



Safe Church Health Check.

1st November 2023



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Table of Contents

Introductory Letter	2
10 Child Safe Standards	5
How The <i>Safe Church Health Check</i> Works	6
Where Do I Start?	8
Standard 1	10
Standard 2	12
Standard 3	14
Standard 4	16
Standard 5	18
Standard 6	20
Standard 7	22
Standard 8	24
Standard 9	26
Standard 10	28
Submission Checklist	30
Declaration	31



Dear Church Leader,

Thank you for considering the *Safe Church Health Check*.

Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT are committed to modelling the love of Christ by promoting physical, emotional and spiritual safety in all we do. We have prepared this Safe Church Package to assist your church increasingly become a place that promotes the wellbeing of all people. We strongly encourage you to consider the contents of this Package and to use the material provided to prepare your church for the *Safe Church Health Check*.

The growing number of recommendations and legal requirements may leave you feeling apprehensive or overwhelmed. The *Safe Church Health Check* will support you to navigate these challenges. In supporting churches in ministry, we have sought to provide suggested structures and resources to reduce the burden on you. However, your local church leadership will need to take some steps to implement these Safe Church practices as appropriate to your local church context. We encourage each local church to delegate this important task to appropriate individuals. The church pastor is not necessarily required to undertake these tasks themselves.

The work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) has emphasised that members of the public, children, young people, parents, carers, families and communities should be confident that organisations working with children provide safe environments. The Royal Commission recommended 10 Child Safe Standards which collectively show that a child safe organisation is one that creates a culture, adopts strategies and takes action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people. On 1st February 2022, the NSW Government introduced a Child Safe Scheme which makes implementing the Child Safe Standards mandatory for organisations that provide services to children. The ACT Government has indicated that it will also be implementing the standards in future. Accordingly, the *Safe Church Health Check* has been designed to assist churches to comply with the Child Safe Scheme.

In addition to mandatory implementation of the Child Safe Standards, churches have existing legal obligations when it comes to providing activities and services to children and young people. For example common law and statutory duties to take reasonable precautions to prevent child abuse, mandatory reporting, reportable conduct, obtaining WWCC/WWVP clearances and obligations to report to police.

Safe Church Health Check is a comprehensive review tool which will assess your church's safe church practices against identified minimum standards for compliance with these various legal duties. Of course, mere legal compliance is not our aim, rather we hope to promote a culture that reflects the love of Christ, loves and protects individuals, and fosters missional engagement with local communities.

Further, Baptist Insurance Services strongly recommends the completion of the *Safe Church Health Check* as a valuable risk management and audit tool.

There are a range of resources relating to the *Safe Church Health Check* available on our Creating Safe Spaces webpage – www.creatingsafespaces.org.au/schc

If you have any further questions please contact our Safe Church Coordinator James Oosterveen at schc@nswactbaptists.org.au



Rev Jonathan Bradford
Ministry Standards Manager



Rev James Oosterveen
Safe Church Coordinator

**For any questions about the
Safe Church Health Check please contact:**

James Oosterveen

- 02 9868 9212
- schc@nswactbaptists.org.au

“

Your Creating Safe Spaces Training is a really excellent example of best practice because it highlights your commitment to creating a child safe culture. It demonstrates that you've been proactively implementing the standards before they even became legislated so well done. And I really encourage you here to think about continuing that training and getting involved in it if you haven't already.

— **Janet Schorer**

NSW Children's Guardian – *Safe Church Team* Network Evening.
May 24, 2022

10 CHILD SAFE STANDARDS*



* For more information see the following resources published by NSW Office of the Children's Guardian:

- [A Guide to the Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Child Safe Standards Video Series](#)

HOW THE SAFE CHURCH HEALTH CHECK WORKS

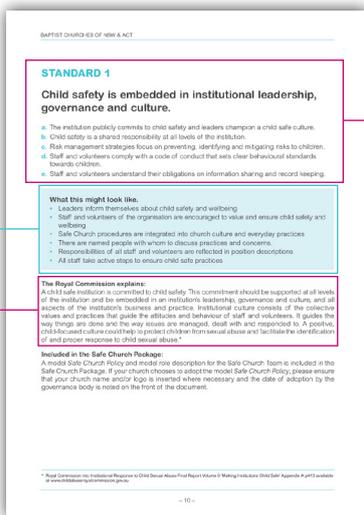
The *Safe Church Health Check* has been designed to assist your church to meet legal obligations regarding child safety. It will also assist your church to adhere to the Child Safe Standards which are now mandatory for churches that provide services to children and young people under the NSW Government Child Safe Scheme.

Participation in the *Safe Church Health Check* is also strongly recommended by Baptist Insurance Services (BIS) as a means of ensuring that your church is implementing the measures outlined in the BIS molestation declaration. This declaration is required by BIS to maintain continued insurance coverage for sexual molestation claims.

