

Policies and Procedures

Child Safety & Wellbeing

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1. Introduction

1.1 Policy Statement

The Grace Christian Church is committed to creating a safe, loving and respectful environment where all children are valued as part of our faith community. We believe that every child has the right to feel safe, be heard and be protected from harm. It is not exclusively the responsibility of the leaders of a program or activity. It is part of the responsibility of the Session, Safe Church Committee, Deacons and ministry leaders. It should become part of the ethos of the church.

1.2 Scope

The Policy & Procedures apply to:

- All employees, voluntary workers, visitors and contractors
- All ministries authorised by or under the control of the GCCB, including those ministries undertaken at the church's premises or away from the church's premises
- All leaders/persons in a position of authority within the church or engaged by the church.

1.3 Aim of Policy

This policy aims to:

- Meet GCCB's responsibility to provide a safe environment for anyone, especially children on GCCB property or in its care
- Fulfill GCCB's responsibility of duty of care, acting with care, integrity and accountability
- Cultural safety is respected, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Inclusion is promoted for children with disabilities and diverse backgrounds
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued and children feel safe to speak up
- Take all concerns and disclosures seriously
- Grow and incorporate people of all ages and backgrounds into its programs and activities.

1.4 Authority

This is a policy/procedure of GCCB and was adopted for use by the Session of GCCB. The Session of GCCB is committed to implementing the policy/procedure and training its leaders and the congregation in its content and application.

1.5 Definitions

Word	Definition
Abuse	Can consist of one or more of but is not restricted to the following: Physical Abuse: Any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as: • Hitting, punching, kicking (marks from belt buckles, fingers). • Shaking (particularly babies) • Burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair • Alcohol or other drug administration.

	Sexual Abuse: Any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential. Emotional Abuse: The chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child's development, self esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child's presence.
Allegation	A complaint, report of an incident, reasonable belief or reasonable suspicion of abuse or a breach of the GCCB Code of Conduct communicated to, or observed by, a person in a position of authority.
Aggrieved person	The person making the complaint whether they present as the victim or a complainant on behalf of someone else.
Alleged offender	The person who is alleged to have offended when there is a reasonable suspicion that a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred.
BCO	The Westminster Presbyterian Book of Church Order.
Breach	A breach is any action or inaction by any member of the organisation, including children and young people, that fails to comply with any part of the strategy which includes Grace Christian Church Buderim.
Bullying	Is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Single incidents, conflict whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.
CALD background	Stands for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse describing individuals or communities with cultural heritage, languages or traditions different from Anglo-Celtic culture.
Child/Children	A person or persons who is or who are, younger than 18 years of age.
Child abuse	Includes any neglect, emotional ill-treatment, physical abuse, sexual abuse or commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity.
Child Safety	The preservation and protection of children's safety, wellbeing and cultural safety with obligations under the Child Protection Act 1999 and/or the Criminal Code Act 1899 and Queensland government laws and regulations.

Church	Westminster Presbyterian Church Buderim Inc trading as Grace Christian Church Buderim. 2-4 Torral Drive Buderim Q 4556.
Coercion or grooming	Any physical or psychological actions intrinsic to initiating or hiding abusive behaviour, which involves the manipulative cultivation of relationships with vulnerable adults, children, their carers or others in authority.
Complainant	The person who makes a complaint or allegation and who may not be the alleged victim.
Contractor	A person or firm that undertakes a contract at the Church to provide materials or labour to perform a service or do a job.
Disclosure	Reveal information not previously known as it may be new information or information previously hidden.
Duty of Care	Is the legal and ethical obligation to take reasonable steps to avoid causing foreseeable harm to others, their property, or their wellbeing.
GCCB	Westminster Presbyterian Church Buderim Inc trading as Grace Christian Church Buderim. 2-4 Torral Drive Buderim Q 4556.
Incident	Is an event or occurrence that could lead to disruption of an activity or curtailing of a program. All incidents should be formally reported to the Session whose responsibility is incident management and review.
Incident Report Form	As per Safe Church Practices/Principles in regard to GCCB policies and procedures.
Leader	Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of members placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a recognised ministry of the church. A leader could include but is not limited to: • Religious practitioner • Small group leaders • Ministry leaders • Counsellors • Youth leaders • Sunday school coordinators • Sunday school teachers • Playgroup coordinator • Playgroup leader • Scripture teachers
Members	Any individual, including children, who attends or participates in church ministries. Communicant and associate members are defined in the Church's Constitution.
Ministry	Any organised activity that is authorised by the church.
Ministry Coordinator	The person recognised and authorised by the church as head of a ministry.
Ministry Leader	A person recognised and authorised by the church to lead individual sessions.

