

SAFE ONLINE YOUTH MINISTRY



**Churches
of Christ**
in Western Australia Inc



**ONLINE
YOUTH
MINISTRY**



ONLINE PLATFORM

Social Network

Church leaders and workers must be aware of the power of influence in leadership and are required to be very careful about their interactions and posts on social network sites.

Church leaders and workers must use a high level of discernment and caution when interacting with young people on social network sites, keeping all interactions broad in nature and being very careful to protect the identity and private details of young people. It is recommended that each church formulate a policy and develop guidelines to provide leaders with guidelines to follow. This policy must then be communicated church-wide to ensure its effectiveness to providing safety for young people and leaders alike. *1

Cyber-bullying, social networking and grooming on the internet

The explosion of electronic communications such as text messages on mobile phones, social networking sites and (video chat*), have seen a sharp increase in the number of internet-based and telecommunications-based allegations of abuse and bullying. It involves the perpetrator using any form of telecommunication, or electronic communication to: sexually groom, bully, suggest an inappropriate relationship be formed, or engage a child in sexual language or behaviours. In some cases these interactions have led to people being charged with sexual abuse and/or sexual grooming of a minor. It is recommended that those working with children, young people or other vulnerable persons develop a set of protocols for the way in which leaders will communicate electronically with program participants, to ensure the safe use of electronic and telecommunication devices.*2

Other Forms of Electronic Communication

Safe practice in electronic communication requires all interactions to be for groups and not individuals and focussed on communicating events and activities rather than private conversations. Church leaders and workers must, where possible and practical, use church equipment and facilities to make calls and electronic contact and always with knowledge of co-leaders and supervisors. The use of personal mobile phones ought to be discouraged so as to maintain transparency and accountability as well as maintain safe boundaries. *3

OUR THREE SUGGESTIONS



Policies were taken from Churches of Christ Victoria and Tasmania; Duty of Care for Responsible Leadership of Children and Youth.

*1. 8.11 Social Networking pg. 20

*2. 8.7 Cyber-bullying, social networking and grooming on the internet pg. 18

*3. 8.12 Other Forms of Electronic Communication pg. 21