

Safe Places Policy

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Policy Area	Governance
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Related Documents	Child Safety Policy, Code of Conduct, Child Safety Reporting Procedure, External Contact with Children Policy, Person of Concern Policy, Family Violence Policy, Complaints Handling Procedure, Privacy Policy, External Partnerships Policy.

PURPOSE

Foundational to all we do at Discovery Church, we seek to continually express our core values of belonging, restoration and creativity. In light of these values, Discovery Church is committed to being a safe place for all people.

The purpose of this policy is to outline Discovery Church's position in relation to ensuring we are a safe place for those who fellowship, those who attend activities and events and those who work or volunteer at Discovery Church.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Discovery Church representatives, defined as:

- **Staff** including employees, consultants and contractors.
- **Volunteers** including leaders, interns, ministry team members, lifegroup hosts and event-based volunteers.
- **Staff & Volunteers of Related Entities** including those of Treasure Corner Op Shop and Discovery Community Care.
- **Elders** (governing body).

STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENT

Commitment to Safety

Discovery Church is committed to being a safe place for all people.

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices. We are committed to the inclusion and empowerment of all people, and believe all people have the right to have their views and opinions valued, especially on matters that directly affect them.

We actively work to create a culture of safety and employ transparency, accountability and risk management practices to prevent abuse from occurring.

Discovery Church has a zero-tolerance policy for any type of abuse and will report all allegations and concerns for the safety of vulnerable people to the appropriate authorities.

Commitment to Child Safety

Discovery Church is committed to child safety because it is integral to our mission. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.

Discovery Church is committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously, responded to in a timely manner and consistently with our policies and procedures. We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Discovery Church is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and reducing or removing these risks. We have comprehensive policies and procedures for recruiting and managing our people, both staff and volunteers. We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

Discovery Church supports and respects all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of indigenous children, and of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and committed to ensuring these children can express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights, and we will have zero tolerance of racism. We are committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for children living with a disability and children who cannot live at home.

We have policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFETY

All Discovery Church representatives are responsible for safety. However, there are specific responsibilities that apply to key roles as described in the following table.

Who	Role in Promoting Safe Places
Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take personal responsibility for their own and others' safety and raise any issues of concern.
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures. Report any issues of concern. Encourage program participants to take responsibility for their own and others' safety and advise how to report any issues of concern.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures. Ensure any staff or volunteers they are responsible for act in accordance with policies and procedures. Report any issues of concern. Ensure any staff or volunteers they are responsible for know how to report issues of concern. Carry out responsibilities in accordance with contracts/position descriptions.
Elders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold responsibility for what happens in the church and activities. Identify, assess and control risks, and review the effectiveness of control measures across the church. Adopt appropriate policies and procedures, review them regularly, ensure they are widely communicated and implemented, and act in accordance with them. Report any issues of concern. Oversee executive leadership's adherence to their responsibilities. Ensure appropriate insurance arrangements are in place. Ensure the church is compliant with regulatory obligations, seek help from our affiliate body Churches of Christ Victoria Tasmania (CCVT) where needed and accept help from CCVT where CCVT believes necessary, including where minimum requirements are not being met.
Executive Leadership/Senior Minister(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures. Ensure staff are aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures. Report any issues of concern. Ensure staff know how to report any issues of concern. Support the Safety Contact Person/Child Safety Officer(s) in responding to safety concerns. Support staff in identifying, assessing and mitigating safety risks. Promote discussions on a culture of safety across our church.
Safety Contact Person/Child Safety Officers	<p><i>In addition to expectations of their respective roles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take the primary responsibility for receiving and responding to safety concerns in our church and activities. Meet reporting obligations to external bodies in relation to safety, with the assistance of the executive leadership and/or chair of eldership as appropriate. Support staff in identifying, assessing and mitigating safety risks.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote discussions on a culture of safety across our church.
Related Entities	<p><i>In addition to expectations of their respective roles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement their own additional policies and procedures that promote safety and align with the church's policies and procedures. Identify, assess and mitigate risks in their respective activities.