Misconduct	Is improper, unethical, or unlawful behavior, often violating policies, professional standards or laws.
Neglect	Characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's development.
Officer	A church officer has the definition assigned by the WPC Book of Church Order, namely Teaching Elders (including candidates under care), Ruling Elders and Deacons.
Position of authority	Within GCCB includes all elders, deacons, licentiates, volunteer leaders (including bible home study) and paid employees including anyone working with children including those who are inactive or emeritus, missionaries in any capacity.
Reasonable belief	Is a justified, honest, and objective conclusion that a fact or event is true, based on evidence that would lead an average, prudent person to the same conclusion.
Reasonable suspicion	A fair and practical reason to believe an incident involving abuse or misconduct has occurred based on either verbal communication, hearsay, rumour or observation of behaviour.
Reasonably practicable	To protect from harm this means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or trouble.
Reportable conduct	A serious allegations of child abuse or misconduct including sexual offences/misconduct, physical violence, significant neglect, and psychological harm, regardless of whether it occurred at GCCB.
Reportable incident	An allegation or disclosure against a person who is not in a position of authority subject to that jurisdiction's mandatory reporting requirements.
Risk	Risk is the possibility or chance of loss, danger or injury.
Risk assessment	A systematic process that considers a program and the risks it presents, what conceivably could go wrong and identifies the likelihood of it going wrong and how potential outcomes might be prevented or avoided.
Risk management	Is the process of managing the church's exposure to potential risks and actual hazards both on-site and off-site when running its programs. Risks are identified and assessed in order to prevent them or reduce them if they should occur.
Safe Church Coordinator	Is the person in a position of authority who reports to the Session/Board of Management about GCCB's Safe Church performance, advocates on behalf of children and vulnerable people, and communicates institutional policies and practices with the church community. The Safe Church Coordinator may also serve as a Safe Ministry Contact.
Safe Church Practices / Principles / Procedures	Apply a comprehensive, proactive approach to creating a secure, respectful and caring environment ensuring the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of everyone, particularly children and vulnerable people. Implementing all relevant

	GCCB policies and procedures.
Safe Church Committee	Is a group of staff and/or volunteers selected by Session that are responsible for implementing, monitoring, and enforcing policies that protect children and vulnerable adults from harm or abuse within church programs. They ensure compliance with safety legislation, manage screening and training for workers, and handle complaints or disclosures of abuse.
Safe Ministry Contact	Are the people in a position of authority that serve as the primary point of contact for anyone wishing to make a disclosure or allegation of abuse.
Session	Is the governing body of the Church.
Screening Check	A compulsory screening strategy whilst working with children including the Blue Card and GCCB requirements.
Universal Principal	The Universal Principle is about creating environments that make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children feel culturally safe, which broadly means welcome, safe, valued, included and respected.
Visitor	A person visiting the Church.
Vulnerable Person/s, People	A person who is unable to care for themselves or they are unable to protect themselves from being exploited or harmed because of an illness, mental health, trauma or because of a disability, or because of their age (elderly or under 18).
Worker	Includes paid worker, coordinator, leader, helper, assistant or volunteer.
Young Person/s , Young People	A person or persons who is or who are, younger than 18 years of age.

1.6 Internal policies and documentation

This policy is to understood alongside GCCB documents which include but are not limited to:

- Safe Church Policy and Procedures
- Code of Conduct
- The WPC Book of Church Order (BCO)
- Risk Management Strategy
- Incident Report Form
- Privacy Policy
- Volunteer Information Form
- Complaints and Grievance Handling Policy and Procedures

1.7 External policies

GCCB acknowledges that some ministries in the church might have external affiliation with other organisations. These organisations will possibly have policies governing these issues. The church's policy & procedures are not intended to replace or conflict with other policies, but instead to operate in conjunction with them. Including:

- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)
- Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld) (failure to report and failure to protect offences)
- Reportable conduct obligations (where applicable)

2. Compliance

GCCB is committed to meeting all legislative requirements and will adopt a preventive, proactive, and participatory approach to child safety. These requirements will be clearly communicated at all levels of the church.

Compliance with this commitment will be subject to regular review, with an audit conducted at least annually, either internally or externally. The results of each audit must be reported to the Session/Board of Management, which is responsible for reporting on compliance to its presbytery.

