



Affirmation of Ministry Guidelines 2022

“So, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

Ephesians 4:11-12



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PROCEDURES FOR THOSE SEEKING AFFIRMATION OF MINISTRY WITH THE BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NSW & ACT

1. PREAMBLE

This document outlines the guidelines to be followed when a person is seeking affirmation as a recognised or accredited minister within the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT. It is supported by the “Affirmation of Ministry Policies and Procedures” document which provides details of procedures and processes. These Guidelines operate according to the Constitution of the Baptist Association of NSW and ACT. These Guidelines are adopted by the Assembly of the Baptist Association of NSW and ACT. These Guidelines are designed to facilitate a collaborative discernment process across the diversity of the Baptist Association of NSW and ACT, which includes individuals, the local church, regional ministry, Morling College and the Baptist Association Team.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 SCRIPTURE

The setting aside of people for ministry is informed by the New Testament. Texts, such as those listed below, indicate that certain persons are called by Christ, gifted by His Spirit and affirmed by the church, to serve God in roles of leadership.

Matthew 10:1 – 16

Luke 6:12 – 16; 9:1 – 6; 10:1 – 7

Acts 1:12 – 26

Romans 12:3-8

1 Corinthians 12:27 – 31

Galatians 2:1 – 2

Ephesians 4:1-16

1 Timothy 3:1 – 7

Titus 1:5 - 9

We believe that the evidence of such calling is seen especially in:

- the confirmation of those who know the leader well.
- the confirmation and support of the local church and any regional network.
- the leader’s own sense of call to ministry.
- the leader’s preparedness to equip themselves for ministry.
- the leader’s willingness to submit to ongoing development, accountability and supervision.

This process of affirmation is best seen as a partnership of discernment between the individual, local church, region and movement. This is consistent with two Baptist convictions: the autonomy of local congregations, and the value of association for mutual support and accountability.

2.2 LEADERSHIP 411

As a movement we are committed to recognising, raising, releasing and resourcing leaders to move towards our goal of 1000 healthy churches in a generation. The process of leadership affirmation in these guidelines is designed to support a diversity of leaders across a diversity of leadership categories, for example those in Ephesians 4:11, being Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds and Teachers. These processes intend to create accessible, rigorous and flexible leadership affirmation pathways for both women and men from metropolitan and regional settings and persons from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The process in these guidelines sits within our Leadership 411 strategies to see our movement as:

- A culture of leadership development.
- A movement that grows leaders.
- A movement whose leaders practice healthy leadership succession.
- A movement committed to mutual partnership and support.
- A movement whose wider resources support leader development.

This vision is further developed in our Association's document "Leadership 411 – A commitment to Leadership Development" which is available upon request.

2.3 PURPOSES OF AFFIRMATION

Discernment.

Support candidates and their families in the discernment of God's call on their lives.

Assessment.

Assess the capacity of candidates to undertake pastoral leadership in its various forms according to seven dimensions: character, call, doctrine, capacity, competence, training and capability.

Education.

Educate candidates and their families regarding the responsibilities, privileges, pitfalls and demands of pastoral leadership.

Leader Development.

Send a diversity of men and women who are Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers with growing: leadership skills, self-awareness, biblical literacy, clarity of call, internersonal functioning

Preparation.

Demonstrate that the calling of a pastoral leader is a demanding role requiring rigour in training, support, association and accountability for the sake of the community,

Compliance.

Maintain rigorous standards in relation to biblical, ethical and legal requirements.

Connection.

Connect leaders and families into ongoing processes and support networks, for continual development, encouragement and challenge.

Association.

Inform the leader and their family regarding the value and importance of the principle of association as understood in our movement.

2.4 DEFINITIONS

In these guidelines:

- **Affirmation Oversight Team (AOT)** refers to the team appointed by the Assembly Council, under the leadership of the Team Leader Ministry Affirmation, to manage the affirmation process.
- **Assembly** refers to the gathering of the Association as delegates of its member churches, as set out in the Constitution.
- **Assembly Council (AC)** refers to the body appointed by the Assembly to implement its decisions and conduct the Association's affairs between Assemblies.
- **Association** refers to the Baptist Association of NSW and ACT, also known as the Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT or the Baptist Union of NSW.
- **Baptist Ministry Team (BMT)** refers to the team within the Association which serves and resources churches and leaders and is accountable to the DOM. In particular, candidates will be engaging with the Leadership Development Group of the BMT.
- **Constitution** refers to the governing document for the Association passed by the Assembly in 2017 and as amended thereafter.
- **Director of Ministries (DOM)** refers to the person holding that leadership role within the Association as appointed by the Assembly.
- **Morling College** refers to the Association's theological college as defined by the Constitution.
- **Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation** refers to the BMT member who chairs the Affirmation Oversight Team and is the key person responsible for managing the affirmation process.
- **Ministry Standards Committee (MSC)** refers to the group which works on behalf of the AOT in matters pertaining to complaints of breaches of the Ministerial Code of Ethics and Conduct against recognised or accredited pastoral leaders.
- **Pastor** refers to the title which applies only to those who are recognised or accredited within the Association (or who are accepted candidates for accreditation). Accredited and ordained leaders may use the title **Reverend**.
- **Pastoral Leadership** refers to persons in roles of leadership in the context of the Baptist Association family of churches. Most churches in our movement use the title "pastor" or "minister" to refer to those in officially appointed leadership roles, including titles such as "Senior Pastor", "Associate Pastor", "Youth Pastor" and so on. In our movement, this title may also be applied to other specific ministry roles such as church planters, chaplains and leaders serving in other approved ministries. These guidelines acknowledge the use of the title "Pastor" as distinct from the diversity of leadership roles noted in Ephesians 4:11. It will therefore describe those roles as Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd (rather than pastor) and Teacher. Persons affirmed in pastoral leadership in our movement will be leaders from across those five leadership categories of Ephesians 4:11.

