

GUIDE FOR PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR AND PRACTICE IN MINISTRY – VOLUME 2

in respect of the *Churches of Christ in NSW & the ACT Professional Conduct Protocols*
(the “*Professional Conduct Protocols*”)

This is Volume 2 of the *Churches of Christ in NSW & the ACT Professional Conduct Protocols*.

The *Churches of Christ in NSW & the ACT Professional Conduct Protocols* comprises:

Volume 1: Dictionary of Defined Terms.

Volume 2: Guide for personal behaviour and practice in ministry.

Volume 3: Code of Conduct

Volume 4: Professional Standards Unit Establishment and Functions Policy

Volume 5: Complaints Procedure

Volume 6: Pastoral Response Policy

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS SUITE OF DOCUMENTS

The *Professional Conduct Protocols* is a group of documents intended to assist *Ministering Persons* to act appropriately in their Ministries. The suite of documents:

- contains a dictionary of terms used in the documents;
- outlines standards and expectations of personal and professional behaviour for *Ministering Persons*;
- prescribes behaviour of *Ministering Persons* which if not observed may lead to a complaint against a *Ministering Person* and, if the complaint is upheld, may lead to the imposition of sanctions against that person;
- establishes a professional standards unit to administer the *Code of Conduct*;
- establishes a procedure to deal with *Complaints*; and
- ensures pastoral care is available and provided to the Complainants and those against whom *Complaints* are made.

As to the *Professional Conduct Protocols*, note:

- for *Complainants* Volumes 1, 5 and 6 are the principal documents to consider;
- for *Ministering Persons* Volumes 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 are the principal documents to consider;
- Volume 4 will likely only need consideration in the event a complaint is made;
- Volume 1 contains a dictionary of the terms used in each of Volumes 2 to 6;
- for the assistance of both Complainants and *Ministering Persons* some key definitions are also included in other Volumes.

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All communications are kept strictly confidential, subject to the *Professional Conduct Protocols*.

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1. Introduction

This Guide describes the standards and expectations of personal and professional behaviour of *Ministering Persons* within *Churches of Christ in NSW & the ACT*. It is intended to assist *Ministering Persons* to determine how to act morally, ethically and with integrity.

This Guide applies to all *Subscribers*.

Ministering Persons are expected to model their ministry practices, attitudes and behaviours on the example of Jesus Christ, as he expressed his priestly, prophetic, servant and mutual ministry. *Ministering Persons* are called to high standards of behaviour (1 Thessalonians 5:22), including being accountable to God (1 Corinthians 4:4-5), to one another (Ephesians 4:1-2), and to the community (Titus 2:7-8). It is therefore appropriate that clear expectations of ethics and behaviour are expressed and defined for each *Ministering Person*.

The Terms or Definitions used in this document are defined in the *Dictionary*. Some key terms include:

Code means the document titled *Code of Conduct*.

Churches of Christ in NSW & the ACT is a network of faith communities made up of *Conference Churches*, *Provisional Churches* and *ACT Churches*, spread across New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory which intentionally associate as Churches of Christ.

CCNSWACT means *Churches of Christ in NSW & the ACT*).

Dictionary has the meaning set out in Volume 1 of the *Professional Conduct Protocols* and Volume 1 contains the *Dictionary*.

Ministering Person means each of:

- (a) a person who is *Endorsed*, or who seeks to be *Endorsed*, by CCNSWACT under the *Policy for Endorsement of Ministers*; and
- (b) a person who has been appointed to *Conference Executive*;
- (c) such persons who from time to time fill roles within each of:
 - Churches of Christ in NSW; and
 - ACOM,

as *Conference Executive* determines and specifies in a resolution of Conference Executive.

Policy for Endorsement of Ministers means the “Churches of Christ Policy for Endorsement of Ministers in NSW and the ACT”.

Subscriber means a subscriber to the *Code*.

2. First Principles

This *Guide* has been developed from a set of ‘first principles’ that are foundational to the functioning of *Churches of Christ in NSW & the ACT*. Each principle has been identified as being helpful to articulate the operational design of this *Guide* within a movement or network of churches and ministries.

2.1 Lordship of Christ:

As head of the Church, Jesus is the ultimate person of spiritual accountability and focus of submission which is a key distinguishing principle for Christian ministry practice.

2.2 Movement Design and Functionality:

CCNSWACT is a network of ministries, agencies and churches that partner and collaborate in ministry and mission. We are not hierarchical or centralist and choose to hold others accountable in mutual respect and maturity.

2.3 Ministry Calling:

The engagement of Christian ministry goes beyond vocation and profession. *CCNSWACT* affirms that a call to ministry is a high calling that carries substantive responsibility, respect and spiritual authority. The ministry calling orientates and positions *Ministering Person* with heightened accountability.

2.4 Christian Ethics:

Ministering Persons are trusted to uphold Christian and ethical standards and appropriate levels of behaviour and professional competence. Christian and ethical standards include:

- a. acting with honesty and integrity, using appropriate language and maintaining appropriate standards in respect of:
 - i. Personal conduct and professional boundaries;
 - ii. Financial integrity and acumen;
 - iii. Sexual conduct and relational and physical boundaries;
 - iv. Behaviour towards *Children*; and
 - v. Personal and pastoral relationships: including conflicts of interest, power differentials, relational boundaries and role expectations; and
- b. ensuring the confidentiality of confidential information and documents.

