



NARARAVALLEY
BAPTIST CHURCH

Safe Church Policy

Narara Valley Baptist Church

Version 3

May 2022

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1. Document Revision and Review History

1.1. Revision History

Rev	Date	Author	Comments
1.0	24/05/18	Craig Corkill	The Church has been diligent in ensuring that the legislative requirements were being adhered to and thus developed a Child Protection Policy and Abuse Care Team 1998 – 2004 followed by a Child-Safe and Child-Friendly Policy (0-18 Year Olds) 2005 – 2008. This Safe Church Policy replaces the aforementioned policies and its previous versions.
1.2	11/01/19	David Hampe	Change: Recruitment Process, Perm Paid Pastoral and Non-Pastoral staff: Addition of the need for a Police Check
2	12/5/20	Safe Churches Team (2020)	NVBC Safe Church policy aligned with the Baptist Association's recommended Safe Church Policy, with relevant differences included in NVBC policy.
3	26/5/22	Safe Churches Team (2022)	Reviewed as per paragraph 12-Review. Updated by Safe Churches team as required.

1.2. Review History

Rev	Date	Issued By	Approved By	Authorisation Capacity	Publish to Web
3	26/5/22	Safe Churches Team (2022)	NVBC Board	Board Governance	YES

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2. Commitment

Narara Valley Baptist Church (NVBC) is committed to providing places, services and programs that promote physical, emotional and spiritual health and safety and model the love of Christ to all people whom we have contact with.

3. Purpose

NVBC has adopted the *Safe Church Policy* to:

- care for vulnerable people (Deuteronomy 10:18-19)
- help us live out our biblical mandate to ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself’ (Mark 12:30-31);
- implement the 10 Child Safe Standards ; <https://creatingsafespaces.org.au/10-child-safe-standards/>
- provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children, youth and young people and vulnerable adults; and
- meet our legal obligations in relation to:
 - staff and volunteers engaged in Child-related Work; and
 - reporting matters, including Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct, and Reportable Conduct involving a Child, to government authorities.

The *Safe Church Policy* outlines the commitment of NVBC to principles in various areas. More detail regarding the practical implementation of these commitments is available in the relevant procedures and guidelines.

4. Scope

This Policy applies to:

- all Church Leadership, staff and volunteers.
- all people who are involved in or attend NVBC and its programs.

5. Activities and Services for Children at NVBC

As a church, we commit to providing spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

5.1. Church Leadership:

- a. recognise that children, youth and young people are an integral part of NVBC and talk about this in services, sermons, training events and meetings.
- b. involve children, youth and young people in the routine of NVBC life where appropriate
- c. consider the needs of children, youth and young people when they make decisions about budgets, buildings, renovations, use of property, décor, or catering; and
- d. encourage children, youth and young people to have input in decisions that affect them by including them in church forums and meetings when appropriate.

5.2. Safe Church Team:

- a. talk with children, youth and young people about the fact that they have the right to feel safe, to be listened to and to have their views respected (including discussing what they should do and who they should approach if they feel unsafe or hurt, or they suspect that someone else is unsafe or hurt); and
- b. ensure their contact details are accessible to children.

5.3. Staff and volunteers:

- a. listen to children and take seriously what children are saying;
- b. talk with children, youth and young people about the kinds of behaviours, attitudes or 'culture' that they would like to promote in their group;
- c. encourage children, youth and young people to have input regarding the content and activities they would like to be part of their group.

Please see the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People* for more detail at <https://creating safespaces.org.au/resources/>

6. Staff and Volunteers

6.1. Screening, selection and induction of Staff and Volunteers

- a. NVBC will undertake appropriate screening processes for all staff and volunteers
- b. NVBC will engage in fair and transparent selection processes for all staff and volunteers
- c. NVBC will provide appropriate induction for all staff and volunteers
- d. All NVBC staff and volunteers are to be recruited, selected and inducted in accordance with the *Procedure for Recruitment of Employees and Volunteers*.
- e. All OSHC staff (Out of School Hours Care service) will be recruited according to the NVBC *OSHC Policy & Procedures Manual*.

