

MAYLANDS CHURCH OF CHRIST

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

As Maylands Church of Christ we believe that children are precious: they are made in the image of God, and as a result they deserve to be treated with dignity, respect and great care at all times. We believe that the care of children is an overflow of Biblical morality, and that children are very precious to God. (Psalm 12:3-5; Matthew 18:1-5, 10-14; Mark 10:13-16; Exodus 1:15-21; Colossians 3:21)

We recognise the great privilege and responsibility of having children within Maylands Church of Christ-organised activities. We understand that with that responsibility comes the need to know how to exercise a high standard of care for children entrusted to us. This policy gives a clear outline on how we seek to care for children and is supported by training and other resources.

1) Purpose

This policy has been developed to provide a practical guide to prevent child abuse in Maylands Church of Christ activities and programs. For child protection policy regarding being part of Maylands Church of Christ community please see **appendix "Children in our community"**. It will outline a range of risk management strategies that have been implemented, reducing the risk of children being harmed. It is a combination of practical guidelines and procedures.

2) Scope

This policy applies to Maylands Church of Christ organised activities and programs.

This policy applies to the following people:

- Staff
- Parents with children in our community
- Volunteers
- Board members
- Visitors including the spouse/partner or family member of those mentioned above

3) Definitions

(1) **Young person/ child/ minor** – a person under 18 years

(2) **Contact with children** - Working on an activity or in a position that involves or may involve contact with children, either under the position description or due to the nature of the work environment. (Australian Aid Child Protection Policy 2013)

- (3) **Child abuse** - The deliberate act of ill-treatment that can harm or is likely to cause harm to a child's safety, wellbeing, dignity and development. Abuse includes all forms of physical, sexual, psychological or emotional ill treatment
- (4) **Sexual abuse** - Any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual, but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.
- (5) **Physical abuse** - Involves the use of violent physical force so as to cause actual or likely physical, injury or suffering (e.g., hitting, shaking, burning, female genital mutilation, torture).
- (6) **Emotional or psychological abuse** - Includes humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name-calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement, and isolation.
- (7) **Responsible leader** - Any person over the age of 18 who is given responsibility for the control and safety of people placed in their care and recognised by the pastoral team as the covering for an activity or program.

4) **Commitment**

- (1) Maylands Church of Christ is committed to the welfare of children and youth. Maylands Church of Christ volunteers, staff and leaders are expected to engage in positive supportive relationships with children, young and older adults. Maylands Church of Christ opposes all forms of child exploitation and child abuse, including child sexual abuse.
- (2) We encourage our staff, and volunteers to build and maintain a protective environment for children, by adhering to and promoting procedures on child protection.
- (3) Maylands Church of Christ believes that all children have value, worth and dignity as they are made in the image of God. Thus, we believe that all children should be treated with respect and cared for in ways that honour God.
- (4) Maylands Church of Christ believes that all children have a right to protection from abuse irrespective of race, social background, age, gender, skin colour, disability, religion, nationality or beliefs.
- (5) Maylands Church of Christ believes that child abuse and exploitation is wrong. Keeping silent is also wrong if it is known beyond reasonable doubt that a child is being abused or exploited.
- (6) Maylands Church of Christ believes in the importance of child protection and that preventative measures should be made to not only protect children from abuse by any Maylands Church of Christ staff, volunteers, friends and/or visitors but also to protect any

persons involved with Maylands Church of Christ and the church's integrity.

- (7) Maylands Church of Christ believes that children have the right to speak and be heard. Therefore, where appropriate, children will also be included as stakeholders and in baseline surveys.

5) Responsibilities

(1) The Governing Board:

- (a) Maylands Church of Christ is subject to Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides further explanation of rights and obligations in relation to this topic.
- (b) will review and monitor compliance with this policy.

