



Children & Vulnerable Persons Safety Policy (2026)

Approved by: National Board

Applies to: All GCI congregations, ministries, programs, events, camps, day programs and online activities across Australia

Effective: 30 April 2026

Next Review: 30 April 2027 (or earlier if laws change)

1. Purpose

Why this policy exists and the minimum safety standards it sets for all GCI ministries with children and vulnerable persons.

GCI is committed to creating safe, inclusive environments where children and vulnerable persons are protected from harm, empowered to participate, and treated with dignity and respect. This policy sets minimum binding standards for: safe culture; suitability screening, training and conduct; physical and online safety controls; child- and vulnerable-person-centred reporting and response; and compliance with Australian National Principles and all state/territory laws.

1a. Theological Rationale & Culture

As a Christian church, we affirm that every person—especially children and vulnerable persons—is made in the image of God and worthy of protection, dignity and respect. Our congregations are called to be a sanctuary where the weak are safeguarded, and all may flourish. We therefore commit to a culture that prevents harm, listens to and empowers children, supports families, and models Christ-like care in every ministry context.

2. Scope

Who this policy applies to, and the ministry settings (in-person and online) it governs.

This policy applies to all workers (employees, pastors, elders, volunteers, contractors), congregational leaders, ministry teams and third parties engaged by GCI for activities involving children (under 18) or vulnerable persons in any physical or online setting operated or sponsored by GCI. It also applies to private contacts arising from GCI activities.

3. Definitions

Key safeguarding terms used in this policy so expectations are clear and consistent.

Child: Any person under 18.

Vulnerable person: Any adult or child who, due to age, disability, illness, mental health, cognitive impairment, cultural/linguistic factors, social isolation, economic hardship or dependency, may be at increased risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Harm/abuse: Physical, sexual, emotional/psychological abuse; neglect; coercion/undue influence; financial abuse; spiritual/religious abuse; grooming.

4. Our Commitment & Principles

The principles and national child-safe expectations GCI commits to, including participation, inclusion, and continuous improvement.

GCI adopts the 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and applies them to children and vulnerable persons, including leadership and governance, child participation, family engagement, equity, suitability and support, child-focused complaints, ongoing education, safe physical and online environments, regular review and documentation.

5. Governance & Accountability

How safeguarding is led, implemented, and monitored across national and local GCI structures.

5.1 Roles

Board: Adopts policy; ensures resourcing and oversight; reviews compliance; receives annual child & vulnerable persons safety report.

The National Office is the National Child & Vulnerable Persons Safety (NCVPS) Lead: Maintains policy; monitors compliance; coordinates training/audits; supports local churches; tracks law changes; keeps national risk register.

Local Pastor, Pastoral Team/Advisory Council: Implements policy locally; ensures screening, supervision, safe ratios; keeps records; reports incidents; leads annual safety audit.

Child & Vulnerable Persons Safety Officer (CVPSO): Provides child-friendly information; maintains safe reporting channels; conducts risk assessment (property/program/online); verifies screening; maintains clearance logs; coordinates incidents and regulator notifications; training refresh and audits.

All workers: Comply with policy, Code of Conduct and law; report concerns immediately; complete training; maintain boundaries.

5.1a Role-Specific Responsibilities (Added)

Leaders/Helpers: complete pre-briefs; maintain sightlines and headcounts; adhere to ratios; avoid 1:1 isolation; use approved communication channels; log incidents; conduct dynamic risk assessments; model respectful behaviour.

Parents/Guardians: provide accurate contact/medical information and authorised collectors; discuss group agreements with children; raise concerns promptly via CVPSO/Pastor.

Children/Young People: participate in creating group agreements; speak up via safe channels; respect others and follow safety instructions.

5.2 Annual Safety Cycle

Audit: property/program/online safety; screening status; training completion.

Review: complaints/responses and participation feedback. Report: local CVPSO to National Office; Board summary.

6. Suitability Screening (Pre-engagement & Ongoing)

Screening and verification requirements before engagement and ongoing, including jurisdiction-specific clearances and record-keeping.

All workers in child-related roles must hold and maintain the correct clearance for their jurisdiction, with employer verification recorded in the local Screening Register. Screening supplements do not replace supervision and accountability.