There are 10 sections of the *Safe Church Health Check*. Each section addresses one of the Child Safe Standards and adopts the following structure:

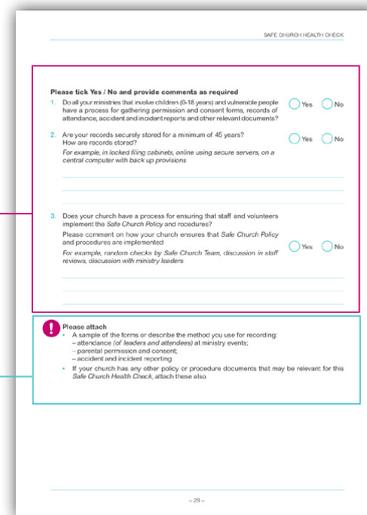
The Standard and core components identified by the Royal Commission.

- Some indicators for identifying the standard in practice.



- Further information regarding the Standard and how it might be met.

A series of questions asking you to set out how your church meets the Standard; and



- If required, a request for appropriate supporting documentation

All the information you need to complete your *Safe Church Health Check* is included in the *Safe Church Package*. This includes:

- Model *Safe Church Policy*
- Model *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*
- Model *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers*
- Model *Procedure for Conflict Resolution*
- Model *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*
- Model *Code of Conduct*
- Other Model documents to help you implement the Policy and Procedures

* Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report Volume 6 'Making Institutions Child Safe' Appendix A p413 available at www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

Your church is encouraged to adopt and implement the provided model *Safe Church Policy* and associated documents. This means that your governance body will need to consider and formally adopt the policy, noting the date of adoption on the cover of the policy document. Space is also provided to add your church logo – this is particularly useful for documents that will be distributed such as the *Code of Conduct*, *Safe Church Policy* and *Ministry Information Forms*.

We strongly encourage churches to adopt the model policy and procedure documents in the Safe Church Package. However, if your church already has policies in place, you may choose to retain these, as long as all mandatory requirements contained in the model documents are adequately addressed. **If you make any changes to model documents you will be asked to provide a detailed explanation of all changes.**

In order to comply with the standards set out in the *Safe Church Health Check*, you will need to:

- Answer 'Yes' to each of the questions;
- Provide comments or explanations where required;
- Attach the appropriate supporting documentation; and
- You can submit your church's *Safe Church Health Check*
 - online at www.creatingsafespaces.org.au/schc
 - or post a copy of the completed form and documents to:

**Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT
Ministry and Learning Centre
Level 4, 5 Saunders Close
Macquarie Park NSW 2113**

For churches affiliated with Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT, there is no cost for participation in the *Safe Church Health Check*. Churches that are not affiliated Baptist churches may apply to submit an application for an agreed fee.

After your *Safe Church Health Check* documentation has been reviewed and considered to meet minimum requirements, a certificate will be issued to your church. The certificate lasts for three years. At the end of the three year period, you will be asked to apply for a new *Safe Church Health Check*.

Once you are issued with a certificate, you will also have permission to use the *Safe Church Health Check* logo on your church website and/or printed materials for the duration of the certificate.

If there are any areas considered not to be satisfactory in your *Safe Church Health Check* application, we will provide feedback to allow your church to make the necessary changes or improvements and invite you to resubmit the relevant documents.

Please address any questions to:

James Oosterveen (Safe Church Coordinator)

- 02 9868 9212
- schc@nswactbaptists.org.au

WHERE DO WE START?

We would encourage your church to take the following steps: -

- 1) Have the governance body appoint a *Safe Church Team* consisting of at least 1 male and 1 female. The *Safe Church Team* will read and comprehend the Safe Church Package and fulfill other responsibilities as outlined in the *Safe Church Team Role Description*.
- 2) The church members meeting (or governance body) adopt the required *Safe Church Policy* and procedure documents, as outlined in the Safe Church Package. Ensure the date they are adopted is inserted at the top of each individual document.
- 3) The *Safe Church Team* will create a *Safe Church Register* (see Excel Document 9 in the Safe Church Package) which includes all staff and volunteers, as well as the roles they undertake. The governance body will determine the categorization of each role as outlined in the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*.
- 4) The *Safe Church Team* will ensure the requirements of the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers* are implemented for each staff and volunteer. This may include: -
 - a. *Screening Questionnaire*
 - b. Signed *Code of Conduct*
 - c. WWCC/WWVP (for some roles)
 - d. Creating Safe Spaces Training (for some roles)
 - e. National Police Criminal Check (for some roles)
- 5) Have the governance body adopt a Work Health and Safety (WHS) Policy, appoint a WHS Team and ensure relevant staff and volunteers complete WHS training. The WHS team will carry out their responsibilities as outlined in the *WHS Team Role Description*.
- 6) Review and action the other requirements as outlined in the *Safe Church Health Check* questions for Standards 1 to 10. This will include: -
 - a. Considering reflection questions and specific areas of application of safe church practice
 - b. Use of the Title Pastor (see relevant letter contained in the Safe Church Package).
 - c. Guided Reflective Practice for Pastoral Staff
 - d. Consideration regarding managing Persons of Concern
- 7) Complete and submit your *Safe Church Health Check* application.

