



# Safe Ministry Policy

**Version**  
Version 1

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This policy is available on our SharePoint Resources folder under Policies and Procedures.

Policies will be reviewed annually but remain valid until replaced

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## 1. Commitment

The Baptist Association of NSW & ACT (Association) is committed to:

- providing places, services and programs that promote physical, emotional and spiritual health and safety and model the love of Christ to all whom we have contact with, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- considering the needs of children, young people and vulnerable adults when making decisions;
- encouraging children and young people to have input in decisions that affect them by appropriately seeking their feedback; and
- supporting and encouraging autonomous affiliated churches and ministries in their commitment to Safe Ministry.

## 2. Purpose

This *Safe Ministry Policy* aims to:

- help us live out our biblical mandate to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:30-31);
- implement the 10 Child Safe Standards;
- provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children, young people and vulnerable adults; and
- meet our various legal obligations, including those in relation to:
  - Working with Children (in NSW) and Working with Vulnerable People (in ACT); and
  - reporting child protection concerns, criminal offences and Reportable Conduct to government authorities.

The *Safe Ministry Policy* outlines the commitment of the Association in principle.

More detail regarding the practical implementation of these commitments is available in the relevant procedures and guidelines.

## 3. Scope

This Policy applies to all staff, volunteers and other representatives of the Association and its Affiliated Ministries.

## 4. Definitions

In the *Safe Ministry Policy* and associated documents, unless the context otherwise requires:

**Affiliated Ministry** means a ministry approved as such under section 18 of the Constitution and operating under the Association's governance.

**Association** means the Baptist Union of NSW, trading as the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT and including Affiliated Ministries.

**Child Safe Standards** Ten statements representing evidence-based best practice for reducing harm to children. The Standards were developed by the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse and have been adopted by the NSW and ACT Governments

STANDARD 1: Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

STANDARD 2: Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

STANDARD 3: Families and communities are informed and involved

STANDARD 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account

STANDARD 5: People working with children are suitable and supported

STANDARD 6: Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused

STANDARD 7: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training

STANDARD 8: Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur

STANDARD 9: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved

STANDARD 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

For more information see <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-standards>

**Complaint** includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of the Association's *Code of Conduct* or the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (where applicable). It also includes disclosures made to an institution about any child protection concern.

**Creating Safe Spaces** means Creating Safe Spaces training offered by the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT

**Disclosure** means a process by which a person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused or neglected.

**Mandatory Reporting Legislation** means

In NSW, the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*

In the ACT the *Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)*].

**Ministry/team leader** means

- a) In the case of staff, the staff members' line manager
- b) In the case of committee members, the chair of the committee or taskforce
- c) In the case of Authorised Special Religious Education Teachers, the Association's SRE Coordinator or their delegate
- d) For all other volunteers or representatives, the person they are accountable to in the relevant organisational structure

**Other representatives** include but are not limited to

- Accredited and Recognised Ministers;
- Authorised Special Religious Education Teachers;
- Nominated volunteers in Simple Churches that are affiliated with the Simple Church Network; and
- nominated volunteers in any Newstart church plant for which the Association has agreed to provide governance oversight.

**Pastoral Staff** any paid or unpaid staff member of the Association who is engaged in pastoral ministry through the Association. This includes any Accredited or recognised minister and any staff member who receives Ministerial Tax Benefits.

**Regulated activities** has the meaning provided by the WWVP Legislation in ACT

**Reportable Conduct Legislation** means

In NSW the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (NSW)  
In the ACT the *Ombudsman Act 1989* (ACT)].

**Safe Ministry Register** means the register required to record information relating to NSW based staff, volunteers or representatives who are engaged in Child-related Work and their relevant details in accordance with section 9A of the WWCC Legislation and ACT based staff, volunteers and representatives who engaged in a Regulated Activity and all relevant WWVP clearances.

**Volunteers** include but not limited to members and attendees of Councils, committees and taskforces

**Vulnerable** means the state of being unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason, and includes those that suffer disadvantage such as social and financial hardship.

**WWCC Legislation** means the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (NSW).

**WWVP Legislation** means the *Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011* (ACT).

**Young person** means a person who is 16 or 17 years old.

## 5. Safe Ministry Team

The Director of Ministries, in consultation with the Assembly Council, will appoint and empower a Safe Ministry Team, including at least one male and one female, to be responsible for:

- a. ensuring that documented policies and procedures across all areas of the Association reflect a commitment to Safe Ministry;
- b. liaising with the designated Safe Ministry Contact person in each area of the Association regarding implementation of *Safe Ministry Policy*, including the *Procedure for Recruitment and Training*;
- c. administering the *Procedure for Handling Complaints* and the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*; and
- d. facilitating and collating, the *Safe Ministry Register* and ensuring that it is updated regularly.

## 6. Screening, Selection and Induction

- a. The Association will engage in fair and transparent selection processes for all staff, volunteers and representatives;
- b. The Association will undertake appropriate screening processes for all staff, volunteers and representatives, in accordance with the *Procedure for Recruitment and Training* and the *People and Culture Manual*
- c. All staff, volunteers and representatives will be required to complete a screening document and commit to a code of conduct.

