

Approved by RRAC MUC 11 October 2021

Ross River Anglican Church Statement

As part of our Child Safety Policy, Ross River Anglican Church has adopted this Code of Practice for working with children. It is expected that all our volunteer will comply with the standards that are set out here for the benefit of those they are serving in the name of Jesus Christ.

Working Safely with All Participants

ChildSafe SP3 is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all participants, especially children and vulnerable people involved in programs run by you and your organisation.

When you work within this Code of Practice you will be supporting the rights of the participant, ensuring a safe environment for all.

Team Members should work together to build and maintain a secure environment for all participants in a program.

Leadership is a position of power and influence over others. This can sometimes be abused. The Code of Practice offers a safeguard against abuse of positional power, providing boundaries for appropriate behaviour.

The Code of Practice provides essential guidelines for behaviour when working with children and vulnerable people in a program.

The Code of Practice means that everyone on the team understands the expectations – we are all ‘on the same page’.

What Does The Code of Practice Cover?

- Behaviour
- Language
- Physical Contact
- Program Style
- Cultural Awareness
- Special Needs
- ChildSafe SP3 Ratios
- Privacy & Social Media

1. Behaviour

What we do as Team Members reflects our values. It is vital to behave in a way that upholds what we believe about children and vulnerable people – that they are valued and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

Be a Good Role Model

Children and vulnerable people learn as much from what Team Members do as from what they say.

It is easy to ‘love the lovable’. The children and vulnerable people who are not easy to love often need more love from us.

Avoid behaviour that gives the impression of favouritism or encourages ‘special’ relationships with individual children.

Where parents, carers or members of the community observe Team Members at work, they need to see a caring style that demonstrates the positive values RRAC seeks to uphold.

What To Do

- Treat all participants with respect, and take notice of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner.
- Do not be alone with a child.
- Do not enter the sleeping accommodation of members of the opposite gender, except in emergencies.
- Be aware of situations when children or vulnerable people might be changing, showering or using the toilet.

2. Language

Words Can Hurt

It is important to use language that affirms the worth, dignity and significance of the participants.

It is not unusual to use negative or critical language towards people in an attempt at humour. Humour is a wonderful thing, however we must ensure that jokes are not made at the expense of others as this erodes the sense of safety and care.

Mind Your Language

- Do not use derogatory language towards Team Members or participants – even when meant as sarcasm or as a joke.
- Do not use ‘in jokes’, negative language, put downs or sexist language with other Team Members or with participants.
- Do not speak down to children or young people in a superior way, but instead speak to them as people of value.
- Where private conversations are necessary, the Team Member and child should remain visible to another adult in the group.

3. Physical Contact

Many children enjoy physical contact, and will seek it as a simple expression of affection and confidence, however others do not appreciate or seek physical contact.

Physical contact between adults and children may be misconstrued. Children and vulnerable people may not be aware of creating such situations. It is your duty to be alert to such circumstances. We must always be SEEN to be doing the right thing as well as knowing that we are.

Expectations

Physical contact should:

- Be in response to the participant’s need and not the Team Member’s.
- Be with the child or vulnerable person’s permission – resistance from the person should be respected.
- Never be in the area normally covered by bathers/ swimwear.
- Be open and not secretive.
- Be governed by the age and developmental stage of the person.

Let the Participant Choose

Children and vulnerable people should be allowed to choose the degree of physical contact they have with others, apart from exceptional circumstances or when needing medical attention.

It is inappropriate to initiate close physical contact; this should come from the participant, if at all.

Physical contact between Team Members, and children and vulnerable people is inappropriate if it could be perceived as a threat, if it causes embarrassment to either person, or if it does not allow either person to disengage easily.

As a general rule, open displays of affection initiated by children in the presence of others, are acceptable.

Team Members need to be aware that consistent contact with the same person may give the impression of favouritism. It is unwise, and may result in others competing for attention or feeling left out.

Any physical activity that is, or may be construed as, sexually stimulating to the Team Member or participant is inappropriate and must be avoided.

Physical touch has an important role in building healthy relationships. It needs to be done within these very clear guidelines and with a heightened awareness of changing community attitudes around safe and appropriate touch with children and vulnerable people.

Doing the Right Thing

- Touching a child or vulnerable person between the neck and the knees should be avoided, although contact with the bony areas of the body such as the shoulder, elbow or head, is generally acceptable.
- A sideways hug around the shoulder is more acceptable than an arm around the waist.
- There will be occasions where displays of affection are natural. Children must not be shunned if they initiate and demonstrate their need for comfort, bearing in mind the age of the child and the circumstances. Care needs to be exercised that such situations don't occur in private.
- On no account must any form of corporal or physical punishment be administered, even in fun.
- The only form of physical restraint appropriate is to protect children from harm. This includes reasonable restraint to stop a fight, to stop bullying or to avoid an accident.
- What is reasonable and lawful will depend on the circumstances, and appropriate judgement should be used.
- Allow children to determine the degree of physical contact they have with you, without showing favouritism.

4. Program Style

Why is this important?

Children and vulnerable people are not always able to sense the risks associated with participating in activities.

Your program and activity choices need to be made keeping the participant group's capability and risk appetite in mind.

