



WINDSOR ROAD
— BAPTIST CHURCH —

Safe Church Strategy

WORKING WITH VULNERABLE
PEOPLE

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Purpose

Under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000, organisations regulated by the Blue Card System are legislatively required to develop, implement and maintain a child and youth risk management strategy.

The purpose of Windsor Road Baptist Church's Safe Church Strategy (Strategy) for working with vulnerable people is to help identify potential risks of harm to vulnerable people and to implement strategies to minimise these risks.

This Strategy provides a clear and consistent framework to guide and support the stakeholders who work with Windsor Road Baptist Church or who participate in Windsor Road Baptist Church ministries and activities. The Strategy also cultivates a culture of safety so that all people, involved in or attending the Church are safe and free to grow in their relationship with God and others.

This Strategy is a framework that is considered by Windsor Road Baptist Church to be a culmination of policy, procedure, guiding principles and resources that fulfill the obligations of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 and reflect findings from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Definitions

Blue Card means the card issued by Blue Card Services after an application is received, verifying suitability for working with children. A positive notice always accompanies a Blue Card approval and accordingly where the term 'Blue Card' is used in this Strategy, it also refers to the positive notice issued by Blue Card Services.

Blue Card Representative is the Safe Church Coordinator.

Child is an individual under 18 years of age (section 8 Child Protection Act 1999)

Church means Windsor Road Baptist Church and includes the associated ministries and activities of the Church.

Church Leader/s/ship refers to persons appointed by the Church according to its constitution as responsible and accountable to the Church members for the governance of the Church.

Contact Person/s means the Safe Church Coordinator and/or Senior Pastor who will be the responsible for managing blue cards and exemption cards.

Disqualified Person a person is a Disqualified Person if they are:

- convicted of a disqualifying offence
- a reportable offender under the [Child Protection \(Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order\) Act 2004](#)
- the subject of an offender prohibition order under the [Child Protection \(Offender Prohibition Order\) Act 2008](#)
- prohibited by a court from applying for or holding a blue card or
- the subject of a sexual offender order under the [Dangerous Prisoners \(Sexual Offenders\) Act 2003](#)

Disqualifying Offence is an offence categorised as a disqualifying offence under the Act if it is an offence:

- against a provision of an Act detailed in the list of disqualifying offences
- under a law of another jurisdiction that, if it had been committed in Queensland, would have constituted an offence of a kind detailed in the list of disqualifying offences
- of counselling or procuring the commission of an offence of a kind mentioned in the list of disqualifying offences
- of attempting, or of conspiring, to commit an offence of a kind detailed in the list of disqualifying offences

- that has, as an element, an intention to commit an offence of a kind mentioned in the list of disqualifying offences, or
- that, at the time it was committed, was an offence of a kind mentioned in the list of disqualifying offences.

[View the list of disqualifying offences here](#)

Harm is defined as ‘any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing’. (section 9 Child Protection Act 1999).

Parent means custodial parent or lawful guardian of a child.

Person of concern means a person who:

- has pleaded guilty to, been convicted of, or has admitted to a sexual criminal offence.
- has been found to have sexually offended, arising through due diligence checks related to recruitment (screening).
- is currently charged with a sexual offence.
- has been the subject of an allegation of a sexual offence and this was not appropriately investigated.
- has been found to have received an adverse risk assessment arising from sexual misconduct.
- is deemed to be a risk to the safety of vulnerable people because of an adverse risk assessment relating to sexual misconduct.
- exhibits constant wandering across other people’s sexual boundaries.

A **Restricted Person** is a person who:

- has been issued a negative notice, or
- has a suspended blue card, or
- is a *disqualified person*, or
- has been charged with a *disqualifying offence* which has not been finalised.

Restricted Employment refers to particular exemptions which allow a person to work with children without a blue card, such as:

- a volunteer parent;
- a volunteer who is under 18;
- paid or unpaid staff who work in child regulated employment for not more than 7 days in a calendar year; or
- a consumer at a child-related service outlet where they also carry out work at the outlet.

Safe Church Coordinator means the person appointed by the Church Leaders to manage the practical implementation of this Strategy under the guidance and direction of the Church Leaders. If there is no designated person in the Church, this person means the Senior Pastor in the Church.

Staff and volunteers refer to both paid employees and volunteers who have contact with vulnerable people (including contractors, visitors or agents) and the Church Leadership team who make decisions about vulnerable people.

Vulnerable people/persons means a child/ren under the age of 18 years **or** an individual aged 18 years and 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.

Work/working refers to any activity or ministry of the Church whereby individuals have contact with vulnerable people, whether in an employed or voluntary capacity.

Scope

This Strategy applies to the following persons:

- The Church Leadership which consists of the Church council and pastoral team.
- Any person engaged by the Church to provide a service to the Church, whether paid or voluntarily, and who while providing their service will be in contact with vulnerable people. This includes staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors (who are in direct contact with vulnerable people).
- All members of the Church Leadership team who make decisions about vulnerable people.
- Vulnerable People and Parents.
- Trainee students doing placement in the Church as part of their studies with an education provider who will be in contact with vulnerable people.

Commitment

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) was established in response to allegations of sexual abuse of children in organisations that had been emerging in Australia for many years (Royal Commission Final Report 2017).

At the end of the 5-year enquiry, the Commissioners had listened to the personal stories of over 8,000 survivors, read over 1,000 written accounts and reviewed allegations of child sexual abuse in more than 4,000 institutions.

The Royal Commission found that organisations had failed to keep children and young people safe in their care.

“the sexual abuse of children has occurred in almost every type of institution where children reside or attend for educational, recreational, sporting, religious or cultural activities” (Royal Commission Final Report 2017).

Some common findings that contributed to this included:

- Poor practices
- Inadequate governance structures
- Failures to record and report complaints, or understating the seriousness of complaints
- A culture where the best interests of children were not a priority.

The Royal Commission Final Report 2017 emphasised that:

“protecting children and promoting their safety is everyone’s business. It is a national priority that requires a national response. Everyone – the Australian Government and state and territory governments, sectors and institutions, communities, families and individuals – has a role to play in protecting children in institutions.”

The Royal Commission resulted in 409 recommendations to make organisations safer for children and that all organisations that have any contact with children must be compliant with 10 National Child Safe Standards (10 National Principles).

Final Report recommendations from the Royal Commission included ones specific to religious institutes in Australia.

Statement of Commitment

It is Windsor Road Baptist Church's policy to respect everyone as unique individuals created by God, and to give special attention to the care, protection and wellbeing of vulnerable people. Staff and Volunteers of Windsor Road Baptist Church will behave towards them in a manner that resembles and represents Christ's attitude and approach, providing environments and ministries that promote their spiritual, social and physical safety and personal growth and development.

To this end Windsor Road Baptist Church will promote a culture of safety throughout the Church, constantly communicating and reinforcing our commitment across all aspects of Windsor Road Baptist Church's ministries and activities.

Queensland Baptists and Windsor Road Baptist Church recognise the [10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#). They provide a nationally consistent approach to embedding child safe cultures within organisations that engage with children, and act as a vehicle to give effect to all Royal Commission recommendations related to child safe standards. Therefore, Windsor Road Baptist Church will have regard to these as guiding principles for cultivating a safe Church environment and safe activities.



8 Minimum Requirements in QLD

To comply with The Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011, the Strategy includes the 8 minimum requirements.

COMMITMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM HARM.2. A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN.
CAPABILITY	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. WRITTEN PROCEDURES FOR RECRUITING, SELECTING, TRAINING AND MANAGING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS.
CONCERNS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING DISCLOSURES OF HARM, INCLUDING REPORTING GUIDELINES.5. A PLAN FOR MANAGING BREACHES OF YOUR RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY.6. RISK MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR SHIGH RISK ACTIVITIES AND SPECIAL EVENTS
CONSISTENCY	<ol style="list-style-type: none">7. POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING COMPLIANCE WITH THE BLUE CARD SYSTEM.8. STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATION & SUPPORT.

