

Overseas students visiting the Sydney Diocese to work with children or youth

Summary

More of our churches are being asked, or are inviting students or other people from overseas to work in the Diocese, either short term or for a longer period (eg: 12 months).

These positions may present as MTS-style ministry apprenticeships or internships, or something less formalised. They may be paid or voluntary, or somewhere in between (eg: accommodation provided in return for work).

These work arrangements present some particular challenges that we need to be aware of to ensure that they comply with Diocesan and State requirements for effective screening and training in Safe Ministry.

This document is a guide to assist parishes in being well prepared for such situations and identifies what information should be sought before any such worker begins work/ministry here.

Planning

The key here is planning well ahead.

The process of gathering the required information should start 4-6 months before the person leaves their country of origin. Often it is easier for the worker from overseas to gather this information.

Principles

The guiding principle in this situation is:

We need to be confident in the **appropriateness** and **preparation/training** of any person coming from overseas to work with children and other vulnerable people in our churches.

For Australian residents, we have local records, church affiliations, personal references etc that are usually easy to check. With people living overseas, obtaining this information is more difficult, and therefore they present a **significant risk** should they work with children, young people or other vulnerable people in our churches.

The Process

Before they arrive in Australia

Key steps for workers from overseas to take *before* arriving in Australia:

- Obtain a **police clearance certificate** (or equivalent) from the police in their country of residence. Any such documents older than six months should be renewed/replaced with a current certificate/document.

- For people resident in the U.S., the following protocol applies: must obtain **both** a State-wide police clearance from each State of residence in the USA during the last 12 months **AND** a FBI clearance in their current name and any other name they are, or have previously been known by.
- The FBI check won't necessarily show up certain offences committed in the last 12 months, or something similar. So best practice would be that we require people to get both.
- The FBI check takes at least 8-10 weeks to process, but can take longer (US embassy site says 4-5 months). <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/identity-history-summary-checks>
- **Obtain a personal written reference** from the Senior Minister/pastor of their church - assuming they have been active at that church for at least one year. If they have been at their current church for less than twelve months, an additional reference from their previous Senior Minister is desirable.
- **They need to apply for an Archbishop's Authority as a Lay Minister.** This [application form](#) is the first step doing that. Part of that application will involve a Safe Ministry Check clearance. For Lay Ministers, that is in the form of completing our **Confidential Lifestyle Questionnaire** (downloadable from [here](#)).

Notes about the Questionnaire:

- They should not sign anything in the form or complete the Statutory Declaration page until the interview in Australia.
- All the previous church information in the Questionnaire should be completed.
- They should print a copy of the completed form and keep the questionnaire with them until their arrival in Australia.
- Upon arrival, they should contact the person who will conduct the interview with them. They will have been informed of who that is in an email once the application form is submitted.
- Have them forward the following information to the Safe Ministry Rep at the parish they will be working in:
 - Their full name, date of birth and contact details (email, mailing address, phone number)
 - Copies of the documents mentioned above (Police check and Minister's reference but **not** the Confidential Lifestyle Questionnaire)
 - Full contact details of their current Senior Minister/Pastor.
 - Full contact details of the equivalent of the Director of Safe Ministry in their denomination/church organisation.
 - Written evidence of the currency of their equivalent to our Safe Ministry Training.

After they arrive in Australia

- After they arrive in Australia, but before they begin work at your church, they will need to apply for a WWCC and your Safe Ministry Rep should process that as normal. It is acceptable that they can begin work with just the APP number while they wait for full clearance.
They should also arrange for a confidential interview with the regional Archdeacon or Bishop's Executive Assistant where the Questionnaire is processed, and the Statutory Declaration completed.
- As soon as practical after arriving the person should complete the *Essentials* Safe Ministry training course and this must be completed **BEFORE** starting in a position working with children. This is important because they need to be aware of the requirements of the Diocese and the laws in NSW in working with children which will differ from country to country just as they do from state to state.

When the Safe Ministry Rep at the Australian church has received the documents and contact details, they should keep a copy for their records and forward a copy of them to the ODSM Safe Ministry Parish Consultant at: neil@safeministry.org.au

If you have any questions about any of these guidelines, or if they do not fit the circumstances that your church finds itself in, please contact the Safe Ministry Parish Consultant on the above email address or on 02 9265 1547