The Universal Principle and Queensland Child Safe Standards will be incorporated at GCCB to help create an environment where children can grow, feel culturally safe, valued, included, respected, can learn, and thrive without harm. GCCB is committed to their implementation in the following ways:

Standard 1 - Leadership and culture

- Church leadership models Christ-like care, respect, and integrity for all
- Child safety is part of all ministry planning, decision-making and review practices
- Risks to children are identified and actively managed
- Child safety and wellbeing are a standing agenda item in all leadership and governance decisions
- A Safe Church Coordinator is appointed.

Standard 2 - Voice of children

- Children are informed, involved and empowered
- Children are encouraged to express their views and have input in decisions that affect them
- We listen and respond to children respectfully
- Importance of friendship is recognised and support from peers is encouraged
- Information is shared in age-appropriate and culturally aware ways
- Children are informed about appropriate peer-on-peer behaviours and child-adult behaviours
- Children are informed about their roles and responsibilities in helping to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their peers
- Clear information is provided about who they can talk to if they feel unsafe.

Standard 3 - Families and community

- Families are informed about programs and safety practices
- Open communication is encouraged including regarding concerns or complaints
- We respect cultural, spiritual, and family diversity and encourage input and feedback.

Standard 4 - Equity and diversity

- Programs are inclusive and accessible
- Every child is treated with dignity and fairness
- We are inclusive of all abilities, backgrounds, and needs and will actively identify and address barriers that may limit participation or access
- Additional support is provided where needed including the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with a disability children from CALD backgrounds.

Standard 5 - People - Safe recruitment and screening

- All workers and volunteers working with children must hold a valid Blue Card
- Recruitment includes value-based and behavioural screening
- Referees and background checks are completed prior to them working with children
- Clear expectations of behaviour are set before service begins
- Role-specific position descriptions that include children's safety and wellbeing and cultural safety responsibilities and expectations.

Standard 6 - Complaints management and concerns

- Children and adults can safely raise complaints and concerns
- Complaints and concerns are taken seriously and handled sensitively
- Clear and accessible reporting processes are in place
- Children are supported during disclosures
- An holistic, strengths-based approach is adopted to support the wellbeing of children, workers and families through the complaints process
- Timely feedback is provided.

Standard 7 - Knowledge and skills - Training and support

- Workers and volunteers receive mandatory child safety training including reporting obligations, how to communicate in a child-friendly manner and to use active listening
- Leaders are equipped to respond to concerns appropriately
- Ongoing guidance and supervision are provided
- Refresher training is provided including recognising grooming and spiritual abuse
- Workers have access to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' cultures, cultural protocols and knowledge
- A system is maintained to monitor training completion and compliance across GCCB.

Standard 8 - Physical and online environments

- Activities are risk assessed and supervised
- Safe leader-to-child ratios and visibility are maintained
- Electronic communication follows clear boundaries and guidelines

Standard 9 - Continuous improvement

- Periodic reviews of child safety practices and policies
- Feedback from children and families is encouraged
- Improvements are made where needed.

Standard 10 - Policies and procedures

- Clear policies guide all child-related ministries
- All workers understand and follow these procedures
- Records are maintained appropriately, for further information, refer to the Privacy Policy.

3. Recruitment of those in a position of authority

The recruitment process is for everyone in a position of authority who will be working with children with exception to helpers (e.g. parent helper in Sunday School) and officers of the church as defined in BCO 1.2. This process shall be documented and tracked through a register.

It involves the following steps:

3.1 Complete a Volunteer Information Form for the role.

The *Volunteer Information Form* must be completed by anyone who will work with children or vulnerable people, including employees.

A statement of the church's commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable people, and all Safe Church Standard documents (as listed in 1.6 Internal policies and documentation) shall be included either via electronic links or in paper format with the application. The *Volunteer Information Form*, the signed Code of Conduct and Role Description must be returned to the church administrator and managed according to the Privacy Policy.

3.2 Make an application for a screening check

You can not start work/volunteering with children at GCCB without a valid Blue Card or Exemption Card unless you are a parent of one of the children in the activity. If you are working with other children or helping with toilets/changing or on overnight camps, you must hold a Blue Card or Exemption Card.

If you already hold a Blue Card the church administrator must be given a copy along with the applicant's date of birth, so the card can be linked to GCCB.

If an applicant doesn't hold a Blue Card they can apply for one on the government website

<https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card/applications/apply>.

