



SAFE SPACES

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Blue Card Services (a part of the Queensland Government) requires all mandated organisations working with Children and Young People to develop and implement a Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy.

This Safe Spaces Safeguarding Policy (hereinafter referred to as “the Policy”) is the Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy of Acacia Ridge Baptist Church, hereinafter referred to as “the Church”.

Please note: If your church has an annual turnover exceeding \$3 million, you will also fall into the category of complying with the Australian Privacy Principles.

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1. Context

The Church will adopt this Policy on an annual basis. Its continual implementation by the Church Governance Group is required to ensure:

- a culture of safety is maintained in the Church;
- that the Church is compliant with legislation relating to reporting harm and protecting Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults; and
- that the Church meets its insurance requirements in the area of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

2. Purpose

Underlying this Policy is the acknowledgement that safe spaces begin and end with the knowledge that God's love is for all people. The Church is committed to the Biblical call to care for the vulnerable and acknowledges God's special concern for the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed. There are many biblical references to this call. We reference the following as a specific mandate from God to ensure safety and protection especially for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults in our community.

- "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31)
- "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow." (Isaiah 1:17)
- "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." (Proverbs 31:8)
- "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." (John 15:12)
- "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10:14)
- "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me." (Mark 9:37)

With this in mind, the Church has adopted this Safe Spaces Safeguarding Policy to:

- Provide a safeguarding framework to inform, guide and support the stakeholders who work with and participate in our ministries and activities; and
- Fulfill our legal and insurance obligations in relation to:
 - staff and volunteers engaged in working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults; and
 - reporting matters, including child sexual abuse, sexual misconduct and reportable conduct involving a child, to government authorities.

This safeguarding policy outlines the commitment of the Church to comply with the Queensland’s Blue Card Systems 8 Mandatory Requirements¹. These include:

OUR 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 stakeholders who interact with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.
OUR CAPABILITY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Written procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers.
MANAGING CONCERNS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Policies & procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines. 5. A plan for managing breaches of your risk management strategy. 6. Risk management plans for high-risk activities and special events.
MAINTAINING CONSISTENCY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Policies & procedures for managing compliance with the blue card system. 8. Strategies for communication & support.

3. Scope

This Strategy applies to:

- all Church Governance Group members, staff, and volunteers; and
- all people who are involved in or attend the Church and its programs, including visitors, parents, and contractors.

4. Definitions

Abuse – Any form of abuse, exploitation, coercion or ill-treatment. This might include but is not limited to physical abuse, verbal or emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, sexual abuse, mental or psychological abuse, or neglect.

¹ Note: The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended the adoption of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. At the time this policy was written those National Principles have not been adopted as part of the law in Queensland. Instead, in Queensland organisations such as QB must comply with the 8 Mandatory Requirements of the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020*.

Blue Card – The card issued by Queensland Government’s Blue Card Services after an application is received, verifying suitability for working with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. A positive notice always accompanies a Blue Card approval. Where the term ‘Blue Card’ is used in this policy, it also refers to the positive notice issued by Blue Card Services.

Children - An individual under the age of 16 years old.

Safeguarding - Appropriate measures put in place to protect Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults from harm.

Stakeholders - Refers to all people (other than staff or volunteers) who have contact with a ministry involving Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. These may include parents, carers, the participants themselves, visitors, and contractors to the ministry.

Vulnerable Adult - 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 and includes those who suffer disadvantage such as social and financial hardship.

Young person / people - Refers to a person / people who is / are 16 or 17 years old.

5. Role Definitions

Please refer to the Position Description of each role for more information.

Junior Volunteer – under 18 years of age - Refers to volunteers under the age of 18 who have contact with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults under the supervision of an adult Team Member/Ministry Leader. Whilst they do not have the leadership responsibilities of an adult, it is important that there is appropriate screening, training and management.

Governance Group Members - Leaders appointed by the Church according to its constitution as responsible and accountable to the church members for the governance of the Church. Can include elders, deacons, council members, board members or pastoral staff.

Ministry Leader - Refers to the person (staff or volunteer) leading a ministry, program or activity which involves children, young people or vulnerable adults.

