

06.03

Child Protection Policy

Theological Foundation

As a community of faith and healing the Lutheran Church is shaped by the Word of God. God brings the church into being as a safe place in which believers can be nurtured in the new life of Christ and grow into maturity. Therefore any form of abuse is a fundamental theological issue which must be addressed and corrected. This is central to our being as church. Nowhere is this more so than in the case of children, who are a precious trust and care from God. Children especially are under divine protection (Isaiah 11:6–9). God protects the vulnerable and God's people are to do the same (Isaiah 1:17). When children came to Jesus and his disciples objected, he turned the usual order of things upside down by saying that the Kingdom of God belongs to 'such as these' (Matt 19:14, Luke 18:16). As we would receive Jesus, so we are to receive a child (Matt 18:5, Mark 9:37, Luke 9:48). Throughout his ministry Jesus honoured children, saying that if one wants to become truly great one must become like a little child (Matt 18:1–5, Mark 9:33–37, Luke 9:46–47).

Therefore the church and all believers have a special responsibility to care for all children and see that no harm comes to them. How we treat children is a test of the genuineness of our faith. God calls us to make every effort to protect children and treat them with the love, care, and respect that is rightfully theirs.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all children who engage with the Lutheran Church of Australia (the Church).

Relevant To

The policy and procedures apply to:

- All ministries and activities of the Church
- All pastors, employees, volunteers, members and visitors

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to ensure:

- The protection of children, especially from any form of physical, emotional, spiritual or psychological abuse, and any form of sexual abuse or exploitation, in a manner consistent with scriptural principles, and in accord with legal obligations
- The rights of children are respected
- An environment in which children can express their views, especially in matters that directly affect them
- An environment in which no form of physical punishment is administered to any child whilst engaged in Church activities
- Awareness of and compliance with systems and procedures for the prevention of harm to children by all those to whom this policy applies
- Awareness of and compliance with all legislative requirements for the health, safety and wellbeing of children by all those to whom this policy applies
- Prompt and proper responses to all reports and allegations of child abuse

Policy Statement

In bringing God's love to life, the Church is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all children who engage with the Church. It will take all reasonable measures to nurture children and protect them from harm and ensure compliance with all legislative requirements for the prevention of harm to children.

Definitions**Child**

Any person under the age of 18.

Child Abuse

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines child abuse or mistreatment as:
All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, power or trust.

Procedural Principles

The application of this policy will provide for:

- The safety and welfare of children to be absolutely paramount
- Approaches that encourage children to be part of decisions, particularly in respect to children's activities, so their needs are properly considered
- Careful recruitment and selection processes, which include working with children type checks, for roles where there is contact with children and also for any leadership and governance roles holding decision-making authority that affect children and/or where trustworthiness is implied or perceived
- Minimum standards of conduct, based on scriptural principles, for all people who work with children
- Training and learning programs for all people who work with children, including pastors, employees and volunteers
- Implementation of risk management systems for all child-related activities
- Documented procedures for receiving, reporting and handling allegations of abuse
- Communication and promotion of the policy and procedures
- Compliance with legislative requirements

Responsible person/s

- General Church Board (GCB) is responsible for implementing this policy and associated procedures across the Church.
- District Church Councils and Boards are responsible for implementing this policy and associated procedures within their respective Districts.
- Congregation/Parish Councils are responsible for implementing this policy and associated procedures within their congregations/parishes.
- Governance boards of all Church-related entities are responsible for implementing child protection policies and procedures that meet their particular requirements, but are consistent with the Church's Child Protection Policy and associated procedures.

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