2.5 TYPES OF AFFIRMATION

There are two forms of affirmation of ministry referred to in these guidelines:

1. Recognition. Persons in pastoral leadership or related ministries who are accepted candidates for accreditation (but not yet accredited) may be affirmed as recognised ministers after completing stages 1 to 3 of the process outlined in these guidelines. Those who do not wish, or are not eligible for, accreditation, may retain this more limited form of affirmation after completing stages 1 to 3. This form of affirmation is more of an acknowledgement that the local church has appointed the person as a pastoral leader than the affirmation that the leader has rigorously demonstrated their standing across the seven leadership dimensions of ministry outlined below. A leader's recognition is limited to the specific ministry role for which they apply. It is not transferrable to other roles without the approval of the AOT. The Association will acknowledge leaders on the list of Recognised Ministers using the title Pastor.

2. Accreditation. This is the broader and more rigorous form of ministry affirmation. It involves the more formalised approval of leaders as suitable and available for pastoral leadership within the Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT. It affirms that they have met requirements including qualifications and credentials usually acknowledged nationally and internationally by Baptist Associations belonging to the Baptist World Alliance. Accredited leaders will have demonstrated growth and development across the seven leadership dimensions: character, call, doctrine, capacity, competence, training and capability. Being accredited means that the Association stands behind the leader, affirming their fitness to perform appropriately under the legal requirements of the State, regarding such matters as marriage, child protection, and non-discrimination legislation. It involves a level of accountability and requires ongoing leadership development.

Leaders who are accredited by the Association are those who:

1. are baptised members of a church affiliated (or otherwise appropriately approved) with the Association.
2. subscribe to the basic doctrines, objects and values of the Association.
3. have been accepted for accreditation by the Affirmation Oversight Team, have had that acceptance confirmed by a resolution of the Assembly Council and approved by a vote at an Assembly.
4. have been set apart for leadership by a local church affiliated with the Association (usually in a service of ordination), or some other body approved by Assembly.
5. will be acknowledged by the Association as eligible to use the titles Pastor and/or Reverend.

3. THE AFFIRMATION OF MINISTRY PROCESS

Affirmation is a process whereby the Association, working interdependently with the local church, assesses and affirms seven leadership dimensions (see below) for women and men who put themselves forward for pastoral leadership.

The Affirmation Process is managed by the Affirmation Oversight Team acting on behalf of the Assembly Council and Assembly.

3.1 THE SEVEN LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS

Affirmation of Ministry is a formal process which develops and supports these leadership dimensions, evaluating them at the time of application and throughout the 6 stages outlined below.

Character.

The bedrock for an individual's ministry effectiveness. It includes aspects such as integrity, reliability and consistency in line with the character of Jesus, with evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, love for God, love of neighbour and love of enemy.

Call.

The conviction of the call of God on the leader, evidenced in the person's life and confirmed by other individuals and the local church.

Doctrine.

A demonstrated love of the Word of God and a commitment to and understanding of orthodox, biblical belief, and the ability to explain it clearly.

Capacity

A demonstrated current ability to follow the call to ministry and leadership.

Competence.

Spiritual gifts, natural abilities and learned skills appropriate to the person's leadership and ministry call.

Training.

Evidence of the proficient development of gifts, skills and knowledge through processes of formal, informal and supervised experience-based equipping.

Capability.

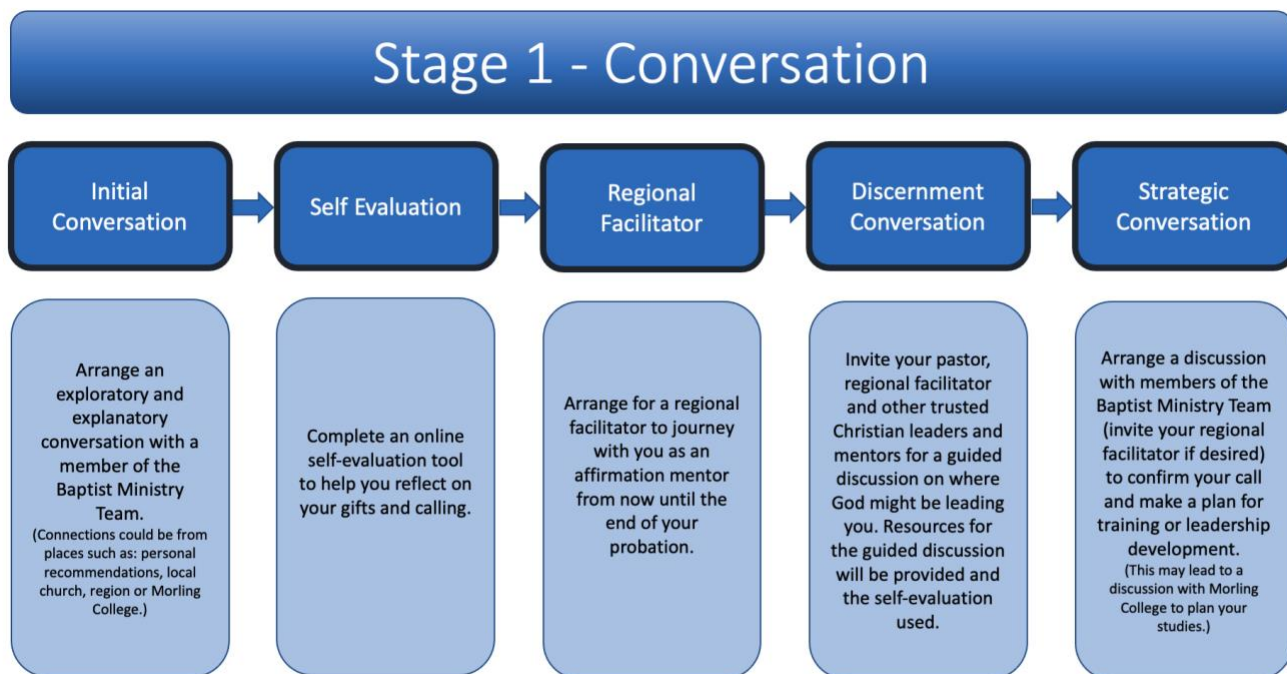
Evidence of an innate potential to develop and improve with a commitment to lifelong leadership development.

3.2 THE SIX STAGES OF AFFIRMATION

Stage 1: Conversation
Stage 4: Education

Stage 2: Application
Stage 5: Accreditation

Stage 3: Recognition
Stage 6: Ongoing Formation



STAGE 1 - CONVERSATION

Leadership Dimensions: This stage assesses the first and second dimensions: “character” and “call”.