Tips for completing the *Safe Church Health Check* Application

- Attach your policy and procedure documents as required by the application.
- Complete the application relevant to your church. We have provided ideas and examples for where a detailed response is required, but they may not necessarily relate to each individual church. Please include your own ideas or identify where you feel the item doesn't relate to your church, providing explanation of the reasons for this.
- Ensure that the *Safe Church Register* is fully complete and there are no outstanding requirements for any staff member or volunteer.
- Ensure the *Safe Church Health Check* responses are reviewed by the *Safe Church Team* and endorsed by the governance body.

The *Safe Church Health Check* is designed to provide assistance for churches as they address various obligations. If you have any questions please contact us.



Application



STANDARD 1

Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.

- a. The institution publicly commits to child safety and leaders champion a child safe culture.
- b. Child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels of the institution.
- c. Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children.
- d. Staff and volunteers comply with a *Code of Conduct* that sets clear behavioural standards towards children.
- e. Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.

What this might look like.

- The Church makes a public statement of commitment to safe church practices (including child safe practices) on their webpage or noticeboard.
- Leaders inform themselves about child safety and wellbeing
- Staff and volunteers of the organisation are encouraged to value and ensure child safety and wellbeing
- Safe Church procedures are integrated into church culture and everyday practices
- There are named people with whom to discuss practices and concerns.
- Responsibilities of all staff and volunteers are reflected in position descriptions
- All staff take active steps to ensure child safe practices

The Royal Commission explains:

A child safe institution is committed to child safety. This commitment should be supported at all levels of the institution and be embedded in an institution's leadership, governance and culture, and all aspects of the institution's business and practice. Institutional culture consists of the collective values and practices that guide the attitudes and behaviour of staff and volunteers. It guides the way things are done and the way issues are managed, dealt with and responded to. A positive, child-focused culture could help to protect children from sexual abuse and facilitate the identification of and proper response to child sexual abuse.*

Included in the Safe Church Package:

Model documents are provided as part of the Safe Church Package. As your church adopts these documents, please ensure that your church name is inserted where necessary and the date of adoption by the governance body is noted on the front of the document. If you make changes to any of these documents, please attach an explanation regarding why you have made such changes.

* Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report Volume 6 'Making Institutions Child Safe' Appendix A p413 available at www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church, including the Pastor/s, staff and governance body, commit to upholding the Child Safe Standards and promoting child safety and wellbeing? Yes No

2. Has your church published a statement of commitment to safe church practices (including child safe practices) on your webpage or noticeboard? Yes No

3. Does your church have a *Safe Church Policy*? Yes No

4. Is your *Safe Church Policy* publicly available and current? Yes No

5. Explain how you raise awareness of your church's commitment to child safety.

For example, signage in the church, information available on the church website, mention in the weekly newsletter, copies of policy available at the information desk and/or sign-in desk.

5. Is your *Safe Church Policy* written in language that is easily understood by church members, attendees and the wider community? Yes No

6. Does your *Safe Church Team* have at least one male and one female member? Yes No

7. *Safe Church Team* (add more names if necessary)

Person 1: Name

Phone

Email

Person 2: Name

Phone

Email

Person 3: Name

Phone

Email

**Please attach the following document/s:**

- *Safe Church Policy*

STANDARD 2

Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

- a. Children are able to express their views and are provided opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- b. The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, helping children feel safe and be less isolated.
- c. Children can access sexual abuse prevention programs and information.
- d. Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns.

What this might look like.

- Children and young people can recognise safe environments and know how to seek help or raise concerns if they feel unsafe
- Staff and volunteers put children's best interests first
- Staff and volunteers take children seriously when they communicate about their feelings, needs and concerns
- Children and young people are supported and encouraged to take part in various ministry areas in the life of the church (as appropriate)
- There are regular opportunities for children and young people to communicate their ideas and opinions and to contribute to the plans and vision of the church

Optional Additional Resources:

The Institute of Child Protection Studies has produced a short (10 Minutes) video summarising their research in the Children's Safety Study listening to children and young people.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaxjSu4UGlw&feature=youtu.be

The NSW Office of Children's Guardian has published a Guide to Empowerment and Participation. Pages 5 to 9, and 27 to 33 provide useful insights and information.

https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/g_CSS_EmpowermentandParticipation.pdf

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Is your church friendly and welcoming for children and young people?
Please detail some examples. Yes No

For example, by the inclusion of children and young people in church services, child-friendly facilities.

