



Menai
Baptist Church

Safe Church Policy

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The Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT *Code of Ethics and Conduct* is available at
<https://nswactbaptists.org.au/project/code-of-ethics-and-conduct/>

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Definitions

In the *Safe Church Policy* and associated documents, unless the context otherwise requires:

Church means Menai Baptist Church (MBC) which adopted this *Safe Church Policy*, as indicated on the cover of the Policy.

Church Leadership means the governing bodies of the church as per the Church Constitution.

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 means 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 means a process by which a person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused or neglected.

governance body means the MBC Church Leadership Team

Mandatory Reporting Legislation means In NSW, the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) In the ACT the Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)].

Pastoral Staff means any accredited or recognised minister staff member who is engaged in pastoral ministry through the Church.

Ministry Staff means any paid or unpaid staff member of the Church who is engaged in pastoral ministry through the Church.

Administration Staff means any paid staff member who supports the administration of ministry through the Church.

Reportable Conduct Legislation means In NSW the *Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW) / Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)*

Safe Church Register means 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.

vulnerable means 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.

WWCC Legislation means the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW).

child is any person under the age of 16 years

young person means a person who is 16 or 17 years old.



Safe Church Policy

Adopted by MBC Leadership Council on: November 3rd 2025

Ratified by the Church Membership on [date]

Commitment

Our 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* (the **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 children, young people and vulnerable adults; and
- c. meet our legal obligations in relation to:
 - implementing the 10 Child Safe Standards;
 - staff and volunteers engaged in child-related work or, in ACT, regulated activities; and
 - reporting matters to government authorities, including making reports to police, making mandatory reports, and making notifications about reportable conduct.

The 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

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:

- recognise that children and young people are an integral part of the Church and talk about this in services, sermons, training events and meetings;
- involve children and young people in the routine of church life, where appropriate
- consider the needs of children and young people when they make decisions about budgets, buildings, renovations, use of property, décor or catering; and
- 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:

- 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
- ensure their contact details are accessible to children.

1.3 Staff and Volunteers:

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

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

2. Staff and Volunteers

2.1 Screening, Selection and Induction of Staff and Volunteers

The Church will:

- a. undertake screening processes for all staff and volunteers;
- b. engage in fair and transparent selection processes for all staff and volunteers;
- c. provide induction for all staff and volunteers; and
- d. recruit, select and induct all staff and volunteers in accordance with the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*.

2.2 Training and Resourcing of Staff and Volunteers

The Church will:

- a. ensure that staff and volunteers develop the knowledge and skills to create safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people;
- b. 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 referred to in the Policy;
- c. support staff and volunteers with adequate resources to enable them to maintain and promote safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people; and
- d. 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 *Code of Conduct* which includes expected behaviours for those who engage in ministry with children, young people 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 Child Protection Concerns

3.1 Responding to Child Protection Concerns

The Church will:

- a. 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; and
- b. ensure that all child protection concerns and complaints will be reported to the relevant government departments and, if necessary, police as soon as possible.

3.2 Complaint Handling

The Church will:

- a. respond to complaints in accordance with the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers; and
- 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, treat the allegation as an allegation relating to a serious breach of the Code of Conduct 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*.

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 the Church has any residential property that is identifiable as being Church property (e.g. a manse adjacent to the Church building) then the Church will ensure that all regular adult occupants of that property obtain and hold a Working With Children Check (or a Working With Vulnerable Persons) clearance for the duration of their residence.

4.2 Online Environments

The Church will:

- a. ensure that online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed; and
- b. promote safe online behaviour in any electronic communication.

Please see the *Procedures 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

The Church **will**:

- a. 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;
 - (i) 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.
 - (ii) for special or 'one-off' activities, a risk assessment to that 'one off' activity will be completed.
- b. 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, ensure that the Work Health and Safety Team reviews risk assessments and gives appropriate feedback to each ministry area; and
- d. store risk assessment forms in a secure location for a period of at least 45 years.

5.3 Safe Church Risk Management Plan

The Church **will**:

- a. as a part of the annual risk assessment process outlined in section 5.2, specifically consider risks to children and vulnerable adults;
- b. 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. require staff and volunteers to abide by the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*;
- d. carefully consider and address any disclosures received on the Screening Questionnaire; and
- e. 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.

6. Third Parties and Affiliated Entities

The Church will

- a. 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. 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.
- c. require any guest speaker or volunteer helper who visits the church and has contact with children or youth must provide their WWCC number and have it validated prior to any ministry taking place.

7. Recordkeeping

The Church will retain all written records for a minimum of 45 years (preferably 100 years), in hard copy and/or electronically in a secure manner.

| Record type | Required Approach |
|------------------------------|---|
| Sensitive information | 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</i> , <i>Safe Church Concerns Forms</i> , or incident reports) |
| Hard copy | The records will be stored in a secure location with proper consideration of access, and the physical condition of the records. |
| Electronic | 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:

- a. operational records such as ministry information forms, attendance records, staff/volunteer rosters, position descriptions, risk assessments;
- b. staff and volunteer records (as outlined in the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*);
- c. general child safety records such as the *Safe Church Register*, the annual safe Church commitment by third parties and affiliated entities, dated copies of this Policy and the relevant procedures, forms and guidelines from time to time; and
- d. specific child safety incident records such as any completed *Safe Church Concerns Form*, any other document relating to reporting an incident or handling a complaint, and any contemporaneous notes regarding reporting decisions.