Stage 1 – Step 1. Initial Conversation: The individual will have an exploratory and explanatory conversation with a member of the AOT or BMT. This conversation will explore the concept of call, explain the affirmation process, and commence a supported discernment process involving the individual, their family, local church, region (if available) and Association. This initial conversation may be held individually or in a group of interested persons, scheduled by the Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation, during any given year.

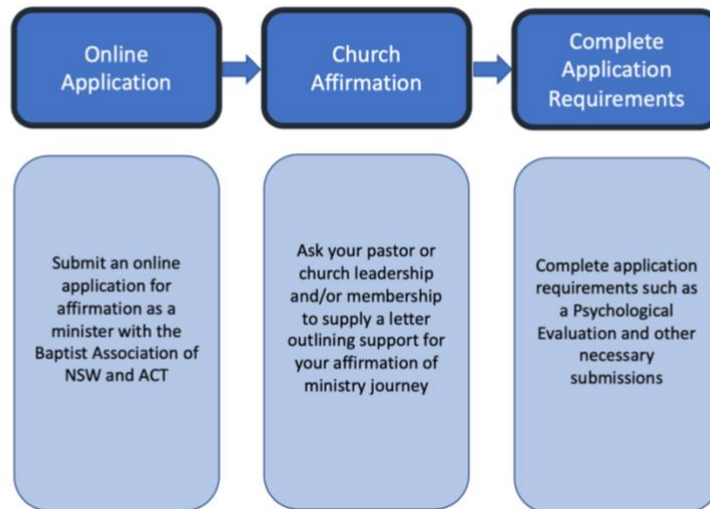
Stage 1 – Step 2. Self-Evaluation: The individual will complete an online self-evaluation tool to help them reflect on their gifts and calling. The AOT will ensure that the self-evaluation is relevant, current, accessible and operational. The AOT may change the contents of the self-evaluation from time to time as needs arise.

Stage 1 – Step 3. Regional Affirmation Facilitator: Where possible, a Regional Affirmation Facilitator may be appointed to mentor the individual through the affirmation process. This facilitator should be appropriately trained and equipped by the Association. They should provide ongoing support to the individual and may be invited by the applicant to participate in significant elements of the process, as approved by the AOT. They should not be people involved in interviewing or assessing the individual they are supporting. The Regional Affirmation Facilitator will usually be a representative of the regional minister for the applicant’s region. If such a person is not available or appropriate from the applicant’s region, an alternate or additional affirmation facilitator may be appointed in consultation with the Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation.

Stage 1 – Step 4. Discernment Conversation: The individual should invite their pastor, a regional facilitator (if available), any other mentors or respected Christian leaders or members of the Association leadership or family members, who know the individual well, to participate in a discernment conversation. A guided discussion resource will be provided by the Association to assist this conversation and prayer time. The Regional Facilitator will be trained to facilitate this discussion, although others can do so if a Regional Facilitator is not available. The individual should share their completed self-reflection with those who comprise the discernment conversation.

Stage 1 – Step 5. Strategic Conversation: Following the above process, should the individual continue to sense a call to leadership, confirmed by the members of the discernment conversation, they will arrange a strategic conversation with the Team Leader Ministry Affirmation or other representative of the AOT. The person will share their self-evaluation and discuss any guidance received from the discernment conversation. The AOT representative should assist the individual to determine whether proceeding to the next stage is recommended. If proceeding, this conversation should plan a way ahead for training and leadership development and pave the way for a formal application. It may also lead to a further conversation with Morling College faculty should studies need to be planned.

Stage 2 - Application



STAGE 2 – APPLICATION

Leadership Dimensions. This stage further examines “character” and “call” as well as “doctrine” and “capacity”.

Stage 2 – Step 1. Online Application. The following submissions will be required:

1. An account of the applicant’s faith story and subsequent spiritual experience, including what has led them to believe that God has called them to ministry and leadership.
2. A statement in not more than 1500 words, of their convictions on key doctrines common to Baptists and the practice of ministry, including views on the place of Scripture, the nature of the Gospel, and the significance of accreditation and ordination (with attention to the practice of this within the Association).
3. A statement outlining their experience in Christian ministry and leadership.
4. A minimum of 4 references from people who should normally include:
 - a. Three persons who know the applicant well, and
 - b. The Pastor of the applicant’s current church or another leader if there is no current pastor, and
 - c. The Pastor of their most previous church if the applicant attended there less than 5 years earlier.
5. A list of books, articles, podcasts etc read or listened to in the past 2 years on topics related to theology, Christian growth, ministry and leadership.
6. A written affirmation that the applicant subscribes to the Basic Doctrines, objects and values of the Association (as outlined in the Constitution) AND a statement addressing the applicant’s response to the Statement of Beliefs (as outlined in the Constitution) commenting on any differences in their belief to that Statement.
7. A signed copy of the Confidential Questionnaire. This document serves as a Statutory Declaration and must be witnessed by a Justice of the Peace or equivalent.
8. A valid Working with Children Check (if in NSW) or a Working with Vulnerable Persons Clearance (if in the ACT).
9. A signed copy of the Ministerial Code of Ethics and Conduct.
10. A current Police Check.

Stage 2 – Step 2. Church Affirmation. The leadership of the applicant’s church should be asked to furnish a letter of endorsement for the person’s application, confirming their support of the applicant’s calling, giftedness, ministry and leadership experience.

If the applicant is not able, for whatever reason (including such matters as theological difference, gender, language or culture), to obtain a reference from their pastor or previous pastor, or a letter of church affirmation, the applicant may, in consultation with the Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation, seek a reference or letter from another leader or relevant organisation with whom the applicant is connected.