Safe Spaces Coordinator(s) - Refers to the person (ideally two staff members or volunteers) appointed by the Church Governance Group to manage the Safe Spaces Team in practical implementation of this strategy under the oversight of the Church Governance Group. Ideally coordinator(s) would have experience in best practice for child safety and either a Governance Group member or an experienced Ministry Leader. Safe Spaces Coordinators must report to the Senior Pastor when critical incidents occur.

Safe Spaces Team - Where achievable, it is recommended to have a team of people (staff or volunteers) appointed by the Church Governance Group to assist the Safe Spaces Coordinator(s) in the practical implementation of this strategy under the oversight of the Church Governance Group. Ideally this team will include a representative from the Governance Group, ministry leaders, an administrator and someone with experience in best practice for child safety (e.g.: police, teacher, doctor, child safety officer, lawyer, nurse).

Team Member - Refers to both paid staff and volunteers who have contact with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

6. Policy

The following outlines the Church's commitment to Queensland's 8 Mandatory Requirements that are mandated by Queensland's Blue Card System.

6.1 Mandatory Requirement 1: Statement of Commitment

At our Church, we believe it is important to respect and treat everyone as unique individuals created by God, and to give special attention to the care, protection and wellbeing of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

Our church is committed to being a safe space for all and will provide a supportive environment by:

- ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately screened and trained and behave in a manner that resembles and represents Christ's attitude and approach;
- providing safe environments and ministries that promote spiritual, social, and physical safety and personal growth and development; and
- promoting a culture of safety throughout the Church, constantly communicating, and reinforcing our commitment across all aspects of ministries and activities.

We have zero tolerance for any form of abuse or harm to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults and are committed to actively seeking to prevent this abuse and harm. This includes maintaining an open and aware culture, treating all concerns and allegations raised seriously, not minimising the impact of abuse and harm on the victim, and promptly responding to all concerns and allegations.

The Church is dedicated to providing safe spaces for everyone and are committed to fulfilling our responsibilities under the Mandatory Requirements set out by the Queensland Government Blue Card System.

For more details, please see: Guidelines for Statements of Commitment.

6.2 Mandatory Requirement 2: Code of conduct

We recognise that everyone is important to God, and therefore to us. All care is taken by the church to provide a safe environment for all involved in our ministries. As well as a Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers, the Church has expectations for children, youth, and parents, carers and visitors whilst attending or interacting in our ministries.

These Codes of Conduct define expectations relating to standards of behaviour for all people involved with the Church and its ministries. It provides clear guidelines about what is expected, the consequences of not meeting these expectations and information on how to report inappropriate behaviour.

These Codes of Conduct will be:

- part of the selection and training process for working or volunteering at the Church;
- visible to any guests or visitors participating in ministries or activities involving children, young people or vulnerable adults; and
- reviewed by the Church Governance Group and the Safe Spaces Team on an annual basis.

For more details, please see: Guidelines for Code of Conduct.

6.3 Mandatory Requirement 3: Recruitment, Selection, Training and Management

6.3.1 Recruitment and Selection of Staff and Volunteers

The Church recognises the importance of recruiting staff and volunteers who have the right gifts, skills, and abilities to fulfill their roles. Whilst this is important for all roles in the Church, we especially acknowledge this importance with roles working with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

To ensure this, the Church will screen and train all staff, leaders and volunteers involved in any ministry, program, or activity of the Church. All staff and volunteers are to be recruited, selected, and inducted in accordance with the Procedure for Recruitment and Training of Staff and Volunteers.

6.3.2 Training of Staff and Volunteers

The Church acknowledges the importance of providing initial and ongoing training and support to staff and volunteers.

All staff and volunteers in contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults must undertake mandatory safeguarding training as part of their induction (and every three years thereafter) as well as annual refresher training. This includes training on definitions of abuse, reporting obligations, risk management, duty of care, positional power, transparency and accountability, and protecting vulnerable people.

The Safe Spaces Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that a training plan is set in place and there is adequate recordkeeping of training applied. For details on training requirements refer to the Procedure for Recruitment and Training of Staff and Volunteers.

6.3.3 Management of Standards of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers

The Church expects all staff and volunteers to uphold the relevant Code of Conduct(s) which provide clear guidelines on expected behaviour when working with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults and the consequences of not meeting these expectations.

The Church also expects staff and volunteers to provide safe environments and follow the Guidelines for Creating Safe Environments. Any breaches of these standards will be dealt with under Section 5 – Complaint Handling.