(2) The Pastoral team:

- a) will increase awareness amongst staff, and volunteers, and anyone coming in contact with children, through training, advice and will ensure that policy is integrated within program design.
- b) develop recruitment and screening practices
- c) conduct staff induction, training, supervision and support
- d) conduct risk assessment and management process
- e) review and improve policy and procedure for receiving and responding to complaints
- f) review and improve policies or procedures on external reporting, record keeping and information sharing

(3) All staff, volunteers, and board members:

- a) have a responsibility for establishing and maintaining safe environments for children.
- b) will attend a refresher Child Safe training session every two years.
- c) will follow through and initiate the appropriate processes if they become aware of, or suspect a breach of the Child Protection Policy.
- d) will adhere to this policy and the code of conduct

6) Selection and training of those working with children

- (1) All individuals applying to join ministry teams will be required to submit a detailed **application form** including information about the applicant's background such as dates and places of employment, education and other activities.
- (2) Applicants are required to have or obtain a **Working With Children Check (WWCC)**
- (3) In positions working directly with children there will be ongoing screening, which includes value-based questions seeking information about the candidate's attitudes to children, professional boundaries, accountability, teamwork and how they have responded to ethical

dilemmas. see **appendix “Questionnaire”** for example questions.

- (4) Maylands Church of Christ reserves the right to refuse or terminate any person’s involvement in activities or programs that may pose a risk to children.

7) Risk assessment

- (1) Effective child abuse prevention strategies will be incorporated in all program designs, activities and emergency responses
- (2) The responsible leader will undertake a child protection risk assessment on all programs and activities that have contact with children.
- (3) Staff and volunteers should continually be aware of risks, and be actively minimizing opportunities and situations where children can be harmed.

8) Protocol for working with minors

- (1) All staff and volunteers **WILL**:

- a) give respect and dignity to all children associated with the work of Maylands Church of Christ regardless of race, social background, age, gender, skin colour, disability, religion, nationality or beliefs
- b) Use a team approach for activities and programs
- c) Monitor children’s safety at all times during activities and programs.
- d) Actively communicate with leaders and other team members to ensure accountability
- e) Use a sign in and out system where appropriate during activities and programs
- f) Maintain modest and discreet behaviour at all times including cultural appropriate behaviours.
- g) Immediately report concerns or allegations for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, or breach of this policy
- h) Continually assess activities and programs with regard to the safety of the child. **If there is doubt around the risks, do not proceed.**

- (2) All staff and volunteers **WILL NOT**:

- a) be alone with a child who is not their own, in a private place that cannot be readily seen by other responsible adults.
- b) have a child alone at his/her own home, or stay overnight with them, unless consented to by parent/guardian in writing or placed in custody of staff by the local social services and/or by a court of law.
- c) touch a child in an inappropriate way or expose them to inappropriate materials such as pornographic videos and literature.
- d) discipline a child in a humiliating way. (i.e., hitting, slapping, beating, verbal abuse such as shouting, swearing or use of demeaning language).
- e) violate the rights of a child.

- f) condone or participate in behaviour with children or young people which is illegal or abusive
 - g) transport a child without at least one other person being present in the vehicle, unless the child is a family member or parent/guardian consents in writing.
- (3) If protocols are broken, Maylands Church of Christ may take disciplinary action which may include dismissal. The person involved may also be subject to criminal proceedings.
- (4) Staff and volunteers are responsible for any guests they may invite.

9) Alcohol and drugs

- (1) The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs at the location or during an activity is not allowed or to be condoned. Parents/guardians will be informed if their child is found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- (2) Any child required to take prescription medication will be asked to provide a letter from their parents/guardians to the responsible leader.

10) Online protocols

- (1) Before using online technologies Maylands church of Christ requests that staff and volunteers consider the safety, privacy, and security features of that technology. This includes familiarising themselves with the terms of use, and privacy settings. **see appendix “safe online communications”.**
- (2) Maylands Church of Christ requests that staff and volunteers avoid 1:1 interaction with minors via live video or audio, where possible.
- (3) Ensure that minors have their parent/guardians’ consent to participate in online communications and request that parents/ guardians are present, whenever possible.
- (4) Maylands Church of Christ requests that staff and volunteers DO NOT Initiate a friend or follow requests with minors online. This action is acceptable when initiated by the minor. Accepting a request is up to the individual discretion and at the individual’s own risk.
- (5) Maylands Church of Christ requests that staff and volunteers DO NOT add/befriend anyone under the minimum age allowed on the online service. For example, Facebook prohibits those under the age of 13.
- (6) Maylands Church of Christ will at all times portray children in a respectful, appropriate and consensual way. See **appendix “Child images and media”.**

11) Insurer

Maylands Church of Christ will keep its insurer informed about the circumstances which may give rise to a claim under its insurance policies. All Staff, volunteers, and Board members have an obligation to inform the Pastoral team or the Secretary to the Board of any circumstances of which they become aware which may give rise to a claim against Maylands Church of Christ.