Stage 2 – Step 3. Complete other Application Requirements:

- **Confidential Questionnaire Discussion.** The applicant will have a confidential discussion with an appropriately trained member of the AOT or it’s representative, or member of the BMT, regarding the Confidential Questionnaire completed in step 1 above. The AOT will maintain a list of concerns that may be raised in the Confidential Questionnaire that the AOT’s representative may then be required to report to the Resident Psychologist, the MSC, or other such professional or body for appropriate follow up.
- **Psychological Evaluation.** The applicant will receive information directing them to complete a psychological evaluation. The applicant will receive a report following the evaluation. In the interview process (see Stage 3 below), the applicant will receive support in the report’s interpretation and recommendations. This panel will include a trained psychologist. The AOT will ensure, to the best of its ability, the exercise of a duty of care to applicants in the psychological evaluation process. It will ensure the involvement of trained professionals in the design, operation, debriefing and recommendations drawn from the psychological evaluation. The AOT will ensure that appropriate confidentiality is maintained at all times. Further policies and processes surrounding the psychological evaluation will be designed, maintained and adhered to by the AOT.
- **Other requirements** may be given from time to time by the Affirmation Oversight Team to applicants depending on their circumstances.

Individuals who have completed the online application but have not yet been interviewed (Stage 3) will be called “applicants”.

Stage 3 - Recognition

Participate in an interview

This is the main interview of the affirmation of ministry process. The interview panels will be comprised of representatives from the Baptist Ministry Team, Morling College, clinical professionals and other members of our movement. Three interview panels will be experienced during the interview day: Doctrine and Denominationalism, Personality and Relational Capacity, Gifts for Ministry.
Attend with your spouse or support person and/or your Regional Facilitator.

If accepted and serving in an approved ministry leadership role, you may be considered a Recognised Minister (and be able to use the title "Pastor") and, if proceeding to accreditation, you will be considered an Accreditation Candidate

If not immediately proceeding to accreditation, go to Stage 6

STAGE 3 - RECOGNITION

Leadership Dimensions. All 7 dimensions will be examined at this stage.

Interview. The applicant will participate in interviews with three panels as outlined below. If married or engaged, the applicant should attend with their spouse or fiancé. If not, the applicant may attend with a family member, their regional facilitator or other support person. Interpreters may be provided if necessary.

1. **Doctrine and Denominationalism** – where the applicant will be able to share in some depth about their understanding of things such as the Scriptures, the Gospel, orthodox Christian belief, Baptist Distinctives, the Baptist Association Basic Doctrines and Statement of Faith and matters to do with the vision, values and ministry of the Association.
2. **Personality and Relational Capacity** – where the applicant will have the opportunity to engage with the psychological evaluation report with a group which includes a trained psychologist, to discuss matters of personality. If the applicant has a fiancé or spouse, it is mandatory that this person attends with the applicant.
3. **Gifts for Ministry** – where the applicant will be able to share in some depth about their understanding of their own gifts, strengths and growth areas in ministry and their experience in ministry and leadership so far.

The AOT should ensure that interviewers are provided with guidelines for the conducting of interviews. Interviewers will provide a report and recommendations to the AOT regarding each interview.

At the conclusion of these interviews and subsequent AOT meeting, the applicant will either be accepted or declined as:

- a. A candidate for recognition or
- b. A candidate for accreditation (if proceeding to Stage 4)

The acceptance of applicants. When a person's application is accepted:

- The applicant will be informed as soon as is possible.
- The applicant will be informed whether there are specific recommendations, timeframes or conditions placed upon them in order to proceed through the next stages.
- the AOT may recommend that the Association acknowledge the candidate as a Recognised Minister using the title "pastor" as long as that person is serving in an approved ministry.

The declining of applicants and reapplication. When a person's application is declined:

- The applicant will be informed as soon as is possible and offered to meet with their spouse, fiancé or family member and regional facilitator (or other support person) with representatives appointed by the AOT to discuss in detail the reasons for being declined and any recommendations which arise from the process to date.
- The applicant may re-apply, but usually not sooner than twelve months after the date of the previous interview. At the time of reapplication, the Team Leader Ministry Affirmation will determine, on behalf of the AOT, what elements of the application should be re-submitted. The applicant who reapplies will usually be required to participate again in all elements of Stage 3 and beyond unless the AOT determines otherwise. In the re-application process, the applicant will usually be required to demonstrate that they have addressed the issues raised by the AOT upon being previously declined.

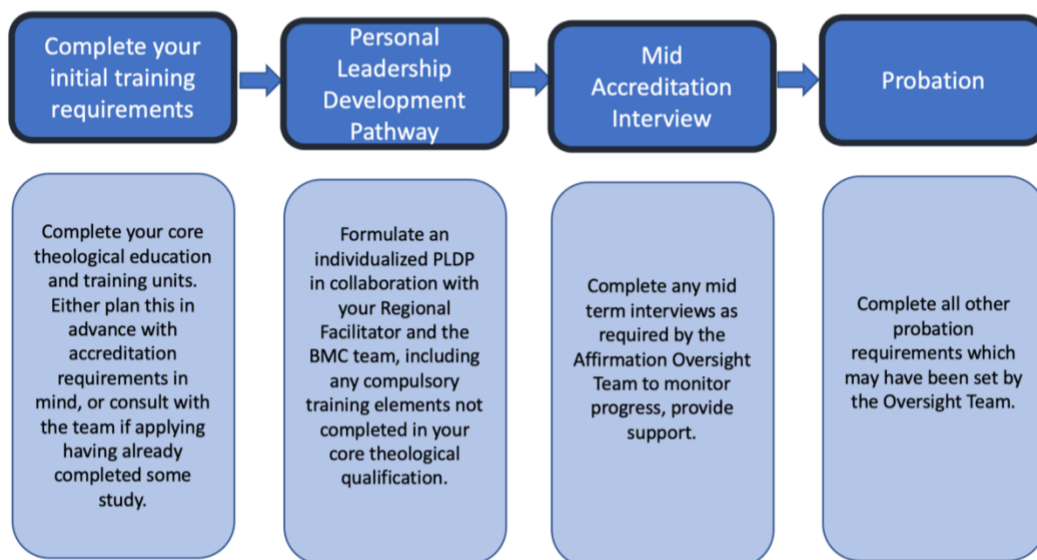
Panel members. Interview panel members will be appropriately trained and inducted by the AOT. The Personality and Relational Capacity Panel must include an appropriately qualified and experienced professional who can interpret the psychological assessment.

