



Member Care Covenant

Version 1

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1. Introduction

Flinders Evangelical Students exists to make Jesus Christ known among students and staff at Flinders University. We do this through regular meetings and activities designed to encourage and support Christian students and to give opportunities for people to explore the Bible, as well as encouraging and equipping individual students to be a witness to Christ in their words and actions.

2. Purpose of our covenant

The main objective of our Member Care Covenant is to maintain responsible behaviour and Biblical, ethical and informed decision-making by participants in this club. This covenant outlines our commitment to a person’s right to be treated with respect and dignity, and to be safe and protected from abuse. Our covenant informs everyone involved in our club of his or her legal and ethical rights and responsibilities and the standards of behaviour that are required.

3. Who our covenant applies to

Our covenant applies to everyone regularly involved in the club, and includes Committee members, Bible study leaders and staffworkers.

4. Extent of our covenant

Our covenant covers unfair decisions, breaches of our code of behaviour and inappropriate behaviour that occurs at meetings, at social events organised or sanctioned by the club, on camps and trips; and any behaviour that brings or is likely to bring the name of Jesus into disrepute. It also covers behaviour where there is suspicion of harm towards a child or young person.

5. Club responsibilities

We will

- Make any necessary amendments to our constitution, rules or other policies to enable this covenant to be enforceable;
- Implement and comply with our covenant;
- Promote our covenant to everyone regularly involved in our club;
- Promote and model appropriate standards of behaviour at all times, including biblical principles of godliness and self-giving love;
- Respond to breaches or complaints made under our covenant promptly, fairly, and confidentially;
- Review this covenant every 12-18 months or as deemed necessary; and
- Seek advice from, and if necessary or appropriate, refer serious issues to our national body, the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

Serious issues include unlawful behaviour that involves or could lead to significant harm and includes criminal behaviour (e.g. physical assault, sexual assault, child abuse) and any other issues that our state or national body request to be referred to them (e.g. conflicts of interest, and doctrinal or moral disputes).

6. Individual responsibilities

Everyone regularly associated with our club will be expected to:

- Comply with the standards of behaviour outlined in our covenant;
- Treat others with respect;
- Always place the safety and welfare of others above other considerations;
- Be responsible and accountable for their behaviour; and
- Follow the guidelines outlined in this covenant if they wish to make a complaint or report a concern about possible child abuse, discrimination, harassment or other inappropriate behaviour.

7. Protection of children

7.1 Child protection

Child abuse involves conduct which puts children at risk of harm and takes a number of different forms, including:

- Physical abuse – e.g. deliberately hurting (hitting, punching), providing alcohol or drugs.
- Sexual abuse – e.g. sexual acts or threats, inappropriate touching or conversations.
- Emotional abuse – e.g. ill-treating by threats, humiliation or intimidation.

- Neglect – e.g. not providing child with basic necessities (food, drink, clothing), failing to protect a child from foreseeable risk of harm or injury.

Abuse is usually against the law. We will take measures to protect children involved in our club from harm. We will do this by:

- Responding to all reports of abuse promptly, seriously and confidentially;
- Complying with state/territory child protection laws and working with children check requirements if they apply;
- Carefully selecting and screening people over the age of 16 years who will have regular supervisory contact with children in the event that our club introduces such roles;
- Promoting and enforcing our codes of behaviour, particularly for roles associated with children;
- Making information about child protection available, particularly for roles associated with children; and
- Adopting practices that provide the maximum opportunity for a child-safe environment.

Anyone who reasonably suspects that a child has been or is being abused must report their concerns to the relevant government agency, and advise the club president and staffworker that they have reported their concerns.

7.2 Supervision

Our club will provide a level of supervision adequate and relative to the members' age, maturity, capabilities, level of experience, nature of activity and nature of venue.

7.3 Transportation

Parents/guardians are ultimately responsible for the transportation of their children (under 18 years) to and from club activities off of campus. Our club is not involved in making arrangements for the transport of children.

7.4 Taking images of children

Images of children can be used inappropriately or illegally. Our club requires that members, wherever possible, obtain permission from a child's parent/guardian before taking an image of a child that is not their own and ensure that the parent knows the way in which the image will be used. If the club uses an image of a child it will avoid naming or identifying the child. We will not display personal information such as residential address, email address or telephone numbers without gaining consent from the parent/guardian. We will not display information about hobbies, school, etc. as this information can be used as grooming tools by pedophiles or other persons. We will only use appropriate images, relevant to our club.

8. Anti-harassment, discrimination and bullying

Our club opposes all forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying. This includes treating or proposing to treat someone less favourably because of a particular characteristic; imposing or intending to impose an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice which has an unequal or disproportionate effect on people with a particular characteristic; or any behaviour that is offensive, abusive, belittling, intimidating or threatening – whether this is face-to-face, indirectly or via communication technologies such as mobile phone and computers. Some forms of harassment, discrimination and

bullying are against the law and are based on particular characteristics such as age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, political or religious beliefs, race, and marital status.

Our club takes all claims of harassment, discrimination, bullying and cyber bullying seriously. We encourage anyone who believes they have been harassed, discriminated against or bullied to raise the issue with the club (see 'Responding to complaints').

9. Inclusive practices

Our club is welcoming and we will seek to include participants from all areas of our community.

9.1 People with a disability

Where possible we will include people with a disability in our club. We will make reasonable adaptations to enable participation.

9.2 People from diverse cultures

We will support and respect people from diverse cultures to participate in our club and where possible will accommodate requests for flexibility where these do not contravene Biblical standards or our doctrinal statement.

9.3 Membership restrictions

Because of our Biblical convictions and identity as a Christian club, membership will be restricted to those who sign our Membership Declaration (including Doctrinal Statement and Objectives). This restriction does not imply discrimination against a person who chooses not to become a member, nor preclude their attendance at our club's activities.