2. Do children and young people have a say in planning and is their input and feedback encouraged in the **groups or ministries that they are directly involved in** (for example, Sunday Kids Programs, Kids Club, Youth Group)? Yes No

Please comment on how this occurs in your church.

For example, via suggestion box, feedback forms, informal discussions.

3. Do children and young people have a say in planning and is their input and feedback encouraged, in the activities and ministries of the **wider church**? Yes No

Please comment on how this occurs in your church.

For example, via suggestion box, feedback forms, informal discussions.

STANDARD 3

Families and communities are informed and involved.

- a. Families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child and participate in decisions affecting their child.
- b. The institution engages in open, two-way communication with families and communities about its child safety approach and relevant information is accessible.
- c. Families and communities have a say in the institution's policies and practices.
- d. Families and communities are informed about the institution's operations and governance.

What this might look like.

- Families and communities are aware of the church's *Safe Church Policy* and associated procedures
- The Church and ministry leaders actively seek feedback from families and communities
- Ministry leaders consult with parents and carers about their children
- Parents and carers are encouraged and supported to talk to their children about safety and wellbeing

For churches with significant culturally and linguistically diverse communities, we recommend developing translations of the *Safe Church Policy* and information about who to go to lodge a complaint or report a child protection concern. If there are staff and volunteers for whom English is not their first language, we recommend providing translations of the *Code of Conduct* and *Screening Questionnaires*.

Additional Resources:

The National Office of Child Safety has produced information on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (which are based on the Royal Commission's Child Safe Standards) in various community languages.

www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/resource-library

See the model *Safe Church Team Poster* provided as document 19 in the Safe Church Package

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Is your church's *Safe Church Policy* and associated procedures available to families and communities? Yes No

Please comment on how your church makes these documents available and accessible to families and communities

For example, they are available online and in hard copy, produced in appropriate languages for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds etc.

2. Are families encouraged to be involved in decisions affecting their child? Yes No
- Please provide an explanation of how your church includes families in decisions, planning and policies affecting their child.

For example, parent information nights, parent letters and handouts, informal discussions with leaders... 'Is Johnny enjoying Ignite? Is there anything you'd like to talk to us about?', use of a Ministry Information Form, parental involvement as leaders/helpers, family social events to build connection.

3. Are families aware of the names and contact details of the *Safe Church Team* members in your church? Yes No

Please explain how your church does this?

For example, posters on church notice board, names in church newsletter/bulletin, or webpage.

4. Are families able to provide feedback to the church regarding issues concerning their child, programs and child safety practices? Yes No
- Please comment on how this occurs in your church.

STANDARD 4

Equity is upheld and diverse needs taken into account.

- a. The institution actively anticipates children's diverse circumstances and backgrounds and responds effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- b. All children have access to information, support and complaints processes.
- c. The institution pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

What this might look like.

- Physical accessibility is considered in building design and renovation
- The church actively seeks to consider the needs of people with diverse needs
- Ministry leaders intentionally seek to create spaces that are welcoming, safe and culturally respectful
- Staff and volunteers consider how safety and wellbeing, communication and participation might differ for children and young people with diverse needs

Additional Resources:

For more information and ideas please contact Baptist Children's Ministries:

www.baptistcfm.org.au/children-and-families-at-church/children-with-special-needs

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church support children and young people with diverse needs?

Yes No

Please describe how your church caters for children and young people with diverse needs.

For example, written material in languages other than English, facilities for children and young people with a disability, culturally appropriate programs, artwork on display, programs and activities recognising diversity.

STANDARD 5

People working with children are suitable and supported.

- a. Recruitment, including advertising and screening, emphasises child safety.
- b. Relevant staff and volunteers have Working With Children Checks.
- c. All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their child safety responsibilities, including reporting obligations.
- d. Supervision and people management have a child safety focus.

What this might look like.

- Child safety and wellbeing is emphasised in advertising, referee checks, pre-employment screening and supervision for staff and volunteers
- Church leaders assess the values, motives and attitudes of applicants to ensure a culture of child safety and wellbeing
- The Church delivers, or provides access to, regular training and/or information sessions regarding child safety and wellbeing
- Ministry leaders ensure everyone is informed about policies and procedures and knows how to enact them

More information about legal requirements for screening

In NSW, WWCC is required for Staff and volunteers who serve in child related work, which we define to include:

- as a religious leader or spiritual officer (eg. pastor, regular preacher, worship leader)
- anyone in a governance role (eg. elder, deacon, council member)
- anyone in a role which involves direct contact with children or young people (eg. children's ministry, creche, youth ministry)
- anyone leading of a ministry team with children or young people in that team (eg. café, cleaning roster)

In NSW, it is a legal requirement to verify the WWCC number for anyone engaged in child-related work, and to keep a record of the WWCC number, the verification date, verification outcome, expiry date, paid/volunteer status, and the name and DOB of the individual. For more information on the WWCC please go to: <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-children-check>