To complete the application, they will need:

1. A customer reference number (CRN) from the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) <https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/crn>
2. Log into your blue card portal <https://my.bluecard.qld.gov.au/login>
 - If they do not have an online account with Blue Card, apply for one <https://my.bluecard.qld.gov.au/account/registration/privacy-notice>
 - Once an account is created the applicant can't go further without an organisational link to GCCB
 - The applicant is to send the office (office@gracechurchbuderim.com.au) the account (reference) number along with full name on card and date of birth (including year). Once the applicant is linked they will be sent an SMS or email from blue card notifying they have been linked
3. The applicant is to then complete their application using the online applicant portal.

3.3 Interview

Any person applying for a position of authority must be interviewed by a panel. The interview panel would normally include an elder and the ministry coordinator. The interview must:

- provide clear information to applicants about the institutional commitment to child safety
- assess attitudes to and application of child safety measures
- assess the values, motives and attitudes of job applicants who will work directly with children
- thoroughly assess the applicant's professional experience, qualifications and competence to work with children
- be alert to signs of unusual attitudes towards children (for example, if applicants profess to have 'special relationships' with children, disagree with the need for rules about child protection, or have a desire to work with children that seems focused on meeting their own psychological or emotional needs)
- assess attitudes to and application of cultural sensitivities and management.

Where feasible and appropriate, the panel will seek comment from the applicant's children and/or family.

The panel is to record the outcomes of the interview. All information provided in the interview and on the application form is to be kept confidential and stored by the administrator in an appropriate manner.

3.4 Reference Checks

Insofar as is possible:

- Verify the applicant's identity and any relevant professional qualifications and registrations
- Engage directly in conversation with not less than two (2) referees
- Ascertain, where possible, the applicant's attitudes and behaviours in previous child-related roles and cultural sensitivities
- Ascertain whether the applicant has ever been involved in any complaint processes.

3.5 Endorsement by the Session

As those finally responsible for maintaining a safe community, the Session should verify that the application process has been followed and, unless they have additional requirements, endorse the appointment of the applicant to a position of authority. The Session shall record the applicant's endorsement in the minutes of one of their meetings and notify the applicant and Administrator of the endorsement.

3.6 Appointment

Appointment to a position of authority is subject to Session endorsement and is granted for a maximum term of three (3) years.

To ensure suitability for the role, each appointment must include a probationary period of no less than six (6) months. A formal review of both the individual and the role will be conducted at the conclusion of the probationary period and again at the end of the three-year term.

Reappointment to a position of authority may be considered upon satisfactory completion of any required additional training and the re-signing of the Code of Conduct.

3.7 Complete Safe Church training

The applicant must complete GCCB's Safe Church training or show evidence of equivalent training from a recognised training provider that Session approves. The training must be completed prior to working/volunteering in the appointed position. This training is valid for three (3) years at the end of which time the person in a position of authority must complete further training.

3.8 Recruitment of those in a position of authority who are officers of the church

The WPC BCO (Chapter 9) sets out the procedures for selecting and training those who are in a position of authority as officers of the church.

Selection and training must also address the safety of children and vulnerable people. A statement of the church's commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable people, and all Safe Church documents (as listed in 1.6 of this document) should be included with the application.

It is expected that all officers of the church:

- have a screening check clearance when they are installed or ordained
- will have completed GCCB's Safe Church training or its equivalent before their installation or ordination
- have a particular responsibility to ensure adherence to Safe Church Code of Conduct by all persons in a position of authority.

4. Communication

All policies relating to child safety and wellbeing are made accessible through the GCCB website, where they may be downloaded, or can be obtained in printed form from the church office upon request.

The Safe Church Coordinator is responsible for liaising with the church administrator and/or leadership team to ensure that relevant policies and practices are effectively communicated within the church community. A range of communication strategies and methods will be used as appropriate.

The Safe Church Coordinator will also identify and address any barriers to communication by implementing targeted strategies. This may include providing information in accessible formats to accommodate varying levels of English proficiency, communication needs, languages, and cognitive abilities.

5. Reporting an incident involving a child

An allegation or disclosure is collectively referred to as an “incident” or “reported incident”.

An allegation is a complaint, report of an incident, reasonable belief or reasonable suspicion of abuse or a breach of the Code of Conduct communicated to, or observed by, a person in a position of authority.

A disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in a position of authority within GCCB that they have been the subject of what appears to be abuse, or someone says they know of what appears to be abuse.

If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim
- maintaining a safe environment in which people can report their concerns without fear of repercussions
- Not pushing the child to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation
- Assuring the child that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident
- Reporting the abuse to the police as required
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator
- Maintaining confidentiality.

