

Safe Ministry Reps and the Safe Ministry Check

This is designed to be a guide for Safe Ministry Representatives 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.

Key fact: The Safe Ministry Check is a Diocesan process and is separate and distinct from the WWCC which is required by NSW State legislation. They are not connected.

Two Forms

Note that the only version of the Safe Ministry Check (SMC) that will impact SMR's and the local church is the Safe Ministry Check for *volunteer* church workers who are working with children.

Within that category, there are two Safe Ministry Check forms:

- The Safe Ministry Check for **Adults** (over 18 years of age) Volunteers
- The Safe Ministry Check for Volunteers aged 13-17 years of age (**Junior Leaders**)

Two parts to record keeping and the SMC

1. Core Safe Ministry records.

These are the (usually electronic) day to day records you keep for all people in your church who are or who have worked with children – their personal details, WWCC data and Safe Ministry Training data, etc.

The SMC will require the addition of extra information to each person's record. These are the extra fields required to be completed for each person in your church who undertakes the SMC in order to work with children:

- a. **Date SMC submitted** (date field)
- b. **Result of processing of SMC** (cleared/not cleared)
- c. **Date clearance is granted/not granted** (date field)
- d. **Name of person processing clearance** (Senior Minister or his Authorised Delegate)

You may also choose to add further fields that relate to how the SMC forms are stored and where to locate them, or similar.

Note that if your church uses SaMRO it will have the new fields added for you.

2. **Extended Safe Ministry Records.**

These are the documents that relate to aspects of safe ministry practice that we are required to store indefinitely. These include attendance and permission papers, Safe Ministry Training certificates (if kept), miscellaneous notes pertaining to individuals, etc. These records can be physical (ie: pieces of paper) or electronic (spreadsheets, pdfs, etc)

A copy of each volunteer's SMC, related ID documents and any related references will need to be stored securely indefinitely.

Two Phases

There will be two phases to the introduction of the Safe Ministry Check:

1. The initial phase leading up to the implementation date of January 1st 2021. All current volunteers working with children are required to have completed an SMC by that date.
2. The ongoing phase where new volunteers coming to children's ministry will be required to complete an SMC before they commence that work.

The Initial Phase

Depending on the size of your church, the initial phase of the SMC is likely to run between the end of June 2020 (or thereabouts) and January 2021. This will mean anything from a handful to hundreds of individuals' SMC data to process and store.

The first thing to emphasise is *privacy and security*.

It is important that you as the SMR appointed by your Senior Minister supervise all aspects of handling the SMC data for your church. This is because an SMC can contain highly sensitive and personal information.

So even if you normally delegate data entry to admin personnel, you should carefully consider who you delegate the handling of SMC information to. This is to ensure that reliable and trustworthy people handle the privacy and security aspects of SMC data.

With the handling of the SMC forms and any character references that may be attached: There should be no need for persons handling the storage and indexing of that data to actually view the contents of the forms.

It is expected that the vast majority of adult volunteers will make use of the automated online SMC form which delivers the completed form to your Senior Minister or his Authorised Delegate as a pdf file. They should then pass on those documents to you for attaching to the persons Safe Ministry Record and for storage.

Manual versions of the forms will also be available as pdf's or to print off as paper

documents.

It is strongly recommended that any completed paper forms be scanned to pdfs and then the paper copies shredded.

It should by now be obvious that a carefully thought out strategy for efficiently storing and indexing these forms needs to be developed, as it is important that individual forms and any connected references can be easily retrieved in the years ahead. See [this article](#) for detailed information on this.

The Ongoing Phase

This will be much easier to manage due to much lower numbers and is really a case of continuing to implement the precautions and strategies that you used in the initial phase in an ongoing way.

On a related note: It is important to be clear that under the new Ordinance, the following are required **BEFORE** a person can start volunteering to work with children:

- A current, verified WWCC
- Current Safe Ministry Training
- A clearance to work with children from a Safe Ministry Check

There is no longer any grace period for Safe Ministry Training prior to a person starting to work with children.

Junior Leaders

It is worth noting that the SMC process for Junior Leaders is far more straightforward.

The SMC form for those leader aged between 13 and 17 years old consists of a simple declaration built around a code of conduct pledge that is signed by the Junior Leader and a parent.

This SMC form is only available as a PDF which will need to be printed, signed and then probably scanned back to a PDF again.

However, it is just as important that these forms be securely stored and indexed for retrieval should it be required sometime in the future.

See the [Church Guide](#) for more information relating to the requirement for Junior Leaders to complete the Junior Leaders Safe Ministry Training Course before they start working with children

Summary:

- Prepare your core Safe Ministry records to receive the new data related to the SMC by adding the extra fields.

- Prepare a secure storage/retrieval strategy for the extended Safe Ministry records (ie: the copies of SMC forms and references). See [this article](#) for suggestions
- Be confident in the appropriateness of any other persons involved in managing/entering the data – in their trustworthiness to manage the highly sensitive data in SMC forms. Consider consulting with your Senior Minister about this if you are not sure.

Any questions or concerns about any aspects of the SMC and your church as be directed to the Parish Consultant (Neil Atwood) at: info@safeministry.org.au.

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