In ACT, current WWVP registration is required for Staff and volunteers who serve:

- as a religious leader or spiritual officer (eg. pastor, regular preacher, worship leader)
- in a governance role (eg. elder, deacon, council member)
- in child-related work (eg. children's ministry, creche, youth ministry)
- as leader of a ministry team with children or young people in that team (eg. café, cleaning roster)
- in ministry with vulnerable adults (eg. seniors, persons with disabilities)

Use of the title 'Pastor'

The Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse concluded that the 'lack of control over who is able to represent themselves as a pastor' constitutes 'a weakness in the necessary safety controls [churches] should have in place to protect children'*. The Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT have recommended that the title Pastor be restricted to people who have been, or are in the process of applying to be, Accredited or Recognised Ministers by the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT. Please see document 17 of the Safe Church Package which includes a letter which was sent to churches in October 2018.

* Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report Volume 18 p88 available at www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church have a *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*? Yes No
2. Have required staff and volunteers completed the *Screening Questionnaire*? Yes No
3. Do you have role descriptions for all staff and volunteer roles? Yes No
4. Are all staff and volunteers aware of the role description for their role/s? Yes No
5. Do all staff and volunteers undergo a documented induction process? Yes No
6. Does your church have a *Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers*? Yes No
7. Have required staff and volunteers agreed to the *Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers*? Yes No
8. **For NSW churches**
Do all of the Church's staff and volunteers who are regularly engaged in Child-related Work have a valid and current WWCC and has your church verified the WWCC or application number online, and retained a copy of verification confirmation? Yes No
- For ACT churches**
Do all of the Church's staff and volunteers (including young people) who engage in a Regulated Activity (which includes activities or services to children, young people or vulnerable adults), have a valid and current WWVP clearance? Yes No
9. Have all of your Pastoral Staff completed a National Police Criminal Record Check? Yes No
10. Does your church keep a copy of the National Police Criminal Record Check? Yes No
11. Does your church maintain a *Safe Church Register*? Yes No
12. Is your *Safe Church Register* up to date? Yes No
13. Has your church governance body either (please answer yes or no and, if yes, tick box as appropriate) Yes No
- a. Agreed to restrict the use of the title 'Pastor' to people who have been, or are in the process of applying to be, Accredited or Recognised Ministers by Baptist Churches NSW & ACT,
- OR**
- b. Decided to use the title Pastor in some additional circumstances (If your church has decided to permit the use of the title 'Pastor' in circumstances other than those recommended, please attach a copy of the decision made by your church's governance body, along with the date on which the decision was made.)

**Please attach the following document/s:**

- *Screening Questionnaire/s*
- *Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers*
- *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*
- Your church's *Safe Church Register* (please redact dates of birth and WWCC/WWVP numbers)
- If you ticked 13(b), minutes of the governance body's decision not to follow the recommendation regarding use of the title "Pastor"

STANDARD 6

Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse [or other concerns*] are child focused.

- a. The institution has a child-focused complaint handling system that is understood by children, staff, volunteers and families.
- b. The institution has an effective complaint handling policy and procedure which clearly outline roles and responsibilities, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints and obligations to act and report.
- c. Complaints are taken seriously, responded to promptly and thoroughly, and reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

* Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT have broadened the scope of this standard to meet the scope of the National Principles agreed by COAG.

What this might look like.

- The process for raising complaints and concerns about child safety is clear, accessible and prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- Staff and volunteers know when and how to report to relevant authorities
- Information about raising and responding to concerns and complaints is available in various accessible formats including child-friendly formats
- There is a clearly defined record keeping system for concerns and complaints

The Royal Commission explains*:

A child-focused complaints process is an important strategy for helping children and others in institutions to make complaints. Child safe institutions respond to complaints by immediately protecting children at risk and addressing complaints promptly, thoroughly and fairly.

A child-safe institution has clear and detailed policies and procedures about how to respond to complaints. Staff and volunteers understand their responsibility for making a complaint promptly if they become aware of concerning behaviours, as well as their reporting obligations to external authorities. Complaint processes specify steps that need to be taken to comply with requirements of procedural fairness for affected parties, have review mechanisms, and ensure any disciplinary action that is taken withstands external scrutiny in accordance with relevant employment law and other employer responsibilities.

Included in the Safe Church Package:

Model documents are provided as part of the Safe Church Package. As your church adopts these documents, please ensure that your church name is inserted where necessary and the date of adoption by the governance body is noted on the front of the document. If you make changes to any of these documents, please attach an explanation regarding why you have made such changes.

* Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report Volume 6 'Making Institutions Child Safe' Appendix A p426 available at www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Are all staff and volunteers aware of the *Procedure for Conflict Resolution*, *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns* and *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers*?

Yes No

Please describe how you ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the relevant policies and procedures?

For example, through induction process and training, keeping copies of the Procedures in prominent place in church office

2. Are families aware of the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers* and the roles and responsibilities of all relevant parties?