5.1 Reporting Lines

GCCB will appoint a Safe Ministry Contact, ideally a male and female.

All incidents relating to child safety and wellbeing must be reported to a **Safe Ministry Contact** as soon as practicable.

Where an incident is initially disclosed to or identified by a person in a position of authority who is not a Safe Ministry Contact, that person must take immediate action by following all policies and procedures including this document. This includes ensuring the child's immediate safety, responding appropriately to any disclosure, and accurately recording the information using the *Incident Report Form*.

The matter must then be promptly referred to a Safe Ministry Contact, who will assume responsibility for managing the incident in accordance with established procedures.

At no stage shall the matter be dismissed, delayed, or managed solely by a person who is not authorised to do so.

5.2 Immediate Action

If the complainant is at immediate risk of life-threatening harm, call the police on 000.

If the complainant is not at immediate risk, the person in a position of authority should:

- Without unnecessary interruptions or searching questions listen very, very carefully and don't add anything to what the child says
- Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they did the right thing in speaking about the alleged abuse
- Tell the child that they need special help. This means that someone who is able to help them must be told about the disclosure.

5.3 Subsequent Action

The person who received the allegation or disclosure should make basic notes using the *Incident Report Form*. All complaints must be documented regardless of whether the complaint meets statutory reporting thresholds. If not themselves a Safe Ministry Contact, the person who received the disclosure must promptly notify a Safe Ministry Contact and furnish them with the *Incident Report Form*.

The Safe Ministry Contact will notify the Safe Church Committee that an allegation or disclosure has been made.