6.2. Training and Resourcing of Staff and Volunteers

- a. NVBC will ensure that staff and volunteers develop the knowledge and skills, according to their role, to create safe spaces for everyone, particularly children, youth and young people.
- b. NVBC will ensure that staff and volunteers have access to information about creating safe spaces and that they all undergo appropriate training regarding the available Procedures, Guidelines and Forms.
- c. NVBC will support staff and volunteers with adequate resources to enable them to maintain and promote safe spaces for everyone, particularly children, youth and young people.
- d. NVBC will implement the *Procedure for Recruitment of Employees and Volunteers*.
- e. NVBC OSHC staff will be supported, trained and resourced according to the NVBC *OSHC Policy & Procedures Manual*.

6.3. Standards of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers

- a. NVBC will provide spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.
- b. NVBC will expect all staff and volunteers to uphold the *Code of Conduct* which includes expected behaviours for those who engage in ministry at NVBC.
- c. NVBC will expect staff and volunteers to follow the relevant NVBC handbooks that have been developed in conjunction with the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*.
- d. NVBC OSHC will expect staff to follow the NVBC *OSHC Policy & Procedures Manual*.

Please see the *Procedure for Recruitment of Employees and Volunteers*, *Ministry Application*, *Code of Conduct*, and *OSHC Policy & Procedures Manual* for more detail.

7. Conflict, Complaints and Concerns

7.1. Responding to Child Protection Concerns

- a. NVBC will ensure appropriate and timely reporting of all child protection concerns and any complaints relating to child sexual abuse and/or sexual misconduct involving a child in accordance with the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*.
- b. NVBC will ensure that all child protection concerns and complaints will be reported to the relevant government departments and, if necessary, Police as soon as possible and in accordance with legislative duties.
- c. NVBC OSHC will ensure appropriate and timely reporting of all child protection concerns and any complaints relating to child sexual abuse and/or sexual misconduct involving a child in accordance with the *OSHC Policy & Procedures Manual*.
- d. NVBC OSHC will ensure that all child protection concerns and complaints will be reported to the relevant government departments and, if necessary, Police as soon as possible and in accordance with legislative duties as outlined in the *OSHC Policy & Procedures Manual*.

7.2. Complaint Handling

- a. NVBC will respond to complaints in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers*.
- b. Where there is a complaint that a staff member or volunteer has engaged in abuse, including child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct involving a child, NVBC will treat the allegation as a serious breach of the *Code of Conduct* and respond in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers* and *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*.
- c. In the event of receiving a complaint that relates to a minor breach of the Code of Conduct or a grievance, NVBC may determine to respond to the matter in accordance with the *Procedure for Resolving Conflict*.
- d. Where there is a complaint that an OSHC staff member or volunteer has engaged in abuse, including child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct involving a child, NVBC OSHC will treat the allegation as a serious breach of the *Code of Conduct* and respond in accordance with the *OSHC Policy & Procedures Manual*.

Please see the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*, the *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers*, and the *OSHC Policy & Procedures Manual* for more detail.

8. Safe Environments

8.1. Physical Environments

- a. NVBC and NVBC OSHC will ensure that physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children, youth and young people to be harmed.
- b. NVBC and NVBC OSHC will comply with Work, Health and Safety requirements.
- c. NVBC and NVBC OSHC will consider the impact of the physical environment on the potential for risk to children, youth, young people and vulnerable people.
- d. NVBC and NVBC OSHC will identify and address risks arising from the physical environment in which programs and activities take place.
- e. NVBC will only partner with ministries, including overseas ministries, that have appropriate child protection practices in place, as outlined in the NVBC *Guidelines for Partnering in Ministry*. (This includes consideration of whether supporting orphanages overseas is appropriate)

8.2. Online Environments

NVBC and NVBC OSHC will promote safe online behaviour in any electronic communication. Staff and volunteers should be careful in the use of SMS, email, social media, and any other digital platforms, that all communication should be beyond reproach, both in words and visual images. Where appropriate, records of sensitive electronic communications should be kept.

- a. Children

Guidelines are set out in the *NVBC Kids Church Volunteer Handbook* and must be followed.

For NVBC OSHC see the *NVBOSHC Handbook*.

- b. Youth and Young People

Guidelines are set out in the *NVBC Youth Green Book Policy* and must be followed.