Code of Conduct

Windsor Road Baptist Church applies a Code of Conduct to define expectations relating to standards of behaviour for all staff and volunteers working with vulnerable people. It provides clear guidelines about what is expected and the consequences of not meeting these expectations.

The Code of Conduct will be completed:

- during the application process for working at Windsor Road Baptist Church.
- by any guests or visitors participating in ministries/activities involving contact with vulnerable people, to ensure laws relating to Restricted Persons and Restricted Employment are upheld.
- by Church Leaders, staff and volunteers on an annual basis.

The Code of Conduct addresses the following:

- People, Property and Language
- Behaviour, Supervision and Communication
- Physical Contact
- Pastoral Care
- Pornography and Sexuality
- Workplace Health & Safety
- Blue Cards
- Restricted Persons and Restricted Employment
- Breaches
- Illegal drugs and Alcohol

Recruitment, Selection, Training & Management

Recruitment

Windsor Road Baptist Church recognises the importance of recruiting staff and volunteers who have skills and attributes to fulfill the roles involved in working with vulnerable people. To ensure this, all such roles will require an application form as an initial screening tool. Any such roles that involve paid employment will be further defined by a position description and selection criteria.

When recruiting for roles involved in working with vulnerable people, applicants will be made aware (via the application form) that they are going to be subject to blue card screening, referee checks, identification verification, and that Windsor Road Baptist Church will request that the applicant disclose any information relevant to their eligibility to engage in activities involving vulnerable people, including if they are a Restricted Person.

Windsor Road Baptist Church will include information regarding Restricted Persons and Restricted Employment laws in position descriptions, application forms and any advertisements for roles working with vulnerable people.

Applicants for roles involved in working with vulnerable people at Windsor Road Baptist Church will be provided a copy of this Strategy when they receive an application form. This is to ensure they are fully informed of the requirements of this Strategy prior to submitting an application.

An application for working with vulnerable people will only be considered if following criteria has been met:

1. Churches that the applicant has attended (or has been involved or connected with) in the past five (5) years are contacted to ascertain whether there have been any alleged or actual incidents of harm involving the applicant.
2. The applicant has signed and returned the Code of Conduct.
3. The Safe Church Coordinator has completed an interview to ascertain the suitability of the applicant.
4. In the case of a volunteer, the person has attended the church regularly for a minimum of six (6) months unless exceptional circumstances apply.
5. Where certain roles require Registration by Queensland Baptists, the applicant must also successfully pass the application process under those Registration Guidelines.
6. Where a position description (for paid employment) has stipulated additional educational, skill or other requirements, the applicant is also required to satisfy these criteria before commencement.
7. The applicant's Blue Card has been sighted and details recoded.

8. If the applicant has not obtained their Blue Card through the Church, the Church leaders must also arrange the completion of a *Link an Applicant/Cardholder to this Organisation*
9. Referees checks have been completed.

Selection

Windsor Road Baptist Church sees the selection stage as opportunity for identifying the most suitable applicants for working with vulnerable people. The selection process will be supported by interviewing, referee checking and a probationary period.

Interview

The Safe Church Coordinator will use the interview process to explore the background of an applicant, their work history, skills and values, and will evaluate their suitability to work with vulnerable people at the Church.

During the interview process, appropriate and informative questions will help the selection, and the responses provided by the applicant will demonstrate how well they will uphold Windsor Road Baptist Church's values. The interview questions will explore the applicant's capacity to contribute to a safe and supportive environment for vulnerable people. As, Windsor Road Baptist Church has a responsibility to provide a safe and supportive environment for vulnerable people, the Safe Church Coordinator will question any inconsistencies in an applicant's work history.

Referee Checks

The Safe Church Coordinator will use referee checks as an important step to validate information of an applicant. Referee checks will be completed, preferably with most recent place or work (staff or volunteer) to verify the:

- o identity of prospective employee
- o accuracy of the details of previous employment, and
- o suitability of individual to work with vulnerable people.

If the reference is written, the Safe Church Coordinator will contact the referee to confirm authenticity.

Probationary Period

Probationary periods will be used to allow for monitoring how a person is settling into their role of working with vulnerable people. The length of a probationary period will be determined by the Safe Church Coordinator.

For paid employees the probationary process will involve setting goals and identifying any training required. For volunteer roles this will be a less formal process of "checking in" to get feedback and see how things are going. If the Safe Church

Coordinator feels it necessary, they will move to the more formal process used of paid employees, to provide further support to the volunteer.

Training

The Safe Church Coordinator is responsible for establishing an arrangement for the appropriate supervision, support and training of staff and volunteers in contact with vulnerable people.

The Safe Church Coordinator must report to the Church Leaders and the annual Church members' meeting about the supervision, support and training of staff and volunteers.

The Safe Church Coordinator will in consultation with staff and volunteers establish a training plan, setting out the type of training that will be provided, the regularity of the training and the expectations that the Church has for attendance and participation.

Staff and volunteers must receive induction/training and development on an annual basis and as required.

Training will include such things as:

- Application of this Strategy
- Risk Assessments (identifying, assessing and minimising risks)
- Reporting disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines
- Laws pertaining to Restricted Persons
- Code of Conduct
- Identifying sexual grooming
- Indicators of abuse
- First Aid and Emergency Response
- Best practice
- What constitutes a breach of this Strategy
- Any other relevant Church policies and procedures

The Safe Church Coordinator will maintain a calendar of training and a register of who has completed what training.

Induction

Staff and volunteers will be inducted into their role before commencing by:

- Reviewing the Strategy (and seeking any clarification required at interview or any time after as it arises)
- Completing the Code of Conduct
- Completing any required training

Management

It is the responsibility of Windsor Road Baptist Church to ensure management procedures are in place to support and encourage safe and supportive environments for vulnerable people. As such the Church will ensure that management processes are consistent, fair and supportive.

To assist Windsor Road Baptist Church in ensuring the ministries and activities offered reflect safe programs and safe environments for vulnerable people, it will continually promote and demonstrate respect for the rights and expectations of vulnerable people, parents and carers.

Disclosures or Suspicion of Harm

Important notes:

1. *The application of the Child Protection Act 1999 pertains to **children** and while this Strategy is a tool for managing risks that relate to vulnerable people (not just children), this section will reference “child or children” as we preserve the intent of this legislation.*
2. *Under the [Criminal Code \(Child Sexual Offences Reform\) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020](#), failure to report a child sexual offence committed in relation to a child is a criminal offence, effective 5 July 2021. As such the process on reporting in this regard is different to responding to and reporting on other disclosures/suspicions of harm (detailed in [Managing and Responding to a Disclosure of Suspicion of Harm](#)).*

Children can only be protected from harm if it is reported and dealt with quickly and effectively. Therefore, Windsor Road Baptist Church outlines in this Strategy procedures to ensure staff and volunteers respond as quickly as possible to a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Defining harm

Harm is defined as ‘any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing’. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect; or sexual abuse or exploitation (section 9 of the Child Protection Act 1999).

Considerations when forming a reasonable suspicion about harm to a child include:

- whether there are detrimental effects on the child's body or the psychological state or emotional state
 - that are evident to the person, or
 - that the person considers are likely to become evident in the future, and
- in relation to any detrimental effects mentioned above
 - their nature and severity, and
 - the likelihood that they will continue, and
- the child's age (section 13C of the Child Protection Act 1999).

It is also important to remember that harm can be caused by a single act or omission or a series of acts or omissions.

Identifying Harm

The below is not a complete list of the types of abuse and resulting harm that may be experienced by children, however it is to be used as a predictive tool for potential signs of harm. Each child's experience is different and depends on a range of factors, including the child's age, the nature of harm, how long the abuse has been occurring, their relationship to the abuser, and their support networks.