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.

Declaration of Commitment to Child Safe Standards

Menai Baptist Church commits to uphold the following 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.

Menai Baptist Church understands and accepts that compliance with the Child Safe Standards is a condition of any lease or licence to occupy or otherwise use any property or facilities of Menai Baptist Church.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

* For more information about the Child Safe Standards please see <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/become-a-child-safe-organisation/child-safe-standards>.

Declaration Regarding Ministry with Persons of Concern

Menai Baptist Church commits to following the process set out in the Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern process by **(please tick one box as appropriate)**:

- A. ensuring that no person who is known to be a person of concern attends church premises or participates in any church programs, activities or events; or,
- B. notifying the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Manager when any person of concern is identified and following the risk management process they advise.

In making this decision, we understand that:

- 1) The Persons of Concern process is developed on a case-by-case basis with careful attention to risk management principles. There will be some instances in which the risk of harm to others cannot be appropriately managed and, in these circumstances, the person of concern may be directed not to attend any church programs, activities or events.
- 2) Baptist Insurance Services **does not provide insurance** cover for claims made in relation to harm caused by any known offender, or person who should reasonably have been identified as a known offender (see explanation on next page).
- 3) As an alternative to insurance coverage and to mitigate risk to churches, access to a contingency fund, managed by Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Finance and Risk Committee, is available in the event of a claim against the church in relation to harm caused by a known offender:
 - a) The fund will cover **legal fees only** up to a maximum of \$75,000
 - b) The church will be required to pay an excess of \$5000
 - c) Access to this fund is dependent on the church having adhered to the Persons of Concern process as advised by the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Manager.
- 4) The church will be asked to make a financial contribution towards establishment costs if a Person of Concern risk management process proceeds to include a written Individual Accountability and Safety Agreement. This contribution does not represent the full cost of administering a Persons of Concern process and is subsidised by Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT.

| Typical Church Attendance (including children) | Financial contribution*: |
|--|--------------------------|
| 0 – 50 | \$250 |
| 51 – 100 | \$500 |
| 101 – 150 | \$1000 |
| 151 – 250 | \$1500 |
| 251 – 350 | \$2000 |
| 351+ | \$2500 |

*2023 figures, subject to change

I declare that the relevant governance body of the church has read and understood this statement and on [date] agreed to adopt the Persons of Concern process as indicated above.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Role: _____

Who is person of concern?

A person of concern is someone who:

1. has pleaded guilty to, been convicted of, or has admitted to a sexual criminal offence.
2. has been found to have sexually offended, arising through due diligence checks related to recruitment (screening).
3. is currently charged with a sexual offence.
4. has been the subject of an allegation of a sexual offence and this was not appropriately investigated.
5. has been found to have received an adverse risk assessment arising from sexual misconduct
6. is deemed to be a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults because of an adverse risk assessment relating to sexual misconduct.
7. exhibits constant wandering across other peoples' sexual boundaries

Explanation of the 'Known offender' exclusion clause

Explanation of the Insurance position

Currently with the General Liability Insurance Policy that covers all Baptist Churches in Australia, there is an exclusion clause which states that the insurer will not cover any compensation claims, damages or legal costs associated with any claims in respect of injury sustained by a third person (i.e. a victim) where:

- Part 1 - the injury arises either directly or indirectly from sexual abuse; and the perpetrator of the sexual abuse was a representative, member, employee or service provider of the insured.
- Part 2 - and the insured knew or ought reasonably to have known that the perpetrator of the sexual abuse had previously: committed sexual abuse; and/or been convicted of sexual abuse; and/or whilst being a representative, member, employee or service provider of the insured, been the subject of a prior complaint in respect of sexual abuse, which has not been appropriately investigated. (Numbers 1-4 of POC list above)

We want to be able to resource churches who face the situation where a person of concern has been worshipping and been involved, or wishes to worship and be involved, in your church.

This process has been developed to reduce the Church's exposure to risk by developing this 7 step process. If this process is followed for the POC who fits into the exclusion clause category, then the Church is eligible to access the Contingency Fund managed by Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Finance and Risk Committee to help fund legal costs incurred if the Church is sued over a POC re-offending.

Other Persons of Concern

There are also other persons of concern who do not fall within the exclusion clause and so are covered by the General Liability Insurance Policy (Numbers 5-7 of POC list above). We have included them in the person of concern definition as we believe that this process perhaps in a modified way is necessary and will help the Churches manage the situation in a clear, transparent and pastoral way as well as reducing the risk of the person of concern causing harm.

When to use this process?