For NVBC OSHC see the *NVBOSHC Handbook*

The Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People have been used in the creation of relevant handbooks for activities and ministries of NVBC and are available at <https://creatingsafespaces.org.au/resources/>.

9. Risk Management

9.1. Persons of Concern

NVBC will manage any person identified as a Person of Concern in accordance with *An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern*.

<https://creatingsafespaces.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/16-An-Australian-Baptist-response-to-Persons-Of-Concern.pdf>

A person of concern is someone who:

1. has pleaded guilty to, been convicted of, or has admitted to a sexual criminal offence.
2. has been found to have sexually offended, arising through due diligence checks related to recruitment (screening).
3. is currently charged with a sexual offence.
4. has been the subject of an allegation of a sexual offence and this was not appropriately investigated.
5. has been found to have received an adverse risk assessment arising from sexual misconduct
6. is deemed to be a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults because of an adverse risk assessment relating to sexual misconduct.
7. exhibits constant wandering across other peoples' sexual boundaries

9.2. Risk Assessments

- a. NVBC will ensure that Ministry Leaders complete and make a record of a risk assessment in relation to any program or activity undertaken at, for or with NVBC.
 - for regular activities, the risk assessment will be conducted at least annually and whenever there are significant changes in the program activities, attendance or location.
 - for special activities, the Ministry Leader or Safe Church Team will complete a risk assessment.
- b. NVBC 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, NVBC will consider the likelihood of an incident occurring, the seriousness of the consequences and the difficulty of avoiding the risk.
- c. NVBC will store risk assessment forms in a secure location for a period of at least 45 years.

10. Third Parties and Affiliated Entities

- a. NVBC will require any third party (tenant or external party using church property) that provides services to children and/or young people to provide written confirmation of their compliance with the Child Safe Standards at least annually.

- b. NVBC will ensure that any affiliated entities (any entity or program that is, or is represented as, a ministry of NVBC) comply with Child Safe Standards including annual reports to the governance body regarding child safety.

11. Record Keeping

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

Please see the *NVBC Privacy Policy* for more detail.

12. Review and Accountability

12.1. Internal Review

NVBC will review this policy annually.

12.2. External Accountability

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

13. Definitions

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

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

Complaint includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of NVBC's *Code of Conduct* or the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (where applicable). It also includes disclosures made to an institution about any child protection concern.

Creating Safe Spaces means Creating Safe Spaces training offered by the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT or alternative training that is Safe Church Training Agreement approved and has a face-to-face component.

Disclosure means a process by which a person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused or neglected.

Governance body means the body designated by the constitution of NVBC to be responsible for the management of church affairs. This may be the Board, Elders, or NVBC Pastor and Staff Team.

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

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

Reportable Conduct Legislation means
In NSW the *Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)*

Safe Church Register means the register required to record information relating to staff and volunteers who engaged in Child-related Work and their relevant details in accordance with section 9A of the WWCC Legislation.

Vulnerable means the state of being unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason, and includes those that suffer disadvantage such as social and financial hardship.

WWCC Legislation means the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*.

Young person means a person who is 16 or 17 years old.

Safe churches team provide oversight of the church's Safe Church program, including Safe Church Policy and procedures and the management of Safe Church/Child Protection concerns/reports.

14. Referred Documents

- 10 Child Safe Standards - <https://creatingsafespaces.org.au/10-child-safe-standards/>
- Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People - <https://creatingsafespaces.org.au/resources/>
- NVBC OSHC Policy & Procedures Manual – NVBOSCH Office
- Procedure for Recruitment of Employees and Volunteers - <https://www.nvbc.info/policies>
- Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns - <https://www.nvbc.info/policies>
- Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers - <https://www.nvbc.info/policies>
- Procedure for Resolving Conflict - <https://www.nvbc.info/policies>
- Ministry Application – NVBC Church Office
- Code of Conduct - NVBC Church Office
- NVBC Guidelines for Partnering in Ministry - NVBC Church Office
- NVBC Kids Church Volunteer Handbook - NVBC Church Office
- NVBC Youth Green Book Policy - NVBC Church Office
- NVBOSHC Handbook – NVBOSCH Office
- An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern - <https://creatingsafespaces.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/16-An-Australian-Baptist-response-to-Persons-Of-Concern.pdf>
- NVBC Privacy Policy - NVBC Church Office