **4. Equity and Diversity**

Clergy On Call is inclusive and respectful of all children, regardless of background or identity.

- We recognise and address the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disabilities, and those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Our programs promote equity, respect, and participation for all.
- Staff receive cultural competency training to ensure inclusive, sensitive, and fair engagement.

## **5. People Working with Children Are Suitable and Supported**

We ensure that all clergy, staff, and volunteers are carefully screened, recruited, trained, and supervised.

- Mandatory Working With Children Checks (WWCC) and background checks are required prior to engagement.
- Induction and ongoing supervision reinforce expectations around professional conduct and boundaries.
- We provide regular wellbeing and reflective practice sessions to support those working closely with children.

## **6. Processes to Respond to Complaints**

We maintain transparent, accessible, and child-focused complaints processes.

- Complaints and concerns are handled promptly, confidentially, and in accordance with legal obligations.
- Children and families are supported throughout any complaint process.
- We review and learn from incidents to strengthen future prevention and response.

## **7. Staff Knowledge, Skills and Awareness**

Building staff capability is central to maintaining a safe environment.

- All personnel receive regular, evidence-based child safety and safeguarding training.
- Refresher workshops and scenario-based learning ensure practical understanding of reporting obligations and safe practices.
- Staff performance reviews include child safety competencies as a key measure.

## **8. Safe Environments**

We provide physical and online environments that minimise risks to children.

- Risk assessments are conducted regularly for all premises, programs, and activities.
- Clear supervision and behavioural guidelines are enforced.
- Online communication with children is monitored and conducted through secure, approved platforms.

## **9. Continuous Improvement**

Clergy On Call is committed to ongoing review and improvement of its child safety practices.

- Regular audits and feedback loops identify areas for enhancement.
- Child safety performance indicators are monitored by leadership.

- Lessons from internal reviews and sector developments inform updated policies and training.

## **10. Policies and Procedures Support Child Safety**

Our policies and procedures provide a clear and consistent framework for maintaining a child-safe organisation.

- All child safety policies are publicly available and regularly reviewed.
- Policies align with legislative requirements and best-practice standards.
- Staff and volunteers are required to acknowledge and adhere to all child safety policies as a condition of engagement.

Everyone working at Clergy On Call is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse. This policy works in conjunction with our Safe Ministry Policy, Incident Management Process and Code of Conduct, in conjunction with the Safe Ministry Check program as advertised on our website – outlining that we are committed to continuous improvement, education and training and ensuring the protection of Children and Vulnerable People, complying with Qld State Child Protection Legislation including Working With Children Checks, Blue Cards, Reportable Conduct, Child Safety Standards and Mandatory reporting obligations.

We will continually review our child safety processes making them a regular agenda item of our unincorporated association – and bringing to the immediate attention of the Chairman were there is believed to have been any breaches of this Child Protection Policy or our code of conduct or Safe Ministry Policy.

### **APPLICATION**

This policy applies to all staff, contractors and volunteers and to the broad range of situations where interaction with children and young people may occur in the delivery of Clergy On Call services.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. ensure that all staff, contractors and volunteers engaged by [Name of Organisation] are aware of the organisation's commitment to creating and maintaining a childsafe environment that meets the Standards
2. facilitate the prevention of child abuse within [Name of Organisation]
3. establish the framework for an organisational culture of child safety
4. outline the responsibilities that various parties have for identifying possible occasions for child abuse, for establishing controls and procedures for preventing abuse, and for detecting abuse when it occurs
5. provide guidance to staff, volunteers and contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation

6. provide a clear statement to staff, volunteers and contractors forbidding any such abuse
7. provide assurance that all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

## **OUR COMMITMENT**

Clergy On Call is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its programs, and to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment for all children and young people who engage with Clergy On Call and are committed to complying with the Child Safe Standards (**Standards**) introduced by the Qld Government, which set out the compulsory minimum standards for organisations that provide services for children and young people (or are used by children and young people), to help protect them from harm.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse. Clergy On Call has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working Clergy On Call is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between Clergy On Call and all staff, contractors, volunteers, associates, and members of the Clergy On Call Community.

Clergy On Call will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop child protection policies.

Clergy On Call supports and respects all children, staff contractors and volunteers.

Clergy On Call is committed to the cultural safety of children, and pays particular attention to the safety and cultural safety of the following groups of children, in recognition of their increased vulnerability, and diverse and unique identities and experiences:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children living with a disability
- children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans
- children who are intersex, non-binary or gender diverse
- children in and out of home care and the youth justice system.

Any person who believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse must contact the police (telephone 000).

## **CLERGY ON CALL'S APPROACH TO CHILD SAFETY**

In continuing to implement and promote a child-safe system of work, Clergy On Call will:

- develop an environment in which children feel listened to and valued, and in which their concerns are acted upon, including encouraging and allowing children to participate in decisions important to them
- consult with staff and other appropriate parties, including families and children
- assess and manage the risk of abuse to children who interact with Clergy On Call including through recruitment practices and online
- take a proactive approach to child safety, including fostering a culture of openness that encourages all staff to report any concerns of child safety and supports them in this process
- report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authority, whether or not the law requires reporting
- ensure children know the options available to them if they are concerned or feeling unsafe, and foster an environment where children are safe to raise such concerns
- recruit staff who are suitable to work with children and provide high quality training, supervision and professional development to staff
- have policies, procedures and supports in place to reflect these commitments, and review these regularly.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

All staff, contractors and volunteers are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who engage with Clergy On Call. All staff are expected to act in accordance with the Clergy On Calls Child Safety Code of Conduct in their physical and online interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years.