10. Responding to complaints

10.1 Complaints

Our club takes all complaints about behaviour seriously. Our club will handle complaints based on the principles of Matthew 18:15-20 and procedural fairness (natural justice), that is:

- Members should seek to resolve personal grievances at a personal level in accordance with the Biblical principles of love, forgiveness and repentance;
- All complaints will be taken seriously;
- Both the person making the complaint (complainant) and the person the complaint is against (respondent) will be given full details of what is being said against them and have the opportunity to respond (give their side of the story);
- Irrelevant matters will not be taken into account;
- Decisions will be unbiased and fair; and
- Any penalties imposed will be fair and reasonable.

More serious complaints, including those against staffworkers may be escalated to our national body.

If the complaint relates to suspected child abuse, sexual assault or other criminal activity, then our club will need to report the behaviour to the relevant government authority and our national body.

10.2 Complaint handling process

When a complaint is received by our club, the person receiving the complaint (e.g. Committee member, Staffworker) will

- Seek to follow Biblical principles in their advice and actions;
- Listen carefully and ask questions to understand the nature and extent of the problem;
- Ask what the complainant would like to happen;
- Explain the different options available to help resolve the problem;
- Take notes; and
- Maintain confidentiality but not necessarily anonymity.

Once the complainant decides on their preferred option for resolution, the club will assist, where appropriate and necessary, with the resolution process. This may involve:

- Supporting the person complaining to talk to the person being complained about;
- Bringing all the people involved in the complaint together to talk objectively through the problem (this could include external mediation);
- Gathering more information (e.g. from other people that may have seen the behaviour);
- Seeking advice from the Senior Staffworker, Regional Director, Area Committee or national body;
- Referring the complaint to our national body; and/or
- Referring the complainant to an external agency (e.g. their local church or minister)

In situations where a complaint is referred to our national body and an inquiry is conducted, the club will:

- Co-operate fully;
- Ensure the complainant and respondent are not victimised;
- Where applicable, ensure the complainant is not placed in an unsupervised situation with the respondent(s); and
- Act on our national body's recommendations.

At any stage of the process, a person can seek advice from or lodge a complaint with an anti-discrimination commission or other external agency.

10.3 Disciplinary measures

Our club will take disciplinary action against anyone found to have breached our covenant or made false and malicious allegations. Any disciplinary measure imposed under our covenant must:

- Be applied in love, and with the ultimate goal of reconciliation and restoration;
- Be applied consistent with any membership and constitutional rules and requirements;
- Be fair and reasonable;
- Be based on the evidence and information presented and the seriousness of the breach;
- Be determined by our Constitution and by-laws.

Possible measures that may be taken include

- Verbal and/or written apology;

- Counselling to address behaviour;
- Suspension or termination of membership, participation or engagement in a role or activity, or
- Any other form of discipline that our club considers reasonable and appropriate and are within Biblical guidelines and the principle of repentance, love and forgiveness.

10.4 Appeals

The complainant or respondent can lodge one appeal against decisions or disciplinary measures imposed by our club to our national body. Appeals must be based on either a denial of natural justice, because of unbiblical, unjust or unreasonable disciplinary measure(s) being imposed, or on the grounds that the decision was not supported by the information/evidence presented and available to the decision maker/club.

Member Care covenant – Summary

Purpose of the covenant

Organisations have obligations to provide safe environments. Our Member Care covenant assists us to adequately meet these obligations and to maintain biblical, responsible behaviour, and ethical decision-making within our club. Our covenant outlines our commitment to treat people with respect and dignity, and to keep them safe and protected from abuse. It informs everyone of their rights and responsibilities and the standards of behaviour that are expected.

Who the covenant applies to

The covenant specifies who it applies to but generally this includes staffworkers, committee members, Bible study leaders, and anyone regularly involved in the club.

What it covers

The covenant states our position on and requirements relating to:

- *Child protection (including taking and using images of children)*
- *Anti-discrimination and harassment*
- *Restrictions on membership*

It covers breaches of our codes of behaviour, and other inappropriate behaviour that occurs at meetings and at events and activities organised or sanctioned by the club. It also clearly confirms that the following types of behaviour will not be tolerated:

- Child abuse
- Sexual assault and sexual misconduct
- Discrimination
- Bullying, harassment and vilification
- Physical assault and violence
- Verbal abuse and intimidation
- Actions that create a hostile environment
- Conduct that may cause psychological injury or distress

Complaints

Our club takes all complaints about inappropriate behaviour seriously. Guidelines have been set out in the covenant for dealing with groups or individuals who engage in any behaviour deemed contrary to the covenant. It provides guidance for those with a complaint, those who have a complaint made against them and, those who have responsibility for handling a complaint.

All complaints will be handled based on the principles of Biblical principles and procedural fairness (natural justice), that is:

- Personal grievances should be resolved using the guidelines of Matthew 18:15-20
- Confidentiality will be maintained
- Both the person making the complaint and the person the complaint is against will be given full details of what is being said against them and have the opportunity to respond
- Irrelevant matters will not be taken into account
- Decisions will be unbiased and fair
- Any penalties imposed will be fair and reasonable

A person(s) found breaching the covenant, including making a false or malicious allegation, may be sanctioned by a range of measures including a verbal warning up to expulsion.

Our Member Care covenant is one of the measures we have put in place to help us ensure that our club is safe, welcoming and enjoyable. It provides assurances to all those involved and those wishing to be involved in our club that improper conduct will not be tolerated.

A copy of our Member Care covenant is available from the committee or the Flinders ES website. If you have any queries relating to the covenant, please contact a committee member.