For more details, please see: Procedure for Recruitment and Training of Staff and Volunteers and Guidelines for the Creating Safe Environments.

6.4 Mandatory Requirement 4: Responding to Child Protection Concerns

Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults can only be protected from harm if child protection concerns are reported and dealt with quickly and effectively. Therefore, the Church will ensure appropriate and timely reporting of all disclosures or suspicions of harm and any complaints relating to child protection concerns, especially sexual abuse and/or sexual misconduct involving a child in accordance with the Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns.

The Church will ensure that Child Protection concerns will be reported to its Safe Spaces Coordinator or a member of its Safe Spaces Team as well as to the relevant authorities as soon as possible and in accordance with legislative requirements.

For more details, please see: Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns.

6.5 Mandatory Requirement 5: Complaint Handling

The Church will respond to complaints about breaches of the Code of Conduct quickly and in accordance with the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers. These apply to both minor breaches and serious breaches, including child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct involving a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Any complaints against Queensland Baptist Accredited Pastoral Leaders are to be reported and investigated according to the Queensland Baptists Ethical Issues Response Group Guidelines.

For more details, please see: Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers and the Queensland Baptist Ethical Issues Response Guidelines.

6.6 Mandatory Requirement 6: Creating Safe Environments

The Church will ensure that physical, spiritual, emotional, and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults to be harmed.

6.6.1 Safe Physical Environments

- The Church will comply with Workplace Health and Safety requirements as well as consider the impact of the physical environment on the potential for risk especially to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.
- If the Church property has any residential facility on or adjacent to the church property that is under direct management and control of the Church (including private rental) then the Church will ensure that all regular adult occupants of that property hold a current Blue Card for the duration of their residence.
- The Church will consider whether any ministries it supports, including overseas ministries, have appropriate child protection policies in place. *(If you are a charity this is a requirement under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission [ACNC] external conduct standards.)*

6.6.2 Safe Spiritual and Emotional Environments

- The Church acknowledges and respects the diverse cultural, religious and family beliefs of each child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- The Church desires for all people to feel safe in any of our ministries. This especially applies to those deemed vulnerable in our society. The Church will work with children, young people, vulnerable adults and parents or caregivers to help create supportive and inclusive ministries.
- It is important to us that our Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults feel safe at all times during our ministries. Should they feel unsafe at any point, there are clear guidelines in place as to who they can speak to.

6.6.3 Safe Online Environments

- The Church will promote safe online behaviour in any electronic communication.
- In accordance with current privacy laws, the Church will seek permission to use media (photos, media, etc.) in marketing and promotion and will ensure these remain the property of the Church and are used only within the law.

For more details, please see: Guidelines for Creating Safe Environments.

6.6.4 Risk Management

a. Managing Persons of Concern

A Person of Concern is someone 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;
- 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 Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults because of an adverse risk assessment relating to sexual misconduct;
- Exhibits constant wandering across other people's sexual boundaries.

A Christian congregation can be one of the few places where Persons of Concern, as the recipients of God's forgiveness, can mix with a Christian community. However, that forgiveness does not mean immunity from temptation to re-offend.

Because the Church is committed to providing a safe space for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults, should a Person of Concern be identified within the Church, the Safe Spaces Coordinator and Senior Pastor, in consultation with the QB Professional Standards Officer will assess and manage any person identified as a Persons of Concern in accordance with An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern.

For more details, please see: An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern.

b. Risk Assessments and Management Plans

The Church will ensure that Ministry Leaders assess the risks and complete a Risk Management Plan in relation to any Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adult programs or activities undertaken at, for or with the Church.

- For regular activities, the assessment will be conducted at least annually and whenever there are significant changes in the program activities, attendance, or location.
- For High-Risk Activities or Special Events, the Ministry Leader will complete a risk assessment.

All Risk Management Plans in relation to any Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults are to be approved by the Safe Spaces Team beforehand and communicated with relevant staff and volunteers to ensure appropriate safe standards are met.

The Safe Church Coordinator and Ministry Leaders will ensure that appropriate and reasonable precautions are adopted to address risks identified as part of a risk assessment. When considering what measures are appropriate, Ministry Leaders will consider the likelihood of an incident occurring, the seriousness of the consequences and the difficulty of avoiding the risk.

c. Incident Management – Responding and Reporting

The Church is committed to providing a safe environment for all. Part of this process is ensuring that:

- incidents, whether potential or actual, are responded to in an appropriate way; and
- reporting and analysing occurs to ensure the incident does not happen again.

