Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania

Safe Places Policy

of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc
and all affiliated Churches and Agencies

Version 4

Approved 7.04.2026

Introduction

We believe that Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc (CCVT) will be doing better at building Communities of Hope and Compassion and developing Leaders to lead them when each place of ministry and mission Affiliated with CCVT is a safe place for everyone to grow in their discipleship of Jesus and in their relationships with one another.

The purpose of this policy is to set out CCVT's position in relation to safety, including the expectations that CCVT has of its churches and agencies (Affiliates).

Who This Policy Applies to

This policy applies to every individual, congregation and organisation within the CCVT movement, including CCVT Inc, Churches of Christ Community Care, The Properties Corporation of the Churches of Christ, Churches of Christ Financial Services, all CCVT churches and agencies (Affiliates) in Victoria and Tasmania, and CCVT's national partner Australian College of Ministries (ACOM).

This policy applies to all leaders, including all people appointed to paid or unpaid ministry roles, elders, deacons, board/council members, administrators, office staff, helpers and anyone appointed to positions of authority over ministries or activities run in the name of the CCVT or its Affiliates.

Scope

This policy applies to all activities, programs, services and operations conducted by CCVT and Affiliates, regardless of where or how they are delivered. This includes all ministry, governance, administrative, pastoral, missional, and community-based activities occurring:

- On-site (church buildings, offices, venues)
- Off-site (camps, excursions, outreach programs, hire venues, partner locations)
- In homes (house churches, pastoral visits, small groups, hosted gatherings)
- During transport or travel related to CCVT or Affiliate activities
- Through external organisations engaged by an Affiliate to deliver programs or services
- In digital, online, hybrid or remote formats, including but not limited to:
    - Livestreamed services or events
    - Video conferencing or online groups
    - Social media interactions
    - Email, messaging apps and direct messaging
    - Online pastoral care or counselling
    - Any electronic communication with children, young people or vulnerable adults

This scope applies to all environments and contexts where CCVT or its Affiliates exercise responsibility, authority or influence, whether formally organised or informally connected to ministry activity.

Commitment to Safety

CCVT is committed to being a safe place for all people. As part of our commitment to being a safe place for all people we have established CCVT Safe Church as the arm which addresses the issues related to all safety and abuse within the CCVT movement.

CCVT and its Affiliates seek to be places of safety and refuge for adults, young people and children, where all people can participate in ministry, mission and community life free from abuse, discrimination, bullying, harassment or spiritual harm. We recognise our obligations under the Victorian Child Safe Standards (2022) and the Tasmanian Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023, and commit to meeting all related requirements, including cultural safety, child participation, online safety and continuous improvement.

- We will develop and establish a Safe Church strategy that is designed on best practice models and mandatory requirements; including but not limited to sound recruitment, effective screening and selection procedures, clear boundaries, risk identification and management, training and education, support and supervision.
- We will maintain and review our Code of Ethics against the ethical and mandatory standard as finalised by the CCVT Board. All CCVT accredited and non- accredited Ministers and Leaders are expected to conduct themselves by the standard. CCVT will exercise its powers according to the CCVT Code of Ethics wherever this action is deemed necessary.
- We value diversity and inclusivity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices against any people or group of people within our community. CCVT is committed to cultural safety, including ensuring Aboriginal children and young people are respected, valued and safe to express their identity.
- We are committed to the inclusion, empowerment and participation 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 any abuse, trauma or harm from occurring where possible.
- CCVT 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 relevant mandatory authorities.

Commitment To Victims

- We recognize and acknowledge the pain and suffering of survivors of abuse. We express regret and sorrow for any hurt that may have been caused whenever our response appeared to be inappropriate or inadequate.
- We are committed to establishing and maintaining a best practice model process that strives for truth and confidentiality.
- We will ensure as far as possible 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 judgment 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 an allegation, including the complainant and the respondent, and we actively seek to provide this support.
- We acknowledge the personal and public difficulties that a false, misconceived, malicious or vexatious allegation can cause for the respondent. We will take whatever steps are possible to address these difficulties.
- We will assess all allegations on a case-by-case basis and where appropriate notifications of mandatory reporting requirements will be placed with the appropriate external authorities.
- We will monitor and maintain records of all mandatory reports made by Affiliates to ensure accountability and transparency across the movement. CCVT will also ensure that Affiliates comply with all jurisdiction-specific reporting obligations and statutory reporting pathways.
- We will investigate all complaints and allegations as determined by our Complaints policy and Procedure for Investigating Complaints of Breaches of the Code of Ethics.
- We will maintain comprehensive, safe and secure records and communications of all complaints and allegations between ourselves and all relevant parties and stakeholders for the period as outlined in the legislation (up to 99 years).

Commitment to Child Safety

CCVT endorses and abides by the Victorian Child Safe Standards (2022), the Tasmanian Child and Youth Safe Standards (2023), and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. CCVT Affiliates are required to comply with all child safety and reporting obligations specific to their jurisdiction, whether operating in Victoria or Tasmania. CCVT is committed to the participation and empowerment of all children because it is integral to our mission. We have zero tolerance policy for child abuse.