TYPES OF ABUSE <i>Actions/behaviours by perpetrator</i>	RESULTING HARM <i>Impact experienced by the child</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Physical abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting • Shaking • Burning/scalding • Biting • Causing bruise or fractures by excessive discipline • Poisoning • Giving children alcohol, illegal drugs or inappropriate medication • Domestic and family violence 	<p style="text-align: center;">Physical <i>Refers to the body</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruising • Fractures • Internal injuries • Burns
<p style="text-align: center;">Psychological or Emotional abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scapegoating • Persistent rejection or hostility • Constant yelling, insults or criticism • Cultural affronts • Teasing/bullying/cyberbullying • Domestic and family violence 	<p style="text-align: center;">Psychological <i>Refers to the mind and cognitive processes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and developmental delays • Impaired self-image
<p style="text-align: center;">Neglect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not giving a child sufficient food, housing, clothing, enough sleep, hygienic living conditions, health care and adequate supervision • Leaving children unattended • Children missing school 	<p style="text-align: center;">Emotional <i>Refers to the ability to express emotions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Hypervigilance • Poor self esteem • Self harm • Fear/anxiety
<p style="text-align: center;">Sexual abuse or exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner • Exposing a sexual body part to a child • Exposing children to sexual acts or pornography • Making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child • Having sexual relations with a child or young person under 16 years of age 	

GENERAL INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

Some general indicators of child abuse include:

- showing wariness and distrust of adults
- rocking, sucking or biting excessively
- bedwetting or soiling
- demanding or aggressive behaviour
- sleeping difficulties, often being tired and falling asleep
- low self-esteem
- difficulty relating to adults and peers
- abusing alcohol or drugs
- being seemingly accident prone
- having broken bones or unexplained bruising, burns or welts in different stages of healing
- being unable to explain an injury, or providing explanations that are inconsistent, vague or unbelievable
- feeling suicidal or attempting suicide
- having difficulty concentrating
- being withdrawn or overly obedient
- being reluctant to go home
- creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse.

GENERAL INDICATORS OF NEGLECT

Some indicators of neglect include:

- malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food
- poor hygiene, matted hair, dirty skin or body odour
- unattended physical or medical problems
- comments from a child that no one is home to provide care
- being constantly tired
- frequent lateness or absence from school
- inappropriate clothing, especially inadequate clothing in winter
- frequent illness, infections or sores
- being left unsupervised for long periods.

Disclosure of Harm

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen to a child.

Disclosures of harm may start with:

- 'I think I saw...'
- 'Somebody told me that...'
- 'Just think you should know...'

- 'I'm not sure what I want you to do, but...'

It is important to act quickly and in the best interests of the child after a disclosure of harm is received, irrespective of the alleged source of harm.

Suspicion of Harm

A suspicion of harm is when someone has a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm. This includes circumstances which relate to an unborn child who may be in need of protection after he or she is born. A child who has been, or may be experiencing, abuse may show behavioural, emotional or physical signs of stress and abuse.

There may also be other circumstances where there is concern for a child's welfare but it does not reach the threshold to be considered a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Windsor Road Baptist Church has a duty of care to follow up any suspicions of harm or potential risk of harm to children in our care. We do this by observing and recording the actions of children who might be at risk and reporting the concerns to the relevant authority.

A suspicion of harm exists if:

- a child tells you they have been harmed
- someone else, for example another child, a parent, or an employee, tells you that harm has occurred or is likely to occur
- a child tells you they know someone who has been harmed (it is possible that they may be referring to themselves)
- you are concerned at significant changes in the behaviour of a child, or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries, or
- the harm is witnessed

In relation to suspicion of harm, staff and volunteers working with children at Windsor Road Baptist Church will:

- remain alert to any warning signs or indicators
- pay close attention to changes in the child's behaviour, ideas, feelings and the words they use
- make written notes of observations in a non-judgemental and accurate manner
- assure a child that they can come to talk when they need to, and listen to them and believe them when they do, and
- follow Windsor Road Baptist Church's process for reporting a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Managing and Recording a Disclosure or Suspicion of Harm

Reporting a Disclosure or Suspicion of Harm

Mandatory Reporting - child sexual offence committed in relation to a child. With proclamation of the [Criminal Code \(Child Sexual Offences Reform\) and Other legislation Amendment Act 2020](#), section [229BC Failure to report a child sexual offence committed in relation to a child](#) becomes applicable to Windsor Road Baptist Church's ministries and activities for children/vulnerable people in regards to reporting. *(NB: for the purpose of understanding offences under this section of the Act, a child is defined as under 16 years of age or a person with an impairment of the mind).*

Under the provisions of this Act, **it is an offence** not to report a belief (including disclosure or suspicion) of an offence of a sexual nature committed in relation to a child. This in effect mandates reporting of child sexual offences for all adults, and so by default includes **all staff and volunteers** engaged in Windsor Road Baptist Church's ministries and activities for children/vulnerable people.

Furthermore, failure to report is an offence even if the information was gained during a **religious confession**.

The Act requires the report be made to the Police as soon as reasonably practicable after the belief is (or ought reasonably to have been) formed, that the offence has been committed.

For the avoidance of doubt, staff and volunteers working with children at Windsor Road Baptist Church who believe on reasonable grounds that a child sexual offence is being or has been committed against a child by another adult **are to report to the Police** as soon as reasonably practicable. In addition, they are to liaise with the Safe Church Coordinator for support and guidance in recording the reporting process, particularly if a breach of this Strategy has also occurred.

Mandatory Reporting – harm (other than child sexual offence)

The Child Protection Act 1999 requires certain professionals, referred to as 'mandatory reporters', to make a report to Child Safety, if they form a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm.

Under the Child Protection Act 1999, mandatory reporters are:

- teachers
- doctors
- registered nurses

- police officers with child protection responsibilities
- a person performing a child advocate function under the Public Guardian Act 2014
- early childhood education and care professionals, from 1 July 2017.

These individuals MUST report to Child Safety and should also report to Child Safety a reasonable suspicion if an unborn child may be in need of protection where the harm or risk of harm relates to any other type of abuse or neglect under s13A of the Child Protection Act 1999.

Non - Mandatory Reporting (excludes child sexual offence committed in relation to a child).

Child protection is everybody's responsibility, and every person SHOULD report to Child Safety if that person forms a reasonable suspicion that a child (including an unborn child) has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm AND does not have a parent able and willing to protect them from the harm.

Any person is lawfully entitled to make a report if they are concerned for a child's welfare, even if they are not required to do so as a mandatory reporter. Anyone making a voluntary (non-mandated) report is protected with regard to confidentiality and immunity from legal liability.

Staff and volunteers working with children at Windsor Road Baptist Church who receive a disclosure or have a suspicion of harm (other than child sexual offence) are to liaise directly with the Safe Church Coordinator who will guide them through and manage the reporting process.

Responding to a disclosure or Suspicion of Harm (other than in response to an offence of a sexual nature committed in relation to a child).

Receiving a Disclosure of Harm

- remain calm and listen attentively, actively and non-judgementally.
- ensure there is a private place to talk.
- encourage the person to talk in their own words and ensure just enough open-ended questions are asked to act protectively (e.g. 'Can you tell me what happened?'...or 'Can you tell me more about that?'). Don't ask leading questions which tend to suggest an answer. Ensure the person is advised that the disclosure cannot remain a secret and it is necessary to tell someone in order to get help.
- reassure the person they have done the right thing by telling you.
- **advise the child that you need to tell someone else who can help the child.**
- do not attempt to investigate or mediate an outcome
- consider if additional barriers exist such as if the child:

- identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- is culturally and linguistically diverse
- has disabilities
- follow this Strategy's procedure for reporting a disclosure of harm.