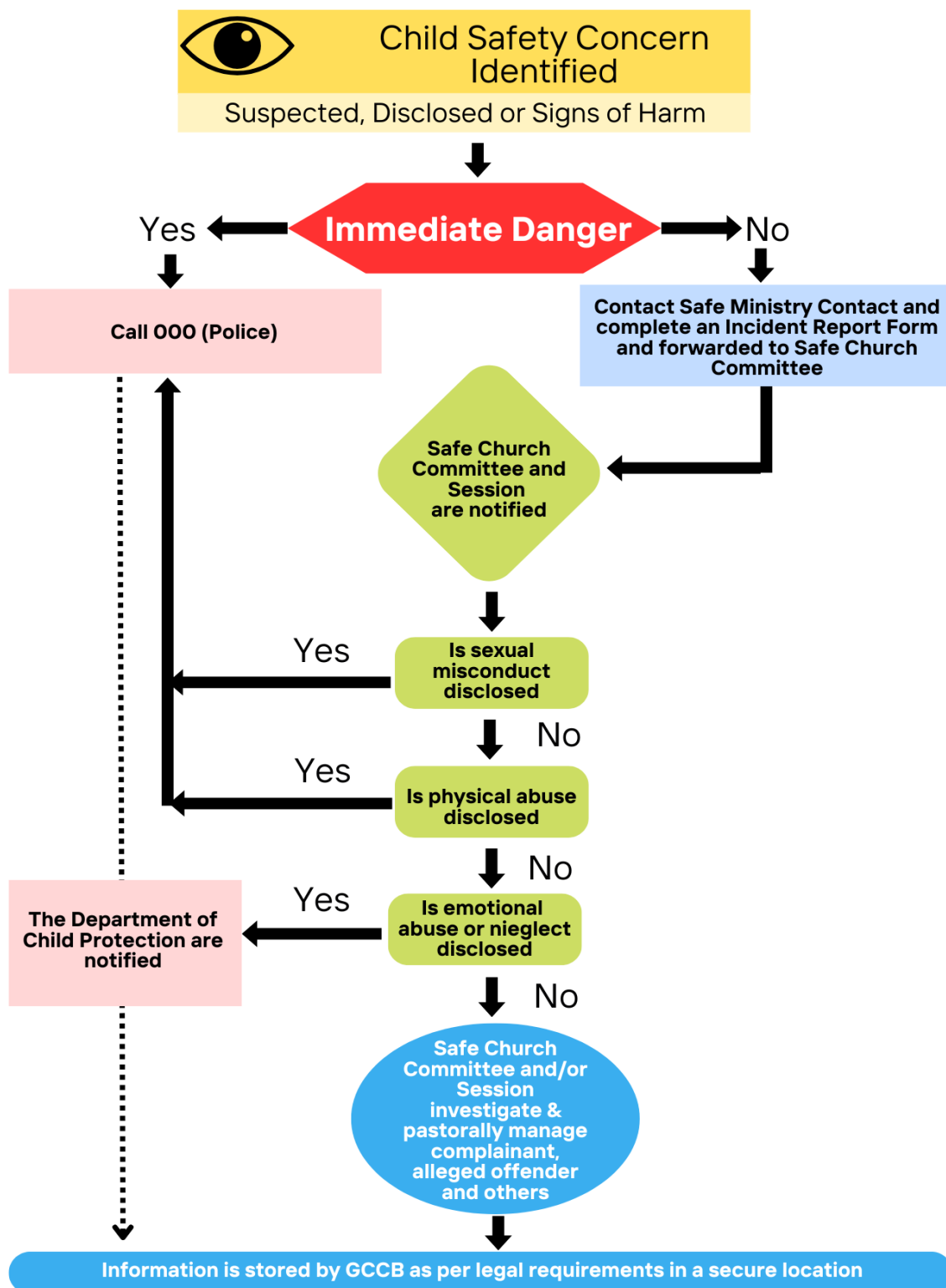
5.4 Incident Assessment

As soon as is practically possible after being notified of an incident, the Safe Church Committee must convene to assess the reasonableness of the allegation or disclosure. They must follow all procedures set out in this document including mandatory reporting requirements.

All parties will be notified of the outcomes with reasons behind the decision making process.

For further information on reporting requirements, refer to the *Safe Church Policy and Procedures*.

5.5 Incident Reporting Flowchart



6. Privacy and Record Keeping

Personal information relating to children will be collected in connection with attendance at GCCB activities for the purposes of safety, protection, and wellbeing. This may include information relevant to the child's care, such as family circumstances, medical details, and emergency contact information.

All information collected is confidential and will be handled with strict limitations on disclosure. Information will only be shared where necessary to support the child's safety or to meet legal obligations.

All documentation collected as part of an individual's application for a position of authority must be securely stored and accessible only to the Session or a person authorised by the Session.

All documentation relating to an allegation or disclosure of abuse, including incident reports and notes, must be securely stored and restricted to access by the Session or an authorised delegate. Disclosure of such information to a third party, including law enforcement, may only occur where permitted or required by law.

For further information, refer to this Church's Privacy Policy.

7. Risk Assessment Procedures

In addition to procedures for recruiting and supporting safe leaders, GCCB acknowledges its responsibility to provide a safe environment for all individuals participating in its programs and activities, or otherwise under its care, regardless of location. All individuals are encouraged to contribute to and influence decisions relating to the safety of children and vulnerable persons.

To fulfil this duty of care, those in positions of authority at GCCB are expected, where appropriate, to utilise the forms, checklists, and templates outlined in the Risk Management Strategy. Risk assessments must be undertaken for all environments in which programs or activities are conducted, with the aim of identifying, eliminating, or managing risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

For further information, refer to the GCCB's Risk Management Strategy.

8. Guidelines for Electronic Communications

A person in a position of authority will effectively manage their responsibilities of all electronic communications taking into account the awareness of the influence that comes with their role, careful consideration of how messages may be perceived, and attention to the potential impact on the ministry, fellow team members and the reputation of GCCB.

Any communication should be generally and primarily about purpose, logistical issues, encouragement and prayer.

Best practice is for pastoral care to be done face to face following the policy of the church and not by electronic communications. Best practice in using electronic communication with children is to seek

permission from parents/guardians in communicating by any means. Any communication should be general, not personal, and primarily about purpose, organisation, encouragement and prayer.

Safe ministry with all ages generally involves a team. So, communication from a team not an individual is best practice. Always consider very carefully how much information to share by electronic communication.

Anyone in a position of authority who publishes in any way needs to consider what they write and, because of their role, its perceived status as a statement of power and representative of the ministry of which they are a part, their church community and even the WPC denomination.

GCCB will monitor its online environment, reporting breaches of its Code of Conduct and any policy in accordance with its Complaints and Grievance Handling Procedure. Online environments are particularly vulnerable to grooming, bullying and other exploitative behaviours. A strong prevention and awareness focus should be adopted by educating stakeholders about online safety and security.

8.1 Video calls

Those in positions of authority within GCCB must not engage in video calls (e.g. FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp) with children involved in the church or church activities unless prior authorisation has been granted by Session.

Video communication with adults should be undertaken with discretion and caution. One-to-one video calls are to be avoided wherever possible, and appropriate accountability measures should be maintained at all times.

8.2 Text message

Text message communication with high school aged young people, as well as with adults who are not well known to the sender, must be limited to matters relating to church activities and organisation.

