



Baptist Churches

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Safe Church Policy

Our Safe Church Commitment:

The Baptist Churches of Western Australia (BCWA) is committed to modelling the love of Jesus to all people that we have contact with and believe that the way that we care for people is one of the strongest expressions of our faith. We are committed to partnering with churches, individuals, parents and families to provide meaningful and welcoming experiences in a safe environment. We want to ensure that all people (including children and vulnerable adults) who interact with our churches, ministries and activities are able to feel safe – physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually.

As such, we have adopted this Safe Church Policy to:

- a. 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);
- b. Provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for all people, and especially children and vulnerable adults; and
- c. Meet our legal obligations in relation to:
 - implementing and embedding the 10 Child Safe Standards into church culture and practice;
 - screening of all staff and volunteers engaged in child-related work (i.e. with children) or regulated activities; and
 - reporting matters to government authorities, including making reports to police, making mandatory reports and making notifications about reportable conduct.

This policy outlines the commitment of BCWA to embed safe church principles across all areas of operation. More details regarding the practical implementation of these commitments can be found in the relevant procedures and guidelines.

We encourage anyone with concerns around safety or wellbeing, especially related to children or vulnerable people, to contact our Safe Church team. Contact details for raising concerns or making a report can be found on our website and in our office reception.

Definitions:

In this policy, the terms used have the following meaning:

- Abuse: Means any action that intentionally harms or injures another person, encompassing various forms of mistreatment, including physical, emotional, financial, spiritual and psychological harm.
- Adult: Means a person who has reached 18 years of age (per s3 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004).
- Child: Means a person who is under 18 years of age, and in the absence of positive evidence as to age, means a person who is apparently under 18 years of age (per s3 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004).
- Child Abuse: Means all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the minor's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. (Please refer to the *BCWA Complaints Management Policy* for a more detailed definition).
- Duty of Care: Means a duty to take reasonable care to protect children and vulnerable people from all reasonably foreseeable risk of injury and harm.
- Harm: In relation to a child, includes harm to the child's physical, emotional or psychological development (per s3 of WA's *Children and Community Services Act* 2004).
- Staff: Refers to any person employed by BCWA.
- Volunteer: Refers to any person who volunteers their time to run, participate, help or serve at any BCWA activity or event.

Scope:

This policy applies to:

- All BCWA staff and volunteers, including those who serve as part of the Baptist Union of Western Australia (BUWA) Council
- All people who are involved in BCWA services, events or activities.

Policy:

This policy identifies the following commitments regarding Safe Church implementation across BCWA.

1. Activities and Services for Children

We commit to providing places, services and programs that are safe for all those involved. We recognise that we have a legal responsibility to provide a safe environment for all people connected to BCWA as part of our duty of care. We will take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all children and vulnerable people from all reasonably foreseeable risk of injury and harm.

a. Leadership

- We commit to ensuring that the safety of children and young people is always prioritised and child safe principles are embedded into our culture
- We will ensure that we seek the involvement of children, young people and their families in our activities and services related to them, seeking their feedback, input and involvement in decision making in appropriate ways
- We will recruit, screen and train suitable people to serve within BCWA who value the safety and wellbeing of children and young people

b. Reporting

- We will ensure that children and young people know that they have the right to feel safe, to be listened to and have their views respected
- We will ensure that children and young people know how to raise a concern if they feel unsafe or are hurt, or suspect someone else may be being hurt
- We will ensure that the contact details of our Response Officer are readily available to all children and young people attending our services or events

2. Staff and Volunteers

a. Selection, Screening and Induction

- We will engage in fair and transparent selection processes for all staff and volunteers according to our HR procedures
- We will undertake appropriate screening for all staff and volunteers
- We will provide an induction for all staff and volunteers

b. Training and Resourcing

- We will ensure that all staff and volunteers develop the knowledge and skills to create safe spaces for everyone
- We will ensure that all staff and volunteers are trained in Safe Church and maintain currency in their training and any required endorsement
- We will support staff and volunteers with adequate training and resources to enable them to maintain and promote safe spaces for everyone
- We will provide training to staff and volunteers to enable them to interact with children and vulnerable people in a way that encourages them to raise concerns

c. Code of Conduct

- We will require all staff and volunteers to uphold the BCWA Code of Conduct (see BCWA Staff Handbook) which includes expected

standards of behaviour for those engaged in serving children and vulnerable people