The Safe Church Coordinator will consider whether there are requirements to report matters to the Queensland Police Service or Child Safety or consider what support services could be offered to the family if the concern does not meet the relevant threshold to make a report. This determination will involve implementing the recommended 3 step process for assessing a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Assessing a Disclosure or Suspicion of Harm

Step 1 – Considering whether the disclosure or suspicion needs to be reported to the Queensland Police Service

If an individual (including staff, volunteer and/or the Safe Church Coordinator) believes a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, they should immediately contact the Queensland Police Service by dialling 000.

Queensland Police Service has a number of child protection and investigation units across Queensland. To contact the Queensland Police Service the nearest Police District Communication Centre can be located following this link [QLD Police - Contact Us](#)

Step 2 - Considering whether the disclosure or reasonable suspicion of harm needs to be reported to Child Safety.

How to determine if there is significant harm?

Section 13C of the Child Protection Act 1999 provides guidance when forming a reasonable suspicion about whether a child has suffered significant harm, is suffering significant harm, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm. The matters the Safe Church Coordinator will consider include:

- whether there are detrimental effects on the child's body or psychological or emotional state:
 - that are evident to the person, or
 - that the person considers are likely to become evident in the future, and
- in relation to any detrimental effects to the child the reporter may consider:
 - their nature and severity, and
 - the likelihood that they will continue, and
- the child's age.

The consideration of these matters may be informed by an observation of the child, other knowledge about the child or any other relevant knowledge, training or experience that the person may have.

How to determine if there is a parent willing and able to protect the vulnerable person?

A parent may be willing to protect a child, but not have capacity to do so and therefore they are not considered 'able'. This may include parents suffering from a severe mental health condition or physical illness/injury.

Alternatively, a parent may have the capacity to protect a child (i.e. they may be able), but may choose not to do so (i.e. they are not willing). This may include a parent continuing a relationship with a person who is sexually abusing their child.

In some circumstances, a parent may be both not able and not willing to protect the child from harm.

In some cases, the circumstances in which the harm occurred will be so serious that it can be presumed there is no parent able or willing to protect the child.

If there is considered to be at least one parent both 'able' and 'willing' to protect the child, the child is considered to not be in 'need of protection'.

What information which must be provided to Child Safety?

Under section 13G(2) of the Child Protection Act 1999, the written report about a 'reportable suspicion' must contain the following details:

- the basis on which the person has formed the reportable suspicion, and
- the information prescribed by regulation, to the extent of the person's knowledge.

Step 3 - Consider whether referral is required to other support services, including Family and Child Connect

Concerns for a vulnerable person that do not amount to a reasonable suspicion of harm will be considered in terms of what support services could be offered to the family. This may include contacting Family and Child Connect who can provide information and advice about connecting families with support services and the circumstances in which a referral can and should be made to one of these services.

A mandatory reporter can refer a family without their consent, but others require the consent of the family to make a referral.

The criteria for Family and Child Connect service to work with the family is:

- the referred family has a child from unborn to 18 years of age, and
- the child is not currently in need of protection, and
- without support the child, young person and family are at risk of entering or re-entering the statutory child protection system, and
- the family would benefit from access to intensive and specialist support services, and
- the family has multiple and complex needs.

The [Family and Child Connect](#) website provides useful materials, including Training resources in relation to family support services, which can assist you further.

Procedure for Recording and Reporting a Disclosure or Suspicion of Harm

The person receiving a disclosure or who have a suspicion of harm, is able to report this directly to the relevant authorities. However staff and volunteers working with children at Windsor Road Baptist Church who receive a disclosure or have a suspicion of harm are asked to liaise directly with the Safe Church Coordinator who will guide them through and manage the reporting process. It is important that the person who receives a disclosure or is reporting a suspicion of harm is involved in the reporting process because:

- the integrity of the information is retained when the person receiving the disclosure is the person reporting the matter to the authorities.
- information is not accidentally mishandled in the internal reporting procedures, prior to the matter being reported to the authorities, and
- where there is immediate risk of harm to a child, all staff or volunteers are aware they can act immediately to protect that child and contact the authorities.

In all cases where harm is disclosed or suspected, the best interests of the child will be paramount, and Windsor Road Baptist Church's response will be clear and transparent to those affected.

When recording and reporting a disclosure or a suspicion of harm, the following will occur:

1. Document the disclosure/suspicion clearly and accurately, including a detailed description of:
 - the relevant dates, times, locations and who was present
 - exactly what the person disclosing said, using "I said," "they said," statements
 - the questions you asked
 - any comments you made, and

- your actions following the disclosure

Care must be taken to record information and evidence in the words of the child to assist with the accurate presentation of the information or evidence.

2. Follow the steps for Assessing the Disclosure of Suspicion of Harm
3. Consider restrictions in relation to privacy obligations, making sure to keep information confidential, only including necessary people in the report handling process. The Safe Church Coordinator will ensure that information included in the report is properly stored either physically and/or electronically and that accessibility to the data is correctly managed.
4. Gain clear guidance and advice from the Queensland Police Service or Child Safety as to:
 - a. who should tell the child or young person's parents or carers about the disclosure and the action taken.
 - b. who can give ongoing help and trained support to the child and family.
5. If the disclosure or suspicion of harm relates to a Registered Minister of Queensland Baptists, then the Safe Church Coordinator or Church Leaders will also inform either the QB Safe Church Officer or the Director of Pastoral Services for Queensland Baptists.
6. If the disclosure or suspicion of harm relates to a staff or volunteer then the Safe Church Coordinator or Church Leaders will immediately stand down that person from any involvement in Church ministries/activities pending an investigation from the report, and also notify Blue Card Services

Child Safety Contact Information

Child Safety Services can be contacted as follows:

- During normal business hours - contact the Regional Intake Service

Regional Intake Service

- After hours and on weekends - contact the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on 1800 177 135 or (07) 3235 9999. The service operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If unsure who to call, or for assistance in locating the nearest Child Safety Service Centre, contact Child Safety Services' Enquiries Unit on 1800 811 810. Child Safety Service Centres have professionally trained child protection staff members who are skilled in dealing with information about harm or risk of harm to children.

A person making a report is protected from liability under the Child Protection Act 1999 from civil or criminal legal actions and is not considered to have broken any code of conduct or ethics.

Reviewing Reporting Procedure

Windsor Road Baptist Church will undertake a review of the procedures following a disclosure or suspicion of harm being actioned to:

- consider the application of the procedure and whether there are any changes necessary, for example, whether they are suitable for:
 - responding to a child or young person when a disclosure is made
 - protecting children and young people from harm, and
 - assisting involved parties within your organisation, and
- identify any additional training requirements.

The review must not interfere with court processes, and it may be a necessary to seek legal advice in this instance. During the review, Windsor Road Baptist Church will record what worked well and what may need to be improved upon. If new procedures and/or are required, information regarding the changes will be provided to all stakeholders.

Persons of Concern

There may be instances where behaviour of an individual is observed that is of a concern to ensuring the safety of others. Windsor Road Baptist Church will seriously consider implementing the Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern in these instances. If so, this process would be employed:

- even if the person of concern is not engaged as a staff or volunteer in working with vulnerable people.
- if a person who is attending or interested in attending Windsor Road Baptist Church:
 - discloses that they have committed a sexual offence
 - in the course of completing due diligence checks for recruitment they disclose they have committed a past sexual offence
 - if the church is or becomes aware that a person has had an allegation of past or current sexual offence
 - is deemed to be a risk to the safety of vulnerable people because of an adverse risk (for example, exhibiting wandering across other people's sexual boundaries)

Managing Breaches of The Safe Church Strategy

What is a breach?

A breach is any action or inaction by individual captured in the Scope, that fails to comply with any part of the strategy.

Who must comply?

All persons/roles identified in the Scope of this Strategy must comply.