Interview policies and procedure documents. The AOT will operate according to policies to govern the conducting of interviews, management of confidential information, keeping of records, duty of care and other matters. These policies may, from time to time, be changed by the AOT and approved by the AC. These can be found in the document "Affirmation of Ministry Policies and Procedures."

Requirements for accepted Recognised Ministers not proceeding to Accreditation: Should a Recognised Minister not be proceeding to accreditation, they must re-engage at Stage 6. They will also be required to complete aspects of the essential training elements listed in Stage 4, Step 4, including Advanced Creating Safe Spaces Training and the initial sessions of the Leadership Incubator.

Individuals who have been accepted by interview but not yet confirmed as Recognised or Accredited Ministers, will be called "candidates".

Stage 4 – Education



STAGE 4 - EDUCATION

Leadership Dimensions. All 7 dimensions will continue to be examined at this stage.

Stage 4 – Step 1. Common theological training requirements.

- The AOT will advise the candidate in advance of the academic requirements for stage 4 step 1. This will usually occur in the strategic discussion in stage 1.
- A list of core theological training requirements is developed and maintained by the AOT, in consultation with representatives of Morling College.
- The Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation, will oversee the candidate's educational journey, ensuring that they adhere to the agreed requirements.
- Should a person apply having already completed theological education the applicant will submit their academic transcript to the Team Leader, Minister Affirmation. The AOT will assess the completed studies against the list of core theological training requirements and make recommendations to the applicant regarding units which will need to be completed in Stage 4. Some subjects will be considered mandatory and not able to be opted out due to prior learning. These will usually be Baptist Distinctives and Contemporary Issues in Christian Leadership.
- Those applying to transfer their accreditation from another denomination must complete both mandatory subjects.
- Those applying to transfer their accreditation from another Baptist Association in Australia, may not need to complete Baptist Distinctives, but must complete Contemporary Issues in Christian Leadership.

Recognised Prior Learning and Experience. Under exceptional circumstances, persons applying for accreditation or recognition may have their prior experience taken into consideration as alleviating certain, non-mandatory requirements. The AOT may exercise discretion in applying this consideration, usually in circumstances where applicants have served for ten years or more in acknowledged and related ministries and where the AOT is confident that the applicant has demonstrated significant development across the seven leadership dimensions and is familiar with Baptist culture and polity. Such persons may include people such as: leaders who have served as non-recognised or non-accredited pastoral leaders; leaders who have served in intercultural mission work; leaders involved in extensive long-term voluntary leadership; and spouses of pastoral leaders. These considerations will usually be arranged and approved during the strategic conversation in Stage 1.

Stage 4 – Step 2. Personal Leadership Development Pathway

- Following the completion of the candidate's initial training requirements, they will need to meet with a representative of the AOT to devise a mutually agreed upon approved leadership development plan.
- This plan should cover the remaining time of the candidate's probation and the first three years following accreditation.
- It should consider the individual's ministry calling and contextual needs.
- It should be devised to facilitate further growth and development across the seven leadership dimensions.
- The AOT will maintain a list of training options available and approve any alternatives.
- The candidate shall provide regular progress reports when required by the Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation. The candidate will provide evidence of completed training and demonstrate learning and development when required by the AOT.

Stage 4 – Step 3. Mid Accreditation Interview

The AOT will arrange any mid accreditation interviews as it deems appropriate for the purposes of monitoring progress of study and training commitments, monitoring progress and development in the candidate's ministry placement and provide support, prayer and any further recommendations.

Stage 4 – Step 4. Probation

Generally, candidates will undergo at least a twelve-month probation, usually commencing from 31st December in the calendar year of their acceptance as a candidate for accreditation.

During probation the candidate will also be required to complete such essential training elements as:

Advanced Creating Safe Spaces Training

Marriage Celebrant Training

Prepare-Enrich Facilitators Training (or equivalent)

Baptist Distinctives (if not already completed)

Contemporary Issues in Leadership (if not already completed)

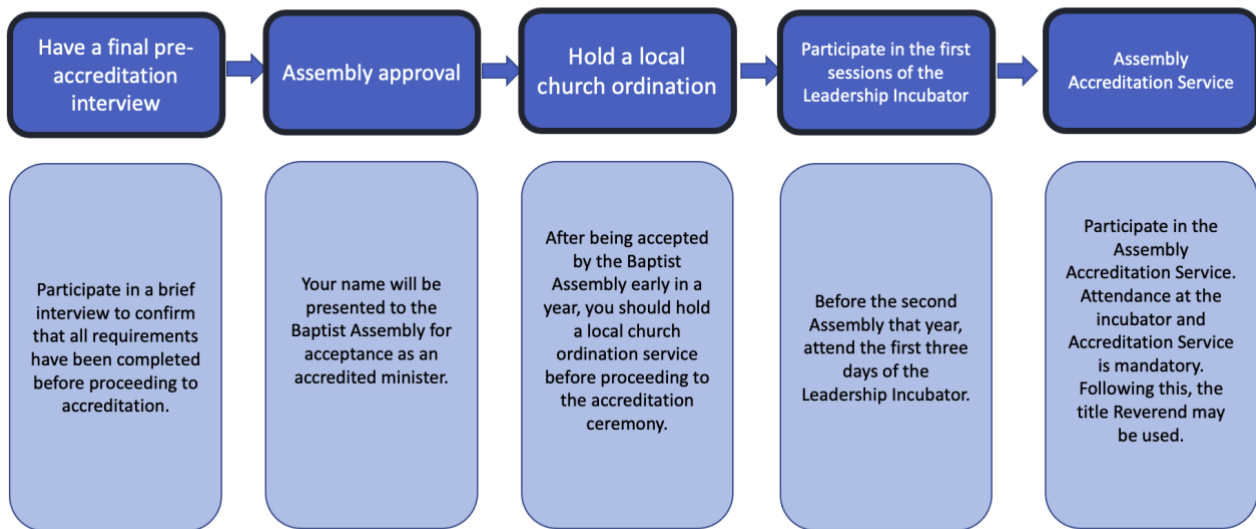
Other training as determined by the AOT

During their probation, a candidate will be under the supervision of the AOT. The person's candidacy may be ended by the AOT in the case of such things as:

- Misconduct
- Lack of diligence
- Undue delays in completing training
- Inability to profit by training
- Refusal to complete the requirements or recommendations of the AOT
- Or any other reason that the AOT considers will prevent the candidate from fulfilling the requirements of accreditation.

