ChurchSafe Policy

Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, Australasian Union Conference

1. Why we have this policy

We want our church to be a place where children are safe.
This policy sets out how we:

- protect children from harm
- respond if something goes wrong
- meet our legal responsibilities under law

2. Who this applies to

This policy applies to workers (including leaders, volunteers, employees, members, and attendees) involved in church activities — especially where children (under 18) are involved.
Church child safety standards apply whenever a church officer or volunteer is interacting with children in connection with their church role, whether on church premises or elsewhere.
Church Leader refers to any appointed leader responsible for oversight of church activities.

3. Our commitment

We are committed to being a safe place for children. We want children to be protected, respected, and taken seriously.
We are committed to meeting the requirements of the **10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations**, endorsed by all Australian governments in February 2019.

4. Legal framework

This policy operates within the Australian and New Zealand Law as summarised in Chapter 1, Section C., Legal Framework.

5. ChurchSafe Staff

Our organisation will appoint a **ChurchSafe Coordinator/Team/Person** who are responsible for:

- receiving child safety concerns
- assisting with reporting to statutory authorities
- overseeing the implementation of this policy
- maintaining child safety records, including the Working with Children Check register

The name and contact details of the ChurchSafe Officers will be communicated to all leaders, volunteers, and families.

6. Screening

We will comply with state screening requirements (ie. Relevant Working with Children's Checks/Vulnerable People/Police Check as legally required and referenced in Chapter 1, Section C., Legal Framework).
We will have minimum attendance requirements for those new to our congregations or appropriate references. See Chapter 5 for further details.

7. How we expect people to behave

When working with children and vulnerable people, we must act appropriately at all times, avoid favouritism, and not form inappropriate relationships (see Annexure C).

Workers **must not** communicate with children in secret (for example, private messaging unknown to their parents).
All workers must comply with the **ChurchSafe Code of Conduct**, which forms part of this policy.

8. Basic safety practices

To reduce risk:

- **Workers must not be alone one-on-one with a child** (unless that worker is the child's parent or guardian). Where this is genuinely unavoidable, the activity must be in a visible, open area and another adult must be informed.
- Keep activities visible and open to others.
- Obtain parental or guardian consent for activities, outings, and events.
- Record medical, allergy, and emergency contact details for children attending events.
- Use sign-in and sign-out procedures where parents/guardians drop off and collect children when not remaining on the site of the event.
- Photographs or recordings of children must only be taken with appropriate church authorisation and parental consent (Form E5).

9. Mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse

We will comply with mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse as legally required and referenced in Annexure A.
Where you have a reasonable belief that a child has been sexually abused, **report to statutory authorities (police or relevant Child Protection Department)** and **notify the ChurchSafe Contact Person and Church Leader** as a parallel step.

10. Reportable Conduct Scheme

We will comply with the relevant state Reportable Conduct Scheme as legally required and referenced in Annexure B.
Reportable conduct (misconduct by employees) includes:

- sexual abuse or sexual misconduct
- physical abuse
- significant emotional or psychological harm (Emotional or psychological harm may include behaviours such as persistent belittling, humiliation, or degrading treatment.)
- significant neglect

The scheme is allegation-based — the church cannot choose not to investigate.

11. Speaking up

Anyone can raise a concern about child or vulnerable person safety. You can:

- speak to the ChurchSafe Officer/ Contact Person or a church leader
- go **directly to the authorities** (Police, relevant state Child Safety Department, Ombudsman)

You do not need permission from the church to report a concern to authorities.

12. Keeping people safe during an investigation

If there is a concern or allegation, the church **will**:

- remove the person from child-related duties pending the outcome
- take any other steps needed to keep children safe

Removal from duties is not a finding of guilt. It is a precaution to protect children while the matter is being assessed.

13. Support for affected persons

The church will:

- assist affected persons to access appropriate counselling or support services
- (provide information about government victim support and compensation services where relevant)
- respect the right of any person to seek support outside the church

14. If allegations are substantiated

Where allegations of child abuse are substantiated (by a court, tribunal, or church investigation), the person **must not** hold any church office, position of responsibility, or role involving contact with children. See Chapter 7 for further details.

15. Keeping records

The church will keep a record of concerns raised, actions taken, and Working with Children Check details. These records will be kept secure and confidential. See Chapter 4 for further details.
Confidentiality does not prevent reporting child safety concerns to authorities or sharing them with other organisations as needed in the interest of safeguarding children or vulnerable persons.

16. Training and awareness

All workers working with children must:

- be given this policy and the Code of Conduct
- understand what to do if something happens
- complete the ChurchSafe Induction **within three months of commencing service**
- complete a **refresher every 3 years**
- complete **officer specific training as required**

17. Review

This policy will be reviewed **annually**, or earlier if required by changes in legislation or circumstances.

Review responsibility: **AUC ChurchSafe Team and/or AUC Bylaws Committee**

Last reviewed: 13 September 2026