Responsibilities and Delegations

The Safe Church Coordinator will be responsible for managing breaches of this Strategy. If the Safe Church Coordinator is unavailable or is in breach themselves, the Church Leadership will manage the breach and may engage the QB Safe Church Officer.

Types of Breaches

There may be different types of breaches of this Strategy and the consequences determined by Windsor Road Baptist Church will vary accordingly.

Depending on the severity of the breach and the level of risk that results will determine the consequence. Consequences will range from additional training, supervision/probationary periods, stand down, reporting to relevant authorities and permanent removal from ministries and activities and/or the Church.

Breach Procedure

Where the breach does NOT relate to a disclosure or suspicion of harm a Breach Incident Form will be completed. This process will identify details of the breach, outcomes and follow up.

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained to protect privacy.

All breaches will be recorded in the Breach Register and reported to the relevant authority as applicable including the Queensland Police Service, Child Safety and/or Blue Card Services.

Risk Management Plans for High-Risk Activities & Special Events

A high-risk activity or special event, due to their nature, will require extra planning to ensure that appropriate control measures are implemented to manage the identified risks.

Windsor Road Baptist Church recognises that in order for a vulnerable person to suffer harm, there must be an opportunity for harm to arise. These opportunities can be reduced by engaging in forward planning to identify risks and implement strategies that reduce the possibility of being harmed during high-risk activities and special events.

The Safe Church Coordinator will lead in the determination of whether an activity or event is deemed high risk. Such criteria to be considered will include (but not limited to) if the activity/event:

- involves the participation of volunteers or people who are external to Windsor Road Baptist Church
- involves additional participant numbers than would ordinarily be provided for
- is to take place at an external venue or destination
- has a large amount of people and/or hazards (e.g. involving water hazards such as ponds, lakes or pools), and/or
- is to take place overnight or for a lengthy period of time.

There may be other criteria that the Safe Church Coordinator or Church Leadership identify that requires the activity or event to be managed as a high risk.

Risk Management Process

Adapted from the Standards Australia's AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management - Principles and Guidelines, Windsor Road Baptist Church will apply a six step process in the development of an effective plan for high risk events and activities:

1. Describe the activity
2. Identify the risks
3. Analyse the risks
4. Evaluate the risks
5. Manage the risks and reassess, and
6. Review

Compliance with Requirements of the Blue Card System

This Strategy ensures Windsor Road Baptist Church is compliant with the Blue Card System requirements and demonstrates our committed to maintaining a safe and supportive environment for vulnerable people. Windsor Road Baptist Church is committed to ensuring the Strategy remains compliant, current and effective in identifying and minimising risks of harm to vulnerable people. As such, an annual review will be completed by the Safe Church Coordinator in collaboration with all stakeholders, with consideration given to:

- whether processes and procedures were followed
- whether any incidents relating to vulnerable people's risk management issues occurred
- the actual process used to manage any incidents
- the effectiveness of processes and procedures in preventing or minimising harm to vulnerable people, and
- the content and frequency of training in relation to the Strategy.

Restricted Persons & Restricted Employment

From 31 August 2020, an employer cannot employ or continue to employ a restricted person in restricted employment.

The maximum penalty is \$26,690 (200 penalty units) or 2 years in prison. Penalties will also apply to individuals.

Windsor Road Baptist Church has a responsibility to ensure that all staff and volunteers working with vulnerable people, including those in Restricted Employment are not a Restricted Person. Windsor Road Baptist Church must also ensure anyone beginning to work or volunteer in Restricted Employment is not a Restricted Person, before that person begins working or volunteering with children within the Church.

The definition of Restricted Employment captures scenarios that could commonly arise in Windsor Road Baptist Church setting, specifically a volunteer parent, a volunteer who is under 18, or a staff or volunteer who do not work more than 7 days in a calendar year. As such, any Staff or Volunteer (as per the definition and scope of this Strategy) working in these capacities will be required to complete the Code of Conduct.

To fulfill obligations relating to Restricted Persons and Restricted Employment, the Code of Conduct will be completed:

- at the implementation of this Strategy; and
- during the application process for working at Windsor Road Baptist Church (including for parents who wish to volunteer as their child participates); and

- o on an annual basis thereafter

If at any time Windsor Road Baptist Church becomes aware that a person is a Restricted Person, that person will be immediately stood down and will not be permitted to continue working. Windsor Road Baptist Church will liaise with Blue Card Services and the QB Safe Church Officer regarding any further action that may be required or if a Response to a Person of Concern process needs to be undertaken.

If at any time Windsor Road Baptist Church becomes aware of a breach to the Restricted Person & Restricted Employment laws, the Safe Church Coordinator will liaise with the Church leadership in reporting the breach to Blue Card Services and the Queensland Police Service. Windsor Road Baptist Church will also liaise with the QB Safe Church Officer regarding any further action that may be required.

Blue Card Screening Requirements

Persons Requiring a Blue Card

All Church staff and volunteers must hold valid and current Blue Cards to attend or participate in any church activities that will bring them into contact with vulnerable persons.

Disqualified Persons and Disqualifying Offences

The blue card system stops certain people from holding or applying for a blue card such as:

- o People convicted of disqualifying offences
- o Current negative notice holders
- o People convicted of serious offences as they can only hold a blue card in exceptional circumstances.

No Card No Start

No Card, No Start means that all staff and volunteers must have a blue card (paid employees can no longer start pending an application) before they can work with vulnerable people.

Nominated Contact Person/s

The Safe Church Coordinator and Senior Pastor will be the **Contact Person/s** responsible for managing blue cards and exemption cards for Windsor Road Baptist Church.

Each blue card or exemption card application form for a paid employee or volunteer has a space in the “Organisation details” section for a “Contact Person”. This is who Blue Card Services will send all notifications to and this is the only people who Blue

Card Services can discuss a person's Blue Card status with unless additional authorisation is provided.

Managing Blue Card Applications

To manage Windsor Road Baptist Church's obligations, the Contact Person may use the online [Organisation Portal](#) to manage blue card records.

Linking Blue Cards

The Contact Person must ensure a Blue Card belongs to the card holder and link them to Windsor Road Baptist Church before engaging them in work. This ensures the Church is kept up to date about a card holder's status.

When a new applicant is progressed and appointed to work with vulnerable people the Contact Person must check the card holder's identity. This will be completed by sighting identification before linking the card holder to Windsor Road Baptist Church. Blue Cards can be linked by submitting the link form or via the Organisation Portal. Blue Cards can also be validated online.

When a card holder leaves Windsor Road Baptist Church the Contact Person will notify Blue Card Services by completing a Delink a Person form or via the Organisation Portal.

All staff and volunteers engaged by Windsor Road Baptist Church must be linked (NB: card holders can be linked to more than one organisation).

Renewals

As long as an individual submits their renewal application before their current card expires, they can continue to work - even if their new Blue Card has not been issued by the time their previous card expires.

The Contact Person will use the Organisation Portal to check whether a card holder has applied to renew their card or will contact Blue Cards Services on 1800 113 611 to determine whether a card holder has applied to renew their card.

Frequency Test

An individual does not need a blue card if their work is not more than 7 days in a calendar year. If it is more than 7 days, a blue card is needed.

For this test, a 'day' includes a full day or part of a day (e.g. 2 hours of work on 1 day is considered to be a day). A 'calendar year' covers the period from 1 January to 31 December.

The new frequency test only applies to volunteers, paid employees and students doing practical placements for their course. It does not apply to an individual who is either:

- a restricted person
- a business operator.

Exemption Cards

Police officers with the Queensland Police Service and teachers registered with the Queensland College of Teachers apply for exemption cards, not blue cards. From 31 August 2020, exemption cards have expiry dates and are valid for three years.

Exemption cards expire if not renewed. Existing exemption card holders whose cards do not have an expiry date have until 31 August 2023 to renew their card or it will expire.