SAFE PEOPLE

Discovery Church employs strategies to embed an organisational culture of safety, including through effective recruitment, screening, training and supervision of all representatives.

Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We develop selection criteria and advertisements for staff roles which clearly demonstrate our commitment to safety. We encourage applications from women and people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people living with a disability.
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We carry out reference checks and screening interviews for all representatives to ensure their eligibility and suitability for their role, including screening questions related to criminal charges, convictions or other outcomes. All representatives aged 18 years and over are required to obtain a Working with Children Check (WWCC) prior to commencing in their role, unless they are teachers registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), whom must inform WWCC Victoria of their child-related work at Discovery Church within 21 days of commencement. Staff and certain volunteers with a high level of engagement with vulnerable people must undergo police checks before commencing in their role.
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are committed to regularly training our representatives to ensure that Discovery Church is a safe place. All representatives undergo training on our child safety policies and procedures. Representatives that work with children and/or vulnerable people are required to complete additional training related to keeping children and vulnerable people safe. All staff, elders and ministry leaders or key team members are required to also attend a NCCA Safe Church Awareness Workshop.
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are committed to ongoing supervision and development of our representatives to ensure they are equipped and supported in their roles. All representatives are provided with clear role expectations, adequate physical and spiritual support and clear accountability structures. All representatives must sign and adhere to our Code of Conduct during their association with Discovery Church.

SAFE MINISTRY

Discovery Church is committed to safe ministry that is God honouring, abuse free, harm free, person valuing and respectful.

Discovery Church has zero tolerance for domestic and family violence and is committed to developing policy and practices that raise awareness and ensure adequate response to any situations of domestic and family violence.

Discovery Church's Person of Concern Policy outlines how we will respond when a Person of Concern wishes to fellowship at our church. While demonstrating genuine compassion and justice, we will take steps to protect the whole church community and especially survivors of abuse.

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS

We work to ensure all representatives and people involved with our activities know what to do and who to tell if they are concerned about any behaviour towards themselves or others.

Every individual is expected to raise any serious issues of concern with the relevant authorities (call 000 if there is immediate danger). General concerns can be reported to a team leader, the Safety Officer or a Child Safety Officer and will be handled in accordance with the Discovery Church Complaints Handling Procedure.

Child safety concerns must be reported in accordance with the Discovery Church Child Safety Reporting Procedure. Any reasonable belief of child sexual abuse or physical abuse must also be reported to police and child protection in line with Victorian legislation including mandatory reporting laws. Discovery Church must report allegations of misconduct made against our representatives in accordance with the CCVT Code of Ethics for Ministers and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (where applicable).

PRIVACY

We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected in accordance with the Australian Privacy Act 1988 and Discovery Church Privacy Policy.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Discovery Church takes a proactive, risk management approach to safety utilising the CCVT Redbook system. We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, mitigate or minimise risks in our physical and online environments.

We also have strategies to ensure our related entities and partner organisations adopt a proactive, risk management approach to safety. Any domestic or overseas missions or charitable partner organisations must comply with the expectations of the Discovery Church External Partnerships Policy.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SAFETY

As an affiliate of CCVT, Discovery Church is required to meet the minimum legislative requirements in relation to child safety and workplace health and safety in Victoria, as a pre-requisite for being affiliated with CCVT.

We are expected to make an annual declaration to CCVT each year confirming that:

- An annual self-assessment of safety has been conducted.
- The minimum legislative requirements relevant to our church are being met.
- The name and contact details of our designated Safety Officer are up to date.

Discovery Church is subject to random conversational and/or written audits at the discretion of CCVT.

SAFETY CONTACTS

Discovery Church has a designated Safety Officer that oversees general safety matters and Child Safety Officers (CSO) that oversee child safety across designated departments. Refer to the Child Safety Policy for CSO contact details.

Discovery Church Safety Officer	Beck Lambert	(03) 9760 8055	beck.lambert@discoverychurch.com.au
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