The Governance Group of Clergy On Call has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place. The board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Safety Code of Conduct are in place.

The Chairman of Clergy On Call is responsible for:

- dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse
- ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct
- ensuring that all adults within the Clergy On Call community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures
- ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- providing support to staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

All staff; contractors and volunteers must ensure that they:

- promote child safety at all times
- assess the risk of child abuse within their area of control and eradicate or minimise any risk to the extent possible
- educate employees about the prevention and detection of child abuse
- facilitate the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

Managers should be familiar with the types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

All staff, volunteers and contractors share responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- familiarise themselves with relevant laws, undertake regular annual training through Safe Ministry Check, and Clergy On Call's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements
- report any reasonable belief that a child's safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police or Qld child protection service) and fulfil their obligations as mandatory reporters
- report any suspicion that a child's safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the organisation)



- provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Child** means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.

**Child protection** means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm.

**Child abuse** means

1. a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded, or
  - sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child, or
  - physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child, or
2. any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child or significant neglect of a child.

**Child sexual assault** is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

**Reasonable grounds for belief** is a belief based on reasonable grounds (see below) that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- (a) the child is in need of protection, or
- (b) the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury, or the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child. A "reasonable belief" or a "belief on reasonable grounds" is not the same as having proof, but it is more than mere rumour or speculation.

A “reasonable belief” is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would form the belief on the same grounds. For example, a “reasonable belief” might be formed if:

3. a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
4. a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (the child may be talking about themselves)
5. someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
6. professional observations of the child’s behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused
7. \_\_\_\_\_ signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually **abused**.

## **EMPLOYMENT OF NEW PERSONNEL AND TRAINING**

Clergy On Calls recruitment procedure, including advertising, referee checks at a minimum of two and staff and volunteer preemployment screening, emphasises child safety and wellbeing in line with its commitment to promoting child safety. Clergy On Call has a robust recruitment and selection process, to ensure the recruitment of suitable staff and minimise the risk of recruiting individuals who may commit child abuse.

Note references for people wishing to volunteer through Clergy On Call must have been known for a minimum period of six months, along with a reference being sought from a prior church organisation or christian ministry that they have been associated with. For those that are seeking employment confirmation of good standing and character is too be sought from prior employers in writing and a copy saved too the employees file.

Clergy On Call undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all staff and volunteers. This process aims to:

- 7.1 promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation
- 7.2 identify the safest and most suitable people who share Clergy On Calls values and commitment to protecting children, and
- 7.3 prevent a person from working at Clergy On Call if they pose a risk to children.

Clergy On Call requires all staff and volunteers to pass through the organisation’s recruitment and screening processes before commencing their engagement.

All relevant staff must have current Working with Children Checks to support the ongoing culture of child safety.

Clergy On Call may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working and during their time with Clergy On Call at regular intervals.

Clergy On Call will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

Once engaged, workers and volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this policy.

Clergy On Call is committed to ensuring that staff, contractors and volunteers have access to appropriate induction and ongoing training in relation to their child safety responsibilities, including Clergy ON Call child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures, external reporting obligations (e.g. mandatory reporting) and the Child Safety Code of Conduct that is also a mandatory part of their training through Safe Ministry Check. This Training will be available to staff and volunteers to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those in our care. This training will include how to identify, assess and minimise the risk of child abuse and detect potential signs of child abuse.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Clergy On Call will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach.

Clergy On Call are committed to identifying and managing risks.

## **REPORTING**

All staff, volunteers and contractors are responsible for reporting child safety concerns to their supervisor or Clergy On Calls Chairman – Colin Christian – 0466 390 470 as soon as possible after receiving such information or forming a belief that a child is at risk. We actively encourage the reporting of sexual abuse.

In situations where the supervisor or child safety officer is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision.

Supervisors must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the Chairman of Clergy On Call and also to any external regulatory body such as the police.

If any staff member, volunteer or contractor has a reasonable belief that reportable conduct may have occurred, then they must report the incident to the Chairman of Clergy On Call directly and immediately. If the incident potentially involves a criminal offence, the incident must also be reported to the local police station or by calling 000 after consulting with Chairman or Vice Chairman as reasonably practicable.

Reportable conduct includes the following incidents:

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a child, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the offence has been commenced or concluded
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

Where a law enforcement agency is seeking to investigate child safety concerns, staff members must co-operate to the best of their ability.

Clergy On Call also works to ensure all children, young people, families and staff understand their obligations and know who to tell if they observe abuse, are a victim, or notice inappropriate behaviour.

## **INVESTIGATING**

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to investigate a report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Chairman will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Chairman may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

The Chairman will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in relation to the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Chairman shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process as deemed appropriate.

## **RESPONDING**

If it is alleged that staff member, contractor or volunteer has committed any offences whether through voluntary or paid employment. It will result in automatic suspension from duties within Clergy On Call if they are under investigation internally or by the Police or authorities for committing any form of sexual abuse. It includes the automatic termination of their employment or involvement with our organization if found guilty of committing sexual abuse either by self-admission, internal investigation or by a court. All employees/ volunteers that engage and provide services with Clergy On Call are obligated too report reasonable

suspicion of sexual abuse to the senior management (chair/vice chair) of Clergy on Call and the Police and ACS Insurance Services will be notified immediately.

## **PRIVACY**

Clergy On Call will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Clergy On Call will have safeguards and practices in place to ensure that any personal information considered or recorded remains confidential.

In accordance with privacy laws, everyone is entitled to know how the personal information will be recorded, what will or can be done with it, and who may be able to access it.

## **REVIEWING**

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the organisation's care.