

## Children serving in ministry leadership to other children

### 37/18 General Synod – Safe Ministry to Children

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

#### Key Points

- Childrens' and youth ministry is carried out in teams with supervision.
- Any leaders between 12 to 15 years of age who are engaged in ministry to other children are under the supervision of at least 2 adults who have been trained and screened.
- A Safe Ministry Junior Leaders course is available for junior leaders in the age range 14-17 years. Youthworks also run a Leaders in Training program involving hundreds of youth each year, across a large number of parishes.
- There are many benefits that flow from engaging junior leaders in children's ministry.

#### Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is address the question of Synod resolution 37/18 regarding whether it is appropriate for children between the ages of 12 and 15 to serve in ministry leadership to other children.

#### Recommendation

2. Synod note this report.

#### Background

3. At its 2018 session, the Synod resolved as follows –

##### **Synod resolution 37/18**

That the *General Synod - Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017 Adopting Ordinance 2017 Amendment Ordinance 2018* pass as an ordinance of the Synod, and that Synod request the Standing Committee, after consulting with Youthworks ministry support team, among others, to report to the next ordinary session of Synod regarding the appropriateness of children between the ages of 12 and 15 serving in ministry leadership to other children.

4. The Standing Committee appointed its Safe Ministry to Children Canon Subcommittee to consider the request in the resolution in consultation with the Royal Commission Steering Committee, and to co-opt additional members as necessary. The Youthworks ministry support team has also been consulted in the preparation of this report.

#### Introduction

5. It is common practice in many parishes within the Diocese of Sydney, to engage youth aged leaders (aged 12-15 years) (**Junior Leaders**) to assist with the running of children's ministry programs.
6. To make an assessment it is important to look at the current safe ministry guidelines and practices at the parish level in relation to children serving in ministry to other children.

## Safe Ministry Training for Junior Leaders

7. This issue has been considered previously at a policy level. In December 2016, the Safe Ministry Board stated the following in the context of safe ministry training in response to queries from parishes –
  - (a) A Junior Leader is a person who has been appointed to a leadership role in children’s or youth ministry in a parish who is under 18 years of age.
  - (b) In general, it is more appropriate for a Junior Leader to complete the Safe Ministry Junior Leaders course. However, at the discretion of the Rector a junior leader who is 16 or 17 years old who has greater leadership responsibilities (e.g., has some teaching responsibilities or has the maturity to be included in leader to child ratios) should complete the Essentials course.
8. The situation described in paragraph 7(b) above is the exception rather than the rule and is not considered to be common practice.
9. The “Junior Leaders Training” course, which although not compulsory, is being taken up by many parishes across the Diocese and is encouraged for all children’s ministry volunteers 14 to 17 years of age. As at 9 May 2019, 30 parishes had utilised Junior Leader training and 101 participants had completed the training.

## Team Ministry Structures & Existing Safe Ministry Guidelines

10. The majority of children’s and youth ministry being carried out in the Diocese of Sydney is carried out in teams with supervision. Adult ministry team leaders are responsible for ensuring safe ministry takes place and for supervising junior leaders.
11. The Safe Ministry Blueprint for Parishes include suggested ratios, with a minimum requirement for 2 adult leaders for all activities. The Blueprint specifically excludes leaders under the age of 16 years for the purposes of the ratio.
12. This means that any leaders between 12 to 15 years of age who are engaged in ministry to other children are under the supervision of at least 2 adults who have been trained and screened in accordance with the existing requirements prescribed by the *Parish Administration Ordinance 2008* and Safe Ministry guidelines.

## Benefits of Youth Leadership Programs

13. There are many benefits that flow from engaging junior leaders in children’s ministry, including –
  - (a) **Engagement:** Giving youth the opportunity to serve as active contributors and participants in their church by being a part of a leadership team. Providing leadership pathways will encourage youth into a lifetime of serving others in church.
  - (b) **Discipleship:** Leading and serving at church is not just a task to be done, it also forms Christian character in the junior leader, so they are being disciplined to maturity in Christ.
  - (c) **Role modelling:** Providing a context for mentoring relationships to form between junior leaders and adult leaders who can model servant leadership.
  - (d) **Culture:** Facilitating a culture of servant leadership among the teenage cohort in a parish where church is seen as a place to serve and not just be served.
  - (e) **Training:** Allowing youth to gain real experience of ministry and develop skills.
14. For many decades the Diocese has run leadership programs designed for youth aged leaders. The longest running is the Youthworks Leaders in Training conference (**LIT**). Conferences and training programs like LIT further serve to equip and encourage junior leaders to take up the call to Christian ministry and to actively serve in their churches. In 2018, LIT involved 474 youth and 156 leaders representing 109 parishes.

On behalf of the Standing Committee.

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30 July 2019