

SafePraxeis

1.1 Introduction

We affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times.

Our mandate comes directly from God. God identified classes of vulnerable people who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (e.g. Ex 22:21-22, Deut 10:17-19, Jer 22:2-4, James 1:27). Jesus placed a high value on children (Mark 10:14). For God's sake we are to submit to authority so we work with the governing authorities in this nation (1 Peter 2:13-14).

Protection of vulnerable people is our responsibility. This policy takes into consideration all vulnerable people in our groups (Discovery Bible Studies, teams and churches). Praxeis acknowledges that empowerment and participation are particularly important for children and young people who are more likely to be misunderstood, marginalised, or suffer discrimination.

We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety, particularly in the area of child protection. Our policy has been developed to help us live out our Biblical mandate and our responsibilities under Victoria (VIC), Australia legislation¹. We acknowledge that we have workers and teams operating throughout Australia however due to Melbourne being the home base for systems operations, we are choosing to comply with VIC legislation¹. Our heart is to look look after all vulnerable people and recognise children are particularly vulnerable in our society. Praxeis has zero tolerance of all forms of child abuse (physical, emotional and psychological, sexual, neglect, racial, cultural or religious) and we are committed to children's best interests and keeping them safe. Children, including those of an Indigenous culture, have a right to feel safe in their environment, identity and culture, communication and/or physical barriers, accessibility and diversity of background and/or other influences. This gives them the opportunity to flourish emotionally, culturally, socially economically, educationally and spiritually.

We aim to create environments where all children and other vulnerable people regardless of gender, cultural background, religion or disability can encounter the love of Jesus through prayer and the Word in their own culture, context and community.

¹ Legislation includes but is not limited to Child wellbeing and safety act (2005), Working with Children Act (2005), Children, Youth and Families act (2005).

1.2 Our Policy Aims:

- To minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power within Praxeis.
- To ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled in a consistent, unbiased and thorough manner.
- To ensure Praxeis is compliant with all government legislation including but not limited to, the Child Safety Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- To ensure we develop a culture in Praxeis amongst our workers, board, leaders etc where safety is a high priority and all involved parties are assisted to know their responsibilities and how they can contribute.
- To ensure that all people are respected and valued, irrespective of their gender, age, country of origin, cultural heritage, socio-economic background or ability.
- To ensure that workers and Praxeis activities are safe.

1.3 Who must comply with this Policy:

This policy applies to the following persons, referred to in this document collectively as “workers”²:

- i. Supported workers;
- ii. Volunteer leaders ; (workers who are starting groups or leading a team)
- iii. Finance and Administration;
- iv. All members of the Board.

1.4 Scope of the Policy:

This Policy covers the following, in the context of Praxeis works and activities:

- i. Worker screening and selection;
- ii. Standards of behaviour expected of staff and volunteers (Code of Conduct);
- iii. Prevention of harm through creating safe emotional, physical and cultural environments;

² Whilst Praxeis uses the term ‘workers’ for all people engaging in Praxeis activities, they would be recognised as ‘a person in religious ministry’ who are ‘appointed, ordained or otherwise recognised as a religious or spiritual leader in a religious institution’.

- iv. Minimisation of harm through procedures for dealing with and reporting allegations of harm;
- v. Risk management processes for high risk activities and special eventsWe commit to:

2. Safe recruitment of workers.

- 2.1. All potential workers will have been known to Praxeis for a reasonable amount of time as to ascertain the character of the person and will complete an induction and receive professional development through training in Praxeis DNA and values and completing Safe Praxeis training.
- 2.2. We will screen all prospective workers (supported workers and volunteer leaders) to Praxeis, before they are appointed.
- 2.3. All workers will have to have a current Working with Children Check or state equivalent.

3. Adequate training of workers.

- 3.1. We require that all workers complete child safety awareness training as directed by the SafePraxeis team which includes staff being taught reporting procedures
- 3.2. We require that team leaders include promotion and awareness of our SafePraxeis policies and and procedures to their teams.
- 3.3. All workers are given access to the child safety policy and can easily access all SafePraxeis documents.

