

# OUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



*St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Doonmore Street, Penrith.*

As the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales:

- We commit ourselves to respect other people's minds, emotions and bodies. We are willing to establish public criteria according to which the community may judge the resolve of **the church** to address issues of abuse within **the church**.
- We acknowledge and accept the extraordinary amount of trust granted to us by those who are taking part in church activities, their families, and the wider community. We therefore commit ourselves to ensuring that all our actions are **morally upright**.
- We acknowledge that, as a church, our responses to **victims** in the past have varied greatly. We express regret and sorrow for the hurt caused whenever the response appeared to deny or minimise the pain that **victims** have experienced.
- We are committed to establishing a process that strives for truth and confidentiality. We will ensure that a compassionate response is the first priority in all allegations, even at a time when it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate, through offering assistance, protection and care without passing judgement or prejudicing the rights of the alleged offender. We acknowledge that concealing the truth is contrary to the character of God, unjust to **victims** and a disservice to **offenders**.
- We understand and value the need for support to all parties involved in the allegation, investigation, determination, outcome and follow-up stages, including the **aggrieved person** and the **alleged offender**, and we actively seek to provide this support.
- We are willing to know the full extent of the problem of abuse and the causes of such behaviour within **the church**. We will ensure that we are aware of our legal responsibilities and obligations in relation to prevention, reporting and processing requirements and seek to meet them at all times.
- We acknowledge that we have had to make changes in the way that we relate to **children and young people** and, as a result, some good things have been lost, however we will bear this loss to ensure that the vulnerable are safe.

*A copy of the full policy document is available at any time, Please ask the Minister or an Elder.*

- We will ensure that all people in **positions of authority within the church** and/or working with **children and young people** are aware of the appropriate standard of conduct and boundaries. We require those who work on behalf of the church to indicate their agreement with this policy and work towards providing an environment that prevents abuse.
- We believe that churches ought to be places of safety and refuge for **children, young people and others**, that they may be, and feel, safe from any threat when on church property or involved in activities operated by **the church**, or accessing services provided by **the church**. We believe that the church should be a place where people can disclose abuse and have it dealt with effectively.
- We will establish a prevention strategy that includes screening, best practice recruitment and selection processes, clear boundaries, risk identification and management, education, support, supervision and training.
- We acknowledge that the age of consent for sexual activity is determined by the Crimes Act. However, we are mindful that this must be read in the light of our duty of care, and therefore all people in a **position of authority within the church**, be it real or perceived, paid or unpaid, have a duty of care towards those over whom they have authority. In this situation it is never appropriate to take part in sexual activity of any kind, regardless of the person's age. We affirm that sexual behaviour belongs in a marriage relationship and that in this context it is a good gift of God.
- Our policies and processes are contained within **Breaking the Silence**. All allegations will be notified to the appropriate external authorities, overseen by the CPU, investigated thoroughly and determined as described in **Breaking the Silence** Edition 3.
- Irrespective of any other action that may be taken, **the church** reserves the right to exercise its powers of discipline over adherents, members and office-bearers according to its **Code of Discipline, the Voluntary Code of Conduct and Breaking the Silence** wherever this action is deemed necessary.
- **Breaking the Silence** applies to all persons holding a **position of authority** within the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales, whether paid or unpaid, who are involved in a **child-related** activity, whether permanently or temporarily, and all ministers, deaconesses, licentiates and home missionaries.

**NOTE:** *This policy relates to **child abuse**, including the **sexual abuse of children and young people**, and the **abuse of authority** by those in a **position of authority within the church** as defined in **Breaking the Silence**. It does not apply to any other forms of abuse, grievance or personal injury claim.*

**Any breach of this Policy for any reason should be reported to:**

**Name: JOHN PICKERING (Elder)**

**Contact number: 4733 7956**

A Companion Document to Breaking the Silence, Edition 3  
 Breaking the Silence: Our Policy, Edition I  
 Child Protection Unit ~ Presbyterian Social Services

*A copy of the full policy document is available at any time. Please ask the Minister or an Elder.*