1. Scope

This policy applies to all AFES Employees, Volunteers, and Student Leaders (AFES Personnel).

2. Purpose

This policy is to help AFES create and maintain a safe ministry environment.

AFES is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all people that engage with AFES, this is particularly the case where people are vulnerable due to age, disability, or some other reason.

The apostle Paul desired that ministry leaders conduct themselves in a manner that is above reproach (1 Thessalonians 2:10, 1 Timothy 3:2). AFES promotes Christ-honouring practices in ministry.

As part of this commitment, all AFES Personnel are to act in the best interest of others (Philippians 2:3-8), and in line with our common law duty of care and relevant statutory duties.

AFES seeks to meet its commitment to safety and Christ honouring practices in ministry by ensuring that AFES Personnel:

- are appropriately screened prior to commencing in their role (see clause 4);
- understand the expected standards of behaviour as set out in the AFES Code of Conduct and Doctrine and the Leader Commitment (Code of Conduct) and follow the necessary safety guidelines (see clause 5);
- implement appropriate risk management (see clause 6)
- are comfortable to, and do, report all concerns about breaches of the expected standards of behaviour to AFES leadership or Creating Safer Communities (CSC) (see clause 7);
- appropriately handle serious complaints (see clause 8); and
- keep all necessary records relating to the above (see clause 9).

3. Policy Contacts

For reporting processes see clause 7.

Creating Safer Communities (CSC)
Helpline: 1800 070 511
Email: helpline@safercommunities.net.au
Post: PO Box 2102, Peakhurst, NSW 2210

AFES Safe Ministry Officer
Chris Haines
Office: 02 9697 0313
Email: safe.ministry@afes.org.au
Post: PO Box 684, Kingsford, NSW 2032

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4. Screening Procedure

4.1 Introduction

AFES runs services and activities at universities throughout Australia. Generally, while on university campuses, AFES does not engage in child-related work within the meaning of the relevant "working with children check" schemes in each State and Territory as contact with children is incidental only (for example, 17-year-olds who turn 18 in their first year of university).

Notwithstanding this, **ALL** AFES Personnel are required to obtain a working with children check in their relevant jurisdiction due to their role requiring them to be able to engage with children if required as part of a mission or ministry engagement.

4.2 Working with Children or Vulnerable People Checks

All AFES Personnel must report their clearance details to the National Office prior to commencing work or their volunteer service. All AFES Personnel must inform the National Office of any changes to their clearance. Failure to obtain and maintain the clearance will lead to termination of employment/engagement.

4.3 Recruitment Requirements for AFES Employees and Volunteers

- A formal interview
- A current working with children check or equivalent (any offer of employment or engagement will be conditional on them obtaining the necessary clearance).
- Contact at least two referees supplied by the candidate, and, for potential AFES employees, enquire with at least two employers (including the previous employer) regarding their suitability for the position.
- Requiring all candidates to declare whether they:
    - have ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of an investigation relating to the abuse of a child or inappropriate sexual behaviour;
    - are prohibited or disqualified from working with children under the relevant working with children check scheme in any State or Territory;
    - will consent to the appropriate National Police Record Check if required, and agree to the release to AFES of information it deems relevant;
    - have ever engaged in (or been the subject of a formal accusation for) any of the following:
        - emotionally abusive behaviour towards an adult or child,
        - neglectful behaviour towards an adult or child,
        - physically abusive behaviour towards an adult or child, or
        - sexually abusive behaviour towards an adult or child (including sexual contact with a person under the age of consent).
- All candidates/volunteers are to sign a declaration that they have read and understood this policy.

4.4 Recruitment Requirements for Student Leaders at Affiliates

The AFES Student Leadership recruitment process occurs at the Affiliate level in a University Student Club. The minimum standards to be followed by the Affiliate are:

- A current working with children check or equivalent (any engagement will be conditional on them obtaining the necessary clearance).
- Provision of at least two referees by the candidate regarding suitability for the position, including an AFES staff or associate staff member, and a church leader from the candidate's church.
- All candidates to declare whether they have ever engaged in (or been the subject of a formal accusation for) any of the following:
    - emotionally abusive behaviour towards an adult or child,
    - neglectful behaviour towards an adult or child,
    - physically abusive behaviour towards an adult or child, or
    - sexually abusive behaviour towards an adult or child (including sexual contact with a person under the age of consent).
- All candidates are to acknowledge they have read and understood this procedure.

5. Expected Standards of Behaviour

5.1 Code of Conduct

All AFES Personnel are required to abide by and uphold the Leader Commitment (Code of Conduct) by Ansvar Insurance.

