

West Melbourne Baptist Church

Safe Organisation Policy and Procedure

Glossary

Within this document the following definitions apply:

Child: For the purposes of this policy a child is considered anyone up to the age of 18. All children are considered vulnerable.

Vulnerable adult: Is a person who is more susceptible to harm due to factors such as (but not limited to) advanced age, disability, illness, residency status, financial hardship and/or past experience of abuse.

Purpose and Context

Policy

This Safe Organisation Policy was approved by the West Melbourne Baptist Church membership. This policy will be reviewed every year and we undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from vulnerable adults, children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers. It applies to all staff, volunteers, children and individuals involved in our organisation. Our church commits to continuous improvement through monitoring, reviewing and adapting policies and procedures in response to changing circumstances, legislation and the needs of those in our care.

This church is committed to promoting the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults who participate in any of its ministries or activities by protecting their rights and also protecting them from harm. We do this through fostering a culture of child and adult safety through constant communication and reinforcement of this commitment at all levels and ministries in our church.

This is to be achieved through the following items:

1. A policy committing the organisation to providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults. (This policy.)
2. A Code of Practice covering pastors, employees and volunteers who may come into contact with children and vulnerable adults.
3. A process for screening applicants for ministry, employment and volunteering, including referee checks, Working with Children checks and criminal record checks.
4. A process for handling allegations of sexual abuse and for complying with mandatory reporting obligations.
5. Training for pastors, employees and volunteers in the above policies /procedures (See this procedure).

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Commitment to Safety

All people who come to the West Melbourne Baptist Church and its ministries have a right to feel and be safe, to be respected, and to have their views and opinions valued at all times. The welfare of the vulnerable people in our care will always be our priority and we have zero tolerance towards abuse.

We teach all people attending our programs about what they can do if they feel unsafe.

We listen to and act on any concerns that children, parents, carers and adults raise with us.

We are intentionally inclusive by including all vulnerable people and their parents and carers in planning and decision making wherever possible. We do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.

West Melbourne Baptist Church staff and volunteers proactively encourage children and vulnerable adults to express their views and give suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them.

Our safe church culture is embedded in all levels of our organisation. Our “Commitment to Safety” statement is used freely in staff email signatures, on event flyers, posters on our noticeboards, job advertisements and more.

Commitment to Safety Statement:

The West Melbourne Baptist Church is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and vulnerable adults. We have a zero-tolerance policy for abuse of any kind.

Relevant Legislation and Other Documentation

These policies and procedures are to be read and implemented alongside relevant legislation related to the protection and welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

Procedure

Our mandate comes directly from God. God identified classes of vulnerable people who are to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (e.g. Ex 22:21-22, Deut 10:17-19, Jer 22:2-4, James 1:27). We also live in a country that legislates for people’s safety, particularly in the area of child protection. This procedure has been developed to help us live out in a practical way our Biblical mandate and our responsibilities under State and Federal legislation.

Screening process

The West Melbourne Baptist Church applies the best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, leaders and volunteers. Our screening process helps us to minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of power within the church. It enables us to be fair and transparent in our screening processes for all staff and volunteers.

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More detailed information can be found in our engagement and screening of staff, leaders and volunteers policy and procedure. Below are some of the procedures we utilise in order to maintain high standards when it comes to the safety of children and vulnerable adults:

- We will screen and train all prospective leaders in our ministries before they are appointed, and we will screen and train all existing leaders.
- Prior to recruitment of any staff, leaders or volunteers the position description for the particular role will be reviewed and updated if necessary. Then the position will be advertised appropriately.
 - Shortlisted applicants must demonstrate a willingness to commit to the mission and values of the Church.
 - Shortlisted applicants must be interviewed. The interview panel must include two (or more) from the following: the ministry coordinator, the Senior Pastor, deacons, as a part of an accountable recruitment, selection and appointment team. One of the interview panel should be the program leader/direct supervisor.
 - The applicant must provide at least two referees and one of the interviewers must contact these referees. For church leader positions, one of the referees must be from the applicants immediate previous Church if the applicant is not from the West Melbourne Baptist Church.