12) Dealing with suspected abuse

- (1) If the child's actions or words cause you to suspect something is wrong, carefully observe the child and their situation, and listen to their story.
 - a) Do not pressure them to talk about or give details about the abuse
 - b) Do not attempt therapy or counselling
 - c) Do not discuss the situation with others not directly involved
- (2) Assure the child that the situation is not their fault and that there are people that can help. Let them know what you will do next and explain how confidentiality in reporting works.
- (3) Record your observations, conversations, and reasons for suspecting abuse. It is not your responsibility to determine if abuse has occurred. That is a matter for the appropriate authorities.
- (4) Report your concerns to the pastoral team or a member of the board as soon as possible.

13) Reporting abuse or breach of policy

- (1) A report of suspected abuse or breach of policy can be reported by:
 - a) A child
 - b) Parents/ guardians and community members
 - c) staff, volunteers
- (2) Reports should be made as soon as possible either verbally or in writing to the responsible leader, a member of the pastoral team or the Board.
- (3) After a report is received an initial assessment will be made on the quality and reliability of the information and a decision will be made on what steps to take next. These may involve:
 - a) **Addressing the health and safety needs** of the child and others involved. This includes:
 - i. Informing the parents/guardians. The family should be informed of what steps are being taken.
 - ii. Taking steps to protect the child including encouraging the parents/guardians to have the child get a physical examination as soon as possible.
 - iii. Distancing the alleged perpetrator; the individual accused must be removed immediately from any position of responsibility or ministry with children.
 - iv. Safeguard confidentiality.
 - b) **Gathering all relevant information** which may include interviewing relevant individuals.
 - c) Seeking guidance from the COCWA Executive Minister

- d) Encourage the parents/ guardians to report the matter to the relevant authorities¹.
The concern may be handled internally if it is not a criminal matter. (Professional advice may be sought)
 - e) In situations of a serious nature Maylands Church of Christ will report immediately to:
 - i. Parents/guardians
 - ii. Local or federal police,
 - iii. Child protection authorities
 - f) **Feedback** will be given where possible to those directly involved or affected, while protecting confidentiality and privacy.
- (4) The rights and welfare of the child is of prime importance. Every effort must be made to protect the rights and safety of the child throughout the investigation.
- (5) Reports will be handled in a professional and confidential manner in line with applicable legal requirements.
- (6) All reports made in good faith will be viewed as being made in the best interest of the child regardless of the outcomes of any investigation. Maylands Church of Christ will ensure that the interests of anyone reporting child abuse in good faith are protected.
- (7) Any person who intentionally makes a false allegation or malicious allegation may face disciplinary action.

14) Special provisions for children making complaints

- (1) The process will be as child-friendly and flexible as possible to meet the needs of the child.
- (2) Complaints may be received via an advocate.
- (3) The child will be given the option of how and when they want to be kept informed of the progress of the investigation into their complaint.

15) Follow up and post-emergency concerns

- (1) After dealing with the initial report as outlined above, post emergency needs and issues may arise in the days and months that follow. Maylands Church of Christ can assist in meeting these needs by:
 - a) Helping the family in obtaining the help of a counsellor.
 - b) Coordinate an official statement to dispel rumours by clarifying what did and did not happen.
 - c) Keep a critical incident report on file including correspondence and notes from interviews and conversations.

