



# Footscray Church of Christ

## Safe Ministry Policy

Version 1.0

Updated as of 14.5.2025.

*Open your mouth, judge righteously,  
and plead the cause of the vulnerable and needy.*  
**Proverbs 31:8-9**

## Background

Footscray Church of Christ (“FCOC”) has established this policy to express our commitment to ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all individuals participating in our ministries, especially children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

We believe that every person is made in the image of God,<sup>1</sup> and is deserving of dignity, care, and protection. Our commitment to safe ministry reflects Jesus’ teaching to love and care for the most vulnerable.<sup>2</sup> As stated in Proverbs 31:8-9, we are called to “open [our] mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the vulnerable and needy.”

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>3</sup>

## Statement of Commitment to Safety

Footscray Church of Christ is committed to being a safe place for all people who engage with us including children, young people and adults, especially those most vulnerable.

## Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and leaders involved in ministry activities, both within church premises and external ministry programs.

## Responsibilities

This is an overview of roles that are responsible for different aspects of safe ministry.

| Role   | Role in promoting Safe Ministry                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Elders | Oversee the following processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Review processes for policies and procedures.</li><li>● Risk assessment and management process</li></ul> |

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<sup>1</sup> (Genesis 1:27)

<sup>2</sup> (Matthew 18:6, James 1:27).

<sup>3</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, point 1

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurance</li> <li>• Compliance with regulatory obligations</li> <li>• Recruitment and screening practices</li> <li>• Responsibilities outlined in the Complaints and Incidents Management Process (“CIMP”)</li> </ul>                                                                                                            |
| Pastor                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment and screening practices</li> <li>• Risk assessment and management process</li> <li>• Staff induction, training, supervision and support</li> <li>• Responsibilities outlined in the Complaints and Incidents Management Process</li> </ul>                                                                            |
| Safe Ministry Contacts Administrator (“SMCA”)                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage communication of fcoc.safeministry@gmail.com including the Safety Concern Form via church website.</li> <li>• Oversee use of “Safe Ministry Check” for training and compliance.</li> <li>• Staff and volunteer training</li> <li>• Responsibilities outlined in the Complaints and Incidents Management Process</li> </ul> |
| Safe Ministry Contacts (“SMC”)                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff and volunteer training</li> <li>• Responsibilities outlined in the Complaints and Incidents Management Process</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Safeguarding Team<br>(i.e. the Safe Ministry Contacts Administrator, the Chair of the Elders, CCVT Safe Places contact and the Pastor, where appropriate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibilities outlined in the Complaints and Incidents Management Process</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Staff                                                                                                                                                     | <p>Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</p> <p>Carry out responsibilities in accordance with position description; including encouraging program participants and workers to take responsibility for their own and others’ safety, report any issues of concern and advise others how to report any issues of concern</p>                       |

|                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                              | Complete training and induction requirements under Safe Ministry Check                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Churches of Christ Victoria and Tasmania     | Provide support to ensure FCOC is meeting its obligations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Volunteers and Leaders                       | <p>Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</p> <p>Carry out responsibilities in accordance with position description; including encouraging program participants and workers to take responsibility for their own and others' safety, report any issues of concern and advise others how to report any issues of concern</p> <p>Complete training and induction requirements under Safe Ministry Check</p> |
| Parents and Guardians of child participants. | <p>Take personal responsibility for their child's contribution to the child's and others' safety and raise any issues of concern.</p> <p>Be aware of and encourage their child/children to act in accordance with policies and procedures.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Congregation and Participants                | <p>Take personal responsibility for their own and others' safety and raise any issues of concern.</p> <p>Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Consultant                                   | <p>Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</p> <p>Additional requirements as discussed with Safe Ministry Contacts Administrator.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## **Relevant Legislation and Standards**

This policy is informed by the principles outlined in the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations,<sup>4</sup> the Commission for Children and Young People 11 Child Safe Standards,<sup>5</sup> and Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Safe Places.<sup>6</sup> These are underpinned by Victorian Legislation, Children Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.<sup>7</sup>

## **Related organisational policies and procedures**

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.

It is to be used in conjunction with the following documents.

- Footscray Church of Christ Code of Conduct
- Footscray Church of Christ Complaints and Incidents Management Process
- Safety Concern Form
- Footscray Church of Christ Complaint Record
- Footscray Church of Christ Children's Ministry Policy and Procedure

## **Access to the policy**

This policy can be accessed on the Footscray Church of Christ website.

It will also be available in the church lobby.

## **Policy status and review**

This policy (Version 1.0) has been ratified as of 13.5.2025 by the Elders of Footscray Church of Christ and comes into effect as of 14.5.2025.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.childsafety.gov.au/system/files/2024-04/national-principles-for-child-safe-organisations.PDF>

<sup>5</sup> <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://churchesofchrist.org.au/for-churches/safe-places/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/child-wellbeing-and-safety-act-2005/034>

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.<sup>8,9</sup>

At a minimum, the Elders of Footscray Church of Christ will review this policy on an annual basis.

The Elders will engage in wider consultation with the congregation on this policy at least once every three years, prioritising opportunities for engagement from children, youth and other vulnerable people.

