

Code of Conduct Agreement Form

Date

Name

.....

Church Responsibility

.....

I have received a copy of the Code of Conduct for those persons working with children / young people at Grace Christian Church, Buderim and have read and agree to abide by the Code and its requirements.

.....

Signature

Received by

Noted in Register date

RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

For Grace Christian Church, Buderim

(a ministry of the Westminster Presbyterian Church), Stringybark Road, Buderim.

PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS CODE FOR THOSE MINISTERING TO AND/OR IN CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

PREAMBLE:

The members, officers and staff of Grace Christian Church, Buderim, are committed to the Christian education, safety, welfare and protection of all children and young people in their care by the very nature and purpose of following the precepts of Scripture.

Children are a gift from God, to their family and to the church and are a vital part of the church body. In our church meetings they are rightly to be affirmed in the fact that they belong to the church of Jesus Christ – that the church is theirs as well as ours. It is the responsibility of the church to spiritually nurture children and young people, supporting and complementing the spiritual nurture received in the home.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT:

In the church, as in the home and wider community, a child has the right to feel safe and be protected from harm at all times. 'Harm' is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional well being. Harm can be caused by:

- Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect,
- Sexual abuse or exploitation, or
- taking advantage in other ways

While children and young people are present in the meetings of the church, the church leadership and wider church membership are responsible for their physical, spiritual, emotional and moral security. To strengthen this latter field of responsibility, the elders of Grace Christian Church (the Session), Buderim have prepared a code of protection behaviour both for those ministering to children and young people (and the wider church membership).

For the purposes of this document, children and young people are defined as any persons up to the age of eighteen.

- **All leaders within the church are to receive a copy of this document and must read and agree to the contents or be not authorised to lead or organise programs or activities involving children defined as up to 18 years of age within the church authority. This is to be acknowledged on a Code of Conduct Register held by the Church Administrator..**
- **All leaders of children's' programs or activities are to obtain a blue card before commencing duties (*see details under 'screening'*).**
- **All leaders and organisers of children's programs or activities are to personally agree to the Code of Conduct contained in this document.**

CODE OF CONDUCT:

- RESPONSIBILITY:** Each children's / young people's worker and church member must understand that our church children are God's children and the children of their parents, and we have a responsibility to God and to their parents to ensure their physical, spiritual, emotional and moral safety.
- PHYSICAL CONTACT:** While physical contact between adult church members and children (other than their own children) should not be forbidden, it must be regulated in the interests of propriety. Touch of a child or young person should be limited to a pat on the head, touch on the shoulder or arm or holding of the hand. Adults should not initiate hugging. However, if the child initiates the hug (especially if the child is upset and requires comforting), the adult can return the hug (to reject the child could be emotionally damaging to the child) but should confine the hug to the upper body and should extricate himself / herself as soon as is reasonably possible.
- SITUATIONS:** An adult, other than a parent of the child, should avoid being alone with a child. If a child wants to speak privately, the conversation should take place in a location where other people are visible. Children must never be taken alone into a darkened room or behind a closed door.

Situations of concern can arise in many places, from meetings within church buildings, to young people's activities on and off church grounds. They can arise elsewhere in informal settings such as picnics, beach game programs, family camps or working bees. Our concern for the children is not just from inappropriate adult behaviour but also from inappropriate child to child behaviour and general safety from physical dangers such as unsafe playground equipment and fire hazards.

- ❑ **SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS:** Avoid establishing a “special relationship” with a certain child, even if the child (perhaps a vulnerable and needy child) seems to crave a special relationship.
- ❑ **HOME VISITS:** Do not visit children at their homes, except at the invitation of parents and in their presence.
- ❑ **TOILET:** Taking small children to the toilet should ordinarily be the responsibility of the parents, and such needs, where possible, should be directed to parents. If someone other than a parent needs to take a small child to the toilet, it should be in the company of another adult (obviously of the same sex).
- ❑ **FLIRTATION:** Avoid engaging in flirtatious behaviour with young people, no matter how innocent such behaviour may seem.
- ❑ **SUSPICIONS OF HARM:** It is the responsibility of all child / young people’s workers & leaders (and indeed, all church members) to report any suspicions of harm to the church leadership. The church leadership acknowledges that it is not the role of the church to investigate complaints or allegations of harm to anyone, child or adult, which may arise within the church. In such unfortunate situations, the church leadership will bring complaints or allegations before the relevant authorities (Queensland Police Service) without delay. ***A Complaints Register will be kept in the office by the Administrator.***

Harm may or may not include inappropriate behaviour, injury, potential injury, or safety breaches such as playing with matches, etc.

- ❑ **SCREENING:** In addition to this Code of Protective Behaviours, Grace Christian Church, Buderim will ensure that all people (staff and volunteers) working with children and young people in the church, are in possession of a ‘blue suitability card’ as evidence of having undertaken a ‘Working with Children Check’, in accordance with the requirements of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000*. The church will maintain a register of workers and staff who hold a ‘blue suitability card’.
- ❑ **HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES & SPECIAL EVENTS:** The church leadership must be advised of all such events. The parents of all children and young people must be fully informed of activities, and should supply the church with written permission for activities outside the church premises, unless a parent is accompanying their child.
- ❑ **PHYSICAL SAFETY:** The church leadership, staff and volunteer leaders must take reasonable steps to ensure the physical safety of the children and young people under their responsibility. Church grounds & buildings will be continually monitored for any damaged or dangerous equipment, which should be reported to church

leadership and rectified without delay. Any injuries must be reported to the church leadership using incident reports and logged on to an 'Incident Register' with note of what action has been taken / or to be taken to ensure no repeat of the incident. ***An Incident Report Register and Incident Report forms will be available in the office from the Administrator.***

COMMUNICATION & SUPPORT:

All staff and volunteer leaders will be supplied with this Code of Conduct and advised of their responsibilities toward the children and young people within the church.

The desire of the members, officers and staff of Grace Christian Church, Buderim in providing a safe environment for children and young people within the church is to uphold the honour of Christ.

An annual review of procedures and information will take place with leaders of children & young people.

Church members and leaders are reminded that this Code of Conduct is issued as a requirement of the government (Commission for Children and Young People and Guardian). The principles of behaviour are in accordance with Scripture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

It has been demonstrated, regrettably, that in Australia in recent times moral security of children has been compromised within the wider church structure as well as in the broader community.

A recent Queensland community survey has made the alarming revelation that about 19% of males and 45% of females report having been subjected to some form of sexual abuse, 80% of that taking place before the victims were 13 years old, and the most vulnerable age being 7-10 years old.

The **Code of Conduct** is designed to protect children and young people and also to protect those working with and associating with young people from any perceived appearance of evil and from the possibility of spurious allegations.

The evidence of the disastrous effects of abuse on the victim is so well documented that we need no further justification for the production of a code of protective behaviours. Our desire in all matters is to uphold the honour of Christ.

In the church, as in the home and wider community, a child has the right to feel safe at all times and we, the adult members, have a responsibility to ensure that safety.