

Deep Creek Anglican Church – Child Safe Policy

Purpose: To outline the policy of the church for ensuring we are a Child Safe Organisation.

Policy Effective: 1 April 2023

Policy Review: 30 March 2025 (2 years)

At Deep Creek Anglican Church each staff member and member of the Church community is committed to living out our vision which is to be 'a welcoming and growing multigenerational church with refreshing faith in Jesus Christ'. In this context we are committed to respecting children and their right to a safe environment. Jesus demonstrated the valued place of children in the kingdom of God when he called for the little children to be brought to Him to be blessed, rebuking the disciples who hindered the children's access to Him. The church should be a place where young people can come to know and experience the love of God. This should be demonstrated to children through those who care for and work with them within the church setting.

This policy has been developed in line with the current Victorian Child Safe Standards and approved by the Parish Council (2023) to demonstrate the absolute commitment that Deep Creek Anglican Church has towards the safety of children. This document outlines the policies and practices that have been developed and approved to keep all children safe from any harm including, but not limited to abuse.

1. Commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children

Deep Creek Anglican Church acknowledges the Wurundjeri Tribe as the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather as a church family. We appreciate the rich culture of the Aboriginal people and endeavour to learn more about it as we grow. We welcome Aboriginal children and their families into our church family and community. We have zero tolerance for any racism or behaviour which interferes with any child's feelings of cultural safety.

2. Commitment to child safety

All children who attend Deep Creek Anglican Church have a right to feel safe and to be safe. We have zero tolerance for child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe, valued and welcome. All people coming into our buildings and participating in our ministries in any way should be aware of our commitment to child safety and of how they can be a part of keeping every person in our community safe in all ways.

3. Children's rights to safety and to participation

We respect and value all children. We work actively to listen to children and to empower them as members of our Church community. We make it clear to children that they have rights and should not be made to feel unsafe when attending Deep Creek Anglican Church and we listen to and act on any concerns that children or their parents may express to us.

4. Family and community involvement in promoting child safety

We appreciate the involvement of families and other members of our church community in the development of policies and procedures that relate to children. Families are experts in their own children and their involvement enables our community to meet a broad range of children's needs and preferences. All information related to being a child safe organisation is readily available electronically and in hard copy. We value all feedback and welcome suggestions related to child safety.

5. Valuing diversity and promoting equity

Our Church values and enjoys being a diverse community and we welcome and encourage children of all ethnicities, cultures, identities and languages, children of all ability or disability, and children from all family backgrounds to participate in our activities and to be part of our church family. We strive to meet the needs of all children and to maximise every child's participation in the life of the Church to the best of our ability. We understand that children have different needs and equity means ensuring each child has equal access to freedom and safety, even if different measures are needed to achieve this.

6. Recruiting staff and volunteers

Our organisational culture is one which values child safety highly. Through effective leadership and accountability, all people in positions of power or influence are properly screened, supervised and trained. We will follow the child safe guidelines and screening processes set out by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne and Kooyoora Ltd.

All persons working with children are required to have a current Working with Children card, Police Check and a clearance for service from Kooyoora. Parish Council members, ministry leaders and worship team members must have the same clearances as those working directly with children. All volunteers, including those in the areas of service listed above and those who are not working directly with children, must agree for their details to be listed on a volunteer register that is shared with Kooyoora and they must attend child safe training and sign a statement of commitment to child safety.

These processes are in place to ensure that anyone that could be visibly seen to be in authority or a position of influence is aware of child safe practice and procedures and is prepared to be accountable for their conduct as a person of influence.

7. Reporting child safety concerns or complaints

The process for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse is set out by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. Any child safety concerns should be reported to the Child Safe Officer who will advise the Senior Minister and take appropriate steps to address the matter of concern.

Child safety concerns can include, but are not limited to, concerns about the physical environment that may pose a risk to children, inappropriate relationships developing between staff or volunteers and children, inadequate church worker to child supervision ratios, suspicions or beliefs that children are at risk of harm.

Grooming and/or sexual or physical abuse of any child is a criminal offence and anyone who suspects such an offence must report it to the police.

8. Supporting and informing staff and volunteers

We provide appropriate information and training to our staff and volunteers from when they first enquire about becoming involved in service and ensure all staff and volunteers are kept up to date with relevant information. They are made aware of how seriously we take child safety and are able to easily access support and information regarding these matters. We print all handbooks and information sheets provided and/or recommended by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne which address issues of child safety. Copies are available to all staff, volunteers, members and visitors in the foyer to the Church building. All relevant information is also available online via <http://www.melbourneanglican.org.au>

9. Risk Management

We recognise the importance of risk management in minimising the potential of injury to children or the risk of child abuse or other harm. We use risk assessment and management to inform our policy, procedures and activities planning. In addition to our general occupational health and safety risk management, we actively manage risks specific to children including the risk of child abuse, in our physical and online environments.

10. Reviewing this policy

We will review this policy every two years and we shall seek the views of children, parents, staff and volunteers as part of the review.

11. Documents reflecting a child safe focus

We provide our community with all child safe policies and documents, including reporting and complaints procedures. We will keep information and posters updated to reflect the needs of all in our community. We will strive to take on feedback and work reasonable adjustments into our policies and procedures to meet the needs of all children in our community.