All incidents (including accidents and disclosures) whether suspected, perceived, potential or actual, will be managed through the Procedure for Responding to an Incident (Minor or Critical) and recorded on the Safe Spaces Incident Response Form.

For more details, please see: Procedure for Responding to an Incident (Minor or Critical) and Safe Spaces Incident Response Form.

6.6.5 Third Parties and Affiliated Entities

The Church will require any third party (tenant or external party using Church property) that provides services to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults to provide a copy of their child and youth risk management strategy at least annually.

The church will ensure that any affiliated entities (any entity or program that is, or is represented as, a ministry of the Church) comply with current child safety standards including annual reports to the Church Governance Group regarding their child and youth risk management strategy.

6.7 Mandatory Requirement 7: Compliance with Queensland's Blue Card Laws

6.7.1 Recordkeeping

The Church complies with recordkeeping requirements of the Blue Card system and with the Safe Spaces Recordkeeping Guidelines that are informed by the Guiding Principles of the Queensland Baptists Data Retention and Destruction Policy (Clauses 2.4 and 4.5).

The Church will retain records in alignment with the Safe Spaces Recordkeeping Guidelines.

- Where records contain, or may contain, sensitive information, they will be kept in a manner that protects confidentiality and will only be accessed by a limited number of authorised persons.
 - Where records are kept in hard copy, they will be held in a secure location with proper consideration of access, and physical conditions.
 - Where records are kept electronically, they will be monitored to ensure security and ongoing accessibility.

*For more details, please see: Recordkeeping Guidelines and the church Privacy Policy**

**Please note: If your church has an annual turnover exceeding \$3 million, you will fall into the category of complying with the Australian Privacy Principles.*

6.7.2 Review and Accountability

a) Internal Review

The Church will review this policy annually, using the Checklist for Annual Internal Review and seeking input from staff, volunteers and stakeholders to which the policy applies.

b) External Review

The Church will seek advice from and communicate with the specialised team available through QB Church Services in regard to:

- Any Child Protection Concerns – contact safespaces@qb.org.au
- Any Safeguarding policy advice and support – contact safespaces@qb.org.au
- Any complaints in regards to Pastors, Staff, Volunteers or Stakeholders – contact pso@qb.org.au
- Any knowledge of a Person of Concern within the Church – contact pso@qb.org.au

6.8 Mandatory Requirement 8: Communication and Support

6.8.1 Communication

The Church recognises this policy is most effective when it is communicated to all stakeholders.

The Safe Spaces Coordinator and the Church Governance Group will:

- Ensure that all stakeholders are aware of responsibilities and understand what is accepted behaviour for interacting with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults;
- Enable individuals to feel comfortable addressing issues of concern; and
- Highlight the importance of the Church's commitment to protecting the safety and wellbeing of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults in our environment.

The Church believes Child protection and a culture of safety is everyone's responsibility, and is committed to considering and implementing new ways of communicating this.

6.8.2 Support

The Church recognises that stakeholders may require support to when dealing with issues such as behaviour management, conflict, bullying, child protection concerns or breaches of this policy. As such, the Safe Spaces Coordinator and Church Governance Group will ensure support is available.

The types of support that may be made available include:

- Partnering with external support and counselling services;
- Seeking guidance and advice from the Church's workplace health and safety officer/s;
- Providing additional training;
- Implementing mentoring or discipleship; or
- Mediation or other conflict resolution techniques.

7. Related Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

- Workplace Health and Safety Policy
- Safe Spaces Safeguarding Policy: Associated Policies, Procedures and Guidelines
 - Privacy Policy (if relevant to your church)

8. Responsibilities & Accountabilities

- Church Governance Group – Approve the policy, instigate annual audit to ensure compliance, oversee effective implementation of these processes.
- Safe Spaces Coordinator and Team – Manage the practical implementation of the Safeguarding policy and conduct an annual audit and review.

9. Approval & Review

Policy Owner:	Acacia Ridge Baptist Church
Approved by:	Barry Barnard (Pastor)
Date Approved:	30 January 2025
Date of Next Review:	30 January 2026

Version Control

Version	Date	Main Changes
1.0	30-01-2025	Downloaded and adopted from QB website