2.5 Professional Compliance:

Ministering Persons are to ensure they maintain appropriate levels of professional competence including with respect to:

- a. Theological integrity;
- b. Ministry and practice; and
- c. Compliance with risk, legal and governance obligations.

2.6 Employment Context:

As *Ministering Persons* are engaged in a variety of contexts, their employment and/or voluntary service is the primary context for engagement and accountability. Each *Accountable Ministry* has a duty of care toward a *Ministering Person*, in the areas of accountability, role definition, well-being and professional development.

2.7 Spiritual Authority, Trust and Positional Power:

The role of a *Ministering Person* carries spiritual authority and positional power. Trust must be both given and received, and *Ministering Persons* are required to understand and develop awareness of their unique role and calling and how that role is undertaken, and experienced, in ministry.

2.8 Respect of All Peoples Regardless of Race, Gender and Culture

Ministering Persons must maintain respect for all peoples regardless of their race, gender and culture. As ministers, their ability to exercise love, grace, justice and care to all people, without discrimination, is critical.

2.9 Ministering Persons to acquaint themselves with the Code

Ministering Persons must acquaint themselves with the *Code* and refrain from acting in a manner which may offend the *Code*.

3. Context

3.1 Associated Policies and Procedures

This Guide is to be read in conjunction with the *Dictionary* and each other Volume of the *Professional Conduct Protocols* and the following policies and procedures:

- Churches of Christ Policy for Endorsement of Ministers in NSW and the ACT;
- Churches of Christ Procedure for Responding to Child Safety Concerns in NSW and the ACT;
- Marriage Rites of Churches of Christ in Australia.

These documents can be downloaded from the Ministry Portal <https://ministryportal.org.au/myresources>.

3.2 Authorisation

Responsible person	<i>The Executive Ministry Director</i>
Version	1.1
Review date	February 2025

3.3 Adoption and Effective Date

Adopted by <i>Conference Executive</i>	3 June 2023
<i>Effective Date</i>	1 July 2023

4. Sexual Conduct

4.1 Preamble

4.1.1 Sexuality is a gift from God and is fundamental to human nature. It is proper for *Ministering Persons* to value this gift, whilst understanding the spiritual, physical, emotional, psychological, and relational complexities of *Sexuality*.

4.2 Guidelines

Ministering Persons and Sexual Conduct

- 4.2.1 It is the responsibility of a *Ministering Person* to ensure that their own physical, emotional and sexual needs are met in healthy ways and in an appropriate manner that does not breach the *Code* and that they do not act in a manner contrary to this *Guide*.
- 4.2.2 *Ministering Persons* should be aware of the example they set to others, avoid situations of temptation, seek advice and accountability through appropriate professional supervision, and ensure the placement and adherence of healthy personal boundaries.
- 4.2.3 Any sexual behaviour must be above reproach and reflect the integrity of pastoral ministry, regardless of whether a *Ministering Person* is: single with the spiritual gift of celibacy; single but seeking a relationship; single in a committed romantic relationship (such as dating or engaged); married; divorced; or widowed.
- 4.2.4 Those in marriage relationships should actively work to strengthen, nurture and protect their marriage, recognising that this is the appropriate relationship in which their relational, emotional and sexual needs are met. Furthermore, *Ministering Persons* should appreciate that their own marriage may be at risk from the pressure of ministry and the complexity of *Pastoral Relationships*.

- 4.2.5 If a *Ministering Person* who is single seeks to establish a committed romantic relationship with a person, it is always the responsibility of the *Ministering Person* to ensure that initiating and/or participating in that relationship will not be exploitative or harmful to the other person in any way, and that it does not breach the *Code*.

Discussing *Sexuality* with *Recipients of Ministry*

- 4.2.6 When preaching, teaching, counselling, or providing *Pastoral Care*, the use of theological and educational materials, including online material, must be appropriate and honouring of the God-given gift of sexual expression. Teaching on *Sexuality*, should be undertaken with the full support of the *Accountable Ministry* and appropriate to the context.
- 4.2.7 While *Ministering Persons* may have their own understanding of *Sexuality*; they should be respectful of the views of others both inside and outside the church, recognising that there are a variety of social and theological views on *Sexuality*.
- 4.2.8 For some, discussion of *Sexuality* may be a difficult or traumatic topic. *Ministering Persons* should be sensitive to the needs of *Recipients of Ministry*, (e.g. in cases of *Sexual Abuse*), and consider whether they are best qualified to provide *Pastoral Care* or whether the *Recipient of Ministry* should be referred to another *Ministering Person* or professional counsellor/therapist.

