

GYMEA PEOPLES CHURCH INC.
POLICY AND CODE OF PRACTICE FOR CHURCH WORKERS
(Revised August 2024)

INTRODUCTION:

While workers of GyMEA Peoples Church have always been expected to maintain high standards of conduct, we have introduced this policy statement and code of practice in relation to Church workers and their ministry to clarify and document those standards.

This Policy and Code of Practice seeks to:

- i. encourage any person who is aggrieved by the misconduct (either sexual misconduct or any other inappropriate behaviour) of a Church Worker to make a complaint;
- ii. assure parents and others that all complaints will be treated seriously and investigated expeditiously,
- iii. ensure that both the aggrieved person and the Church Worker concerned are treated appropriately, fairly and respectfully; and
- iv. ensure that all those involved are informed of the outcome of a complaint.

Since work amongst children is the most vulnerable area the statement majors on that aspect but all areas of ministry are included.

DEFINITIONS:

- a) **SEXUAL MISCONDUCT** means any form of inappropriate sexual behaviour, whether by act or words, and includes any form of sexual behaviour involving a minor or an intellectually impaired person.
- b) **OTHER INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR** includes all other forms of physical or verbal abuse or neglect.
- c) **CHURCH WORKER** is any person who is authorised by the GyMEA Peoples Church to be involved in the various ministries of the Church.
- d) **CHURCH LEADERSHIP** includes deacons and elders.

PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS:

- a) All allegations or suspicion of misconduct made against a Church Worker should be heard promptly by any ministry director and, where possible, in the presence of an adult witness of the same gender as the complainant.
 - b) All these allegations or concerns must be conveyed without delay to the Church Leadership.
 - c) The Leadership will then:
 - i. inform parents/guardians as soon as possible if a minor is involved;
 - ii. require the Church Worker to stand down immediately from his/her position of ministry; and
 - iii. investigate the legitimacy of the complaint.
 - d) Having consideration for:
 - i. the nature of the complaint;
 - ii. the confidentiality required by the aggrieved person;
 - iii. the wishes of parents/guardians where minors are involved;
 - iv. legal responsibilities relating to the reporting requirements concerning the risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect as set out in the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#); and
 - v. other relevant considerations;the Leadership will then:
 - i. inform Community Services, the police and/or
 - ii. engage in mediation. The Church will not assume liability for the costs of mediation unless specific prior arrangements are made and agreed to by all parties.
- Notwithstanding the above, the police will be informed in every case where an allegation indicates that criminal activity has occurred.
- e) If a complaint is found to contain issues of substance then, depending on the nature and seriousness of the complaint, the outcome may include one or more of the following:
 - i. legal proceedings against the Church Worker;
 - ii. a written apology from the Church Worker;
 - iii. mediation/counselling/referral for those involved, including parents/guardians of minors;

- iv. disciplinary action against the Church Worker as described in the Church's Constitution. If the Church Worker is a non-member, then the Leadership will deal with him/her in the spirit of the disciplinary section of the Constitution;
 - v. reinstatement of the Church Worker to his/her ministry position.
- f) If a complaint is found to contain no issue of substance, then the outcome may include one or more of the following:
- i. mediation/counselling/referral for those involved, including parents/guardians of minors;
 - ii. a written response to the aggrieved person;
 - iii. reinstatement of the Church Worker to his/her ministry position.

Notwithstanding any of the above, all those involved in the matter, including parents/guardians of minors, will be advised of the outcome of a complaint.

GUIDELINES AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS:

Guidelines and practical suggestions for children's work are outlined in Appendix A to this Statement. It will be the responsibility of the respective Departmental Leader to ensure that the guidelines are known and practiced by Church Workers under his/her direction.

Church Workers are required to sign a "Church Workers Declaration" indicating that they have read and agree to abide by this Policy and Code of Practice (Appendix B).

RELEASE OF POLICY STATEMENT:

All Members and Adherents are to be made aware of this Statement. Non-attending parents of children attending meetings authorised by the Church should also be made aware of its existence and supplied with a copy, if requested.

Appendix C is a specimen letter for this purpose.

APPENDIX A

GYMEA PEOPLES CHURCH - FOR CHILDREN'S WORKERS

a) Appointment

Before appointing a person to any ministry position, the Leadership will:

- i. comply with the requirements of the Working With Children Check administered by the Office of the Children's Guardian,
- ii. prohibit the employment or acceptance of any person from working at GPC if they have prior convictions relating to violent or sexually related offences.
- iii. in the case of SRE teachers, obtain the statutory declaration required by the NSW Department of Education and Training.
- iv. All new appointees will be required, at the earliest opportunity, to attend appropriate training for working with children unless such training has already been done.
- v. If a volunteer has been at GPC for less than 12 months two references from external references are required (eg, previous church). For volunteers who have been at GPC for more than 12 months, one internal reference from a Ministry or Church leader is required (a verbal reference is acceptable).

b) Guidelines

- i. Children of school age should not be picked up and carried as toddlers.
- ii. Apart from legitimate games, physical contact should be limited to the shoulder/arm and above.
- iii. Never be left alone with a child in private. If you need to speak personally, do so in a quiet place that is in public view.
- iv. Where possible, a male and a female Church Worker should be present when transporting children to and from church activities.
- v. If a church worker has ongoing contact outside of church activities with the children who are or have been involved in his/her children's ministry, he/she must make this known to a church Elder.
- vi. All contact with children must be conducted in accordance with the GyMEA Peoples Church Communications Policy.

c) Advice

- i. Following the guidelines will help to avoid misunderstandings and difficulties. They are to protect children and your reputation.
- ii. Some children come from difficult home situations and may be emotionally "starved". For these seeking (and perhaps needing) added emotional support, it can be provided by non-physical or limited physical contact, e.g.
 - high 5's
 - "pat" on the head
 - arm across the shoulder
 - using eye contact
 - including first name
 - personal (rather than stereo-typical) conversation
 - crouching to eye-level

APPENDIX B

I _____ declare that:

- i. I have read and understood the "Policy and Code of Practice for Church Workers" of the Peoples Church, GyMEA.
- ii. I agree to abide by the abovementioned "Policy and Code of Practice".

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Note to Parents

As those involved in children's and youth ministries at GyMEA Peoples Church, we count it a great privilege and an enormous responsibility to be teaching, leading and sharing with your children through these important years of their lives. We accept as from God, the challenge of meeting some of their physical, psychological and spiritual needs, and feel accountable to Him and to you for their welfare. We thank you for entrusting to us their care for regular periods each week.

We have all been appointed to our positions of ministry by the church on the recommendation of our church's leadership. Regular reports of each ministry, including Sunday School, AWANA, youth and associated ministries are received by the Eldership. We may not be "professionals" but all have received some basic training on managing children's groups and on what is appropriate behaviour toward children.

As part of the church's commitment to your child's welfare, we wish to ensure that you are happy with the care that is given. If at any time you are concerned about the care your child receives whilst under our supervision, we encourage you to make this known to us as quickly as possible. Your first point of contact would be your child's ministry director If this is not convenient, you should contact the Pastor on 9525 5770. Your concerns will be treated promptly and properly. Our priority, as is yours, is the welfare of the children. Thank you again for allowing us to share in the life of your family.

A copy of our Policy Statement regarding Church Workers is available on request.

In Christ's service,