Candidates will have the opportunity of being present and heard at a meeting of the AOT at which such a decision is to be considered.

Stage 5 – Accreditation



STAGE 5 - ACCREDITATION

Stage 5 – Step 1. Final pre-accreditation interview

At the conclusion of the probationary period, representatives of the AOT will interview the candidate to make a final recommendation to the AOT regarding the conclusion of the probationary period and an affirmation that the candidate's name may be recommended to the Assembly Council for accreditation.

Prior to this interview, the Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation, may require reports from such persons as a local pastor or representatives from the candidate's church or ministry context, a regional facilitator, the Principal or representative of Morling College, or other such persons as may be deemed to provide evidence of the candidate's fulfilment of all requirements and suitability for accreditation.

The candidate must demonstrate that all recommendations provided to them by the AOT have been completed. Only candidates who are associated in leadership roles within the Association, an affiliated Baptist Church or other approved ministry may proceed to have their name go forward for accreditation.

Stage 5 – Step 2. Assembly Approval

On completion of all requirements and acceptance from the AOT, the AOT will recommend to the Assembly Council the names of those candidates who are eligible to proceed to accreditation. Upon approval from the AC, the names of those candidates will be brought to an Assembly for presentation and approval.

Individuals who have been accepted for Accreditation by an Assembly but not completed stage 5 steps 3, 4 and 5 below, will be called "accreditands".

Stage 5 – Step 3. Ordination

Following acceptance at an Assembly, accreditands may arrange for an ordination service to be held, usually by their local church, to be completed before the next scheduled Association Accreditation Service.

Stage 5 – Step 4. Initial sessions of the Leadership Incubator

All ministers who have been accepted by Assembly, along with accepted candidates for Recognition, must complete the mandatory leadership training sessions conducted by the Association, usually called The Leadership Incubator. A number of these sessions will be held prior to the Assembly Accreditation Service and should be completed by the accreditands for them to be eligible to attend the service and be accredited.

Stage 5 – Step 5. Assembly Accreditation Service

An annual Accreditation Service should be held at an Assembly usually scheduled for the latter part of a calendar year. Those who were accepted for Accreditation at a previous Assembly and who will usually have since completed an ordination service at a local church, and are currently serving as a leader in an approved ministry, are eligible to be accredited at this service. Attendance at this Accreditation Service is mandatory unless the AOT grants leave for exceptional circumstances.

Following accreditation, the minister's name will be added to the List of Accredited Ministers for the Association. While ordained and remaining accredited, fulfilling the requirements of the Continuing Ministry Development Program, the minister may use the title 'Reverend'. During this stage, in the first year after February 1st following accreditation, accredited ministers continue to serve under the direction of the Baptist Ministry Team or Global Interaction or such a body approved by the AOT for three years. During this time, an accredited minister will need to consult with the Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation, if considering a change in their ministry placement.

Stage 6 – Ongoing Formation



STAGE 6 – ONGOING FORMATION

Stage 6 – Step 1. Leadership Incubator

Participation in the Leadership Incubator is mandatory for those who have been recognised and accredited. The first sessions of the Incubator should take place before the accreditation service with subsequent sessions being scheduled usually over the ensuing 3 years following accreditation and recognition.

The Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation will be responsible to arrange, review and update an appropriate curriculum for the Incubator, utilising leaders and experts from across and beyond the movement.

The aims of the Incubator are to:

- Provide ongoing leadership development, formation and equipping appropriate to this stage of ministry experience.
- Introduce leaders to the breadth of ministries and leaders throughout the Association and the associated resources which support ministry and leadership development.
- Develop a cohort of leaders for ongoing support and lifelong connection.

During this time, accredited ministers will also be required to complete any remaining education, training and development commitments previously agreed to in Stage 4, Step 2 “Personal Leadership Development Pathway.”

Stage 6 – Step 2. Pastoral Supervision

During the first three years following accreditation or recognition, ministers are required to undertake professional / pastoral supervision with a suitably qualified supervisor approved by the Association, for a number of sessions per year, determined by the AOT.

The Association will manage a process of approving appropriately qualified and experienced professional supervisors and partner with Morling College or other agencies in supporting the provision of appropriate training for professional supervision (pastoral). The Association will provide a list of approved pastoral supervisors to newly accredited ministers.

Stage 6 – Step 3. Continuing Ministerial Development

All accredited and recognised ministers are required to demonstrate the fulfilment of certain requirements as outlined in the Continuing Ministerial Development Guidelines, in order to retain their accredited or recognised standing. The CMD requirements include ongoing provision of a verified clearance with a WWCC in NSW and WWVP in the ACT, as well as the completion of Creating Safe Spaces training every 3 years. Failure to adequately fulfill the requirements of the CMD process, may result in the AOT recommending to the Assembly Council that a minister be removed from the List of Accredited or Recognised Ministers. All accredited and recognised ministers should make themselves familiar with the policies and procedures of Continuing Ministerial Development which should be provided and made available upon request.

Stage 6 – Step 4. Ongoing accountability, guidance and support.

Accredited ministers are urged to commit to lifelong learning and ongoing leadership development. The Association shall provide resources, networks and programs to assist accredited ministers to have numerous options to engage in ongoing self-care and growth.

4. RETIRED MINISTERS

Ministers who have formally retired from active ministry will be placed on a Retired Ministers List and may use the title Rev. *Name* (retired). While wishing to retain their accreditation, retired ministers must remain accountable to the Association, abide by the Code of Ethics and Conduct, be available for occasional ministry (eg pastoral supervision, mentoring, interims etc) and complete the Continuing Ministerial Development requirements. Should retired ministers no longer fulfil these requirements, they may be removed from the list of retired ministers. The AOT may exempt retired accredited ministers from some of these requirements, allowing the retired minister to retain the title Reverend (retired) after a certain age, should they no longer be involved in regular, ongoing leadership roles.