Assistance with or additional information on this policy can be requested via an Elder.

## **Guiding Principles**

### **1. Commitment to safeguard 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.<sup>10</sup> This includes children and young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the elderly, people with disabilities, and people with identity and mental health challenges.<sup>11</sup>

It is important that all people involved in our organisation (including vulnerable people and children) are informed about their rights, invited to express their individual needs, participate in decisions which significantly affect them, and have their concerns taken seriously.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> All people are encouraged to appropriately express their cultural backgrounds and racism will not be tolerated within the organisation.<sup>14</sup>

To help achieve this, we encourage every person attending or involved in our organisation to be aware of this policy and training opportunities. We have also made this policy (and further information for children, families and vulnerable people) available through our website.

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<sup>8</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, points, 9 & 10

<sup>9</sup> This policy is in accordance with the NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 No 157.

<sup>10</sup> As an organisation that works with children, we are committed to the National Child Safe Principles. See <https://childsafef.org.au/national-principles>

<sup>11</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, point 4

<sup>12</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, point 2. Victorian Child Safe Standards, point 5

<sup>13</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, point 3

<sup>14</sup> Victorian Child Safe Standards, point 1

This material will help people in our community to better understand their shared responsibility to safeguard vulnerable people around our community and how to raise any concerns. We actively encourage everyone involved in our organisation to be involved in the effectiveness and ongoing improvement of our policies and safeguarding procedures.<sup>15</sup>

## **2. Commitment to respond to concerns**

We are committed to creating a culture where people feel safe and encouraged to raise concerns about their own or other people's safety. Therefore we encourage people at all levels of the organisation and in our community to report any concerns they have about the safety and wellbeing of people connected with Footscray Church of Christ. We are committed to listening well and handling all concerns seriously. We will protect the confidentiality, dignity, health and well-being of all individuals involved in any concern raised. Any child-related issues will be managed with a focus on the interest of the child.<sup>16</sup>

All reports will be managed by the Footscray Church of Christ Safe Ministry Contacts Administrator, who is contactable at [fcoc.safeministry@gmail.com](mailto:fcoc.safeministry@gmail.com).<sup>17</sup>

When any concerns or allegations are raised, the Safeguarding Team will follow the Complaints and Incidents Management Process which, depending on the circumstances, may involve reporting the concern or allegation to other entities like the Police, the Victorian Child Protection Service, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Churches of Christ Victoria and Tasmania, and the insurer of Footscray Church of Christ. In certain incidents the Safeguarding Team will appoint an Independent Ministry Investigator to investigate allegations.

## **3. Commitment to screening and training**

We are committed to ensuring all leaders at Footscray Church of Christ are appropriately screened, supported and trained.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, point 8 & 3.

<sup>16</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, point 6

<sup>17</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, point 10

<sup>18</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, points 5, 7 & 8

This means all Elders, staff members, team leaders and volunteers involved in personal/relational serving roles (including anyone working with or around children) must follow the direction of the Safe Ministry Contacts Administrator who oversees this compliance. These leaders must:

1. Be regular participants at Footscray Church of Christ;
2. Adhere to the Safe Ministry Check verification process, including;
  - a. Provide referees who can confirm they are suitable to work with vulnerable people;
  - b. Complete an approved safe ministry training course which outlines appropriate behaviour, including how to minimise the chance of harm, as well as training in how to identify and report cases of abuse.
  - c. Commit to the Footscray Church of Christ Code of Conduct, including being willing to be held accountable for their behaviour; and
  - d. If they are working with children & youth, they must have their Victorian “Working With Children Check” verified and current.
  - e. Elders and Church Staff to also complete a Victorian Police Check

No-one with a criminal record of child abuse, molestation or similar offences is allowed to be involved in children or youth ministry at Footscray Church of Christ.

#### **4. Commitment to safe and accessible programs**

We are committed to ensuring that our physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing for all involved.<sup>19</sup> 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 permission and confidentiality of records kept.

The Safe Ministry Contacts will regularly check-in on Footscray Church of Christ programs and team meetings to help establish a safeguarding culture and provide ongoing training and supervision to leaders and volunteers in those roles.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, point 8

<sup>20</sup> National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, points 1, 7, 8.



## **Glossary of Policy Terminology**

**Organisation** Organisation refers to Footscray Church of Christ and its ministries.

**Safeguarding** Safeguarding is protecting the welfare and human rights of people that are, in some way, connected with your Organisation or its work – particularly people that may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. As such, safeguarding is part of your organisation's primary duty of care.

**Safe Ministry Policy** Statements that set expectations for decisions made, or actions taken by, members of an organisation related to the protection of rights of vulnerable people and the duties of, as well as the terms and conditions of engagement for, organisation members & volunteers.

**Safe Ministry Contact** A Safe Ministry Contact is someone in your organisation who will hear your concern, and help you work out what to do.

**Complaints and Incident Management Process** A document that outlines the process of and assists Safe Ministry Contacts in responding appropriately to concerns raised.

**Vulnerable People** While the term 'vulnerable people' includes everyone under the age of 18, the elderly, people with disabilities, people who experience mental health issues, people who are unable to live at home, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, people who are intersex, as well as people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.