

B03 - Safe Ministries Policy & Procedure

Commitment:

Ettalong Baptist Church (EBC) is committed to ensuring as far as reasonably practicable that vulnerable people are protected from harm and or abuse. This is done by 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.

This requirement comes directly from God. God identified classes of vulnerable people who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their weakness or fragility (Exodus 22:21-22, Deuteronomy 10:17-19, Jeremiah 22:2-4, James 1:27).

Purpose:

The Church has adopted the Safe Church Policy 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; (See appendix 1)
- provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children, young people and vulnerable adults; and
- meet our legal obligations in relation to:
 - staff and volunteers engaged in Child-related Work.
 - reporting matters, including child sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and reportable conduct involving a child, to government authorities.

The Safe Church Policy outlines the commitment of the church to principles in various areas. More detail regarding the practical implementation of these commitments is available in the relevant procedures and guidelines

Scope

This procedure is aimed at children, the elderly (those post retirement), and those in a physical or psychological situation unable to advocate for themselves, and as such are vulnerable persons. This procedure has been developed to prevent the risk of harm to those seen as potentially vulnerable and provides training to staff and leaders in identifying vulnerable persons, changes in legislative requirements and standards within the Baptist Community.

This procedure is designed around the 10 Child Safe Standards, and applies to:

- all Church Leadership, staff and volunteers.
- all people who are involved in or attend the Church and its programs.

It arises from the changes to legislation under the legislation that protects children.

Description	Link	Effective Date
Children's Guardian Act 2019	https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/new/act/2019	02.02. 2020

DEFINITIONS

Child	A person who is under the age of 18 years
Church	Ettalong Baptist, the local church which adopted this Safe Church Policy, as indicated on the cover of the Policy.
Church Leadership	Elders, Deacons, Pastors and Ministry Leaders
Complaint	Includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of the Church'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	Creating Safe Spaces training offered by the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT or alternative training that is Safe Church Training Agreement approved and has a face-to-face component
Disclosure	A process by which a person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused or neglected
Domestic and Family Violence	Domestic and family violence involves an abuse of power, in an intimate partner relationship and or after separating from the relationship. It extends beyond physical violence and may involve the exploitation of power imbalances and patterns of abuse.
Governance body	The body designated by the constitution of the church to be responsible for the management of church affairs. This may be the Diaconate.
Safe Environment:	Ensures the discharge of the duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including e.g. spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.
Safe Places:	Take steps to keep vulnerable people safe from spiritual, physical, sexual or emotional abuse and/or bullying.
The Work Health and Safety (WHS) Person/Team:	The team responsible for the oversight and implementation of the Work Health and Safety system & supporting documentation and process in the church
Safe Church Concerns Team	Safe church concerns reporting group within the local church
Approval for Ministry:	A process of written accountability, whereby the senior church leaders approve a program/event to take place in the church/organisation's name.
Mandatory Reporting Legislation	In NSW, the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) In the ACT the Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)].

Ministry Coordinators:	Oversee a program or a group of programs and/or events in the church, for example the children and youth leaders. This is a role that should be undertaken by a senior church leader e.g. pastor, elder, deacon as it brings with its significant positional power.
Ministry Leader:	An adult who has been through a process of recruitment, training for their leadership role and understands their responsibilities. They must have signed a Code of conduct and is an accountable team player in the Church.
Pastoral Staff	Pastor or any accredited or recognised minister or any paid or unpaid staff member of the Church who is engaged in pastoral ministry through the Church.
Persons of Concern	The Church will manage any person identified as a Person of Concern in accordance with An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern.
Reportable Conduct Legislation	In NSW the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
Safe Church Register	The register required to record information relating to staff and volunteers who engaged in Child-related Work and their relevant details in accordance with section 9A of the WWCC Legislation.
Safe Ministry Program	All risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned. These programs been authorised to proceed from a ministry coordinator
Vulnerable	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.
Working with Children Check Legislation	The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW).