CCVT is committed to supporting children and young people by providing an environment that is physically, emotionally, culturally and spiritually safe and where their unique identities and experiences, like those of Aboriginal children, are respected and valued throughout all the levels of our church movement.

- We value the voice of all children and young people and actively seek their opinions and views on matters which may impact on them in our movement, affiliates and agencies.
- We consistently seek to communicate with and involve families and communities in creating, promoting and maintaining a Child Safety culture as a high priority in our movement.
- We are aware children have diverse backgrounds, circumstances and needs and commit to ensuring their needs are reflected throughout all our policies, procedures and practices.
- We are committed to ensuring all people working with children and young people are safe, appropriate and suitable for their roles and are supported, trained and supervised according to ensure they operate safely as per Safe Places policy. This includes compliance with Working with Children Checks (VIC) or Working with Vulnerable People Registrations (TAS). This requirement applies to all in-person, digital, online and hybrid ministry contexts.
- We will ensure that children and young people have access to clear, safe and supportive ways to

raise concerns or make complaints. All allegations will be taken seriously and managed in accordance with the CCVT Safe Church Policy and all legal reporting obligations, including the Victorian and Tasmanian Reportable Conduct Schemes, Mandatory Reporting requirements, and Failure to Disclose/Protect laws in Victoria. Complaint pathways will be child-friendly, culturally safe, accessible and clearly communicated to children, families and wider community.

- We will ensure all our physical and online environments and venues are safe places where children and young people can reach their potential and interact safely with each other and ensuring all relevant policies, procedures and monitoring are followed.
- We encourage best practice, continuous improvement, and ongoing reviewing of Child Safety Standards, Policies and Procedures to ensure improvement in our movement, affiliates and agencies. This includes annual child safety self-assessments, regular policy reviews, audit processes, and active monitoring of compliance requirements in both Victoria and Tasmania.
- We welcome ongoing legislative change that improves child safety in our movement, affiliates and agencies.

Leaders

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

Recruitment:

- We develop selection criteria and advertisements for leadership roles which clearly demonstrate our commitment to safety.
- We actively encourage applications from women, Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people living with a disability.

Screening:

We carry out thorough background checks of people in both paid and unpaid leadership roles to ensure their eligibility and suitability for the role.

All pastors, elders, deacons, and anyone appointed to a role where they have general authority over the operations of the congregation are required to obtain a Working with Children Check (Vic) or a Working with Vulnerable People Registration (Tas)prior to commencing in that role.

All people aged 18 and over who work or volunteer with children under the age of 18 in any capacity in person and/or online are required to obtain a Working with Children Check (Vic) or a Working with Vulnerable People Registration (Tas) prior to commencing involvement in that role.

Where exemptions apply under the Working with Children Act, Affiliates are encouraged to require a Working with Children Check (Vic) or a Working with Vulnerable People Registration (Tas) as part of their local policy. This is demonstrative of our desire to meet a higher standard of practice that simply meets the minimum legal requirements. Affiliates must also comply with jurisdiction-specific obligations relating to ongoing monitoring, reporting changes in circumstances, and ensuring screening remains current throughout the period of service.

Supervision:

We commit to ongoing supervision of leaders through the provision of:

- Position descriptions which give a clear expectation for each role
- Adequate physical and spiritual ministry support and accountability for leaders
- A commitment to develop leaders
- A Code of Conduct which clearly states expectations of appropriate behavior and consequences for breaches of the Code
- A well communicated process for conflict resolution and complaints handling.

Training:

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leaders to achieve our commitment to providing Safe Places. CCVT encourages Affiliates to utilise the training and resources available through CCVT and other relevant training providers for all those who hold positions of leadership. This training will be ongoing and regularly updated to ensure leaders remain current with child safety legislation, best practice standards, and the evolving needs of children and young people.

As a minimum training requirement, the Chair of the governing body, the Senior Minister/Leader, the Safety Contact Person, and the person responsible for children's ministry and youth ministry at each Affiliate must attend a CCVT Safe Church Awareness Workshop (Level 1 and Level 2 or equivalent). These leaders must also complete regular refresher training every three years to ensure continued competence in child safety responsibilities.

All people involved in children's ministry and youth ministry must undergo training in child safety, including how to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse, how to detect potential signs of child abuse and how to report any concerns appropriately.

Responding to Complaints and Concerns

We work to ensure all children, families, staff, volunteers and others involved with our activities know what to do and who to tell if they are concerned about any behaviour towards themselves or others. Information about how to raise concerns will be communicated in child-friendly, culturally safe, accessible and age-appropriate ways across all physical, online and hybrid ministry environments.

Every individual must:

- take personal responsibility for their own and others' safety
- carry out responsibilities in accordance with their employment contract, position description, and Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct
- raise any issues of concern with the relevant authority (call 000 if there is immediate danger)
- follow the approved policies and procedures of Affiliate and any relevant CCVT policies and procedures.