¹ Note: Under Australian Law, Maylands Church of Christ has the responsibility to report all reasonable beliefs of child sexual abuse to the Department of Communities - Child Protection and Family Support

16) Compliance with this policy

- (1) If the board has a reason to believe a person subject to the policy has failed to comply with it, it will investigate the circumstances.
- (2) If it is found that this person has failed in their responsibilities, the board may take action against them.
- (3) If a person suspects that a board member has failed in their responsibilities, they must discuss the matter with the person in question and notify the Board.

17) Revision

- (1) This policy will be reviewed and revised every three years
- (2) Current policy date and version: version 2403
- (3) Next review: 2026

18) Related resources

- (1) Department of Communities - Child Protection and Family Support
 - [Tel: 1800 273 889](tel:1800273889)
 - Email: cpduty@cpfs.wa.gov.au
- (2) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Web: <http://www.unicef.org.au/Upload/UNICEF/Media/Our%20work/childfriendlycrc.pdf>
- (3) National principles of Child safety
 - Web: [Organisations | Child Safe Organisations \(humanrights.gov.au\)](http://humanrights.gov.au/organisations/child-safe-organisations)
- (4) DFAT Child Protection Policy:
 - Web: <http://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/child-protection/Pages/child-protection.aspx>
- (5) Safety Commissioner
 - Web: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

19) Contacts

For questions about this policy, contact the board by email at hello@maylands.church

APPENDIX A

Appendix “children in our community”

At Maylands Church of Christ we have many families with children of all ages that form a part of our community. This is a valuable aspect of our community, and we strive to create an environment in which children can thrive. Having said that, parents have complete responsibility for their children’s wellbeing, guidance, care, and spiritual formation. Parents are encouraged to watch their children at all times, or to provide adequate adult supervision.

Maylands Church of Christ is not responsible for providing childcare services.

Appendix “Questionnaire”

1. Have you read and understood the Maylands Church of Christ Child protection policy?
2. Has anyone ever expressed concerns about your behaviour towards a child?
3. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of an investigation relating to the abuse of a child or inappropriate sexual behaviour?
4. Why have you applied for this position and why do you feel you are suitable for the role?
5. Please describe any positive experiences you have had with children or young people.
6. Please describe any negative experiences you have had with children or young people.
7. Have you ever been in a situation where you have disciplined a child or young person? If so, how did you handle this situation?
8. Have you ever been investigated for violent or sexually related offences? If so, what were the circumstances?
9. Is there any other information relating to your suitability for this position that we should be aware of?

Appendix “child images and media”

Below are Maylands Church of Christ guidelines on the use of children’s images. These guidelines apply for Maylands Church of Christ-related purposes and personal use when images or media is captured during Maylands Church of Christ organised activities or programs.

- A child should always be portrayed in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner.
- Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- A child and their family must always be asked for consent when using their images. When asking for consent to use the image, details should be given as to how and where this image will be used.
- There should be no identifying information of the child used in the publication of images with their location, unless explicit permission is given by the parent/guardian of the child.
- A child's community and living circumstances should not be manipulated to misrepresent the child's current situation.
- Local cultural traditions should be considered and restrictions for reproducing personal images. For example, it is possibly distressing for Aboriginal Australians to see images or hear the voice of deceased people.
- Images should be an honest representation of the context and the facts.
- When sending images electronically, file labels should not reveal identifying information.
- Ensure a child is not subject to a legal order (i.e. Family Court, domestic violence order, child protection or criminal order) where the safety of the child or parent/guardian may be at risk

or the privacy of the child is compromised, if the identity and location of the child is revealed.

Appendix “Safe online communications”

Maylands Church of Christ will take appropriate steps to make sure that any information you give us during virtual communications is private and secure, but no internet-based communications are completely secure. There is an increased security risk that your conversations may be intercepted or disclosed to third parties when using video or audio communication tools.

To help us keep your information safe and secure:

- Understand that video calls, text messages, private messages through social media, and social messaging e.g. WhatsApp are not secure in the same way as a face-to-face conversation.
- Use a private computer/device – avoid public computers e.g. libraries.
- Use private accounts and make sure your passwords are strong.
- Make sure you log out of devices and accounts once you’ve finished using them.
- Use a secure internet connection – avoid public or guest WiFi as this is much more susceptible to interception.