

## Senior Minister/Authorised Delegate and the Safe Ministry Check

This is a guide for Senior Ministers or their Authorised Delegate in Sydney Anglican Churches in managing the new Safe Ministry Check as the Safe Ministry To Children Ordinance 2020 takes effect.

There is a more [extensive guide for churches](#) available with a broader application.

### What responsibilities does the Senior Minister/Authorised Delegate have in relation to the volunteer Safe Ministry Check?

The main task is that of processing the Safe Ministry Check forms for all volunteer children's ministry workers in their parish – which should then lead to each volunteer either being cleared to work with children or barred from working with children.

Processing the forms includes:

- Reading the contents of the form – especially the Safe Ministry Questionnaire section.
- If 'red flags' are raised by any answers to those questions, or if any questionnaire questions are unanswered. An interview should be arranged in order to clarify the information given.

We encourage all Senior Ministers/Authorised Delegates to see this as an opportunity for pastoral ministry to those people.

### Online form for adult volunteers

If you wish the adult (18 years and over) volunteers in your parish to use the semi-automated online form, you or someone you delegate will need to [register your church](#) and receive an SMC Church ID number which all online applicants will require to know. Information about this is available [here](#).

### What is an 'Authorised Delegate'?

The responsibility for processing the Safe Ministry Check forms for volunteers and clearing (or not) those volunteers to work with children sits with the Senior Minister of each parish.

However:

- In many cases it is not practical for the Senior Minister to undertake that role personally. In which case he may appoint an Authorised Delegate to manage

that process on his behalf.

This is entirely an internal parish appointment.

- There can be more than one person appointed to process the forms if your parish has a very large number of SMC forms to process in the initial period when all current volunteer church workers are required to complete the process, but there should only be one Authorised Delegate to oversee that.
- ***Any Authorised Delegate should be a person who is a member of the pastoral staff team and who has considerable pastoral experience.*** This is in order to be able to assess and process the sensitive information in the 'Safe Ministry Questionnaire' section of the form.

There is a [pastoral guide](#) to conducting any follow up interview with a volunteer which may be helpful.

## Things to look for

### References

There are two situations where one or more volunteers in your church may need to supply a reference as to their suitability to work with children:

1. Where the applicant (current volunteer or new) has attended your church for less than two years - In which case, a reference must be obtained from the Senior Minister of the volunteer's previous church, or if they did not attend church previously, another adult who has known them for at least two years and can vouch for their appropriateness or otherwise to work with children.
2. Where you as Senior Minister of the volunteer's current church has been at the church for less than 2 years or has not observed the person undertake ministry to children for at least this period, in which case he is to contact the previous minister of the church.

This means that for the first case, the volunteer must seek a reference from their previous Senior Minister and supply that to you or your Authorised Delegate.

In the second case, **you or your Authorised Delegate are responsible** for seeking the reference from the previous Senior Minister in your church.

We suggest this approach during the initial period where all current church worker working with children are completing their Safe Ministry Checks:

If there are significant numbers, create a list of names as their SMC forms are submitted to you. When you have all names collected, send through the list to the previous Senior Minister of your parish with a request that he reply noting any concerns he may have about any individuals on the list being cleared to work with children.

In the rare situation where the previous Senior Minister is not available to consult (eg: if he is deceased), contact the Safe Ministry Team Parish Consultant ([Neil Atwood](#)) for suggestions how to proceed.

After January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 when all current volunteers have completed their SMC, the ongoing much smaller numbers of new volunteers will be much easier to manage if they require a reference.

### **The Safe Ministry ‘trifecta’**

Note that from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 ALL adult volunteers working with children will be required to:

- Be cleared to work with children by virtue of completing a Safe Ministry Check.
- Be current in their Safe Ministry Training (no grace period now permitted)
- Have a current, verified NSW WWCC

Without all three, no adult volunteer should be permitted to work with children.

Note that a few people may be exempt from the SMC – see page 4 of the [Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020](#)

### **Processing the Safe Ministry Questionnaire questions**

The Safe Ministry Check for adult volunteers asks a set of seven questions about the personal life of the applicant. These questions are designed to draw out any information which might result in having concerns about the suitability of the applicant to work with children.

The vast majority of applicants will answer ‘no’ to each of the questions, or will include information that helps explain a ‘yes’ answer to your satisfaction. But if any answers give you cause for concern, a confidential interview with the applicant will give you the opportunity to explore those matters further and help inform your decision to clear or not clear the applicant to work with children.

There is a guide to help you access any ‘yes’ answers and on conducting any subsequent interview

### **Safe Ministry Records**

The Senior Minister/Authorised Delegate should ensure that processes are in place to supply the following information for each volunteer SMC is supplied to the parish Safe Ministry Rep for entry into the parish Safe Ministry Records:

1. Date SMC submitted (date field)
2. Result of processing of SMC (cleared/not cleared)
3. Date clearance is granted/not granted (date field)
4. Name of person processing clearance (Senior Minister or his Authorised Delegate)

In addition, copies of completed Safe Ministry Checks and any attached references must also be securely and permanently stored in the parish Safe Ministry Records. See this article: <https://safeministry.org.au/safety-ministry-records/> for guidelines

Any questions or concerns about any of these processes can be addressed to the Parish Consultant - [Neil Atwood](#)

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