

BATHURST **DIOCESE**

Sharing Jesus for Life



Safe Ministry Protocol and Guidelines for Screening

Adopted by Bishop in Council 19 December 2023

Protocol for Screening

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Proverbs 31:8-9

A. Purpose and Scope

This Protocol outlines the screening requirements for all Diocesan church workers i.e., clergy, lay, licensed, unlicensed, paid, or unpaid, including all volunteers in Diocesan Parishes and Diocesan Boards and Committees, and the process for undertaking the required screening requirements.

The Screening Guidelines are consistent with good practice and outline the necessary requirements to ensure compliance with the standards for screening in the Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017 of General Synod (adopted by the Diocese) and relevant state legislation.

B. Our Commitment

Our Diocese is committed to **Safe Ministry**. We are committed to being person-valuing and respectful spaces, free from abuse and harm to God’s glory. This means that we commit to our pastoral duty of care, legal and governance obligations with the goal that all ministries are spiritually, emotionally, and physically safe.

We are mindful of the work involved in the implementation of rigorous appointment processes, but we know that this work makes a vital contribution to the safety and well-being of vulnerable people in our parishes. We must ensure we have done all that is reasonably practicable to ensure we have safe church workers as they have positions of leadership, power, and trust.

C. Principles that guide this Protocol

1. **Scripture** – we use Jesus’ words laid down in the Bible as our guide.
2. **Duty of care** – we must do all that is reasonably practical to ensure people are safe and unharmed.
3. **Accountability** – we will show that we have done all we can to ensure vulnerable people are being ministered to by safe church workers.
4. **Partnership** – we work together across the Diocese to ensure we support and learn from each other in implementing best practice in safe ministry.
5. **Continuous review and improvement** – we regularly review and improve our practice in this area to ensure that it remains current and effective.

D. Screening requirements

The requirements for different types of church workers are outlined in ‘**Required Screenings by Role**’ tables in the Diocesan Screening Guidelines. They vary according to role and whether the church worker engages in ministry to children, as defined in the Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017, where a person:

- (a) *is required to hold a working with children check by reason that the person has contact with a child as part of engaging in a regulated activity; or*
- (b) *exercises a pastoral ministry which has direct, regular, and not incidental contact with children; or*
- (c) *provides services to children that are ancillary to the exercise of a pastoral ministry within paragraph (b) which involve:*
 - i) *contact with children during an overnight activity (such as camps and similar activities); or*
 - ii) *close, personal contact with children (such as changing clothes, washing and toileting); or*
- (d) *supervises the ministry of a person within any one or more of paragraphs (a) to (c); or*
- (e) *performs a professional standards role; or*
- (f) *performs a safe ministry role.*

E. Implementation

1. Bishop-in-Council is responsible for oversight of the implementation of this Protocol.
2. The Diocesan Screening Guidelines constitute the implementation process for this Protocol.
3. Parish Safe Ministry Coordinators have a vital role in the implementation of this Protocol.
4. With the exception of legal requirements for Safe Ministry Training (which must be renewed every 3 years) and a Working with Children Check (which must be renewed every 5 years) the frequency of screening checks (as outlined in Tables 1 and 2) are:
 - all licenced ministry roles (including ordained clergy, ATOs and LLMs)—6 years or every second licence renewal, whichever is sooner, **plus every 3 years for an update statement on their safe ministry check.**
 - SRE teachers—six years **plus every year** NSW Department of Education declaration and diocesan authorisation.
 - all other roles—6 years **plus every 3 years for an update statement on their safe ministry check or declaration.**
5. A previously screened applicant applying for a role which requires a higher level of screening (see the Diocesan Screening Guidelines) must undertake all diocesan screening relevant to that role, irrespective of the currency of previously completed screening.
6. All screening documentation related to this Protocol will be held on the diocese's Safety Management Online (SMO) site where it can be accessed and updated by the relevant Parish Safe Ministry Coordinators and diocesan staff.
7. The Safe Ministry Check forms and declarations are available on the Diocesan website.

F. Documents and programs used to support this protocol

- Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017
- Anglican National Register Canon 2007
- Safe Ministry Policy 2014
- Faithfulness in Service
- Diocesan Screening Guidelines
- Safe Ministry Check – Ordained Ministry or appointment as a Paid, or Licensed Church Worker
- Safe Ministry Check – Volunteer Church Worker over 18 years
- Safe Ministry Check –Volunteer Church Worker 13-17 years
- Safe Ministry Declarations
- Australian Federal Police Background Check Application Form
- NSW Working with Children Check
- Anglican Church of Australia National Register Check
- SRE Teacher's Engagement Letter
- Referees Form (licensed positions)
- Position Interview sample for Licensed Church Workers
- Position interview sample for Unlicensed Church Workers
- Documentation for Ordination candidates
- Safe Ministries training (online or face to face) or Diocesan approved equivalent.
- Policy for Safe Ministry to Persons of Concern 2017

G. Review

This Protocol was endorsed by Bishop-in-Council on 19 December 2023 but has been amended on 28 June 2024 to reflect requirements for Level 3 training authorized by the Bishop on 18 November 2023.

Acknowledgement – Adapted from the Screening Protocol of Canberra and Goulburn Diocese 2019

Diocesan Screening Guidelines

Relevant forms

There are five (5) different role specific Safe Ministry Checks and Declaration forms, all available from the Diocesan website:

- A. Safe Ministry Check – Ordained, Paid and Licensed Church Worker **plus** accompanying Safe Ministry Questionnaire for Referees
- B. Safe Ministry Check – Volunteer (over 18 years) in Ministry with Children/Vulnerable People
- C. Safe Ministry Check - Volunteer (13-17 years) in Ministry with Children/Vulnerable People
- D. Safe Ministry Declaration – Volunteer Role (non-child/vulnerable people)
- E. Safe Ministry Declaration for Clergy seeking Permission to Officiate on Special Occasions.