***Sexuality* and Misconduct**

- 4.2.9 Those who practice ministry typically hold *Positional Power* relative to *Recipients of Ministry*. This *Positional Power* means that any sort of sexual or romantic behaviour or relationship between a *Ministering Person* and *Recipient of Ministry* may not be as equals and may therefore be inappropriate.
- 4.2.10 A *Ministering Person* must take responsibility for their own sexual conduct and respect the boundaries of others, recognising that *Sexual Misconduct* by a *Ministering Person* has a particularly significant impact on the person the subject of the *Sexual Misconduct*, the *Ministering Person's* family, and on any *Ministry*.

5. Behavioural Standards Towards Children

5.1 Preamble

- 5.1.1 *Ministering Persons* must proactively act to protect *Children* from *Abuse* by leading and creating environments where *Children* feel safe, respected, valued and encouraged. This requires an intentional culture of *Child* safety to be embraced and embedded throughout the person's ministry, to ensure that *Child* safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice. This culture begins with the *Ministering Person* proactively demonstrating appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours towards *Children*.
- 5.1.2 In the event of a disclosure of *Abuse* towards a *Child*, then the needs and welfare of the *Child* must take priority over any perceived threat to the reputation of a *Ministering Person*, a *Ministry* or associated individuals.

5.2 Guidelines

- 5.2.1 *Ministering Persons* should seek to treat all *Children* with respect and uphold *Children's* safety and advocate for *Children's* rights. This means behaving as a positive role model to *Children*, and to their communities, speaking with them respectfully, using positive and affirming language. It also means not unreasonably isolating a *Child* or making offensive or inappropriate comments to *Children* regarding their background, religion, appearance, abilities or *Sexuality*. *Children* should so far as is reasonable be treated equally, and, within reason, should not be shown favouritism, given personal gifts or favours.
- 5.2.2 Treating all *Children* with respect, and upholding *Children's* safety includes providing reasonable opportunities for *Children* to be empowered through decision-making. It also includes intervening

when *Children* are subject to *Bullying* and *Harassment*, or are engaging in *Bullying* or *Harassment* towards one another, or acting in a humiliating or vilifying way.

5.2.3 All backgrounds, ethnicities and *Cultural Traditions* should be considered and respected when interacting with *Children*.

5.2.4 *Ministering Persons* should take responsibility for being accountable and avoid being in a position where there is a risk of allegations being made. That includes, but is not limited to:

- ensuring permission is sought from any *Parent/Guardian* prior to taking photos or videos of *Children*, and ensuring images are saved securely, only taking photos or videos for proper purposes and ensuring they are used for the reasons for which they were taken, and not stored on any personal phone or device except for a proper and reasonable purpose;
- being sensitive with respect to any physical contact with, or conduct in the presence of, a *Child*;
- not assisting a *Child* in doing things of a personal nature that they can reasonably do for themselves;
- not spending time alone, with a *Child* in other than a public place nor remaining in a confined or secluded space, with a *Child* in a manner which is inappropriate in the context of a program, activity or event;
- not cultivating relationships online or through social media with a *Child* without the permission of a *Parent/Guardian* or other leaders being included on as recipients of that social media. Any private messaging to a *Child* should be sent and returned during pre-approved times; and
- not taking a *Child* to the *Ministering Person's* home nor having meetings with a *Child* in the *Ministering Person's* home, unless accompanied by another adult or in the presence of a group of persons; and
- not engaging in inappropriate physical behaviour with a *Child* nor using physical means to control or discipline a *Child*, other than what is reasonable in the circumstances, such as by holding a *Child* to prevent injury.

5.2.5 Unless necessary to satisfy a lawful obligation, information that may identify a *Child* should not be disclosed to a third party.

6. Financial Management

6.1 Preamble

6.1.1 *Ministering Persons* must maintain integrity in financial matters and exercise faithful stewardship in managing both their own finances and that of the *Accountable Ministry*.

6.2 Guidelines

6.2.1 *Ministering Persons* are not to exploit any person or organisation for financial purposes. *Ministering Persons* are to avoid situations of conflict between personal financial interests and *Pastoral Care* responsibilities.

7. Abusive Behaviours

7.1 Preamble

7.1.1 *Ministering Persons* are expected to be examples and models of Christian faith and practice, keeping their public and private life above reproach (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

7.1.2 The personal conduct of a *Ministering Person* impacts the professional standing of all *Ministering Persons* and the broader professional and reputational calling of *Ministering Persons*.

7.2 Guidelines

7.2.1 A *Ministering Person* should not act in a manner which discredits, or is likely to discredit, the name of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Christianity, CCNSWACT and/or the church.

8. Seek Support When Required

At any time a *Ministering Person* is concerned with their ability to cope or is in a situation where observing these *Guidelines* is presenting any difficulty or there is any likelihood of their conduct not being consistent with these *Guidelines*, any such *Ministering Person* is encouraged to seek professional supervision, counselling and support in order to address the issues confronting them.

9. Matters Arising

Where at any time a *Ministering Person*:

- 9.1 desires to obtain any professional supervision, counselling and support in order to address the issues confronting them; or
- 9.2 has any questions arising out of this *Guide*,

such a *Ministering Person* may contact the *Professional Standards Unit Co-ordinator* for advice and assistance.