Yes No

Please describe how your church ensures that families are aware of the relevant procedures and the persons responsible for their implementation

For example, through information on your webpage or church noticeboard

3. Does your church have a child-focused approach to the management of complaints and concerns including communicating to children and young people about who to approach if they feel unsafe?

Yes No

Please comment on how this occurs in your church

For example, posters on display, discussion about child safety, providing information to children and young people about reporting opportunities and support services available

**Please attach the following document/s:**

- *Procedure for Conflict Resolution*
- *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*
- *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers*

STANDARD 7

Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through continual education and training.

- a. Relevant staff and volunteers receive training on the nature and indicators of child maltreatment, particularly institutional child sexual abuse.
- b. Staff and volunteers receive training on the institution's child safe practices and child protection.
- c. Relevant staff and volunteers are supported to develop practical skills in protecting children and responding to disclosures.

What this might look like.

- Staff and volunteers engage in training which addresses the circumstances and experiences that increase a child's vulnerability to harm and how to recognise signs of child sexual abuse
- Staff and volunteers share skills to allow continual improvement in promoting safe environments
- Ministry leaders engage in training to develop effective risk management approaches to ensure child safety and wellbeing

As outlined in the church *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers* completion of *Creating Safe Spaces* training is required for anyone who serves:

- as a religious leader (eg: pastor)
- in a governance role (eg: elder, deacon, council member)
- in a role of significant authority in a church service (eg: regular preacher, worship leader)
- in child-related work (eg: children's ministry, creche, youth ministry)
- in ministry with vulnerable adults (eg: seniors, persons with disabilities)
- as leader of a ministry with children or young people in their team (eg: band, sound/AV, café)

For more information on Creating Safe Spaces training please go to www.creatingsafespaces.org.au

The Royal Commission recommends*:

Each religious institution should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, have professional supervision with a trained professional or pastoral supervisor who has a degree of independence from the institution within which the person is in ministry.

The Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT strongly encourage that all pastors engage in regular supervision or mentoring as outlined in their letter to churches dated October 2018 enclosed in the Safe Church Package. The *Safe Church Health Check* requires all pastors to engage in some form of guided reflective practice: supervision, coaching, mentoring or spiritual direction.

* Recommendation 16.45 Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report. www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_recommendations.pdf

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church provide ongoing training opportunities for staff and volunteers as appropriate to their needs and role. Yes No

Please describe how ongoing training opportunities are provided.

For example, attendance at Baptist Youth Ministries events, Children & Family Ministries (CFM) events, Baptist Association leadership events.

2. Does (or would) your church provide support to staff, volunteers or church members who report Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct involving a child, or a Risk of Significant Harm to children or young people Yes No

Please describe how support is or would be provided.

For example, referral to counselling or pastoral care team.

3. Have all the church's relevant staff and volunteers attended Creating Safe Spaces training within the last 4 years or undertaken the online module and committed to attend a face to face workshop within 3 months of commencement? Yes No

4. Do all your Pastoral Staff engage in some form of regular guided reflective practice (supervision, mentoring, coaching, spiritual direction) as recommended by the Royal Commission and Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT? Yes No

Please provide details of the guided reflective practice each of your pastors has undertaken in the last twelve months:

Name of Pastor	Type of Guided Reflective Practice (supervision, mentoring, coaching, spiritual direction)	No. of sessions



Please attach the following document/s:

- Record of CSS training (and renewal dates) if this is not captured in your *Safe Church Register*.

STANDARD 8

Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse [or other harm*] to occur.

- a. Risks in the online and physical environment are identified and mitigated without compromising a child's right to privacy and healthy development
- b. The online environment is used in accordance with the institution's *Code of Conduct* and relevant policies.

* Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT have broadened the scope of this standard to meet the scope of the National Principles agreed by COAG.

What this might look like:

- The Church takes steps to identify places and activities where there may be the risk of harm to children
- Ministry leaders identify any children or young people who may be at increased risk of harm due to situation or particular vulnerability
- The Church and ministry leaders implement and communicate agreed guidelines for online communication
- Third party contractors and hirers of facilities are required to have appropriate measures in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people

Online safety

An important part of compliance with this Standard involves addressing online safety risks. Model *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*, including suggestions regarding use of social media, are available as part of the Safe Church Package.

Third parties and affiliated entities

The Royal Commission recommended that agencies which are affiliated with a church should report their compliance with Child Safe Standards to the church on an annual basis.*This is relevant where a church operates a school, preschool or other service to children and young people.

ACNC External Conduct Standards

External Conduct Standard 4 requires a charity (including a Basic Religious Charity) to take reasonable steps to protect vulnerable people that it works with when conducting operations overseas. This includes a church conducting short term ministry overseas, overseas ministry partnerships, or sending a small amount of money overseas.