Exemption card applicants are able to start work as soon as they apply online or submit their application (i.e. No Card no Start does not apply) AND have been linked to Windsor Road Baptist Church.

Police Information

Blue Card Services will notify the Contact Person of any change in an individual's police information, when appropriate. It is no longer a requirement for Windsor Road Baptist Church to notify Blue Card Services of any changes in police information that the Church becomes aware of.

Managing High Risk Individuals

The Safe Church Coordinator will stand down any staff or volunteer from duties immediately if they:

- i. receive a negative notice or is a known disqualified person.
- ii. have their blue card or exemption card cancelled or suspended.
- iii. have their blue card application withdrawn.
- iv. receive a notification in relation to a serious change in criminal history.

Blue Card Register

The Safe Church Coordinator for Windsor Road Baptist Church must maintain a register of all staff and volunteers engaged to work with vulnerable people. This may be maintained in hard copy or electronically and must be made available if requested by Blue Card Services.

The Blue Card Register will be maintained to include up to date information on:

- whether or not the person requires a blue/exemption card (if not, why not – e.g. an exemption applies under the Act)

- the type of application/blue card (e.g. paid or volunteer) or exemption card
- when the person applied and/or the date of issue of the positive notice and blue/exemption card
- the blue card/exemption card number and the expiry date of the blue card, and
- the renewal date.

The Safe Church Coordinator will ensure that appropriate and confidential records in relation to the following are maintained:

- whether a negative notice has been issued
- any change in status to a blue/exemption card or exemption card (such as a change in police information, or the cancellation or suspension of a blue/exemption card)
- where there is a change in police information
- where an employee leaves Windsor Road Baptist Church and the date Blue Card Services were informed, and
- any change to a staff or volunteer's personal information, including the date Blue Card Services were informed (NB it is an offence for any staff or volunteer to fail to notify Blue Card Services on the appropriate form of any change in personal details within 14 days).

Communication & Support

Communication

Windsor Road Baptist Church recognises this Strategy is most effective when it is communicated to all stakeholders. If parents/carers, staff and volunteers and vulnerable people are actively involved and aware they are more likely to accept, support and implement the Strategy. This is aimed at strengthening a culture of safety.

The Safe Church Coordinator and church leadership will:

- ensure that all stakeholders are aware of responsibilities and understand what is acceptable behaviour for interacting with vulnerable people.
- enable individuals to feel comfortable addressing issues of concern
- highlight the importance of Windsor Road Baptist Church's commitment to protecting the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable people in our environment, and
- reduce the likelihood of breaches of this Strategy.

This will be achieved through an ongoing commitment promoting safety by:

- training both annually and as required
- use of Windsor Road Baptist Church's website

- induction of staff and volunteers
- enrolment process for families into programs/ministries/activities
- annual review of this Strategy.

Child protection and a culture of safety is everyone's responsibility Windsor Road Baptist Church is committed to considering and implementing new ways of communicating this.

Support

Windsor Road Baptist Church recognises that staff and volunteers may require support to deal with issues such as behaviour management, stress, conflict, bullying including cyberbullying, child protection concerns, breaches of this Strategy and dealing with disclosures or suspicions of harm. As such the Safe Church Coordinator will ensure support is available.

The types of support that will be made available include:

- risk management guidance from the Church's workplace health and safety officer/s.
- annual training and specific training as required.
- partnering with external support and counselling services.
- implementing mentoring programs.
- mediation or other alternative conflict resolution techniques.

The Royal Commission Recommendations to all Religious Institutions in Australia

Recommendation 16.31

All institutions that provide activities or services of any kind, under the auspices of a particular religious denomination or faith, through which adults have contact with children, should implement the 10 Child Safe Standards identified by the Royal Commission.

Recommendation 16.32

Religious organisations should adopt the Royal Commission's 10 Child Safe Standards as nationally mandated standards for each of their affiliated institutions.

Recommendation 16.33

Religious organisations should drive a consistent approach to the implementation of the Royal Commission's 10 Child Safe Standards in each of their affiliated institutions.

Recommendation 16.34

Religious organisations should work closely with relevant state and territory oversight bodies to support the implementation of and compliance with the Royal Commission's 10 Child Safe Standards in each of their affiliated institutions.

Recommendation 16.35

Religious institutions in highly regulated sectors, such as schools and out-of-home care service providers, should report their compliance with the Royal Commission's 10 Child Safe Standards, as monitored by the relevant sector regulator, to the religious organisation to which they are affiliated.

Recommendation 16.36

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 1, each religious institution in Australia should ensure that its religious leaders are provided with leadership training both pre- and post-appointment, including in relation to the promotion of child safety.

Recommendation 16.37

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 1, leaders of religious institutions should ensure that there are mechanisms through which they receive advice from individuals with relevant professional expertise on all matters relating to child sexual abuse and child safety. This should include in relation to prevention, policies and procedures and complaint handling. These mechanisms should facilitate advice from people with a variety of professional backgrounds and include lay men and women.

Recommendation 16.38

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 1, each religious institution should ensure that religious leaders are accountable to an appropriate authority or body, such as a board of management or council, for the decisions they make with respect to child safety.

Recommendation 16.39

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 1, each religious institution should have a policy relating to the management of actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise in relation to allegations of child sexual abuse. The policy should cover all individuals who have a role in responding to complaints of child sexual abuse.

Recommendation 16.40

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 2, wherever a religious institution has children in its care, those children should be provided with age-appropriate prevention education that aims to increase their knowledge of child sexual abuse and build practical skills to assist in strengthening self-protective skills and strategies. Prevention education in religious institutions should specifically address the power and status of people in religious ministry and educate children that no one has a right to invade their privacy and make them feel unsafe.

Recommendation 16.41

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 3, each religious institution should make provision for family and community involvement by publishing all policies relevant to child safety on its website, providing opportunities for comment on its approach to child safety, and seeking periodic feedback about the effectiveness of its approach to child safety.

Recommendation 16.42

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, each religious institution should require that candidates for religious ministry undergo external psychological testing, including psychosexual assessment, for the purposes of determining their suitability to be a person in religious ministry and to undertake work involving children.

Recommendation 16.43

Each religious institution should ensure that candidates for religious ministry undertake minimum training on child safety and related matters, including training that:

- a) equips candidates with an understanding of the Royal Commission's 10 Child Safe Standards
- b) educates candidates on:

- I. professional responsibility and boundaries, ethics in ministry and child safety
- II. policies regarding appropriate responses to allegations or complaints of child sexual abuse, and how to implement these policies
- III. how to work with children, including childhood development
- IV. identifying and understanding the nature, indicators and impacts of child sexual abuse.

Recommendation 16.44

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, each religious institution should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, are subject to effective management and oversight and undertake annual performance appraisals.

Recommendation 16.45

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, 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.

Recommendation 16.46

Religious institutions which receive people from overseas to work in religious or pastoral ministry, or otherwise within their institution, should have targeted programs for the screening, initial training and professional supervision and development of those people. These programs should include material covering professional responsibility and boundaries, ethics in ministry and child safety.

Recommendation 16.47

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 7, each religious institution should require that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, undertake regular training on the institution's child safe policies and procedures. They should also be provided with opportunities for external training on best practice approaches to child safety.

Recommendation 16.48

Religious institutions which have a rite of religious confession for children should implement a policy that requires the rite only be conducted in an open space within the clear line of sight of another adult. The policy should specify that, if another adult is not available, the rite of religious confession for the child should not be performed.

Recommendation 16.49

Codes of conduct in religious institutions should explicitly and equally apply to people in religious ministry and to lay people.