If a person in your church, or a person interested in coming to your church:

- tells you that they have committed a sexual offence
- in the course of doing your due diligence checks for recruitment, a person discloses they have committed a past sexual offence
- if you are aware that a person has had an allegation of a past or current sexual offence
- deemed to be a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults because of an adverse risk

Who should we contact?

Your Professional Standards or Safe Church Liaison person:

- Baptist Churches of South Australia**
08 8357 1755
- Baptist Union of Victoria & Baptist Churches of Tasmania**
03 9880 6100
- Queensland Baptists**
07 3354 5600
- Baptist Churches Western Australia**
08 6313 6300
- Baptist Churches NSW & ACT**
02 9868 9200

An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern



Individual Accountability & Safety Agreements

A Christian congregation can be one of the few places where sexual abusers, as the recipients of God's forgiveness, can mix with a Christian community. However, that forgiveness does not mean immunity from temptation to re-offend.

The forgiveness and grace of God, mediated with supervision and clear guidelines through a local church, can be a vital part of that journey.

This demonstrates the Australian Baptist Churches' mission and commitment to provide a safe place for children and other vulnerable people to grow and shine.



The definition of a Person of Concern is adapted from the Anglican Church of Australia – Professional Standards Commission "Guidelines for parish safety where there is a risk of sexual abuse by a person of concern", 2010.



Why do we need a process?

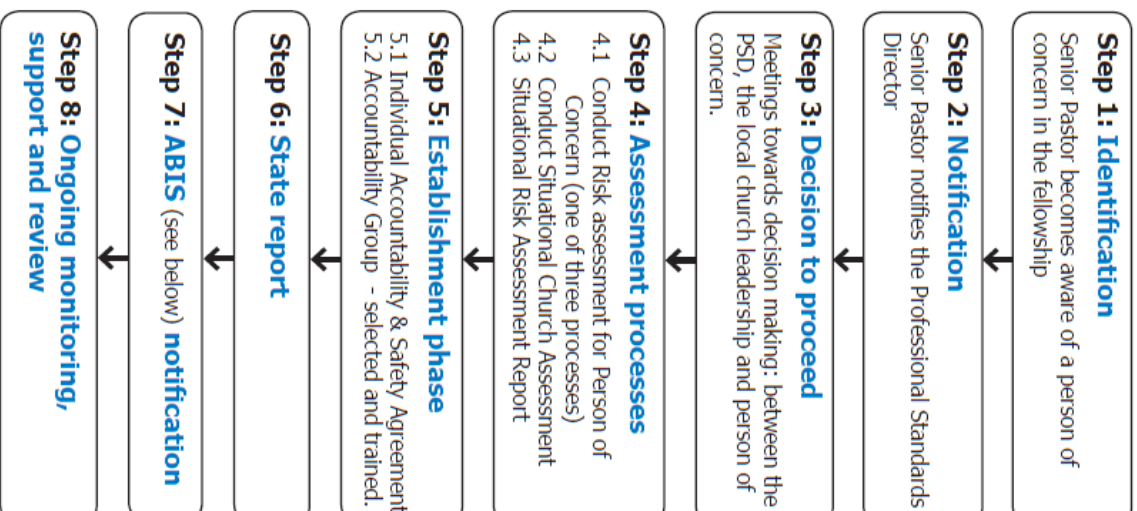
From time to time you may face the situation where a person of concern has been worshipping and been involved, or wishes to worship and be involved, in your church. While demonstrating genuine compassion and justice, you must take steps to protect the whole church community.

This process aims to ensure that all reasonable measures have been put in place to ensure *safe ministry* occurs with persons of concern. Australian Baptists are committed to *safe ministry*, i.e. God honouring, abuse free, harm free, person valuing and respectful ministry.

Ministry to a person of concern acknowledges:

- that there is a high level of community feeling and fear about sexual abuse.
- the duty of care we have to provide safe environments for all people in our churches.
- that there is no one type of person of concern, therefore individual Safety Agreements are necessary.
- that there are survivors of abuse in congregations, and we seek to care for them effectively.
- the issues of forgiveness and a person of concern's right to privacy.
- the liability issues around a person of concern reoffending.
- the need for denominational support, training, monitoring and oversight in this process.

Flowchart



Who are persons of concern (POC)?

A person of concern:

1. has pleaded guilty to, been convicted of, or has admitted to a sexual criminal offence.
2. has been found to have sexually offended, arising through due diligence checks related to recruitment (screening).
3. is currently charged with a sexual offence.
4. has been the subject of an allegation of a sexual offence and this was not appropriately investigated.
5. has been found to have received an adverse risk assessment arising from sexual misconduct
6. deemed to be a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults because of an adverse risk assessment relating to sexual misconduct.
7. exhibits constant wandering across other peoples' sexual boundaries.

What does an Individual Accountability & Safety Agreement Mean?

An individual safety agreement is an agreement between a person of concern, the local church and denomination, establishing the terms and conditions for the person of concern to participate in the life of the church.

A Safety Agreement makes clear what steps the church and person of concern are taking to reduce real and potential risks associated with ministry to the person of concern.