



All people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times. We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety.

A foundational conviction of the Ashburton Baptist Church ("ABC") is that we worship and serve a God of love who calls us to care for all. The Scriptures also call people to protect the vulnerable and give special care and concern for the weak and powerless (e.g. Exodus 22:21-22, Deuteronomy 10:17-19, Jeremiah 22:2-4, James 1:27). ABC is therefore committed to protecting the safety of all people within its programs, ministries and events.

This policy has been developed to help ABC live out its Biblical mandate to care and to meet its responsibilities under national and Victorian legislation.

This policy aims to:

- Prevent or minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power;
- Ensure that ABC responds to cases of actual or suspected abuse and ministry misconduct in a consistent, unbiased and thorough manner.

To minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct and the misuse of positional power, we commit to:

a) An environment which is welcoming to everyone

We will welcome all First Nations people, people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds and of all and any abilities. We will afford participants a say in the programs and activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation.

b) Ensuring that the ABC community is well informed about this Safe Church policy

We will regularly provide the ABC community with information about this policy. In particular we will teach children how to raise concerns or make complaints and regularly check that children and their families are aware of safe church policies.

c) Safe recruitment of leaders.

We will screen all prospective leaders in our ministries before they are appointed by using relevant working with children's check / police check / leader application processes.

d) Adequate training of leaders.

We require that all ABC leaders attend safe church training within the first six months of their ministry and attend a refresher workshop every three years.

e) A leaders' code of conduct.

We will implement a code of conduct for all leaders. All leaders will be required to follow the code of conduct.

f) Ongoing supervision of leaders.



We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders.

To ensure that ABC responds well to allegations of abuse or misconduct, we commit to:

a) Reporting all disclosures of suspicions of abuse or misconduct.

All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of abuse according to ABC procedure and relevant legislation.

b) Taking abuse and misconduct concerns seriously

We will not readily dismiss disclosures or suspicions of abuse. We will be particularly careful to listen to and take seriously children and vulnerable adults who raise concerns.

c) Supporting victims and perpetrators

Where an allegation of abuse or misconduct is made, we will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate denominational help for a just and fair resolution.

Roles

The ABC Property Team is responsible for health and safety procedures of ABC. Its responsibilities include, among other things, fire safety, building safety, risk assessment for activities, critical incident and emergency recommendations.

The ABC Safe Church Concerns Person will, among other things, receive and deal with reports of abuse in accordance with ABC reporting procedures.

Reviewing this Safe Church Policy

This policy and the accompanying procedures will be reviewed and endorsed by the deacons every three years.

Legal Framework

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

- National Framework for Protecting Australia's children
"Protecting Children is Everyone's Business" 2009 – 2020 (Commonwealth of Australia)
- The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012 (Vic)
- Working With Children Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)



Definitions

Abuse In this policy abuse includes, but is not limited to, physical abuse; emotional abuse; family violence; sexual abuse; grooming; neglect; bullying; spiritual; financial

Child A person who is under the age of 18 years

Leader In this policy 'leader' includes:

- a) ABC Staff
- b) ABC Deacons
- c) Any person appointed as an ABC ministry coordinator
- d) Any person appointed to another role specified by the Deacons.

Vulnerable adult

A person aged 18 years and over who is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.