CCVT and Affiliates are to take their legal responsibilities seriously. Affiliates must report Child Safety

issues in accordance with the CCVT Child Safety Reporting Procedure and the Victorian Government SSR Reportable Conduct Scheme or the Tasmanian Reportable Conduct Scheme via the Office of the Independent Regulator (where applicable).

Affiliates must report allegations of misconduct made against leaders in accordance with the CCVT Code of Ethics for Ministers (or any subsequent iteration).

Please note that all Ministers and Leaders have a responsibility to report conduct if they *suspect* a child is being abused as per the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Vic – SSR, Tas - OIR) and as a Mandatory Reporter.

Reportable Conduct: Reporting to the Social Services Regulator (SSR - Vic) or the Office of the Independent Regulator (Tas), any reasonable belief of 'reportable conduct' (as defined by the Act) within three days. This is done via the Head of Entity at each affiliate and agency and reported to CCVT Safe Church office for transparency and accountability.

Mandatory Reporting: People in religious ministry are mandatory reporters and legally required to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities. Through the CCVT Safe Church Training we encourage all staff and volunteers to be ethical reporters and report all abuse as per the Safe Places policy. This includes abuse disclosed or witnessed in digital or online contexts.

Please also note that reporting Child Sexual Abuse is a community wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police. If you do not do so you could be convicted under the **Failure to Disclose** legislation. Affiliates must ensure these obligations are communicated clearly to all staff (paid or unpaid) and volunteers.

Anyone in a position of authority who knows a child is at risk of sexual abuse and has the ability to reduce or remove that risk but fails to act, commits an offence under the Failure to Protect laws. This applies in every setting—online ministry, camps, off-site events and activities run with partner organisations.

Privacy

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

Risk Management

CCVT takes a proactive, risk management approach to safety and expects CCVT Affiliates to do the same.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, mitigate or minimise risks in both physical and online environments.

CCVT is committed to helping Affiliates to become safer places through the provision of guidance and resources and encourages Affiliates to seek assistance from CCVT's Safe Places Coordinator where needed.

CCVT will assist with safety issues at the invitation of the Affiliate, or if CCVT considers it necessary, at CCVT's instigation.

Accountability For Safety

As stated in Affinity, (and any subsequent iteration of Affinity), Affiliates agree to "ensure that all mission and ministry activities are safe places for all people". Affinity: 2 also states, Affiliates will "agree to the CCVT Safe Places Policy and the implementation of its suite of Safe Places policies". Thus, Affiliates are required to meet the minimum legislative requirements relevant to them in relation to Child Safety and Workplace Health and Safety in Victoria and Tasmania respectively, as a pre-requisite for being Affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania.

The governing body of each Affiliate is 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 them are being met;
- the name and contact details of the person designated as the "Safety Contact Person" (by whatever name)

CCVT will conduct random conversational and/or written audits. Affiliates which fail to demonstrate commitment or ability to making their organisation safe will have a loading applied to their insurance premium, and risk lack of insurance coverage and potentially disaffiliation.

Responsibility For Safety

Everyone associated with CCVT and its Affiliates has some responsibility for safety as set out below.

Who	Role in Promoting Safe Places
Individuals (participants)	Take personal responsibility for their own and others' safety; raise any issues of concern. Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.
Affiliate Leaders	Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures. Encourage program participants to take responsibility for their own and others' safety and advise how to report any issues of concern.
Minister/Key Leader	Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures. Carry out responsibilities in accordance with employment contract/position description.
Affiliate governing body	Take responsibility for what happens in our church or agency. Identify, assess and control risks, and review the effectiveness of control measures. Adopt appropriate policies and review them regularly. Ensure the relevant policies are lived out in the church or agency. Ensure the church or agency is compliant with regulatory obligations. Ensure appropriate insurance arrangements are in place. Seek help from CCVT where needed. Accept help from CCVT where CCVT believes necessary including where minimum requirements are not being met.
CCVT	Provide resources for Affiliates to use, for example template policies and checklists. Provide Affiliates with assistance when difficult issues arise, for example an allegation of abuse, either at the invitation of the Affiliate, or at the instigation of CCVT. Identify minimum requirements for risk management and compliance purposes. Hold Affiliates accountable for meeting those minimum requirements.
CCVT Inc. Board	Ensure that risk is managed proactively. Challenge the Movement in relation to opportunities and risks.

Who	Role in Promoting Safe Places
	Implement a system to minimise risk and encourage compliance with regulatory obligations. Promote compliance with risk and compliance regulatory obligations across CCVT. Monitor risk and compliance. Take responsibility for how CCVT, as a whole, deals with allegations of abuse and other major risks.
Churches of Christ Insurance	Provide insurance. Promote utilisation of insurance and related services.

Authorisation

Responsible person:	Michael Vanderree
Version:	4
Approved by the Boards of:	
CCVT Inc	7.04.2026
Community Care	7.04.2026
Properties Corporation	7.04.2026
ACOM	7.04.2026
Scheduled review date:	April 2027