

# Safe Church Policy

This policy outlines the underlying principles that direct our approach to safeguarding vulnerable people involved with Church of Christ Albany.

## BASIS

We are committed to safety of vulnerable persons because it is integral to our mission. We believe all people are made in the image of God and as such they are to be respected, valued, and treated with love and dignity. As followers of Christ we are called to love vulnerable people as Christ loved them. Jesus did not use His power for selfish means rather He gave Himself in selfless, sacrificial love.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all leaders at COCA—pastors, elders, staff, volunteers, and anyone acting on behalf of the Church in any ministry or activity. It aligns with our Biblical convictions, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and Child Safe Organisations WA.

## DEFINITIONS

### **Vulnerable Person means:**

- a) children (under 18 years of age)
- b) adults (18 years or above) who are or may be unable to protect themselves due to age, disability, illness, trauma, or other factors
- c) a senior
- d) gender and sexually diverse persons.

### **Reportable Conduct**

as defined by the Children's Guardian Act 2019 includes the following:

- a) Any sexual offence, or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child,
- b) Any assault, ill-treatment, or neglect of a child, or
- c) Any behaviour that causes emotional or psychological harm to a child, whether, in any case, with the consent of the child.
- d) or Offence under s43B (failure to protect) or s316 A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900

## POLICY STATEMENT/COMMITMENT

At COCA we commit to:

**Safeguard Vulnerable People** we are committed to creating and maintaining a safe, respectful, and caring environment for all persons, especially vulnerable individuals, including children (under 18), seniors, people with disabilities, and others who may be unable to protect themselves due to age, illness, trauma, or disability

We are committed to a Biblical call to care for the vulnerable by actively preventing harm and abuse, and by seeking to provide safe leaders, programs and spaces. We are also responsible to follow the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and comply fully with Western Australian legislation including the Working with Children Check and mandatory reporting laws.

We are committed to consulting as appropriate and ensuring that vulnerable people are able to voice their concerns and thoughts about decisions that affect them. We recognise the diverse needs of vulnerable people should be taken into account and their concerns taken seriously.

### **Safe Leadership and Recruitment**

We are committed to ensuring all COCA ministry Leaders are screened, trained, and appropriately supported for the position they hold by the process outlined below.

All volunteers in contact with vulnerable persons must:

- Be regular attendees and participants of COCA
- Have roles and responsibilities clearly outlined as they start a new ministry role. Undergo references and screening focused on safeguarding suitability, this is done via Safe Ministry Check.
- All leaders will have completed the Safe Ministry Training Course (Safe Ministry Check) relevant for their position. This training outlines appropriate behaviour such as including how to minimise the possibility of harm or abuse, appropriate boundaries, as well as training in how to identify and report cases of abuse.
- If working with children the volunteer must hold a valid Working with Children Card
- Relevant leaders will have committed to the leader's Code of Conduct and behave as followers of Jesus and be willing to be held accountable for their behaviour.
- Leaders must commit to refresher training where appropriate with Safe Ministry Training to be completed every 2 years.
- Leaders should model safe ministry culture safeguarding should be discussed routinely in meetings and integrated into all planning and community life.
- Promote a culture where safe ministry is seen not as administrative compliance but as ministry care.

## **Provide Safe Programs and Environments**

We are committed to ensuring that our ministry programs and events are safe and appropriate for those attending. Careful consideration is given to the activities chosen, the venue, safe ratios of supervision, appropriate toileting practices, transportation, work health and safety. Parental or guardian permission will be asked for and recorded, and kept confidentially. To help maintain appropriate standards, we will give all leaders access to ongoing training and adequate supervision in their roles and responsibilities.

- Programs involving vulnerable persons must:
  - Be risk-assessed and held in safe environments.
  - Include check-in/check-out procedures for children (where applicable) and gathering emergency contact and medical information.
- Volunteers should not transport minors alone—always ensure parental permission and adhere to safe transport protocols.
- Special guidelines—for toileting or supervision of young children, volunteers should follow the procedure outlined in the COCA kids ministry.

We are committed to ongoing improvement therefore we:

- Keep detailed records
  - WWC checks and expiry dates
  - Training participation and refreshers
  - Signed acknowledgments of policies by leaders/volunteers
  - Incident or disclosure reports and follow-up actions
- Conduct regular reviews of ministries and events in a timely manner.
- Review policies bi-annually:
  - Stay current with legislative changes, denominational recommendations, and lessons from internal reviews or incidents.

**Appropriately Respond to Concerns or Complaints**

We are committed to creating a culture where people feel safe to speak out about inappropriate behaviour without fear of being rejected or ridiculed. We are committed to listening and appropriately responding to allegations of Reportable Conduct or other concerns or complaints about behaviour and safety at COCA. Throughout this process we are committed to protecting the confidentiality, dignity, health and wellbeing of all individuals involved.

We will appropriately respond to:

- a) allegations of leader misconduct and/or b) reports of vulnerable persons at risk of harm.

**Responding to any allegations of leader misconduct**

*Care of the alleged victim.*

COCA is concerned to protect the interests and welfare of children and vulnerable people as of first priority. All leaders will report allegations to a COCA Church Safe Church Contact. Detail of action to be taken can be found in Responding to Allegations of Misconduct and Necessary Reporting.

*Support of Leaders.*

We are committed to ongoing leadership training, support, and supervision of leaders. Where a leader is the subject of an allegation of ministry misconduct, we will provide support to both the alleged victims and the accused person. We will carefully monitor and provide appropriate care for anyone in COCA who has been found to have breached any Code of Conduct or Safe Ministry practice.

**b) Where it is suspected that a vulnerable person is at risk of harm, abuse, neglect or ill-treatment.**

All leaders will report such disclosures or suspicions to a COCA Safe Ministry Contact. Any child related issues will be managed with a focus on the interests of the child and will be reported to the relevant WA Government Child protection bodies according to the Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse in WA as governed and directed by the Children and Community Services Act 2004 and in accordance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Western Australia).

COCA Safe Ministry Contacts  
 Tim Burns - Executive Minister  
 Craig Bottomley - Church Elder

Date Policy Approved	
Approved by	
Review Date:	

## APPENDIX A

### Associated Documents & References

Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse in WA – Resources

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/mandatory-reporting-of-child-sexual-abuse-wa-resources>

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/national-principles-child-safe-organisations>

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

<https://www.cyp.wa.gov.au/>

Churches of Christ in WA safe church resources.

<https://www.cocwa.com.au/safe-church>