It is not appropriate to send text messages directly to children of primary school age. Any necessary communication for this group shall be directed to their parents/guardians.

The use of messaging applications to communicate with groups can be helpful and efficient; however, all such groups must include access for more than one person in a position of authority to ensure appropriate oversight and accountability (see also Social Media).

8.3 Email

Communication via email with high school aged young people, as well as adults who are not well known to the sender, will be limited to matters directly related to church activities, administration, and appropriate encouragement. As a matter of best practice, emails should include another authorised church leader or staff member in the CC field to ensure transparency and accountability.

Email communication shall not be directed to children of primary school age. Any necessary correspondence for this group must be sent to their parents/guardians.

8.4 Social media

Any person in a position of authority at GCCB who maintains a private social media account must exercise caution regarding who they interact with and the content displayed on their profile.

Any person in a position of authority is to redirect “friend” or connection requests from children to official social media accounts managed by the church ministry team. Children and their friends who are involved in a church ministry should be encouraged to engage only through these designated, moderated accounts, which are created and overseen by authorised church leaders.

Where possible, adults should also be directed to use group or ministry accounts rather than connecting with individual church leaders’ personal accounts, ensuring transparency, accountability, and safe boundaries.

8.5 Summary – guide to electronic communications with children

Communication Type	Primary-age children	School Years 7-9 children	School Years 10-12 children (under 18)
Phone calls	With permission of the parent/guardian and in earshot of them	To be avoided. If necessary, ask parent/guardian permission to speak to child	Care needed to keep calls only related to ministry purposes
Text messages	Never appropriate	For organisational purposes only	For organisational purposes only
Email	Never appropriate	For organisational purposes only using a ministry address	For organisational purposes only using a ministry address
Social networking	Never appropriate	Wisely use only a social media account specific to the ministry	Wisely use only a social media account specific to the ministry
Video calls and chats	Never appropriate	Never appropriate	Never appropriate

9. Guidelines for Active Listening & Child-Centred Communication

A person in a position of authority will effectively communicate with children by having a child-centred, respectful and safe manner which supports Child Safe Standard 2.

9.1 What is Child-Centred Communication?

Child-centred communication puts the needs, rights, and views of children first. This means:

- Treating children as capable individuals with valid opinions
- Encouraging them to share their thoughts, questions, and concerns
- Respecting their voice—do not speak for them or over them
- Adjusting how you communicate to suit their age, development, culture, and communication needs.

Key Principle:

If a child speaks, we listen. If they raise a concern, we take it seriously.

9.2 What is Active Listening?

Active listening means listening to understand, not just to respond. It involves:

- Giving your full attention
- Making eye contact when appropriate (respect of cultural differences)
- Using open body language (for example, getting down to their level)
- Repeating or summarising what they said (“So you’re saying...”).
- Being patient and allowing them to finish speaking before responding.

Avoid:

- ✗ Interrupting
- ✗ Dismissing feelings (“You’ll be fine. Don’t worry about it.”)
- ✗ Minimising concerns (“It’s not a big deal.”)

Do:

- ✓ Validate
- ✓ Clarify
- ✓ Act

Situation	Not Child-Centred	Child-Centred Approach
A child is upset after an activity	“You’re fine, it’s not a big deal.”	“I can see you’re upset. Do you want to tell me what happened?”
A child asks a lot of questions	“Stop asking so many questions.”	“Those are great questions—let’s go through them together.”
A child shares an idea	Ignoring or moving on quickly	“That’s an interesting idea—tell me more about it.”

Situation	Not Child-Centred	Child-Centred Approach
A child doesn't want to join in	"You have to join in like everyone else."	"Would you like to sit this one out or try a different activity?"
A child reports a concern	"I'm sure it's nothing."	"Thank you for telling me. Let's talk about what happened."
A child struggles to explain something	Interrupting or finishing their sentence	"Take your time—I'm listening."
A child makes a mistake	"That's wrong."	"That's okay—let's try again together."

9.3 Child Friendly Language

Child-Centred Communication shall consist of: Listen → Acknowledge → Check Understanding → Act → Close the loop

Step	What it looks like	Example
Listen	Focus fully on the child and stop any other activity you are doing	"I'm listening, please tell me what happened."
Acknowledge feelings	Name and validate the child's emotion	"I can see you're upset. Do you want to tell me what happened?"
Check understanding	Ask questions to clarify details	"Do you mean during the activity at youth group or after church?"
Act appropriately	Follow procedure, escalate concerns if required	"Thank you for telling me. I'm going to talk to someone who can help."
Close the loop	Let the child know what will happen next	"I've passed this on to ..., and someone will speak with you soon."