For all specific implementation questions contact the Safe Ministry Helpline on 1800 070 511.

Table 1. Not involved in ministry to children

Role	Working with Children Check	Police Check	Safe Ministry Declare	Code of Conduct (FiS)	Anglican National Register Check	Anglican Prof Standards Clearance	Medical/ Psych Assess	SRE Letter and Card	Bishop's Licence	Interview and Endorse	Referees	Current Safe Ministry Training
Paid Admin and Ancillary Staff		✓	Form D	✓						✓	Phone x 2	Level 1
Volunteer			Form D	✓						✓	Phone x 2	Level 1
Aged Care Facility Pastoral Visitor		✓	Form D	✓						✓	Phone x 2	Level 1
Parish Warden			Form D	✓	✓					✓	Phone x 2	Level 1,3
Other Parish Councilor			Form D	✓	✓					✓	Phone x 2	Level 1

1. Except for Anglican National Register verification (which is undertaken by the diocesan office), screening responsibilities (including uploading to SMO) for volunteer, aged care facility pastoral visitor, and parish councilor/warden roles rest with the Parish Safe Ministry Coordinator (PSMC). Consult the 'PROCEDURE Safe Ministry Record Keeping (PSMCs)' or the diocesan office for guidance.
2. Referees for all roles listed above need only be contacted by phone and asked if the person in question is suitable for the role rather than complete the six page Referee Screening Questionnaire.

Table 2. Involved in ministry to children (including oversight of ministry to children)

Role	Working with Children Check	Police Check	Safe Ministry Check	Code of Conduct (FiS)	Anglican National Register Check	Anglican Prof Standards Clearance	Medical/ Psych Assess	SRE Letter and Card	Bishop's Licence	Interview and Endorse	Referees	Current Safe Ministry Training
Stipended Clergy and Ordination Candidate	✓	✓	Form A	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	Quest x 3	Level 1,2,3
Other Licenced Clergy	✓	✓	Form A	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	Quest x 3	Level 1,2
Retired Clergy (5 events/yr with Bishop's permission)	✓		Form E		✓					✓		
Licenced Lay Minister	✓	✓	Form A	✓	✓				✓	✓	Quest x 3	Level 1,2
Parish Safe Ministry Coordinator	✓		Form B	✓	✓					✓	Quest x 2	Level 1,2,3
Volunteer (18+ years)	✓		Form B	✓	✓					✓	Phone x 2	Level 1,2
Volunteer (13-17 years)			Form C							✓	Phone x 2	
SRE Teacher	✓		Form B	✓	✓			✓		✓	Phone x 2	Level 1,2
Parish Warden	✓		Form B	✓	✓					✓	Phone x 2	Level 1,2,3
Other Parish Councilor	✓		Form B	✓	✓					✓	Phone x 2	Level 1,2
Diocesan Board and Committee Member	✓		Form B	✓	✓					✓	Phone x 2	Level 1,2

1. Except for WWCC and Anglican National Register verification (which are undertaken by the diocesan office), screening responsibilities (including uploading to SMO) for volunteer and parish councilor/warden roles rest with the Parish Safe Ministry Coordinator. Consult the 'PROCEDURE Safe Ministry Record Keeping (PSMCs)' or the diocesan office for guidance.
2. Referees for all roles listed below Safe Ministry Coordinator need only be contacted by phone and asked if the person in question is suitable for the role rather than complete the six page Referee Screening Questionnaire.

Appendix: The process for screening

The steps outlined below should be read in conjunction with 'PROCEDURE Safe Ministry Record Keeping (PSMCs)' which provides detailed guidance for processing and recording documentation in Safety Management Online (SMO).

1. Screening documentation is provided to the applicant as applicable to their role by the relevant office holder (i.e., MDO, Parish Safe Ministry Coordinator).
2. The applicant completes the Safe Ministry requirements for their role (see tables above)
3. The relevant office holder conducts position interviews i.e.:
 - For parish based lay (licensed & unlicensed) positions, the Rector or Parish Safe Ministry Coordinator will conduct all interviews.
 - For clergy, diocesan board, and committee members the diocesan office will complete interviews.
4. **Referee** forms:
 - For licensed positions referee forms are to be sent, by the applicant, to the nominated referees. The Referee will then send completed Referee forms to the Diocesan Ministry Development Officer (MDO).
 - For parish based unlicensed positions, the Rector or Parish Safe Ministry Coordinator will contact the nominated referees and complete the referee section on the Safe Ministry Check.
 - For members of Boards and Committees, the diocesan office will contact the nominated referees and complete the referee section on the Safe Ministry Check.
5. The diocesan office will process **screening documentation** including verification of Working With Children Check (NSW), police clearances, and Anglican National Register checks.
6. Once all screening for appointment requirements have been successfully completed, the diocesan office or the relevant parish office holder (i.e., Rector or Parish Safe Ministry Coordinator) will be notified.
7. In normal circumstances, appointment to a role will not occur until the safe ministry screenings are complete.

Adverse finding

1. In the event of an adverse finding or concern raised in the process of the referee checks or screening documentation, the relevant office holder (Bishop's Office, Rector, Parish Safe Ministry Coordinator) shall inform the Professional Standards Director. A risk report shall be produced by the Director of Professional Standards or delegate and provided to the relevant office holder/s.
2. The Bishop, or delegate (or relevant office holder) shall then implement appropriate risk and pastoral management, this may include a decision that the applicant is not to be appointed to a role, or a decision that a person may only be appointed to a role under supervision or with specified restrictions.