<https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities/manage-your-charity/governance-hub/acnc-external-conduct-standards>

Persons of Concern

A flyer entitled 'An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern' is included at attachment 16 the Safe Church Package. This flyer outlines the risk management process for known sex offenders and other persons of concern and the reasonable precautions required to ensure safe ministry. In adhering to this process your church may decide that the most reasonable precaution in your context is to exclude a person of concern from attending your church services and activities.

Included in the Safe Church Package:

Model documents are provided as part of the Safe Church Package. As your church adopts these documents, please ensure that your church name is inserted where necessary and the date of adoption by the governance body is noted on the front of the document. If you make changes to any of these documents, please attach an explanation regarding why you have made such changes.

* Recommendation 16.35 Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report.
www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_recommendations.pdf

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your church have guidelines for risk management that address both physical and online risks to children and young people? Yes No
2. Has your church's *Safe Church Team* undertaken an audit of physical environment that might create increased risk of harm to children and young people (for example, offices without windows, basement or other isolated areas, balcony areas) Yes No
3. If the church has residential property that is identifiable with the church, have all regular adult residents been required to provide evidence of their WWCC / WWVP clearance? If N/A answer "Yes". Yes No
4. Has your church considered whether any ministries you support, including overseas ministries, have appropriate child protection practices in place? (This may include consideration of whether supporting or visiting orphanages overseas is appropriate) Yes No
5. Does your church commit to performing risk assessments for all ministry activities at least annually? Yes No
6. Does your church have a WHS Team to oversee the implementation of safe physical environments (including emergency procedures, risk assessments, privacy policy and safe food handling)? Yes No

Please list the names of your WHS Team Leader and WHS Team members.

7. Have all paid Pastoral Staff, WHS Team Leader and WHS Team completed the Baptist Insurance Services (BIS) WHS online training? Yes No
8. Do all associated entities who offer services to children (e.g. OOSH, School, Pre-school, Foodbank, Op Shop) report to the church on an annual basis regarding their compliance with the Child Safe Standards and the measures in place to ensure the safety of children and young people? Yes No
9. Do any third-party groups who hire facilities to offer services to children (e.g. dance groups or tutoring) agree as part of their lease or licence agreement to abide by the Child Safe Standards and confirm that they have appropriate measures in place to promote the safety of children and young people? Yes No
10. Has your church leadership adopted the Australian Baptist Ministries endorsed process to manage Persons of Concern in your congregation? Yes No
11. Does your church have a screening and risk management process for guest speakers, visiting ministry guests, and other contractors involved in ministry roles or child related roles in your church context? Yes No

**Please attach:**

- Record of BIS WHS training for all paid staff and each member of the WHS Team (if this was not already recorded in the *Safe Church Register*).
- Completed and signed *Declaration Regarding Ministry with Persons of Concern* (attachment 16 of the Safe Church Package).

STANDARD 9

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continually reviewed and improved.

- a. The institution regularly reviews and improves child safe practices.
- b. The institution analyses complaints to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.

What this might look like.

- There are regular opportunities to specifically discuss child safe practices in the church e.g. meetings, forums, planning days
- Feedback is sought from children, young people, families and communities about child safe practices
- Any incidents or complaints are reviewed to help improve future plans for child safety and wellbeing

A review should include:

- Considering and, if necessary, updating your *Safe Church Policy* and any procedures (this is one reason why you should record the date on which a policy or procedure was adopted by the governance body)
- Ensuring that the *Safe Church Team* is fulfilling their requirements
- Awareness of changing legislative requirements
- Making any required changes to policies/procedures
- Analysis of complaints/incidents
- Consideration of feedback from ministry leaders, children, young people and families.

For more information regarding compliance with this standard, please see “A Guide to the Child Safe Standards” pages 43-45 published by the NSW Office of Children’s Guardian at the link below.

https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/g_CSS_GuidetotheStandards.pdf

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Does your Church Leadership (Pastors, Deacons, Elders, Governance Group) have a minuted review of child safe practices at least on an annual basis? Yes No

How does your church seek feedback on child safe practices to inform the Church Leadership as they conduct this review?

For example, conducting a survey, or by inviting feedback by a publicised due date.

2. Please identify the 3-5 most important potential risks or issues specific to children and young people in your church.

For example, the church has not considered risk related to online communication, the youth room is isolated with limited visibility, the church needs to improve our strategies for listening to children and young people.

3. Please identify the steps your church can take in the next 12 months to address (or begin to address) the issues raised in question 2 above.

STANDARD 10

Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

- a. Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.
- b. Policies and procedures are accessible and easy to understand.
- c. Best practice models and stakeholder consultation inform the development of policies & procedures.
- d. Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.
- e. Staff understand and implement the policies and procedures.

What this might look like.