9.4 Encouraging Children to Speak Up

We want GCCB to be a place where speaking up is normal and not the exception. We will empower children to have a voice by:

- Offering choices ("Would you like to try the activity again or have a break?")
- Asking open questions ("How did you feel today?")
- Building routine check-ins (asking how they are going at the start and end of activities and improvement ideas).

9.5 If a Child Discloses a Concern or Safety Issue

Do:

- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ Listen without judgement
- ✓ Reassure them it was right to speak up
- ✓ Record and report according to GCCB policies and procedures

Do NOT:

- ✗ Make promises you can't keep ("I won't tell anyone")
- ✗ Investigate yourself
- ✗ Express shock or disbelief

10. Guidelines for Child to Child Behaviours

Children and young people must be supported to engage in safe, respectful and developmentally appropriate interactions. Any behaviour that is coercive, harmful, sexualised, or causes physical, emotional or psychological harm—regardless of intent—will be treated as a child safety concern and responded to in accordance with organisational procedures and Queensland legislation.

Situation	Appropriate Behaviour	Concerning Behaviour	Harmful / Reportable Behaviour
General Interaction	Inclusive play, kindness, cooperation, respectful language	Excluding others, minor teasing, short-term conflict	Bullying, intimidation, threats, targeted harassment
Physical Contact	High-fives, handshakes, incidental contact	Rough play, repeated unwanted contact, ignoring personal space	Hitting, pushing, restraining, physical aggression or intimidation
Emotional Behaviour	Expressing feelings appropriately, resolving disagreements with support	Name-calling, teasing, emotional outbursts impacting others	Humiliation, coercion, threats, sustained emotional harm
Sexual Behaviour	Age-appropriate curiosity (e.g. questions, non-directed discussion)	Inappropriate language, boundary testing, mild sexualised behaviour	Sexual touching, coercion, exposure, simulated sexual acts
Communication (incl. online)	Respectful conversation, appropriate group messaging	Inappropriate jokes, persistent messaging, minor harassment	Sexual messages, threats, grooming behaviours, image sharing
Power & Control	Equal participation, turn-taking, respecting "no" and cultural differences	Bossy or controlling behaviour, minor manipulation	Grooming, coercion, manipulation, creating secrecy or dependency
Respect for	Asking permission, respecting	Repeated boundary	Ignoring refusal, invading



Boundaries	privacy and space	testing, ignoring social cues, pressuring participation	privacy (e.g. bathrooms/change areas)
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Schedule 2 - Document Control and Review

Document Effective: August 2017

Document Revision: Annual

By Whom: The Safe Church Committee

Scheduled Review Process: Church decision-makers shall notify the relevant ministries and the congregation of the scheduled review date. Any recommendations or proposed amendments must be submitted in writing to the decision-makers at least one (1) month prior to the review date for consideration. All proposed changes must then be presented to the Session meeting for approval before implementation.

Unscheduled Review: Any person can propose to amend or alter this document at any time. Any proposal to amend or alter this document shall:

- Be submitted in writing;
- Clearly identify the clause or clauses proposed to be amended;
- Set out the proposed amendment or alternation in full; and
- Include the rationale for the proposed amendment or alteration.

Review Date	Persons Involved	Items Changed	Date Adopted by Session	Next Review Required
August 2017			07.08.2017	
22.01.2020	Des Morris, Clint Lombard, Renier Scheepers, Tim Richards, Brad Joyce, John Butler, Anna Jones	Complete overhaul	30.01.2020	22.01.2021
05.05.2021	Clint Lombard, Anna Jones	Minor format changes to application	30.5.2021	30.05.2022
21.03.2023	Clint Lombard, Laura Smith, Renier Scheepers, Tim Richards, Rob Newell	Format changes, changes to 1.5, 3.11, 4.2 and Appendix 1	25.03.2023	25.03.2024
21.03.2024	Darren Burnett, Renier Scheepers, Tim Richards, Mark Porter, Des Morris, Amanda Martin	Add Creche volunteer tick box to application		
16.09.2025	Peter Adamson	Resolution NA2025/n		16.09.2026
20.04.2026	Darren Burnett, Cameron Blue, Des Morris, Ken Watson, Andrea Hooper, Anna Jones	Overhaul to meet new standards	23.04.2026	23.04.2027
28.05.2026	Darren Burnett, Des Morris, Andrea Hooper, Anna Jones	Inclusion of unscheduled document review process	28.05.2026	28.05.2027