Successful applicants will:

- Undergo a National Police Criminal Record Check (to be updated every three years);
- Undergo or already hold a current Working with Children Check (volunteer or employee, as appropriate);
- Complete a West Melbourne Baptist Church Application Screening Form;
- Sign the West Melbourne Baptist Church Code of Conduct, and;
- Participate in a documented induction process to enable them to safely fulfil their position. This must include:
 - Receiving a copy of their position description
 - Receiving copies of the Church Safety Policy and Procedure, Mandatory Reporting Obligations Procedure, and the Handling Allegations of Sexual Abuse Policy and Procedure
 - Instructions on how to access and complete other key documents, such as the Safe Church Concerns Form.

Induction should familiarise the individual with formal or informal support mechanisms, so that staff and volunteers have a clear understanding of who to go to for support and what type of support is available to them.

There will be a minimum period of 6 months of regularly attending the West Melbourne Baptist Church for all prospective volunteer leaders. Pastors are exempt from this attendance period as they undergo a more rigorous screening process.

If offences are identified through the above process, depending on the nature of the offence(s), it will remain the discretion of the senior pastor and leadership team as to the applicant's future involvement in the West Melbourne Baptist Church.

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Sexual abuse-related offences will preclude that person from having any contact with, or responsibilities involving children/youth. In some cases, an offender may not be permitted to attend the church, or any associated program under any circumstances. The BUV Professional Standards Consultant must be contacted and consulted in this situation.

BUV Professional Standards Consultant:

Brenda Williams

Phone: 0425 752 238

Email: brenda.williams@buv.com.au

Training

We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders (including pastors, employees and volunteers). All leaders must agree to follow the Code of Conduct. All leaders will receive training on the requirements of the Code, before signing it, so that it is understood and put into practice by all leaders and volunteers.

We require all staff, leaders and volunteers to be familiar with and trained in this Church Safety Policy and Procedure, Code of Conduct, Mandatory Reporting Obligations Procedure, and Reporting and Handling Allegations of Sexual Abuse Policy and Procedure. This may occur through a one-on-one meeting with the ministry coordinator conducted prior to commencing ministry or may be part of a regular training session for the whole team.

We require that the following leaders attend a Safe Church Awareness Workshop (or equivalent) within their first year of ministry and attend a refresher workshop every three years:

- Church secretary, treasurer, pastor(s), deacons, pastoral care coordinator and paid staff
- Main leader(s) or coordinators of every ministry/program
- Any leader or volunteer working with children in any capacity.

This training covers a range of topics including risk management, indicators of abuse, responding to disclosures, and mandatory reporting of suspected sexual abuse.

Additional ministry-specific training will be provided as required, according to the role held. This may include but is not limited to: Church Administration Workshop, First Aid, Food Safety and Handling.

Pastors must engage with the BUV accreditation process (including attending BUV Professional standards workshops), receive training in responding to complaints and safety concerns raised, as well as some form of guided reflective practice such as: supervision, coaching, mentoring or spiritual direction.

The West Melbourne Baptist Church leadership has the responsibility to ensure that our church programs are adequately resourced with staff and volunteers and have the required equipment for the safe and effective running of the program. The West Melbourne Baptist Church leadership will provide ongoing support and supervision for all staff and volunteers, to ensure they feel valued, respected and fairly-treated. Additionally, the leadership will undertake with each leader/volunteer an annual process of position review to provide an opportunity for mutual feedback and encouragement.

Policy Information

Approved By	Community, Deacons and Staff
Approval Date	May 2020
Review Date	March 2021
Control File Title	Safe Organisation Policy and Procedure
Version Number	1.1
Superseded Documents	V1.0

Policy Changes

DATE	REASON FOR CHANGE	MADE BY
15 May 2020	Policy name updated to Organisation from Church to be inclusive of other areas such as Community Centre.	Office Manager