

Safe Spaces Safeguarding Policy (draft)

Pine Rivers Vineyard Church

WHY?

At Pine Rivers Vineyard Church, the safety and well-being of every child and young person is a sacred trust.

Flowing from our mission to love God wholeheartedly and love people unconditionally, we are committed to creating and maintaining a child-safe culture—one that protects children from harm, empowers their voices, and nurtures their spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

As a Vineyard church, we follow Jesus, we learn to live like Him, we love to worship, and we love kids — just like Jesus. Our safeguarding practices reflect our call to join Jesus in His mission and ministry so that His Kingdom comes to the hearts and lives of people in our suburbs and city. Creating safe spaces for children is a direct expression of this Kingdom calling and of our commitment to embody the love, compassion, and justice of Christ in all we do.

This policy outlines Pine Rivers Vineyard Church's approach to preventing harm through proactive systems, clear procedures, safe ministry conduct, and accountable leadership.

It applies to all Pastors, Elders, Ministry Leaders, staff, volunteers, worship/prayer teams, youth and children's leaders, students, contractors, and visitors engaged with any church activity or ministry environment.

Alignment With Governance & Legislation (Queensland Churches)

Pine Rivers Vineyard Church acknowledges our legal and ethical responsibility to protect all children and young people who engage with our ministries. Our safeguarding practices comply with:

National Framework

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Australian Human Rights Commission – Child Safe Standards Guidance

State Requirements (QLD)

- Queensland Child Safe Standards (mandatory for churches from 1 October 2025)
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Blue Cards)
- Child Protection Act 1999 (Mandatory Reporting Pathways & Definitions of Harm)

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- Criminal Code Act 1899 (Offences involving children, including failure-to-report clauses)
- Civil Liability Act 2003 – Duty of Care

Church-Specific Governance Expectations

- Safe Ministry / Safe Church frameworks used by Australian churches
- Not-for-profit governance obligations
- Mandatory reporting and ethical responsibilities of clergy, staff, and volunteers

Pine Rivers Vineyard Church commits to operating within these obligations in full.

The National Principles / QLD Standards We Commit To Implementing

These mandatory principles form the backbone of our safeguarding responsibilities:

1. Child safety is embedded in leadership, governance, culture, and everyday practice.
2. Children and young people are empowered to participate and have a voice in their safety.
3. Families and caregivers are respected, informed, and actively engaged.
4. Diversity is respected, and inclusion is actively practised.
5. Children are safe in physical environments.
6. Children are safe in online and digital environments.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped, trained, and supported.
8. Safe recruitment, screening, and onboarding practices are maintained.
9. Concerns, complaints, disclosures, and allegations are taken seriously and responded to immediately.
10. Continuous improvement underpins all safeguarding systems and behaviours.

These principles, required of all Queensland churches, guide the content and implementation of this entire policy.

HOW?

Child Safe Outcome 1 — Leadership, Governance & Culture

Pine Rivers Vineyard Church ensures child safety is embedded in governance through:

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- Board/Elder oversight of child safety systems
- Clear delegation of safeguarding responsibilities
- Mandatory training for all leaders
- Integration of child safety into ministry planning and decision-making
- Regular risk assessments and annual policy review
- Zero tolerance for abuse, misconduct, or boundary violations

Spiritual authority **must never** be used to intimidate, manipulate, shame, or control a child or young person.

Child Safe Outcome 2 — Empowering Children & Supporting Their Participation

We uphold children's rights by:

- Encouraging children to speak openly and ask questions
- Teaching children how to seek help
- Ensuring children know who to talk to if they feel unsafe
- Creating predictable, respectful environments
- Listening deeply and responding appropriately

Child Safe Outcome 3 — Engaging Families as Partners

We recognise that safe ministry depends on transparent partnership with parents:

- Providing clear information about programs, supervision, and expectations
- Communicating promptly about incidents, concerns, or changes
- Inviting feedback on safety, inclusion, and ministry experience
- Respecting family structures, cultural contexts, and parenting choices

Child Safe Outcome 4 — Valuing Diversity & Inclusion

We commit to:

- Supporting children of all abilities, backgrounds, and identities
- Removing barriers to participation
- Ensuring cultural, linguistic, disability, and trauma-aware practices
- Adapting supervision and ministry approaches for individual needs

Child Safe Outcome 5 — Safe Physical Environments

Leaders ensure that:

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- All ministry areas are visible, open, and appropriately supervised
- Risk assessments are completed for programs, camps, special events
- Children are never left alone with an un-screened or un-approved adult
- The premises remain drug-free, alcohol-free, and vape-free during child-related activities
- Emergency procedures are known and practiced

Child Safe Outcome 6 — Safe Online Environments

- Leaders only communicate with children via approved church platforms
- No private messaging, unsupervised chats, or personal social media contact
- Digital content must be appropriate and safe
- No photographs or recordings are taken or shared without **written parental consent**
- Cyber safety breaches must be reported immediately

This also aligns with the **Criminal Code Act** and **Queensland online harm regulations**.

Child Safe Outcome 7 — Training, Supervision & Support

All staff and volunteers must:

- Complete approved safe ministry / child safety training
- Maintain Blue Card clearance
- Follow the Safe Ministry Code of Conduct
- Understand mandatory reporting obligations
- Participate in ongoing supervision and team support

Child Safe Outcome 8 — Safe Recruitment & Onboarding

We ensure:

- Interviews, reference checks, and screening conversations occur before appointment
- Volunteers complete structured onboarding and role expectations
- Blue Cards are verified and monitored (as required by Blue Card Services)
- No one begins ministry until all checks are complete

This fulfils obligations under QLD's **Working with Children Act** and the **Child Safe Standards**.

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Child Safe Outcome 9 — Responding to Disclosures, Concerns & Allegations

Under Queensland law, churches must:

- Take all disclosures seriously
- Provide immediate support to the child
- Report suspicions of physical or sexual abuse
- Document concerns accurately
- Escalate concerns to police or Child Safety if required
- Stand down leaders under investigation
- Maintain strict confidentiality

Failure to report may be an offence under the **Criminal Code Act 1899**.

Child Safe Outcome 10 — Continuous Improvement & Monitoring

We commit to:

- Annual safeguarding reviews
- Incident and near-miss analysis
- Monitoring patterns across ministries
- Updating policies when legislation changes
- Maintaining a Child Safety Register
- Reviewing the policy with the Eldership and Safe Ministry Team each year

This fulfils obligations under QLD's Child Safe Standards governance requirements.

WHAT?

Consistent implementation of this policy ensures Pine Rivers Vineyard Church upholds a visible, robust culture of child safety and wellbeing.

Our environments—physical and online—are intentionally designed to protect children, nurture belonging, and support spiritual growth.

By living out this policy, we strengthen our mission to love God wholeheartedly and love people unconditionally—creating spaces where children flourish, families feel secure, and leaders serve with integrity and joy.

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References

National Standards & Frameworks

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Safe Ministry / Church Governance Standards

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Baptist Union of Queensland. (2020–2024). *Safe Church Guidelines*.

Anglican Church of Australia. (2017–2024). *Faithfulness in Service: A National Code for Personal Behaviour & Safe Ministry Practice*.

The Salvation Army Australia. (2020–2024). *Child Safe Practice Framework*.

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(These denominational references support best practice and are widely recognised across Australian churches, even though each church implements its own local policy.)

Risk Management & Safety Guidance

Australian Human Rights Commission. (2018). *Guide to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*.

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(Although developed for NSW, widely used across Australia for practical guidance.)

Pine Rivers Vineyard Church Vision & Ministry Context

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