

Safe Ministry to Children

Implementation Bulletin No.1

– December 2017–

A message from the General Manager

On 23 September 2017, the Anglican Church Southern Queensland (ACSQ) Synod adopted the Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017 (SMCC).

The SMCC sets national benchmarks for safe ministry to children. A key issue identified by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is a lack of uniformity between dioceses in the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA) in relation to child protection and safe ministry practices. The SMCC addresses this.

The full text of the SMCC can be accessed at the below web address:

https://www.anglican.org.au/data/canons/Safe_Ministry_to_Children_Canon_2017.pdf

The General Manager has formed the SMCC Working Group to oversee the implementation of the SMCC in ACSQ. It comprises representatives of each Commission. It will give regular updates to keep all in ACSQ up to date on the implementation of the SMCC.

Key Requirements of the SMCC

The SMCC covers four broad areas of practice relevant to all Church workers:

1. Code of Conduct

Section 5 of Faithfulness in Service (see below) is adopted as the code of conduct for all ministry to children across the ACA;

2. Screening

Detailed requirements for the screening of all clergy and Church workers who are involved in, or connected to, ministry to children;

3. Training

Expectations for child protection training for all clergy and Church workers who are involved in, or connected to, ministry to children; and

4. Audit

Annual auditing and reporting of compliance with these practices.

Ministry to children covers any activity for which a working with children check (Blue Card) is required, a pastoral ministry which has direct, regular and not incidental contact with children, services to children that are ancillary to the exercise of such a pastoral ministry which involve:

- contact with children during an overnight activity (such as camps and similar activities); or
- close, personal contact with children (such as changing clothes, washing and toileting),

or supervising such ministry. This includes clergy and both employed and volunteer lay people.

The majority of our practices in ACSQ are already compliant with the SMCC. However, some gaps have been identified. Over the next six months, ACSQ will be working to address these gaps.



New Code of Conduct – Faithfulness in Service Section 5

Under the SMCC, the code of conduct for all clergy and Church workers in the ACA engaging in ministry to children is:

... the standards and guidelines of Faithfulness in Service set out in:

- (a) section 3 (Putting this Code into Practice) so far as they relate to section 5 (Children), and
- (b) section 5 (Children),

when read in each case with section 1 (About this Code) and section 2 (Key Terms).

In other words, section of 5 (Children) of Faithfulness in Service is the benchmark code of conduct.

As an initial measure, Diocesan Council has adopted the benchmark code of conduct, to be referred to as 'Code of Conduct for Ministry to Children within ACSQ', across all activities of ACSQ. A copy can be found at <https://anglicanchurchsq.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Code-of-Conduct-for-Ministry-to-Children-within-ACSQ.pdf>

Clergy are already subject to Faithfulness in Service so there is no change for them. Various Church bodies covering employees and volunteers have their own codes of conduct. The amendment of these existing codes to incorporate the Code of Conduct for Ministry to Children within ACSQ will be rolled out in the new year.

In the meantime, please make the existence of this new code known among any Church workers involved with children within your area.

We will be doing some more work on codes of conduct in the coming months. If a Church body is subject to an 'equivalent code of conduct', this can be used instead of the benchmark code, if approved by the General Synod Standing Committee.

The SMCC Working Group is currently investigating the possibility of applying to the Standing Committee for approval of some existing codes of conduct as 'equivalent' codes, but in the interim, the Code of Conduct for Ministry to Children within ACSQ will apply.



What's coming next?

ACSQ has made a lot of progress in child protection over the last ten years, and this has put us in a good position to fully implement the SMCC. It is critical that we continue this important work so as to ensure that children within our care remain safe from harm.

The SMCC Working Group is working on the necessary changes to screening and training requirements to roll out over the first half of 2018. For now, please continue to follow the current policies and procedures.

Further communications will follow regarding this roll out. I look forward to working with all of you to implement these important changes.

*If you have any questions or concerns regarding the requirements of the SMCC and its implementation in the Diocese, please contact **Mr Ben Oberhardt**, Research Officer – Office of Professional Standards, at (07) 3835 2261, or by email at BOberhardt@anglicanchurchsq.org.au for advice and assistance.*