All AFES Employees and Volunteers are required to abide by and uphold the AFES Code of Conduct and Doctrine.

5.2 Guidelines for Interpersonal Behaviour and Meetings

In all interpersonal behaviour, AFES personnel must be blameless in their conduct, paying careful attention to godliness, transparency, and accountability.

If a situation arises during private meetings, or at any other time that is concerning to you, or where the situation has placed you at risk of harm, call **CSC Helpline 1800 070 511** to discuss what has happened, and to determine what to do.

6. Risk Management

AFES Personnel will manage risk in respect of child safety matters in accordance with AFES risk management practices.

7. Reporting Concerns about Harm and/or Abuses and Responsibilities

7.1 Introduction

AFES takes seriously all historical and/or current allegations and/or complaints about abuse, misconduct and/or workplace bullying and/or harassment and current grievances in relation to AFES Personnel. AFES actively encourages responding appropriately to all concerns about harm and/or abuse. AFES Personnel are required to report all concerns about risk of harm and/or abuse (i.e. don't dismiss concerns when raised) in accordance with the AFES reporting procedure (Section 7.2).

AFES has appointed Creating Safer Communities (CSC), an independent organisation experienced in ministry safety. CSC can be contacted on the **CSC Helpline 1800 070 511**, which will take the required steps to comply with relevant laws and report to relevant government authorities. Anyone can raise a concern about abuse and/or misconduct in relation to AFES Personnel, or learn more about safe ministry processes. The CSC Helpline person (external to AFES) will assist you by determining the appropriate course of action, in consultation with the National Director as required.

7.2 Procedure for Disclosures

The Disclosure for Sexual Abuse, Domestic Violence and Self-Harm Procedure is to be followed.

7.3 Confidentiality

Details of person/s reporting concerns about harm and/or abuse will be kept confidential. However, information may need to be disclosed in order to meet reporting obligations and/or investigation processes relating to disciplinary procedures. It is the responsibility of all parties to maintain a level of confidentiality appropriate to the particular circumstances to ensure the integrity of the process. This is particularly the case when the conduct complained of may constitute criminal activity and/or is a serious breach of the AFES Code of Conduct and Doctrine.

7.4 Criminal Activity

Where allegations are of a criminal nature, AFES will report to the police, and other relevant government statutory authorities as required. AFES commits to working with the police as part of its process, including informing the police of pastoral care and risk management strategies it intends to employ.

AFES will explain to the alleged victim(s) that AFES will report this matter to the police. The police will determine if the matter will proceed with a police investigation. The police may ask for a witness statement, but that is a matter for the alleged victim(s) to decide.

Where it does not interfere with the police investigation, AFES will concurrently select an appropriate investigation/disciplinary procedure(s) and decide on appropriate actions in respect of risk management.

8. Complaint Handling

AFES commits to being accountable and transparent in its response and to praying that these procedures bring some form of healing for those who have been harmed, and appropriate discipline for those who have offended.

8.1 Complaint Processes

AFES will investigate any report of harmful or abusive behaviour allegedly engaged in by AFES Personnel. These actions are in line with AFES's commitment to appropriate processes including procedural fairness.

For AFES Employees and Volunteers

a. **Resolving Conflict or Misunderstanding Procedure:** to be implemented when workers or volunteers require assistance with conflict or misunderstanding; or

b. **Poor Performance and/or Misconduct Procedure:** to be implemented where there is information concerning a worker or volunteer that is defined as misconduct, or in cases of poor work performance; or

c. **Serious Misconduct Procedure** be implemented when there are allegations of serious breaches of misconduct and/or abuse against workers or volunteers. The procedure may include the appointment of an independent investigator if necessary.

For Student Leaders

d. **Informing the Affiliate:** When AFES becomes aware of a breach of this policy by a Student Leader, the President and Vice President of the affiliate will be informed, including next action recommendations.

8.2 Compulsory Steps

Where AFES Personnel have been subject to a plausible complaint (as determined by CSC) relating to abuse they are to be suspended while a complaint investigation occurs (either by the Police and/or an internal investigation).

Where AFES Personnel have been subject to an adverse finding or that the complaint is sustained (either by a Court or an internal investigation) then their employment or engagement with AFES will be terminated.

9. Record Keeping

AFES will ensure the secure retention of all AFES Personnel employment records, incident and investigation reports, liability insurance policies and other relevant incident-related correspondence for no less than 50 years from the date of creation or as otherwise required.

10. Compliance and Breaches

Failure to comply with this procedure, whether deliberate or not, will invoke a disciplinary procedure.

