



## A1 Safe Church Policy

Revised: August 2024

### **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. The Bible identifies 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).

The Church is committed to modelling the love of Christ to all people we have contact with. We are committed to partnering with individuals, parents and families in providing meaningful, welcoming and fun experiences in high quality, safe environments. We want to ensure that when anyone (including children, young people and vulnerable adults) interacts with the ministries and activities of our Church that they feel safe – physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The NSW Government requires organisations to implement ten Child Safe Standards with respect to children and young people and we are committed to upholding these standards in our Church community. Every adult working with children or young people holds a valid Working with Children Check\*. We use strict screening procedures. We have a process for anyone (including children and young people) to be able to raise any concerns they may have, and for the Church to respond in a timely and appropriate manner, including reporting concerns to the relevant authorities if appropriate. We train our leaders and volunteers to understand their responsibilities, to ensure our Church is a safe place.

We encourage anyone with concerns regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person at our Church, or any other concerns about safety, to contact a member of the Safe Church Team. The Church will publish the names of our Safe Church Team members on our webpage and/or noticeboard.

## 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. Including making reports to police, making mandatory reports, and making notifications about reportable conduct.

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 and
- 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.
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 Team	The team of people within the church to contact with any concerns or to make a report. This team should ensure the church safe church policies are appropriately reviewed by the church and are being implemented.
Approval for Ministry:	A process of written accountability, whereby the senior church leaders approve a program/event to take place in the church's name.
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 person	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, services and 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, decor, 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; and
- 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 require all staff and volunteers to uphold the Leaders Conduct Covenant which includes expected behaviour for those who engage in ministry with children and/or vulnerable people.
- c. The church will expect staff and volunteers to follow the 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 Child Protection 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.

#### **3.3 Resolving Conflict**

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**

The church will:

- a. appoint a Work, Health and Safety Team to assist the Church to comply with Work, Health and Safety requirements.
- b. ensure that paid pastoral staff and all members of the Work, Health and Safety Team have completed the Baptist Insurance Services WHS online training (or equivalent training).
- c. consider the impact of the physical environment on the potential for risk to children and vulnerable people.
- d. identify and address risks arising from the physical environment in which programs and activities take place. (see Risk Assessment and Safe Church Risk Management Plan at sections 5.2 and 5.3)
- e. consider whether any ministries it supports have appropriate child protection practices in place.



- f. take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable people when it provides direct support to overseas ministries (that is, not via the relevant Australian entity of the overseas ministry), in accordance with ACNC External Conduct Standard 4 (this includes consideration of whether supporting orphanages overseas is appropriate); and
- g. 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.

#### 4.2 Online Environments

- a. The Church will ensure that online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- b. 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 or 'one-off' activities, a risk assessment to that 'one off' activity will be completed.
- 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. At least annually, the Church will ensure that the Work Health and Safety Team reviews risk assessments and gives appropriate feedback to each ministry area; and
- d. The Church will store risk assessment forms in a secure location for a period of at least one hundred years.

#### 5.3 Safe Church Risk Management Plan

- a. The church will as a part of the annual risk assessment process outlined in section 5.2, specifically consider risks to children and vulnerable adults.

- b. The church will at least annually, ensure that the Safe Church Team reviews the part of the risk assessments relating to risks to children and vulnerable adults and gives appropriate feedback to each ministry area.
- c. The church will require staff and volunteers to abide by the Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People.
- d. The church will carefully consider and address any disclosures received on the Screening Questionnaire; and
- e. The church will ensure that any staff or volunteer in child related work who poses a serious risk to children will be removed from their role in accordance with the Failure to Protect provisions outlined in Section 43B of the NSW Crimes Act 1900 (or Section 66A of the ACT Crimes Act 1900).

## 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

The Church will retain all written records for a minimum of one hundred years, in hard copy and/or electronically in a secure manner.

Record type	Required Approach
<b>Sensitive information</b>	The records will be stored in a manner to protect confidentiality and only accessed by a limited number of authorised persons (For example <i>Screening Questionnaires, Safe Church Concerns Forms</i> , and incident reports)
<b>Hard copy</b>	The records will be stored in a secure location with proper consideration of access, and the physical condition of the records.
<b>Electronic</b>	The records will be stored in a manner to ensure security and to allow for ongoing accessibility.

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 annually.

### **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 safety and wellbeing incident that relates to a police report, mandatory report, reportable conduct allegation, legal claim, work safe report, and/or any complaint about an Accredited or Recognised Minister.

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

## **Appendix 1: Ten Child Safe Standards**

On page 10:

For more information see:

The Office of the Children's Guardian NSW:

<https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-scheme>

The final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse:

[www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/making-institutions-child-safe](http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/making-institutions-child-safe)



**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

#ChildSafeStandards

# Child Safe Standards