Recommendation 16.50

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 7, each religious institution should require all people in religious ministry, leaders, members of boards, councils and other governing bodies, employees, relevant contractors and volunteers to undergo initial and periodic training on its code of conduct. This training should include:

- a) what kinds of allegations or complaints relating to child sexual abuse should be reported and to whom.
- b) identifying inappropriate behaviour which may be a precursor to abuse, including grooming
- c) recognising physical and behavioural indicators of child sexual abuse
- d) that all complaints relating to child sexual abuse must be taken seriously, regardless of the perceived severity of the behaviour.

Recommendation 16.51

All religious institutions' complaint handling policies should require that, upon receiving a complaint of child sexual abuse, an initial risk assessment is conducted to identify and minimise any risks to children.

Recommendation 16.52

All religious institutions' complaint handling policies should require that, if a complaint of child sexual abuse against a person in religious ministry is plausible, and there is a risk that person may come into contact with children in the course of their ministry, the person be stood down from ministry while the complaint is investigated.

Recommendation 16.53

The standard of proof that a religious institution should apply when deciding whether a complaint of child sexual abuse has been substantiated is the balance of probabilities, having regard to the principles in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw*.

Recommendation 16.54

Religious institutions should apply the same standards for investigating complaints of child sexual abuse whether or not the subject of the complaint is a person in religious ministry.

Recommendation 16.55

Any person in religious ministry who is the subject of a complaint of child sexual abuse which is substantiated on the balance of probabilities, having regard to the principles in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw*, or who is convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse, should be permanently removed from ministry. Religious institutions should also take all necessary steps to effectively prohibit the person from in any way holding himself or herself out as being a person with religious authority.

Recommendation 16.56

Any person in religious ministry who is convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse should:

- a) in the case of Catholic priests and religious leaders, be dismissed from the priesthood and/or dispensed from his or her vows as a religious
- b) in the case of Anglican clergy, be deposed from holy orders
- c) in the case of Uniting Church ministers, have his or her recognition as a minister withdrawn
- d) in the case of an ordained person in any other religious denomination that has a concept of ordination, holy orders and/or vows, be dismissed, deposed or otherwise effectively have their religious status removed.

Recommendation 16.57

Where a religious institution becomes aware that any person attending any of its religious services or activities is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse, or has been convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse, the religious institution should:

- a) assess the level of risk posed to children by that perpetrator's ongoing involvement in the religious community
- b) take appropriate steps to manage that risk.

Recommendation 16.58

Each religious organisation should consider establishing a national register which records limited but sufficient information to assist affiliated institutions identify and respond to any risks to children that may be posed by people in religious or pastoral ministry.

Guidelines for using Electronic Communication in Ministries involving Vulnerable People

Preface

Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic called upon our Church ministries to adapt and work to stay connected through online platforms. In this process, it became important to consider best practice for online safety, particularly in relation to ministries and activities involving vulnerable people.

For the purpose of this guide, where the term “young people” is used, it includes children, youth and vulnerable people.

For many of our young people, online platforms such as social media, text messaging, and video are a natural way for them to interact and express themselves. This affords an opportunity for the Church to create safe places for young people to build community, explore faith and grow as disciples, and to receive care and support.

Caution must be taken however, when engaging with young people in the various forms of electronic communication and social media. Intentional boundaries are fundamental to keeping young people safe. As such, this tool provides guidance for churches to assist their decision making in setting up different ways to deliver ministers and activities in an online context.

It remains essential that church staff and volunteers continue to adhere to the Church’s Code of Conduct for standards of behaviour when interacting with young people via online platforms.

Guiding Principles

Consent

Parental/Guardian consent must be in place before engaging online or via any form of electronic communication with young person. Verbal consent would be considered unacceptable as it does not meet the principle of Traceability. No online engagement or electronic communications can occur where consent has not been given or where the Parent/Guardian has indicated that they do not want online communications to take place between their young person and church staff or volunteers.

Any online group involving children 12 years or younger must be set up using only a Parent/Guardian’s email and login, and login-in details must not disclose a child’s full name. Groups involving teenagers must ensure that Parental/ Guardian consent covers off young person’s email being used as a login.

Consent should also encompass the details of all platforms to be used, the purpose of the engagement/activities and how information will be managed (accessed/stored).

Additionally, consent should identify specific timeframes for when church staff and volunteers are permitted to communicate online with young people. For example, not before 8am or after 8pm.

Traceability

Does the platform have a digital footprint, and can it be accessed if the need arises? The Church should consider what platforms they will use and how they will effectively achieve the principle of Traceability and being able to review online activity/engagement.

Accountability

What “in person” practices in ministry can be replicated in an online environment to ensure accountability remains in place? For example, student/leader ratios, two leaders present during online engagement etc.

Transparency

How is church governance and oversight enacted in implementing online ministries? For example, have processes/procedures relating to ministries and activities been updated and endorsed by the church leadership? Additionally, the concept of Transparency should be considered in the context of oversight, data protection and also privacy obligations. For example, considering the privacy requirements of gathering people's data to an online platform. How is this data stored and used by the platform? Who has access to this information now and in the long term?

Safety

Online platforms are ever changing, and churches need to consider how to remain up to date with changes to privacy settings/restrictions etc.

The following are recommended considerations for incorporating into online ministries and activities for young people:

Live Stream

- When using live stream, no images of young people should be used if the Church does not have consent for their image to be online, or if there is a custody issue that could endanger them if they were seen online.
- If a church is streaming in a way where members of the public can access the stream, chat functions should be disabled.
- If a church is streaming in a way where members of the public cannot access the stream (closed Facebook group for example) chat is permitted.

Online Groups

- Links to any online platform should not be available in the public domain, instead they should only be sent to those invited into the group.

- Private chat functions through these platforms should be disabled.
- Maintain a minimum of 2 staff/volunteer leaders and a minimum of 2 participants
- Consider gender dynamics. For example, never have a group discussion where the group of participants are all of the opposite gender.
- Photographs/screenshots should not be permitted.

Social Media

- Comply with the terms of any social media platform. For example, Facebook and Instagram have a minimum age of 13 years for someone to have a personal account.
- Where possible use of social media with young people should be via church/ministry accounts rather than personal accounts.
- Establish systems to enable a minimum 2 staff or volunteer leaders able to see all communications with a young person. This includes direct messages, text, email, social media, video chats, clips, etc
- Retain chat history. The church and its staff and volunteers should not use social media platforms for ministry activities which cannot be traceable.
- Consider privacy settings which prevent personal contacts from seeing or interacting with the young people contacts connected to your ministry.
- Care must be taken with online communication, and consideration given to how an engagement may be perceived differently by those who view/receive it. For example, ensuring the text/image is beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.

Text Based Communications

- To assist with the principle of Accountability, all emails to young people be cc'd to a Church email address or the email address of a supervising Church staff member.
- Where possible text/direct message communication should be restricted to providing general and publicly available information or must have another person added to the conversation.
- Emails, texts, and direct messages that are sent or received should be kept and stored in an appropriate place for the purposes of Traceability.

Risk Assessments

Online events/activities should be risk managed as would be done for any in person event using a risk assessment tool.

When completing risk assessments, consideration needs to be given to how to communicate to parents/guardians the event/activity specific details (outside of the original consent) as would be done when hosting any in person event/activity.

Awareness and Training

The Church needs to provide training and education to staff/volunteers around etiquette and expectations as well as protecting personal and private information during online activities/engagements.

Churches can also encourage Parents/Guardians to educate themselves and their young people about online safety. The QLD Family and Child Commission has a variety of [online safety resources](#) useful in this area.

Disqualifying Persons and Disqualifying Offences

Disqualified Person

You are a disqualified person if you are:

- convicted of a disqualifying offence, which includes
 - having sex with a child (regardless of the type of relationship, e.g. teenage boyfriend/girlfriend, unlawful carnal knowledge)
 - other child-related sex or pornography offences
 - murder and other serious sexual or violent offences against an adult or child (regardless of the penalty and regardless of when and where it occurred)
- a reportable offender under the [Child Protection \(Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order\) Act 2004](#)
- the subject of an offender prohibition order under the [Child Protection \(Offender Prohibition Order\) Act 2008](#)
- prohibited by a court from applying for or holding a blue card

or

- the subject of a sexual offender order under the [Dangerous Prisoners \(Sexual Offenders\) Act 2003](#).

