

Safe Church Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the underlying principles that direct our approach to safeguarding vulnerable people involved with Albany Baptist Church (ABC).

Biblical Basis

The church is called to be a community of love that reflects our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (John 13:35; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Timothy 3:15). Because all people are made in the image of God, they are to be respected, valued and treated with dignity, care and love (Genesis 1:27). This love extends especially to the most vulnerable in all of society (Matthew 18:1-14; Mark 9:33-36, 42.)

Because of the nature of power in abuse, we look to the Lordship of Jesus Christ who did not use His power and control for selfish gain, rather He gave Himself in sacrificial, selfless love. He calls His followers to do likewise (Philippians 2:1-11; Matthew 20:24-26).

In light of this, ABC is committed to the safety, protection and wellbeing of all people and actively seeks to prevent all form of abuse. At every level of our church, and in accordance with our legal responsibilities under Australian legislation (Romans 13:1), we will make every effort to provide an environment of love, safety, and support for all.

Scope

This policy applies to all leaders at ABC. It aligns with our Biblical convictions, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, Child Safe Organisations WA and principles outlined in the Baptist Churches of WA Code of Good Leadership Practices.

Definitions

Vulnerable person means:

- a) a child (i.e. a person under 18 years of age);
- b) a person aged 18 years or above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason;
- c) a senior; and
- d) gender and sexually diverse persons.

Leaders are all pastors, elders, staff, team leaders and volunteers serving on behalf of the ministries of Albany Baptist Church.

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Reportable Conduct as defined by the Children's Guardian Act 2019 includes the following:

- a) Any sexual offence, or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child, or
- b) Any assault, ill-treatment, or neglect of a child, or
- c) Any behaviour that causes emotional or psychological harm to a child, whether, in any case, with the consent of the child.
- d) Offence under s43B (failure to protect) or s316 A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900

Policy Statement

At ABC we commit to:

Safeguard Vulnerable People

We affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected and have their views and opinions valued at all times. We are committed to a Biblical call to care for the vulnerable by actively preventing harm and abuse, and by seeking to provide safe leaders, programs and spaces (Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Matthew 18:1-6; Mark 10:13-16). We are also responsible and accountable to fulfil our obligations to State and Federal law to protect children and vulnerable people.

We are committed to consulting as appropriate and ensuring that vulnerable people are able to voice their concerns and thoughts about decisions that affect them. We recognise the diverse needs of vulnerable people should be taken into account and their concerns taken seriously. We are committed to embedding this care into all levels of our leadership and culture.

Screen, Train, and Support Safe Leaders

We are committed to ensuring all ABC ministry Leaders are screened, trained, and appropriately supported for the position they hold by the process outlined below.

1. All leaders must be regular attendees and participants in the life of ABC.
2. They will have their potential roles and ministry responsibilities clearly outlined to them as they start a ministry role.
3. All Leaders must provide referees who can confirm the proposed leader is suitable to work with vulnerable people and that there is no reason the proposed leader should not be appointed in such a role.
4. All Leaders will have completed the Safe Ministry Training Course (Safe Ministry Check) relevant for their position, which outlines appropriate behaviour including how to minimise the possibility of harm or abuse, as well as training in how to identify and report cases of abuse.
5. Relevant leaders will have committed to the leader's Code of Conduct and behave as followers of Jesus and be willing to be held accountable for their behaviour
6. If a Leader is working with children or youth, they must have a WA Working with Children Check verified.

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Provide Safe Programs and Environments

We are committed to ensuring that our ministry programs and events are safe and appropriate for those attending. Careful consideration is given to the activities chosen, the venue, safe ratios of supervision, appropriate toileting practices, transportation, work health and safety, parental or guardian permission and confidentiality of records kept. Our Safe Ministry practices are documented in the ABC Kids Ministry Handbook, the ABC Youth Ministry Handbook and in the ABC's Safe Church Ministry Procedures. These are reviewed annually.

To help maintain appropriate standards, we will give all leaders access to ongoing training and adequate supervision in their roles and responsibilities.

Appropriately Respond to Concerns or Complaints

We are committed to creating a culture where people feel safe to speak out about inappropriate behaviour without fear of being rejected or ridiculed. We are committed to listening and appropriately responding to allegations of Reportable Conduct or other concerns or complaints about behaviour and safety at ABC. Throughout this process we are committed to protecting the confidentiality, dignity, health and wellbeing of all individuals involved.

We will appropriately respond to a) allegations of leader misconduct and/or b) reports of vulnerable persons at risk of harm.

a) Responding to any allegations of leader misconduct

i. Care of the alleged victim.

ABC is concerned to protect the interests and welfare of children and vulnerable people as of first priority. All leaders will report allegations to an ABC Church Safe Church Contact. Detail of action to be taken can be found in Responding to Allegations of Misconduct and Necessary Reporting.

ii. Support of Leaders

We are committed to ongoing leadership training, support, and supervision of leaders. Where a leader is the subject of an allegation of ministry misconduct, we will provide support to both the alleged victims and the accused person. We will carefully monitor and provide appropriate care for anyone in ABC who has been found to have breached any Code of Conduct or Safe Ministry practice.

b) Where it is suspected that a vulnerable person is at risk of harm, abuse, neglect or ill-treatment.

All leaders will report such disclosures or suspicions to an ABC Church Safe Ministry Contact. Any child related issues will be managed with a focus on the interests of the child and will be reported to relevant WA Government Child protection bodies according to the Mandatory Reporting of Child

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Sexual Abuse in WA as governed and directed by the Children and Community Services Act 2004 and in accordance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Western Australia).

ABC Safe Ministry Contacts

Phil Beeck – Senior Pastor, Safe Church Reporting Officer (SCRO)

Jordan Diaz – Children’s Pastor, Deputy SCRO

Jodie Pol – Safe Church Administration Officer (SCAO)

Dan Macomish – Youth Pastor

Responsibilities

The Elders and Pastoral Staff of ABC takes responsibility for reviewing this Policy regularly and embedding it in the organisation’s culture at all levels. The responsibility for the implementation of and the regular review of the implementation procedures lies with the Pastoral staff and Ministry leadership. Responsibilities for reporting are detailed in the procedure documentation.

Date Policy Approved: 13 July 2023	Review Date: January 2024
Approved By: Eldership	

To be issued to:

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APPENDIX A Associated Documents & References

Baptist Churches WA Code of Good Leadership Practices

<https://www.baptistwa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/bcwa-code-of-good-leadership-practices-july-2016.pdf>

Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse in WA – Resources

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/mandatory-reporting-of-child-sexual-abuse-wa-resources>

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/national-principles-child-safe-organisations>

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

<https://www.cyp.wa.gov.au/our-work/child-safe-organisations-wa/>

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APPENDIX B Associated Procedures

To Be Updated