Roles and responsibilities in respect to this procedure:

- a) the safe recruitment of leaders.
 - All prospective leaders in our ministries, will be screened before they are appointed in accordance with the Ettalong Baptist Recruitment & Screening Procedure. (i.e. relevant working with children's check/vulnerable people/police check, and a Safe Ministry Check questionnaire).
 - A minimum church attendance policy of 6 months for all prospective volunteer leaders.
- b) adequate training of leaders.
 - All leaders with ministry responsibility for children or young people will attend a Creating Safe Spaces Awareness (or Safe Church Training Awareness endorsed) workshop within their first 6 months of ministry and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years.
 - All leaders to attend additional ministry-specific training as required.
- c) continued supervision of leaders.
 - The Church commits to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders.
 - All leaders will agree to follow the EBC Leaders Conduct Covenant.

- d) responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious ministry misconduct.
- All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, to the Senior Pastor or a Deacon
 - Where a leader has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them, support will be provided to alleged victims and perpetrators. Appropriate help and advice will be sought from the Baptist Association Ministry Standards Manager on 1300 647 780 for a just and fair resolution.
 - The alleged perpetrator may be asked to step down from their role pending outcome of investigation
- e) safe environments in our ministry programs.
- All will serve as participants to the church, as servants of God, committed to the good news of Jesus and lead in spiritually non-abusive ways.
 - We will afford participants a 'say' in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation. (Usually in consultation forums and church meetings)
 - The church will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs, whilst following privacy guidelines
 - All leaders will discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates for establishment and maintenance of safe environments in our church.
 - A Ministry Leader/Team will be appointed to establish and maintain: WHS, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures, and implement the corrective actions out of investigation processes.

Standards of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers is provided for in the EBC Leaders Conduct Covenant, however when found that the covenant has not been adhered to and disclosures are made in the following steps need to be taken.

1. Firstly, when a genuine complaint is made, the appropriate Ministry leader will respond to the complaint in a timely manner,
2. The matter will be assessed
3. depending on the severity communications to the members or leader involved will done verbally (i.e. minor & unknown) and in writing in the cases of constant and breaches of law.

When a code of conduct is been breached:

It is the responsibility of the diaconate to make a determination as to whether the code of conduct has been breached,

1. Minor: Everyone is capable of sin but can repent and be forgiven (1 John 1:8-9). It stands to reason then, that the code can be breached. When this happens in an area that is not a breach of civil or criminal law, simply cease the conduct. If this is difficult, the person should see their pastor or ministry supervisor about receiving help (e.g. counselling). In some cases, it may be necessary to step a person aside from their duties whilst this takes place. It is crucial to deal with such matters confidentially and sensitively.
2. Unknown: Not all leaders will understand 'unacceptable' behaviours. Even after explaining the code some may be unaware; they are exhibiting unacceptable behaviours. Leaders need to be open to correction and humble enough to modify behaviours so as to not discredit the gospel. As above, stepping a person aside from their duties may be necessary.

3. Constant: There are breaches that are not a breach of civil or criminal law, but still unacceptable behaviour in a ministry context. Where a leader has been made aware of their behaviour and yet refuses to change: a) the ministry leader meets with the person for behaviour review meetings. Communicate required behaviour change (no more than 3 meetings). b) If behaviour continues, a small group of church senior leaders are to arrange a meeting to address the behaviour. Stepping aside is appropriate at this point. c) If the behaviour/s continues beyond this meeting, then respectfully and upholding confidentiality, the person will be stood down for a set period. They will be offered help in changing their behaviour via counselling if they are willing. It is important that written notes of all meetings to be carefully taken and a copy given to all parties.
4. Breaches of the law or allegations of abuse: Allegations of abuse or serious misconduct are to be referred to the appropriate government authorities in line with Baptist Association processes. The Church will manage any person identified as a Person of Concern in accordance with An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern.

Record Keeping:

The Church 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.

Appendix 1: Ten Child safe Standards



1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
5. People working with children are suitable and supported
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child-focused
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

For more information see the Office of the Children's Guardian NSW:

www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-Organisations/child-safe-standards

or Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Abuse:

www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/making-institutions-child-safe