The activities you choose will speak loudly about the values you and your organisation (RRAC) hold about people.

What do I need to know?

Activities or 'wide games' that require participants to operate on their own or in pairs out of sight of the Team Members need to be managed carefully. This includes activities that require participants to engage in public places.

Clear boundaries and rules are needed to ensure that participants can engage in activities safely.

It is not appropriate for participants to be made to feel stupid or embarrassed. Whilst competitive games or activities can be fun, if they exploit gender, intellectual or physical differences, then they should be avoided.

As you identify your program activities, take into account their age appropriateness.

What do I need to do?

- Be willing to drop an activity if you sense that it is not working safely, or is making participants feel angry or isolated.

- Put in extra planning and support measures when an activity has extra challenges.
- Ask your Team Leader to help you plan well.

5. Cultural Awareness

Sensitivity

Team Members need to be sensitive to cultures and family traditions different from their own. These differences may affect the degree of participation of children and vulnerable people in activities and games.

Respect

No pressure should be applied to participants from other cultures and traditions to encourage participation.

The family has many forms and leaders must respect a participant's support structures.

Team Members need to be sensitive about using words that make assumptions about any participant's background, family status or principal caregivers.

Your team should have zero tolerance for language or activities that discriminate on the basis of gender, race, age or ability.

What do I need to do?

- Show respect for the authority structures of other cultures and traditions.
- Do not make statements that reflect ignorance, bias or ridicule about other religions and cultures.
- Do not hold, kiss, cuddle or touch children or vulnerable people in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive way.

6. Special Needs

Who May Have Special Needs?

People with special needs may include very small children, and people with particular intellectual, mental or physical disabilities, children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and the elderly.

Be Inclusive

Being inclusive of children and vulnerable people with special needs has more to do with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn, than with a list of 'Dos and Don'ts'.

Being inclusive means seeing that each person has both the potential to learn and the need to be loved and included like all other children and vulnerable people.

Be Proactive

You may need extra adult help. The number of extra Team Members will depend on the particular needs of the child or vulnerable person.

Some children and vulnerable people will require one-on-one assistance.

Privacy and respect are particularly important for participants with special needs who may need help with toileting.

Find out as much as you can about the specific disability, as well as constructive ways to include the participant.

Caregivers and schools are often the best sources of information on how to include those with special needs.

When working with people with special needs, activities should be structured, yet flexible.

Be Creative

Make sure your attitudes and behaviour are positive and inclusive towards children and people with special needs, as this will have a significant influence on how others react.

Encourage all children and vulnerable people to participate, play and learn together, and to share responsibilities.

Where appropriate, ask the participant what they think or want.

Rather than avoiding some activities because your group includes children or vulnerable people with special needs, be creative in the ways you include everyone.

Limit the amount of furniture and other obstructions to allow space to move.

Plan to include regular breaks in your program.

7. ChildSafe SP3 Ratios

1:8

Every program must have a safe number of adult Team Members in relation to the number of participants. This will differ according to the activity, age and capacity of the participants.

What do I need to know?

- ChildSafe SP3's recommended Team Member to participant ratio for any activity is no greater than 1:8 (i.e. 1 leader for every 8 participants).
- When young children or people with special needs are present the ratio should be lower.
- Some organisations use lower ratios, allowing a greater opportunity to build quality relationships and provide higher safety standards.
- ChildSafe SP3 has other ratios for specific contexts, including working with the very young or when water activities are involved. Your Team Leader has Modules for these activities with more details.

What do I need to do?

- Ensure that you have sufficient Team Members to run your program.

8. Privacy & Social Media

Personal Information

As a Team Member you may, at times, require access to private information about a participant (e.g. medical information).

You have an obligation to abide by the Diocese of NQ's privacy policy in relation to protecting the right to privacy of participants and their families.

Personal information and photographs obtained from your involvement in programs must not be used inappropriately.

Appropriate use would be within the context of the program itself, or uses for which permission has been obtained from the caregiver or child (as appropriate).

Contact Outside the Program

It may be necessary to continue to keep contact with participants outside a program. This requires care on your part, ensuring that the family grants permission, and that the child or vulnerable person welcomes such contact.

What do I need to do?

- Ask your Team Leader for a copy of The Diocese of NQ's privacy policy.
- Photographs taken during programs must not be kept for personal use or publically shown, including on social media sites, without permission as indicated above.
- Keep a record of ongoing contact with participants.
- Communicate with the child or vulnerable person in an open manner, keeping in mind what you would be happy for their family to hear or read.
- Do not take a child or vulnerable person to your home, or encourage meetings outside the program activity.
- Ongoing contact with participants should only occur within strict guidelines set by your organisation (RRAC).

Social Media

The use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter can pose danger to participants, Team Members and organisations.

Participants under 18 should not be 'friended' on personal social media sites. Your program may choose to set up an authorised site, which can be used to keep in touch with participants.

Be aware that whatever you post online cannot be taken back. Again, only share what you would be happy for a caregiver to see.

Note: A specific Social Media policy is seen as a useful tool in the face of its growing use, and associated and emerging risks arising from their misuse. Also find helpful resources at - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>