## 7. Training and Resourcing

- a. The Association will ensure that staff, volunteers and representatives develop the knowledge and skills to facilitate Safe Ministry for everyone, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- b. The Association will ensure that staff, volunteers and representatives have access to information about Safe Ministry and that they all undergo appropriate training regarding relevant procedures, guidelines and forms.
- c. The Association will support staff, volunteers and representatives with adequate resources to enable them to maintain and promote safe spaces for everyone, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- d. The Association will implement training and resourcing in accordance with the *Procedure for Recruitment and Training*.

## 8. Standards of Behaviour

- a. The Association will provide spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.
- b. The Association will expect all staff, volunteers and representatives to uphold the relevant code of conduct, which include expected behaviours for those who engage in ministry with children, young people and/or vulnerable people.
- c. The Association will expect staff, volunteers and representatives to follow *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*.

## 9. Conflict, Complaints and Concerns

### 9.1 Responding to Child Protection Concerns

- a. The Association will ensure appropriate and timely reporting of all child protection concerns and any complaints relating to child sexual abuse and/or sexual misconduct involving a child in accordance with the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*.
- b. The Association will ensure that all child protection concerns and complaints will be reported to the relevant government departments and, if necessary, Police as soon as possible and in accordance with legislative duties.

### 9.2 Complaint Handling

- a. The Association will respond to complaints in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints*.
- b. Where there is a complaint that a staff member, volunteer or representatives has engaged in abuse, including child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct involving a child, the Association will treat the allegation as a serious breach of the code of conduct and respond in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints*.
- c. In the event of receiving a complaint that relates to a minor breach of the code of conduct or a grievance, the Association may determine to respond to the matter in accordance with the *Procedure for Resolving Grievances and Conflict*.

## 10. Safe Environments

- a. The Association will take reasonable steps to ensure that physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children, young people and/or vulnerable adults to be harmed.
- b. The Association will comply with Work, Health and Safety requirements, in accordance with the Association's *Work Health and Safety Policy*.
- c. The Association will consider the impact of the physical environment on the potential for risk to children, young people and vulnerable people.
- d. The Association will identify and address risks arising from the physical environment in which programs and activities take place.

- e. The Association will ensure that all regular adult occupants of a residential property that is publicly identifiable as being Association property obtain and hold WWCC (or WWVP) clearance for the duration of their residence.
- f. The Association will consider whether any ministries it supports, including overseas ministries, have appropriate child protection practices in place.

## **11. Risk Management**

### **11.1 Persons of Concern**

The Association will adopt the *Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern*.

### **11.2 Risk Assessments**

- a. The Association will ensure that ministry/team leaders and/or Safe Ministry contacts in each area of the Association complete and make a record of a risk assessment in relation to any program or activity undertaken at, for or with the Association in accordance the Association's *Work Health and Safety Policy*.
- b. The Association will ensure that appropriate and reasonable precautions are adopted to address risks identified as part of a risk assessment. When considering what measures are appropriate, the Association will consider the likelihood of an incident occurring, the seriousness of the consequences and the difficulty of avoiding the risk.

## **12. Third Parties and Associated Entities**

- a. The Association will require any third party (tenant or external party using Association property) that provides services to children and/or young people to provide written confirmation of their compliance with the Child Safe Standards at least annually.
- b. The Association will ensure that any Associated Entities comply with the Child Safe Standards including annual reports to the Assembly regarding child safety.
- c. The Association will strongly encourage existing affiliated churches to participate in the Safe Church Health Check to provide accountability about their compliance with the Child Safe Standards.
- d. The Association will require newly affiliated churches to complete the Safe Church Health Check prior to becoming Affiliated at Assembly.



## 13. Recordkeeping

- a. The Association will retain all written records for a minimum of 45 years, in hard copy and/or electronically in a secure manner.
  - Where records contain, or may contain, sensitive information, they will be kept in a manner that protects confidentiality and will only be accessed by a limited number of authorised persons.
  - Where records are kept in hard copy, they will be held in a secure location with proper consideration of access, and physical conditions.
  - Where records are kept electronically, they will be monitored to ensure security and ongoing accessibility.
- b. Records to which this item applies includes, but is not limited to:
  - Ministry Information Sheets
  - Staff, Volunteer and Representative files
  - Attendance (sign-in/sign-out) sheets
  - Risk assessment forms
  - Safe Ministry Register
  - Safe Ministry Concerns forms and any contemporaneous notes regarding reporting decisions
  - Annual Safe Ministry commitment by third parties and associated entities
  - Dated copies of any *Safe Ministry Policy*, procedure, form or associated document in force at any time

## 14. Review and Accountability

The Assembly Council of the Association will

- include Safe Ministry matters as a standing item on all meeting agendas;
- ensure that this policy is reviewed annually;
- require an annual report from the Safe Ministry Team, regarding implementation of the *Safe Ministry Policy* and relevant procedures. A summary of this report will be reported to Assembly.