11. Commitment to Adhere to the Safe Ministry Policy

The following statement will be signed by all employees and volunteers (staff).

I have read, understood and hereby state that I am willing to adhere to the AFES Safe Ministry Policy to provide a safe ministry workplace environment. I have access to the AFES Safe Ministry Policy, Disciplinary Procedures and Incident Pathways into AFES Policies and Procedures.

12. Definitions

AFES Employee means all staff remunerated directly by AFES, excluding volunteers, contractors, and staff remunerated by other organisations, even where AFES is used for financial support raising.

AFES Volunteer means a person engaged by AFES as a volunteer (other than as a Student Leader).

Harm and/or Abuse means all forms of harmful behaviour including but not limited to bullying behaviours, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual grooming, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and/or domestic and family violence.

Immediate family means a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling.

Reasonable suspicion means fair and practical reason to believe an incident involving harm and/or abuse has occurred based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumour or observance of behaviour.

Staff means AFES employees and volunteers including unpaid officeholders.

Student Leader means university students engaged by an AFES Affiliate to serve the affiliate by being a member of the affiliate Executive, lead a significant ministry, or lead a small group bible study.

Supervisor means any AFES Employee who has a supervisory function in a managing capacity including the roles of Campus Staff Team Leader, Regional Leader, Deputy National Director, National Director, National Office Team Leader or the supervisor as listed in an employee's contract.

Document Information

1.	Approval	AFES Board
2.	Contact	Staff Support Team Leader
3.	Version	22/8/2026 Regional Team Leader renamed to Regional Leader. 5.2 "Interpersonal" added to heading, Closed Room Rule replaced by paragraph on godliness, transparency, and accountability. 11. Critical Incident Pathways updated to Incident Pathways into AFES Policies and Procedures.
4.	Revision History	1/8/2025 3. Policy Contacts updated from Bec Kimpton to Chris Haines. 4/11/2022 Campus/Regional Director renamed to Campus Staff/Regional Team Leader. 10/5/2022 Code of Conduct became Code of Conduct and Doctrine. Safe Ministry now Creating Safer Communities (CSC). 7.2 - replaced with reference to Disclosures of Sexual Abuse, Domestic Violence and Self-Harm Procedure. 26/8/2021 Updates to: 1 Scope – inclusion of Student Leaders 3.3 – new 3.3 for Student Leaders 3.4 c – immediate family to include siblings / parents / children 3.5.4 d – new for Student Leaders 6 Definitions 5/2/2018 Updates to: 2 – refine wording 3.1 – replace South Australia with States and Territories 3.3 – clarify expectations 3.4 and 3.4.1 – historical allegations & SMR references 4 – whether deliberate or not 25/3/2017 Updates to: 3.3 – Never meet alone in a closed room 3.4.3 Criminal Activity 3/9/2016 First Version
5.	Next Review Date	8/2026 (5 Years)
6.	Related Documents	Code of Conduct and Doctrine Critical Incidents Resolving Conflict and Misunderstanding Procedure Poor Performance and Misconduct Procedure Serious Misconduct Procedure Disclosures of Sexual Abuse, Domestic Violence and Self-Harm Procedure
7.	Documents Superseded by this Policy	Nil
8.	Acknowledgements	Nil

Appendix 1



Leader Commitment (Code of Conduct)

Developed by www.safeministrytraining.com.au

Endorsed by Ansvar Insurance

Personal Leader Commitment

1. I commit to conducting myself in a manner consistent with the Safe Ministry Training "Leadership Training Course" when serving at <church name>;
    a. I will treat adults, children and young people with respect and value, without favouritism.
    b. I will behave appropriately, being faithful to my appointed tasks, being an example to others, and being careful in how I physically interact with others.
    c. I will never use physical punishment or abusive language - even as a form of discipline.
    d. I will act transparently, as far as possible, ensuring that another adult is present or within eyesight when I am with a vulnerable person (including other people's children).
2. I commit to ensuring that the spaces and activities I'm responsible for are safe and do not put people at risk of significant harm.
3. I commit to including vulnerable people (and/or their carers/significant other) in discussions about decisions that will significantly affect them.
4. I commit to encouraging openness by listening to people's concerns with a willingness to support them and help them.
5. I commit to reporting any concerns or suspicions about harmful behaviours and significant risks to the <church name> Safe Ministry Contacts without bias or partiality.
6. I will submit to the <church name> leader screening process to ensure I'm a suitable person to work with vulnerable people.
7. I will submit to disciplinary steps if I am found to violate these commitments or act in an otherwise inappropriate or illegal manner at <church name>.

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