- We will expect all staff and volunteers to follow BCWA Safe Church guidelines and principles in all areas of their role
- We will require all pastoral staff or volunteers to maintain Registration with BCWA and comply with the BCWA Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice

3. Conflict and Complaints

a. Conflict Management

- We commit to seeking to work with affected parties to resolve any identified conflict, grievance or dispute as a first step
- Depending on the issues that has been raised and by whom, BCWA will ensure the procedures related to Grievance Complaints (see BCWA Staff Handbook) or Disputes (see BUWA Constitution) are followed at all times, including any process for escalation

b. Complaints Management

- BCWA is committed to effective complaints management and values the feedback that can be received via complaints
- All complaints received by BCWA will be responded to as per the BCWA Complaints Management Policy and Complaints Management Process and Framework
- We are committed to ensuring that all complaints are taken seriously and addressed in an appropriate manner
- We will seek to empower and support children and vulnerable adults to raise any concerns that they have
- Any complaints regarding potential abuse of any kind related to staff and volunteers shall be treated as an allegation of a breach of the Code of Conduct and/or pastoral Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (if applicable) and be responded to accordingly
- We will seek to help local autonomous churches in our movement to apply these principles as much as possible

4. Child Protection Concerns

a. Receiving Concerns

- BCWA has zero tolerance for child abuse, and we commit to ensuring that any concern, allegation or complaint that includes abuse against children or vulnerable people will be responded to in an appropriate and timely manner
- All concerns regarding child protection shall be investigated according to our Complaints Management Process and Framework

b. Reporting

- We have a moral responsibility to contact authorities when we are concerned for a child's safety and will do so if we believe a risk exists
- We commit to ensuring that all child protection concerns and complaints will be reported to the appropriate government departments, and if necessary, police as soon as possible

5. Safe Environments

a. Workplace Health and Safety

- We recognise that we have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for staff, volunteers and attendees of our services, events and activities at all times
- We commit to meeting all relevant requirements of the *Western Australian Work Health and Safety Act (2020)* and to seek continued improvement in our systems and resources
- We commit to providing opportunities for all people, including children, to provide input into the programs and activities in which they are to participate, especially related to safety and health
- We commit to ensuring that physical and online environments used by BCWA will promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for harm
- We will ensure all staff and volunteers are appropriately trained in emergency management, safety practices and hazard identification

6. Risk Management

a. Persons of Concern

- We commit to managing any person identified as a Person of Concern in accordance with the 'Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern' process
- We will maintain a database of identified persons of concern within our movement and manage safety concerns regarding these accordingly, in partnership with local church leadership

b. Risk Management Plans

- We will eliminate and control hazards and risks in our environment according to the BCWA Hazard and Risk Management WHS Procedure
- We commit to the development of Risk Management Plans for all BCWA activities and services
- We will, as far as is reasonably practicable, eliminate or manage any identified risk to a level of risk tolerance set by the BUWA Council
- We commit to a regular review of all risk management plans and registers

7. Record Keeping

a. Relevant Policies

- When considering the requirements of records management, BCWA will ensure it meets all required legislation, as well as the requirements of internal policies including, but not limited to, our Privacy Policy and Data and Document Management Procedure

b. Document Management

- We commit to ensuring that all child related records are kept indefinitely in a manner to ensure security and ongoing accessibility
- All BCWA records, including any complaint, Safe Church or other related type, shall be retained and stored according to the BCWA Guidelines for Retention of Records

Document History and Version Control Record

Document Title:		Safe Church Policy	
Source Documents:		NSW Safe Church Policy Risk Management and Safe Environment Guidelines Code of Good Leadership Practices	
Associated Internal Documents:		BCWA Staff Handbook BUWA Constitution BCWA Complaints Management Policy Complaints Management Process and Framework Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern BCWA Hazard and Risk Management WHS Procedure BCWA Privacy Policy Data and Document Management Procedure	
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