4. Continued coaching of workers.

- 4.1. We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for all workers.
- 4.2. All workers will adhere to the Praxeis Code of Conduct.
- 4.3. We commit to help workers to access resources that are culturally and contextually relevant for vulnerable people (e.g. Indigenous Australians, refugees etc)
- 4.4. We commit to having Child Safety as part of the conversation in all areas of the organisation.

5. Responding to complaints and concerns of of harm (abuse) and serious ministry misconduct.

5.1. Responding - We will respond quickly and train our workers to respond quickly to any allegations of harm or serious ministry misconduct. We will respond with care and support to ensure the physical and emotionally safety of children and other vulnerable people. .

5.2. Reporting - All workers will report disclosures of suspicions of child abuse, according to state legislation by using the Reporting procedures and factsheets. .

5.3. If a complaint or disclosure is made about a Praxeis worker, we will take the disclosure seriously and respond quickly, with due care to fulfil state legislative requirements. Refer to Praxeis reporting procedures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 for required steps to take place. .

5.4. Record-keeping - Notes and documents will be kept from all disclosures, conversations, reports and investigations in a secure manner for 45 years. All concerns will be included on a Register.

5.5. Confidentiality - We will maintain confidentiality for all parties involved. Advice will be sought from police and other authorities before communication is made with necessary people. Refer to the Reporting procedures for specific steps involved in potentially required communication.

5.6. Board - A SafePraxeis report is an agenda item at all Board meetings. In the event of a disclosure or other reportable concern being made, we will follow the Reporting procedures to ensure that the Chair of the Board and other Board members are made aware at the appropriate time.

5.7. Reportable Conduct Scheme - as a Victorian religious organisation, Praxeis needs to participate in the CCYP Reportable Conduct Scheme for any allegations made against a Praxeis worker, National Director, Board Member or Office staff. Use the Reporting Procedures to ensure that requirements are followed.

5.8. For all other complaints (expression of dissatisfaction with the organisation) then we will use the complaints procedure to resolve concerns as quickly as possible.

6. Emotionally safe environments.

6.1. We are aware and sensitive of Indigenous culture and its value.

6.2. We will offer participants, including children and their families, the opportunity to provide input in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation in Praxeis activities, as far as is sensible and practical.

6.3. We will obtain appropriate information relating to those we are engaging with, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.

6.4. We will take complaints, including racism, seriously and we will respond promptly and thoroughly. The complaint process will be easily accessible on our website.

6.5. We recognise that children particularly from Indigenous and other culturally diverse backgrounds have a range of experiences and insights that will be helpful in creating safe environments.

7. Safe physical & online environments.

7.1. Workers are to prayerfully process new/expanded ministry/access strategies with their coach or regional leader to discuss and manage potential risks. National Director is to be informed of new ministries and access strategies. New child or young-person focussed initiatives (activities without parents or other caregivers) need to have a risk assessment done in consultation with the Safety team before commencing any activity.

7.2. Workers will ensure our online environments including but not limited to zoom, website and online training are safe and children won't be exposed to inappropriate content or communication.

7.3. All workers will discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates for establishment and maintenance of safe environments in Praxeis ministry activities.

8. Safety Officer and Team.

8.1. A Safety Officer and team will be appointed to bring Child safety standards and other Safe Church recommendations to Praxeis management for consideration and adoption and oversee the implementation of SafePraxeis policies and procedures.

9. Consequences for breach of this Policy

Praxeis recognises that failure to follow government mandatory reporting legislation, may be classed as a criminal offence for individuals and the organisation.

9.1. A breach of failure to comply with the Policy or the Code of Conduct may give rise to the following measures:

- Meeting with regional leader of National Director to discuss breach or lack of compliance

- An internal investigation occurring, facilitated by an independent investigator (not affiliated with Praxeis)
- Formal warning being issued
- Report being made to external agencies, i.e. Professional Associations and/or Police
- Report being made to the Commission for Children and Young people as part of Praxeis responsibilities as a religious organisation in the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- Close monitoring and live supervision
- Further education being required before recommencing in role
- Any other performance management strategy deemed appropriate
- Immediate suspension
- Immediate termination of Praxeis membership
- Immediate termination.

SafePraxeis Policy v6

Reviewed: July 2023

Approved by Board: 10th August 2023