



A1 Safe Church Policy

Adopted: 26 February 2023

Replaces former policy: B03 Safe Church Policy And Procedure

Commitment:

Ettalong Baptist Church (herein referred to as The Church) 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.

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 Policy applies to:

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

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 Leaders Conduct Covenant 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).

1. Activities and Services for Children at the Church:

As a church, we commit to providing spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

1.1 Church Leadership:

- a. recognise that children and young people are an integral part of the Church and talk about this in services, sermons, training events and meetings;
- b. involve children and young people in the routine of church life where appropriate
- c. consider the needs of children and young people when they make decisions about budgets, buildings, renovations, use of property, décor, or catering; and
- d. encourage children and young people to have input in decisions that affect them by including them in church forums and meetings when appropriate.

1.2 Safe Church Team:

- a. talk with children and young people about the fact that they have the right to feel safe, to be listened to and to have their views respected (including discussing what they should do and who they should approach if they feel unsafe or hurt, or they suspect that someone else is unsafe or hurt); and
- b. ensure their contact details are accessible to children

1.3 Staff and volunteers:

- a. listen to children and take seriously what children are saying;
- b. talk with children and young people about the kinds of behaviours, attitudes or 'culture' that they would like to promote in their group;
- c. encourage children and young people to have input regarding the content and activities they would like to be part of their group.

2. Staff and Volunteers

2.1 Screening, selection and induction of Staff and Volunteers

- a) The church will undertake appropriate screening processes for all staff and volunteers
- b) The church will engage in fair and transparent selection processes for all staff and volunteers
- c) The church will provide appropriate induction for all staff and volunteers
- d) All staff and volunteers are to be recruited, selected and inducted in accordance with the Procedure for Staff and Volunteers.

2.2 Training and Resourcing of Staff and Volunteers

- a) The church will ensure that staff and volunteers develop the knowledge and skills to create safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people.
- b) The church will ensure that staff and volunteers have access to information about creating safe spaces and that they all undergo appropriate training regarding the available Procedures, Guidelines and Forms.
- c) The church will support staff and volunteers with adequate resources to enable them to maintain and promote safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people.
- d) The church will implement the Procedure for Staff and Volunteers

2.3 Standards of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers

- a) The church will provide spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.
- b) The church will expect all staff and volunteers to uphold the Leaders Conduct Covenant which includes expected behaviours for those who engage in ministry with children and/or vulnerable people.
- c) The church will expect staff and volunteers to follow Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People.

Please see the Procedure for Staff and Volunteers and the Screening Questionnaire for more detail.

3. Conflict, Complaints and Concerns

3.1 Responding to Child Protection Concerns

- a) The church 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 church 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.

3.2 Complaint Handling

- a) The Church will respond to complaints in accordance with the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers.
- b) Where there is a complaint that a staff member or volunteer has engaged in abuse, including child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct involving a child, the Church will treat the allegation as a serious breach of the Leaders Conduct Covenant and respond in accordance with the Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers.
- c) In the event of receiving a complaint that relates to a minor breach of the Code of Conduct or a grievance, the Church may determine to respond to the matter in accordance with the Procedure for Resolving Conflict.

Please see the Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns and the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers for more detail.

4. Safe Environments

4.1 Physical Environments

- a) The Church will ensure that physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
- b) The Church will comply with Work, Health and Safety requirements.
- c) The Church will consider the impact of the physical environment on the potential for risk to children and vulnerable people.
- d) The Church will identify and address risks arising from the physical environment in which programs and activities take place.
- e) If any residential property belonging to the church becomes identifiable as being church property then the Church will ensure that all regular adult occupants of that property obtain and hold WWCC clearance for the duration of their residence.
- f) The Church will consider whether any ministries it supports, including overseas ministries, have appropriate child protection practices in place.

4.2 Online Environments

The Church will promote safe online behaviour in any electronic communication

Please see the Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People for more detail.

5. Risk Management

5.1 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.

5.2 Risk Assessments

- a) The Church will ensure that Ministry Leaders complete and make a record of a risk assessment in relation to any program or activity undertaken at, for or with the Church.
 - for regular activities, the risk assessment will be conducted at least annually and whenever there are significant changes in the program activities, attendance or location.
 - for special activities, the Ministry Leader or Safe Church Team will complete a risk assessment.
- b) The Church 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 Church will consider the likelihood of an incident occurring, the seriousness of the consequences and the difficulty of avoiding the risk.
- c) The Church will store risk assessment forms in a secure location for a period of at least 45 years.

6. Third Parties and Affiliated Entities

- a) The church will require any third party (tenant or external party using church 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 church will ensure that any affiliated entities (any entity or program that is, or is represented as, a ministry of the Church) comply with Child Safe Standards including annual reports to the governance body regarding child safety.

7. Recordkeeping

- a) 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.
- b) Records to which this item applies includes, but is not limited to:
- Ministry Information Sheets
 - Staff and Volunteer files
 - Attendance (sign-in/sign-out) sheets
 - Risk assessment forms
 - Safe Church Register
 - Safe Church Concerns forms and any contemporaneous notes regarding reporting decisions
 - Annual Safe Church commitment by third parties and affiliated entities
 - Dated copies of any Safe Church Policy, Procedure, Form or associated document in force at any time

Please see the Privacy Policy for more detail.

8. Review and Accountability

8.1 Internal Review

The Church will review this policy biannually.

8.2 External Accountability

The Church will seek advice from and communicate with the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Manager in relation to any Reportable Conduct, Child Protection Concerns and/or Complaints against Accredited or Recognised Ministers in accordance the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers and the Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns.

More Information:

Association of Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT

Manager – Ministry Standards 1300 647 7801

Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Code of Ethics and Conduct, are available at <https://creatingsafespaces.org.au/resources/>

Contacts and Services:

Reporting Suspected Risk of Significant Harm (Abuse)

NSW: Child Protection Help Line - 13 21 11

Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline - 1800 628 221

Brisbane Water Local Area Command (Woy Woy) - 02 4379 7399

Domestic Violence Line - 1800 656 463

Link2home Homelessness - 1800 152 152

Counselling Help National:

Kids Help Line - 1800 551 800

Lifeline - 13 11 14

Child Abuse Prevention Service (24 hr) - 02 9716 8000

Family Crisis Centre (24 hr) - 02 9622 0522

Domestic Violence Legal Advice Line- www.wlsnsw.org.au - 1800 810 784

Indigenous Women's Legal Contact Line - 1800 639 784

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