5. THE AFFIRMATION OVERSIGHT TEAM

The Affirmation Oversight Team (AOT) is responsible to oversee the processes outlined in these guidelines and to maintain and update all policies and procedures associated with these guidelines. The AOT is appointed by and accountable to the Assembly Council.

Terms of Reference for the AOT will be maintained and updated by the Assembly Council.

6. APPLICATIONS, REAPPLICATIONS AND TRANSFERS

6.1 MINISTERS ACCREDITED (OR EQUIVALENT) FROM OTHER BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS IN AUSTRALIAN BAPTIST MINISTRIES OR BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE OR FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

Applicants wishing to transfer as accredited ministers from a Baptist Association or other denomination, may commence the affirmation process at Stage 1, Step 5 “Strategic Conversation.” As a result of this conversation and following the application, the Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation (or their representative) will recommend to the AOT a custom pathway for affirmation. This pathway will take into consideration the requirements outlined in these guidelines which may have already been completed to the AOT’s satisfaction. Exceptions to fulfilling any of the requirements in these guidelines will only be given upon evidence that the candidate has completed equivalent requirements. A transferee will usually not be exempt from completing a psychological evaluation, Advance Creating Safe Spaces Training, and other mandatory training courses.

The transferring applicant must, in addition to all other requirements, obtain a letter from the leadership of the Association or denomination from which they are transferring, stating that they are a minister in good standing with that organisation. Applicants for transfer must be engaged (or be about to be engaged) in a ministry role in an affiliated church or approved ministry within the Association.

An accepted applicant for transfer need not organise an ordination service, but must fulfill all the requirements placed on them by the AOT and agree to abide by ongoing requirements. Once satisfied, the AOT will recommend the applicant’s transfer be accepted by the Assembly Council and their name presented at the next opportunity to an Assembly.

6.2 MINISTERS SEEKING REACCREDITATION AFTER NON-ENGAGEMENT

Should an accredited minister leave their leadership role in an affiliated church or approved ministry, they may retain their accreditation for up to two years without needing to commence in a new leadership role in an affiliated church or approved ministry.

Following this two-year period, should the accredited minister not be actively seeking such an approved role, the AOT may remove that person from the list of Accredited Ministers following consultation with them.

Persons who have previously been removed in these circumstances, may re-apply at a later date if:

- They apply in writing to the Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation.
- They supply a statement that the applicant subscribes to the Basic Doctrines, objects and values of the Association (as outlined in the Constitution) AND a statement addressing the applicant's response to the Statement of Beliefs (as outlined in the Constitution) commenting on any differences in their belief to that Statement.
- They provide evidence of the currency of requirements for all accredited ministers to retain their accreditation as outlined in these guidelines.
- They are engaged (or about to be engaged) in a ministry role in an affiliated church or approved ministry.

The applicant will usually be required to attend an interview and following a successful recommendation from the AOT to the Assembly Council, the leader's name may be placed back on the list of Accredited Ministers.

Should the applicant be seeking reaccreditation after 10 or more years, they will usually be required to complete a full application process according to these guidelines.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

All written material relating to a person's application may be made available only to the members of the AOT and to members of that person's interview panels. An applicant's documentation will be securely kept by the Association under the supervision of the Team Leader, Ministry Affirmation and Associate Director, Discipleship and Leader Development. AOT members will not keep application documentation after a decision has been made on the application. Excess documentation will be destroyed.

Reports from referees will not be made available to applicants in order to protect the ability of a referee to complete a frank report. AOT members may phone selected referees for further comment if deemed necessary.

Comments of individual AOT members will not be quoted to the applicant or referees, nor recorded verbatim in AOT minutes so they can not be attributed to specific AOT members.

Further policies and processes regarding the taking and keeping of notes and documentation will be adopted and maintained by the AOT.

8. PASTORAL LEADERS UNDER DISCIPLINE

In accordance with the 'Procedures for Handling Allegations', complaints of serious misconduct against Recognised and Accredited Ministers, (including applicants, candidates and accreditands), will be referred to the Ministry Standards Committee for investigation. The accredited or recognised minister's church or organisation's leadership will be informed if an investigation by the MSC is taking place. The Ministry Standards Manager and/or Team Leader Ministry Affirmation may advise that the minister being investigated should withdraw from leadership and ministry responsibilities during the investigation period.

Following an investigation, the MSC will determine whether a breach of the Code has occurred and what outcome may be appropriate. Outcomes may include:

- A decision that no action is required.
- Removal from the list of accredited or recognised ministers.
- Conditions under which the minister may retain their accredited status, including supervision, counselling or other such requirements, followed by a review after an appropriate amount of time.

The decision of the MSC will be reported to the AOT who will ensure that due process, and the guidelines of the relevant procedure document, have been followed in the matter. The MSC will then notify all relevant parties in writing of the outcome and the decision will be reported to the Assembly Council. A decision to remove someone from the Accredited List will also be reported to the Assembly Council and thereafter to the Assembly via the AOT's annual report.

9. REMOVAL FROM THE ACCREDITED OR RECOGNISED LISTS

Ministers may be removed from the list of Accredited or Recognised Ministers at the AOT's recommendation to the AC under the following circumstances:

- a. Death.
- b. Ceasing to be a member of an affiliated church within the Association.
- c. Accreditation (or equivalent) to ministry in another denomination.
- d. Upon ceasing to minister in the appointment for which a Recognised Minister was recognised.
- e. Upon ceasing to minister as an Accredited Minister in NSW or the ACT and the minister's accreditation has not been transferred to another body affiliated with the Baptist World Alliance within two years.
- f. The Accredited Minister has not been available to serve in an approved ministry for a period of two years. Accredited Ministers must inform the AOT should they move from leadership in an affiliated church or approved ministry. Any minister who, for a period of not less than two years, has ceased to engage in the ministry for which, in the opinion of the AOT, the minister is approved, will be contacted to discuss their accreditation status. If no response to the contact is received, the minister may be removed from the accredited list. Recognised ministers must inform the AOT of any change in their ministry role and re-apply for recognition status.
- g. Serious moral or ethical breaches of the Code of Ethics and Conduct or other misconduct based on the findings of the MSC according to their policies and procedures.
- h. Failure to follow Continuing Ministerial Development requirements.
- i. The Assembly Council resolves that the Accredited or Recognised minister no longer subscribes to the basic doctrines, objects and values, ceases to hold to their response to the Statement of Beliefs, or makes comments or acts in a way which indicates that the person no longer holds to their responses to the Statement of Beliefs, provided that the person has been given an opportunity to be heard by the Assembly Council either in writing or in person at one of its meetings. The minister must be given no less than 1 months' notice in writing of the time and place of the meeting and the nature of the business to be addressed at the meeting.
- j. At their own request.

