



# Safe Church Policy

Adopted by Church Meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021

## Commitment

Lighthouse Baptist Church Nelson Bay (LBC) is committed to providing places, services and programs that promote physical, emotional and spiritual health and safety and model the love of Christ to all whom we have contact with, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.

## Purpose

LBC has adopted the *Safe Church Policy* to:

- 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);
- implement the 10 Child Safe Standards;
- provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children, young people and vulnerable adults; and
- meet our legal obligations in relation to:
  - staff and volunteers engaged in Child-related Work; and
  - reporting matters, including Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct, and Reportable Conduct involving a Child, to government authorities.

## Scope

This Policy applies to:

- all leadership, staff and volunteers of LBC;
- all people who are involved in or attend LBC and its programs;

### 1. Activities and Services for Children at LBC

- We recognise that children and young people are an integral part of LBC.
- We commit to involve children and young people in the routine of church life where appropriate and consider their needs in all aspects of planning, policy and church life.
- LBC will have a Safe Church team of at least 2 persons (1 male, one female) who will ensure all aspects of this policy are communicated to children and young people.
- The staff and volunteers of LBC will ensure the needs of children and young people are addressed in programs involving them and encourage children and young people to have input regarding the content and activities they would like to be part of their group.

### 2. Staff and Volunteers

- All staff and volunteers are to be recruited, selected and inducted in accordance with the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*.
- The church will support staff and volunteers with adequate training and resources to enable them to maintain and promote safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people.

- 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 and/or vulnerable people.

Please see the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers* and the *Screening Questionnaire* for more detail.

### **3. Conflict, Complaints and Concerns**

- LBC will respond to any child protection concerns in an appropriate and timely matter in accordance with the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*.
- LBC will respond to any complaints in an appropriate and timely matter in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers*.
- In the event of receiving a complaint that relates to a minor breach of the Code of Conduct or a grievance, LBC may determine to respond to the matter in accordance with the *Procedure for Resolving Conflict*.

Please see the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns* and the *Procedure for Resolving Conflict* for more detail.

### **4. Safe Environments**

- LBC will comply with statutory Work, Health and Safety requirements.
- LBC will consider, identify and address the impact of the physical environment and ministry activities on the potential for risk to children and vulnerable people.
- LBC will consider, identify and address if any external ministries it supports have appropriate protections for all vulnerable people.
- LBC will consider, identify and address the safety of any electronic communications or activities involving people involved in its ministries and programs.

### **5. Risk Management**

- In high risk activities undertaken at LBC, Ministry Leaders will complete and make a record of a risk assessment; for regular activities, this will be done annually.
- Where any risks are identified, appropriate and reasonable precautions will be taken.
- The Church will manage any person identified as a Person of Concern in accordance with *An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern*.

### **6. Third Parties and Affiliated Entities**

The church will 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.

### **7. Recordkeeping**

- The Church will retain all written records for a minimum of 45 years, in hard copy and/or electronically in a secure manner.
- Records to which this item applies includes, but is not limited to:
  - Ministry Information Sheets
  - Staff and Volunteer files
  - Attendance (sign-in/sign-out) sheets
  - Risk assessment forms
  - Safe Church Register
  - Safe Church Concerns forms and any contemporaneous notes regarding reporting decisions
  - Annual Safe Church commitment by third parties and affiliated entities

- Dated copies of any *Safe Church Policy*, Procedure, Form or associated document in force at any time

## 8. Review and Accountability

- The Church will review this policy annually
- The Church will seek advice from and communicate with the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Manager in relation to any Reportable Conduct, Child Protection Concerns and/or Complaints against Accredited or Recognised Ministers in accordance the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers* and the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*

## 9. Definitions

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

**Church** means the local church which adopted this *Safe Church Policy*, as indicated on the cover of the Policy.

**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 body designated by the constitution of the church to be responsible for the management of church affairs. This may be the Diaconate, Elders, or the Church Council.

**Mandatory Reporting Legislation** means the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*

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

**Reportable Conduct Legislation** means the *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)*.

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