6.1 Safer Recruitment Steps

(a) Application form (e.g., PPL1) and role description (PPL2). (b) Structured interview including safeguarding questions. (c) Two referee checks focused on suitability to work with children. (d) Working with Children/Vulnerable People clearance verified and recorded. (e) Induction and mandatory training completed before engagement. (f) Initial three-month review; annual agreement renewals (PPL5).

7. Training & Code of Conduct

Training and behaviour standards for all workers, including mandatory safeguarding training and the Code of Conduct for in-person and online ministry.

7.1 Mandatory Training

Initial plus triennial refresh covering National Principles; boundaries; social media protocols; online safety obligations (eSafety Basic Online Safety Expectations, industry codes/standards); grooming indicators; reporting pathways; accessibility and inclusion.

7.2 Code of Conduct

Respectful conduct at all times; no degrading, discriminatory or sexualised comments/behaviour, including an annual agreement to our code of conduct. Two-adult rule and visibility—avoid isolated 1:1 situations; adhere to ratios.

Physical contact: only if child-initiated, brief and appropriate; never to meet the leader's needs. No lap-sitting, tickling or lingering embraces. Seek consent, explain actions; maintain visibility.

Prayer ministry: obtain consent; ensure open, observable settings; same-sex prayer where feasible for sensitive topics; avoid touching sensitive areas; never in closed rooms.

Digital communications: no private messaging with children; use official channels with parent/guardian visibility; no secret chats; moderate online groups; retain records.

No alcohol/drugs at programs; no pornography or explicit media; adhere to transport, medication and photography procedures.

8. Safe Environments (Physical & Online)

Safety requirements for physical venues and activities, plus online ministry and communications, to reduce risk and prevent harm.

8.1 Physical Safety

Property audits (hazards, first aid, sun safety, supervision). Risk assessments for camps, transport, swimming and outdoor activities; trained first aider present; sign-in/out; authorised collectors; incident logs.

Premises checklists: congregations complete Annual Safety Checklist (PTY1) and program forms (PGM5/5b attendance; PGM6 accident; PGM7/8/8b incident/harm).

8.2 Online Safety

Use official accounts; dual-admin controls; content moderation; age-appropriate settings; disable direct messages for minors where possible; clear group rules; parental consent and visibility; apply Basic Online Safety Expectations and industry codes/standards; document and report online harms; preserve evidence.

9. Mandatory Reporting (by jurisdiction)

When and how workers must report suspected harm internally and to external authorities, by jurisdiction.

All workers must follow GCI's immediate reporting internally (to CVPSO/Pastor) and comply with their jurisdiction's external reporting obligations (police/child protection). When in doubt—report and document.

10. Reportable Conduct Schemes (where applicable)

Additional notification and investigation obligations in states/territories with reportable conduct schemes.

In VIC/NSW/ACT/QLD, notify the overseeing authority about allegations of reportable conduct by workers/volunteers (including clergy) and follow prescribed timeframes and processes.

11. Responding to Concerns, Disclosures & Incidents

How to respond when concerns or incidents arise: immediate safety steps, reporting pathways, documentation, investigations, notifications, and ongoing care.

11.1 Immediate Actions

Safety first; call 000 if urgent. Listen, affirm, document; avoid leading questions. Notify CVPSO & Pastor and follow jurisdictional reporting. Preserve evidence; do not promise secrecy.

11.2 Reporting & Investigation

Where reportable conduct schemes apply, follow the authority's guidance and timeframes; maintain confidentiality; protect whistleblowers; provide pastoral care and referrals; consider eSafety notifications for online harms.

11.3 One-Page Reporting Flow (Added)

1) Ensure immediate safety → 2) Tell CVPSO/Pastor → 3) Log incident in Safety Management Online (SMO) or GCI Incident site → 4) Make external reports (Police/Child Protection; CCYP/OCG/ACT Ombudsman where applicable) → 5) National Office notified → 6) Ongoing case management and pastoral care.

12. Participation & Inclusion

How GCI ensures children and vulnerable persons can participate safely, be heard, and access inclusive supports.

Include children and vulnerable persons in decisions that affect them; ensure accessible, culturally safe, and disability-inclusive communication; provide clear reporting options and child-friendly materials.

13. Program Safety Requirements

Program safety requirements for supervision and ratios, transport, camps/overnights, health and medication, photography/media, and facilities use.