- Church leaders are familiar with the Child Safe Standards
- Child safe issues are regularly discussed at any leadership or governance meeting, both independently and in relation to other issues
- The church has a *Safe Church Policy* and sufficient clear and accessible procedures to enable the policy to be consistently implemented
- The church keeps copies of all policies, procedures and relevant documents
- The church maintains specific records of adherence to the *Safe Church Policy* to demonstrate compliance with legal obligations and reasonable responses to any risk (for example, sign-in sheets, training records, risk assessments, records of complaints)

Records (which need to be kept for a minimum of 45 years, preferably 100 years) include, but are not limited to:

- *Safe Church Policy* (dated versions)
- Procedures (dated versions)
- Records of attendance (children, young people and leaders)
- *Ministry Information Forms*
- Permission and consent forms
- Incident reports
- Contemporaneous notes, where required (including notes regarding consideration of potentially reportable matters even where a report was not made)

Please tick Yes / No and provide comments as required

1. Do all your ministries that involve children (0-18 years) and vulnerable people have a process for gathering permission and consent forms, records of attendance, accident and incident reports and other relevant documents? Yes No

2. Are your records securely stored for a minimum of 45 years (preferably 100 years)? How are records stored? Yes No

For example, in locked filing cabinets, online using secure servers, on a central computer with back up provisions

3. If your church uses an online CRM/database (eg Elvanto, Planning Centre, Fluro, PastoralCare) do you regularly download data to allow for historical enquiries in the future? If N/A answer "Yes". Yes No

4. Does your church update the *Safe Church Register* at least 2-3 times/year and keep a record of all previous versions for future reference? Yes No

5. Does your church have a process for ensuring that staff and volunteers implement the *Safe Church Policy* and procedures? Yes No

Please comment on how your church ensures that *Safe Church Policy* and procedures are implemented.

For example, random checks by Safe Church Team, discussion in staff reviews, with ministry leaders, or in governance group meetings.

**Please attach:**

- A sample of the forms or describe the method you use for recording:
 - attendance (*of leaders and attendees*) at ministry events;
 - parental permission and consent;
 - accident and incident reporting
- If your church has any other policy or procedure documents that may be relevant for this *Safe Church Health Check*, attach these also.

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Please ensure you have completed all of the following before returning your *Safe Church Health Check*:

All questions answered by ticking Yes or No.

Written explanations and additional information given when requested

Attached documents	Different adopted or changes made*	Model adopted with no changes
Safe Church Policy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Procedure Responding to Child Protection Concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Procedure for Resolving Conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Procedure for Staff and Volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ministry Information Form	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ministry Screening Questionnaire/s	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Copy attached
Record of screening and training of all staff and volunteers	<input type="radio"/>
Safe Church Register	<input type="radio"/>
Attendance, parental permission/consent, accident and incident reporting forms (blank examples)	<input type="radio"/>
Declaration Regarding Ministry with Persons of Concern	<input type="radio"/>
(If required) Minutes of the decision to use the title Pastor outside the recommendations of the Baptist Churches ACT and NSW	<input type="radio"/>
(If required) Explanation of changes to Model documents attached	<input type="radio"/>
Final declaration completed and signed	<input type="radio"/>

* If you make any changes to model documents you will be asked to provide a detailed explanation of all changes.

DECLARATION

I, _____ (full name),
 declare that I am authorised by _____ (name of church)
 “the Church”, to complete the *Safe Church Health Check*, and that the answers and documentation
 provided are a true and accurate representation of the current practices of the Church.

I understand that this *Safe Church Health Check* process is offered by the Baptist Churches of NSW
 & ACT as a resource to assist the Church to review the *Safe Church Policy* and procedures of the
 Church, and their implementation. I understand that the *Safe Church Health Check* is only an
 assessment against the Child Safe Standards and other recommended safe church practices, and
 does not constitute an acceptance of legal responsibility by Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT.

The governance group understand that it is their duty to provide a safe church environment.

The governance group, _____ (title of governance group),

read and endorsed the responses provided in this document on: Date: / /

Signed: _____ Date: / /

Person completing the *Safe Church Health Check*

Name: _____

Position in church: _____

Contact number: _____

Church Email: _____

(THE EMAIL ADDRESS FOR FOLLOW UP INFORMATION AND COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATE TO BE SENT TO)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With thanks to the following organisations for their assistance and consultation:

- Bravehearts
- Survivors and Mates Support Network
- Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT *Safe Church Health Check* Advisory Group
- Baptist CFM (Children and Family Ministries)
- BYM (Baptist Youth Ministries)
- Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Assembly Council
- Baptist Union of Victoria
- Queensland Baptists
- Baptist Churches Western Australia
- Rev Peter Barnett, Safe Ministry Resources
- Uniting Church in Australia
- Anglican Church of Australia
- Presbyterian Church of Australia
- Catholic Religious Australia (CRA)
- Baptist Insurance Services
- NSW Office of the Children's Guardian
- Sam Burnett, Partner, Prolegis Lawyers

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