Any minister who is removed from the list of Accredited or Recognised Ministers is no longer able to hold a marriage licence.

10. HUMAN SEXUALITY, MARRIAGE AND PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

In line with the Association's statements on Marriage and Human Sexuality, the following standards will apply to Accredited and Recognised Ministers (including candidates and accreditands).

1. The Association will not knowingly accredit or recognise for local church leadership or other approved ministry, persons who engage in sexual relationships outside of marriage. Marriage is defined as outlined in the Marriage Rites of the Baptist Union of Australia (ie, the union between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life) and must be a legally recognised marriage. Applications for accreditation, or recognition or other ministry from persons actively engaged in sexual relationships outside of marriage, as so identified, will be declined.
2. Upon preliminary application for acceptance as an Accreditation or Recognition Candidate, the applicant will be made aware of the Association's position and policy on marriage and sexual relationships. Applicants will be asked to affirm in writing whether there is anything in these policies that would call into question their suitability for ministry in or on behalf of our churches. Unless there is evidence to justify pursuing the matter, the candidate's affirmation will be accepted as settling the question.
3. If it is alleged that an accredited or recognised minister is involved in sexual relationships outside the marriage relationship as defined in 1. above, the matter will be referred to the Ministry Standards Committee which will investigate the allegation. As necessary, the MSC will bring a recommendation to the AOT regarding any appropriate disciplinary action. Throughout the process, the AOT will do all it can to preserve the confidentiality of the people involved and act with pastoral sensitivity. The grounds upon which any minister's name is to be removed from the Accredited List, will not usually be disclosed unless it is so requested by that minister.

11. GUIDELINE CHANGES

A copy of these Guidelines will be made available to all applicants and other interested parties. No alteration or addition to these Guidelines will be made except by the Assembly upon receipt of a report from the AOT through the Assembly Council.

APPENDIX 1 – FOUNDATIONAL BELIEFS (FROM THE BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NSW and ACT CONSTITUTION)

Basic Doctrines

The Incorporation Act sets out the following doctrines as the basis upon which the Association is founded:

- a) The sinfulness of man
- b) The Deity of Jesus Christ
- c) His atonement for the sin of man
- d) The need of the Holy Spirit for conversion
- e) The divine inspiration of the Scripture
- f) The resurrection of the dead
- g) Rewards and punishment in a future state
- h) The baptism of believers only by immersion

Statement of Beliefs

1. The Nature and Unity of the Godhead

There is one God Who is eternal personal Spirit. He is infinite in power, wisdom, holiness and love. God is Triune in essential being and revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2. The Deity and Humanity of Christ

Jesus Christ as the second Person of the Godhead is eternally one with God the Father of whose person and glory Jesus is the accurate expression. To become human He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, the nature of God and human nature, were united in one Person; truly God and truly human.

3. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity is eternally one with the Father and the Son yet He is sent by Them to achieve the divine purpose in the world and in the Church.

4. The Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures

The Scriptures, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, are the infallible Word of God. They were written by holy people of God inspired by the Holy Spirit and have supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

5. The Sinfulness of People

People were made in the image of God and for fellowship with God. By transgression of God's command humankind fell from fellowship with God and their nature was corrupted. As a consequence all people are spiritually dead under Satan's dominion and control and subject to God's wrath and condemnation. Therefore, apart from God's grace, people are helpless and hopeless.

6. Christ's Atonement for Human Sin

In order to redeem people from the guilt, penalty and power of sin, Jesus Christ became human and died a sacrificial death as our representative substitute. By His resurrection, God's acceptance of His atoning death was demonstrated. This atonement is sufficient for the whole world, but effective only in those who receive it. The sinner is justified and reconciled to God, not through any personal merit, but solely on the basis of God's gracious gift of salvation in Jesus Christ received through faith.

7. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the acceptance of God's provision of salvation. The Holy Spirit convinces sinners of their sinfulness, leads them to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and so brings them to spiritual birth as God's children and to fellowship in Christ. Working within the life of believers the Holy Spirit makes real the presence of Christ, witnesses to their relationship with God, leads into all truth, bestows gifts for effective service and produces graces for holy living.

8. The Church

The Church is the body of people whom God has separated from the world through faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. All regenerate persons are members of the universal Church of God which takes local form wherever groups of believers unite for worship, fellowship and service in accordance with scriptural principles. All believers are called to a priestly ministry in the offering of spiritual sacrifices and sent into the world to be witnesses. God calls individuals to positions of oversight and leadership or to special ministries. The Church recognises such by ordaining pastors, commissioning missionaries, appointing deacons and other leaders, following New Testament practice.

9. The Baptism of Believers Only by Immersion

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a public declaration of a person's faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In accordance with New Testament Scripture it should be administered only by total immersion which symbolises the believer's identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, the remission of sins and the believer's dedication of themselves to God to live and walk in newness of life.

10. The Communion

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ instituted by Him to be celebrated with the elements of bread and wine by believers in Christ until the end of the age. It commemorates and declares our thanks for the Lord's substitutionary death. The celebration of the ordinance expresses our fellowship with and in the Lord Jesus Christ as members of the Body of which He is the Head.

11. The Return of the Lord Jesus Christ

At the end of this age, according to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in His glory to the earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom of God awaits His return.

12. The Resurrection of the Dead

At the end of the age, there is to be a resurrection both of the righteous and the unrighteous. After death people's bodies return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God – the righteous to be with Him and the unrighteous to be reserved for the judgment.

13. Rewards and Punishments in a Future State

God has appointed a day of final judgement for the world. At that time Jesus Christ will judge every person and each will receive reward or punishment according to their deeds. Those judged righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment.

(Refer to the Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT Constitution to view the Objects and Values of the Association).