Disqualified Offence

All disqualifying offences are listed in the [Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening\) Act 2000](#).

An offence is categorised as a disqualifying offence under the Act if it is an offence:

- against a provision of an Act detailed in the list of disqualifying offences
- under a law of another jurisdiction that, if it had been committed in Queensland, would have constituted an offence of a kind detailed in the list of disqualifying offences
- of counselling or procuring the commission of an offence of a kind mentioned in the list of disqualifying offences
- of attempting, or of conspiring, to commit an offence of a kind detailed in the list of disqualifying offences

- that has, as an element, an intention to commit an offence of a kind mentioned in the list of disqualifying offences

or

- that, at the time it was committed, was an offence of a kind mentioned in the list of disqualifying offences.

View the [list of disqualifying offences](#).

[More information on who cannot apply for or hold a Blue Card](#)

Facts on Child Sexual Abuse

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse occurs when an adult, adolescent or child use their power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity. Child sexual abuse can cause physical and emotional harm to a child.

Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional and can include but is not limited to the following:

- kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner
- exposing a sexual body part to a child
- having sexual relations with a child
- talking in a sexually explicit way that is not age or developmentally appropriate
- making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child
- sending obscene mobile text messages or emails to a child
- fondling a child in a sexual manner
- persistently intruding on a child's privacy
- penetrating the child's vagina or anus by either the penis, finger or any other object
- oral sex
- rape
- incest
- showing pornographic films, magazines, internet sites or photographs to a child
- having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner
- forcing a child to watch a sexual act
- child prostitution.

Grooming behaviour of people responsible for the sexual abuse of children

Grooming refers to the process by which some people who are responsible for the sexual abuse of children groom people in the community, such as parents, carers, teachers and children to establish trust and gain access to a child.

Some people who are responsible for the sexual abuse of children spend considerable time targeting, enticing and trapping a child for sexual purposes. Grooming involves the person responsible for the sexual abuse integrating themselves into places where they have access to children and then grooming the adults to create opportunities for the person to abuse their victims. Grooming behaviour can be difficult to identify as it can sometimes include the use of in some contexts, appropriate behaviours. Some examples of grooming behaviour can include a person:

- regularly offering to babysit a child for free or take a child on overnight outings alone
- actively isolating a child from other adults or children
- insisting on physical affection such as kissing, hugging, wrestling or tickling even when the child clearly does not want it
- being overly interested in the sexual development of a child
- insisting on uninterrupted time alone with the child
- enjoying taking lots of pictures of children
- sharing alcohol or drugs with younger children or adolescents
- exposing their genitals to a child.

Indicators of sexual abuse

A child may say things, do things or exhibit physical signs that may indicate sexual abuse, even if they do not disclose clear information.

Some indicators of child sexual abuse may include:

- displaying greater sexual knowledge than normally expected for their age or developmental level
- inappropriate sexual play and behaviour with themselves, other children or dolls and toys
- hints about sexual activity through actions or comments that are inappropriate to the child's age or developmental level
- excessive masturbation or masturbation in public after kindergarten age
- persistent bedwetting, urinating or soiling in clothes
- persistent sexual themes in their drawings or play time

- running away
- destroying property
- hurting or mutilating animals
- creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse
- difficulty concentrating or being withdrawn or overly obedient
- having unexpected redness, soreness or injury around the penis, vagina, mouth or anus
- having torn, stained or bloody clothing, especially underwear
- recurring themes of power or control in play.

Should any of the above be present, a child may need parents or other adults to take action to keep them safe from any further harm. Without a disclosure it is important to talk to a sexual abuse specialist about observed behaviours.

Protecting children from sexual abuse

To help protect a child from sexual abuse:

- be suspicious if an adult wants to spend time alone with your child
- be wary of people who are overly affectionate or generous with gifts to your child
- be careful about the company your children keep. Watch children's behaviour for signs of stress — their reactions to certain individuals may tell you something
- teach children about being safe in a way that does not frighten them
- teach children that the parts of their bodies covered by underwear are private
- teach children anatomical names for body parts, such as penis or vagina
- encourage children to tell someone they trust if anyone tries to touch their private parts
- carefully consider who else you might want your children to tell if you are not available — let your children know these contact options
- speak to children who are under school age about personal safety in simple language and repeat the same rules often — play 'what if' games to reinforce the message
- teach children of primary school age basic family safety rules and how to apply them in potentially dangerous situations
- assist adolescents to think independently, and to develop decision-making and assertiveness skills

Queensland Baptists Safe Church Strategy – Working with Vulnerable People

- know who is supervising your children when they are away from home
- listen to your children and trust what they say, even if it shocks you — children rarely make up stories about sexual abuse.

Because you cannot be with them all the time

You have a right to know your children are safe. Ask organisations about their policies, activities and who is looking after your children.

Remember:

- People who work with children have an obligation to keep them safe.
- Adults who work with children must have a blue card from the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.
- Organisations should have written policies available to read showing how they respond to child sexual abuse allegations.
- Organisations must provide activities that are suited to the developmental stage of the children involved.
- Organisations must supervise all children in their care.

Where to get help

If you would like further information on child sexual abuse, an information booklet is available from Child Safety Services. If you suspect a child has experienced harm, or is at risk of experiencing harm, there are a number of agencies that can provide support and advice.

The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women

- Contact **the department** on **13 QGOV (13 74 68)**.
- After business hours, call the Child Safety After-Hours Service Centre, freecall **1800 177 135**.
- Visit [Child safety](#) website

Queensland Police Service

The Queensland Police Service has a number of dedicated Child Protection and Investigation Units across the state to investigate criminal matters relating to child abuse. If you have concerns about criminal behaviour, contact your local police station.

In an emergency, call **000**.

Parentline

Parentline is a free, confidential telephone service that provides counselling and referrals. Counsellors are available from 8am to 10pm, seven days a week. Call **1300 30 1300** to speak with a Parentline counsellor.

Source: QLD Government Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women

More Information – Child Abuse

[Department of Children, Youth Justice & Multicultural Affairs - Child Abuse Information](#)

Persons of Concern and Individual Accountability & Safety Agreements

[Persons of Concern Brochure](#)

Risk Management Plans for High Risk Activities & Special Events

[BIS Risk Management Guidance](#)

[BIS Activity/Event Risk Assessment Template](#)

Blue Card Register

[Blue Card Register Template](#)

Posters for Display

[Poster—No Card, No Start changes are coming](#)

[Poster—New laws for Restricted Person, Restricted Employment](#)

Social Media Promotional Resources

[No Card No Start Campaign Promotional Kit](#)

Useful References

1. Blue Card Services website:

www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/

2. Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women:

www.csyw.qld.gov.au/department-child-safety-youth-women

3. Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020

<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/asmade/act-2020-032>

4. Family and Child Connect Services:

www.qld.gov.au/community/caring-child/family-child-connect

5. Queensland Police Service:

www.police.qld.gov.au

6. Department of Education and Training:

www.deta.qld.gov.au

7. Early Childhood Education and Care:

www.deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/

8. Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships:

www.datsip.qld.gov.au/

9. Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel to access legislation such as the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000, Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011, Child Protection Act 1999 etc:

www.legislation.qld.gov.au/OQPChome.htm

10. Play by the Rules:

<http://www.playbytherules.net.au/>

11. Bullying and cyberbullying:

www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/health/bullying

12. Australian Human Rights Commission – Children’s Rights

www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights

13. Queensland Family and Child Commission

www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/