13.1 Ratios & Supervision

Minimum two screened adults at all times. Recommended minimum ratios: Early years 1:4; Primary 1:8; Teens 1:10. Increase supervision for higher-risk activities (water, offsite, nights). Maintain visibility in spaces.

13.2 Transport

Two adults in front seats; children in rear; complete PGM4 Transport Register; publish pickup points and times; no detours; no solo drives with a child unless a documented exception with parent/guardian consent has been approved in advance; comply with child restraint laws.

13.3 Camps, Overnights & High-Risk Activities

Separate sleeping quarters for adults and unrelated children; leaders never sleep alone in a room with a child; two adults on duty; gender-appropriate facilities; clear shower/change protocols; buddy system; night checks documented; headcounts at transitions; risk assessment completed and approved before departure.

13.4 Medication & Health

Parent consent required; leaders supervise self-administration; no administering medication unless medically authorised SOP permits; secure storage; allergies prominently recorded and briefed.

13.5 Photography, Media & Livestream

Obtain parent consent; do not publish identifying info without consent; respect cultural protocols; disable geotags; store securely; no images of children in swimwear; livestream zones signposted with opt-out seating; avoid close-ups of non-consenting minors; do not tag minors on social media.

13.6 Facilities Use at Camps

To ensure safety, privacy and compliance with child protection laws, insurance requirements, and site standards, GCI mandates:

- Strict separation of adults and minors in bathrooms, showers, change rooms, and sleeping areas.
- Gendered facilities supplemented by single-occupancy all-gender options for privacy.

- No requests for disclosure of gender identity.
- Supervision protocols to prevent unsupervised interactions.
- Alignment with anti-discrimination and suppression-change laws.

14. Record-Keeping & Privacy

What records must be kept, how they are stored, who can access them, and privacy expectations.

Maintain screening registers, training logs, incident reports, reportable conduct notifications, risk assessments and consent forms securely; restrict access; retain per legal requirements; share information only as permitted/required by law.

15. Continuous Improvement

How GCI reviews safeguarding practice, learns from incidents and feedback, and updates procedures over time.

Annual safety audit and action plan (CVPSO). The board receives an aggregated report and approves improvements. Monitor legislative changes and update SOPs.

16. State/Territory Compliance Quick Reference

A high-level overview of key legal requirements by state/territory (with a prompt to check current official guidance).

(Summary retained—refer to official state/territory guidance for latest updates on WWC/WWVP/RWVP/Ochre schemes; mandatory reporting; reportable conduct where applicable.)

17. Breaches & Sanctions

What happens when policy or conduct standards are breached, including removal from roles and referrals.

Breaches of this policy or Code of Conduct may result in removal from ministry, disciplinary action, or referral to law enforcement/regulators. Reportable conduct findings may impact clearances.

18. Related Policies & Tools

Key related safeguarding documents, procedures, templates, and tools that support this policy.

Code of Conduct [Child Safety - Code of Conduct](#)

Screening & Verification SOP (state-specific); [Volunteer Application](#)

Incident Reporting; [Safety Management Online](#) or [GCI Help Desk](#)

Annual Safety Audit Tool; [Child and Vulnerable Safety Protocol Forms](#) (Pg 37)

Risk assessment; [Policies, Forms, and Reports](#)

Annex A – Local Contacts & SOPs

The local contact list and site-specific procedures each congregation should attach to make reporting easy.

Each congregation appends key contacts (Police 000, Child Protection helplines, CCYP/OCG/ACT Ombudsman) and site-specific SOPs; include links to SMO and GCI Incident reporting site.

Annex B – GCI Forms Index (PPL/PGM/PTY)

A quick index of the forms used for screening, program delivery, incidents, and property safety checks.

People: PPL1 Volunteer Application; PPL2 Team Leader Role Description; PPL5 Volunteer Agreement. Program: PGM1 Activity Info; PGM2 Risk Management; PGM3 Participant Registration; PGM4 Transport Register; PGM5/5b Daily Attendance; PGM6 Accident; PGM7 Incident; PGM8/8b Harm Report. Property: PTY1 Annual Safety Checklist.

Annex C – Family Summary (2 pages)

A plain-language, family-friendly summary of rights, how to raise concerns, and what happens next.

Plain-language summary for children/parents: rights; how to speak up; who to contact locally; what happens after a report; online safety tips. (Publish locally and on noticeboards/web.)