

Safe Church Policy and Procedure

DEPT: Safe Church	VERSION: 01
DRAFTED BY: Keryn Smith - Administrator	APPROVED DATE: 06/05/2020
RESPONSIBLE PERSON/POSITION: Pastoral Team & Ministry/Department Leaders	REVIEW DATE: June 2022

Werribee Baptist Church is committed to protecting the safety of all people who participate in our programs, ministries and events.

Our policy has been developed to uphold this commitment to safeguarding and to adhere to National and State legislation.

POLICY

This Policy applies to all staff, volunteers, children and individuals involved in our organisation.

Werribee Baptist Church is committed to promoting the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults who participate in any of its ministries or activities by protecting their rights and also protecting them from harm. We do this through fostering a culture of child and adult safety through constant communication and reinforcement of this commitment at all levels and ministries in our church.

This is to be achieved through the following items:

1. A policy committing the organisation to providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults. (This policy)
2. A Code of Practice covering pastors, employees and volunteers who may come into contact with children and vulnerable adults.
3. A process for screening applicants for ministry, employment and volunteering, including referee checks and working with children / criminal record checks.
4. A process for handling allegations of sexual abuse. (See **Safe Church Concerns Reporting Procedure**)
5. A process for complying with mandatory reporting obligations. (See **Safe Church Concerns Reporting Procedure**)
6. Training for pastors, employees and volunteers in the above policies /procedures (See this procedure).

These policies and procedures are to be read and implemented alongside relevant legislation related to the protection and welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

For the purposes of this policy a child is considered anyone up to the age of 18. All children are considered vulnerable. A vulnerable adult is a person who is more susceptible to harm due to factors such as (but not limited to) advanced age, disability, illness, residency status, financial hardship and past experience of abuse.

PROCEDURE

COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

Werribee Baptist Church is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and vulnerable adults by providing an environment that is physically, emotionally and spiritually safe. We have a zero-tolerance policy for abuse of any kind.

Our safe church culture is embedded in all levels of our organisation. Our brief statement “Commitment to safety” is used freely in our communications, job advertisements and more.

The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to promoting within Werribee Baptist Church; Due diligence, Integrity, Duty of Care, Transparency, Inclusivity, Teamwork.

SCREENING PROCESS

We will screen and train all prospective leaders in our ministries, before they are appointed. We will screen and train all existing leaders.

Prior to recruitment the position description will be reviewed and updated if necessary. Then the position will be advertised appropriately.

Shortlisted applicants must

- demonstrate willingness to commit to the mission and values of the Church
- must be interviewed - The interview panel must include two (or more) from the following: the ministry coordinator, team leader, Pastoral Team member, elders, as a part of an accountable recruitment, selection and appointment team. One of the interview panel should be the program leader/direct supervisor.

The applicant must provide at least two referees and one of the interviewers must contact these referees. One of the referees must be from your immediate previous Church if the applicant is not from Werribee Baptist Church.

Successful applicants will:

- sign the **Werribee Baptist Church Leaders Code of Conduct**;
- complete a **Werribee Baptist Church Safe Ministry Check Form (Elvanto)**;
- hold a current Working with Children Check (volunteer or employee, as appropriate)
- undergo a National Police Criminal Record Check. The following roles/positions require a police check every three years: all staff, ministry coordinators and Church Council committee; whether paid or volunteer.
- Participate in a documented induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position. This must include the following documents:
 - Position description,
 - Safe Church Policy and procedure,
 - Leaders Code of Conduct, and
 - Safe Church Concerns Reporting Procedure.

They must also be instructed on how to access and complete other key documents (such as **Safe Church Concerns Form Template**).

Induction should familiarise the individual with formal or informal support mechanisms, so that staff and volunteers have a clear understanding of who to go to for support and what type of support is available to them (for example, team meetings, counselling, prayer).

There will be a minimum period of 6 months of regularly attending Werribee Baptist Church for all prospective volunteer leaders. (Pastors are exempt from this attendance period as they undergo a more rigorous screening process.)

If offences are identified through the above process, depending on the nature of the offence/s, it will remain the discretion of the senior pastor and leadership team as to the applicant's future involvement in Werribee Baptist Church.

Sexual abuse-related offences will preclude that person from having any contact with, or responsibilities involving children/youth. In some cases, an offender may not be permitted to attend the church, or any associated program under any circumstances. The BUV Professional Standards Consultant must be contacted and consulted in this situation.

TRAINING

We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders (including pastors, employees and volunteers). All leaders must agree to follow the Code of Conduct. All leaders will receive training on the requirements of the Code, before signing it, so that it is understood and put into practice by all leaders and volunteers.

We require all staff, leaders and volunteers to be familiar with and trained in this **Church Safety Policy, Code of Conduct, Sample Reporting and Handling Allegations of Abuse**.

We require that the following leaders attend a Safe Church Awareness Workshop (or equivalent) within their first year of ministry and attend a refresher workshop every three years:

- Pastoral Team, Church Council, pastors, elders, care coordinator and paid staff
- Ministry leader(s) or coordinators(s) of every ministry
- Any leader or volunteer working with children in any capacity

Note- This training is open to all people (16 years and over), however, it is required for the above positions

This training covers a range of topics including risk management, indicators of abuse, responding to disclosures, and mandatory reporting of suspected sexual abuse.

Additional ministry-specific training will be provided as required, according to the role held. This may include but is not limited to: Church Administration Workshop, First Aid, Food Safety and Handling

Pastors must engage with the BUV accreditation process (including attending BUV Professional standards workshops), receive training in responding to complaints and safety concerns raised, as well as some form of guided reflective practice such as: supervision, coaching, mentoring or spiritual direction.

Werribee Baptist Church leadership has the responsibility to ensure that our church programs are adequately resourced with staff and volunteers and have the required equipment for the safe and effective running of the program. Werribee Baptist Church leadership will provide ongoing support and supervision for all staff and volunteers, to ensure they feel valued, respected and fairly-treated. Additionally, the leadership will undertake with each leader/volunteer an annual process of position review to provide an opportunity for mutual feedback and encouragement.

DEFINITIONS

Abuse:	Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical Abuse - Emotional Abuse - Family Violence - Sexual Abuse - Grooming - Neglect
Child:	a person who is under the age of 18 years (eg: The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012, Victoria).
Disclosure:	a disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in authority/leadership (or a trusted adult within the Faith Community that they have been subject to abuse or knows of abuse. A disclosure may or may not be an allegation or a notifiable circumstance, but it is the responsibility of the person in authority to investigate and take any appropriate action.
Child Safe Environment:	discharges 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.
Child Safe Leader:	has been through a recruitment process, understands responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team player.
Child Safe Program:	all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned.
Vulnerable Person:	a person who may be considered to be susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (physical or mental), age, grief, previous experience of abuse, social isolation or financial hardship. In this sense vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This Policy reflects legislation and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

National Legislation

- National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children “Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business” 2009 – 2020 (Commonwealth of Australia)

State Legislation

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)

Working With Children Checks

- Working With Children Act 2005 (Vic.)

WE RECOGNISE THAT:

- the welfare of the child is paramount, and is everyone’s responsibility as outlined in the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children
- all children: regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other organisations/agencies is essential in promoting young people’s welfare.

We are committed to reviewing our Policy and good practice every two years and undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from vulnerable adults, children parents, carers, staff and volunteers.

Signed: 

Lead Pastor

Document history

Date	Note
October 2018	New policy - Child & Vulnerable Adult Safety Policy
June 2020	This policy & procedure to replace Child & Vulnerable Adult Safety Policy V 01 Policy reviewed and updated