

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Commitment Statements

Safe Church Commitment Statement

Kilsyth South Baptist Church (KSBC) is committed to providing a safe environment that is physically, emotionally and spiritually safe and model the love of Christ to all who we have contact with, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We will endeavour to provide a safe and healthy environment through our policies and procedures, including recruitment, training, supervision, reviews, code of conduct, duty of care, risk management, workplace health and safety, conflict resolution, zero tolerance for discrimination against inclusion in our programs, zero tolerance for abuse, and environmental best practice.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

KSBC is committed to child safety. All children and young people at KSBC have the right to feel and be safe. We support and respect all children, and we value the feedback from children and young people, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to providing a culturally safe environment for First Nations children and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability to ensure they can participate equally.

We have zero tolerance for any/all forms of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently in line with our policies and procedures. KSBC is committed to preventing abuse of children and young people by identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff, ministry leaders and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

The purpose of this policy:

Our church has adopted the '*Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*' to

- 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 Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards;
- Provide a framework to inform the provision of safe inclusive environments and programs for children and young people and vulnerable adults; and
- Meet our legal obligations with regard to National and Victorian legislation

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy outlines the commitment of KSBC to principles in various areas. More details regarding the practical implementation of these commitments is available in the relevant procedures and guidelines.

Scope:

This policy applies to

- all church leadership, staff and volunteers,
- all people who are involved in or attend the church and its programs.

We commit to:

1. Cultural safety for First Nations children

- A child's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported.
- Strategies are embedded within KSBC which equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of First Nations children's culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of First Nations children.
- Measures are adopted to ensure all forms of racism within KSBC is identified, confronted and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate responses.
- KSBC actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within it by First Nations children, young people and their families.
- All of KSBC's policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of First Nations children, young people and their families.

2. A commitment to child safety and wellbeing

- KSBC makes a public commitment to child safety and wellbeing.
- A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of KSBC from the top down and bottom up.
- Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the child safety and wellbeing policy at all levels.
- A Code of Conduct provides staff and volunteers with expectations, behavioural standards and responsibilities in their role.
- Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.
- Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.

3. Taking child participation and empowerment seriously

- Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, feedback and participation.
- Recognising and promoting the importance of healthy mutually supportive peer relationships that helps children and young people feel safe and reducing isolation
- Where relevant and appropriate to the setting or context, children and young people are offered access to age-appropriate content and delivery of sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information.
- Staff and volunteers at KSBC are provided with training on the signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.
- KSBC has strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.
- KSBC provides opportunities for children and young people to participate in programs. The church values their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

4. Involving families and communities

- Families are invited to participate in decisions affecting their child.
- KSBC engages and communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible.
- Families and communities have a say in the development and review of KSBC's policies and practices.
- Families, carers and the community are informed about KSBC's operations and governance.

5. Respecting equity and diversity

- KSBC, including staff and volunteers, seeks to understand children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.
- Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- KSBC pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.
- KSBC pays particular attention to the needs of First Nations children and young people and provides/promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

6. Ensuring that staff and volunteers working with children and young people are suitable and supported

- Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasize child safety and wellbeing.
- Relevant staff and volunteers have current Working with Children Checks (WWCC) or equivalent background checks.
- All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.
- Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.

7. Child focussed complaint systems

- KSBC has an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.
- All children, young people, families, staff and volunteers are provided with information on complaints handling and feedback processes in an accessible, age-appropriate way and uphold cultural safety.
- Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- KSBC has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.
- Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

8. Staff and volunteer knowledge, skills and awareness

- Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement KSBC's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people.
- Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

9. Safe physical and online environments

- Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

- The online environment is used in accordance with KSBC's Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing policy and practices.
- Risk management plans consider risks posed by church settings, activities, and the physical environment.
- When outside contractors are on the premises, KSBC are responsible to consider, identify and manage any risks and maintain the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

10. Review of child safe policies and practices

- KSBC regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child safe practices.
- Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.
- KSBC reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.

11. Documenting policies and procedures

- Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.
- Policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.
- Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures.
- Leader's champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.
- Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.

DEFINITIONS

In the '*Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*' and associated documents unless the context otherwise requires:

Children and young people are persons who are under the age of 18 years (The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012, Victoria).

Complaint includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of the church's *Code of Conduct* or the *Baptist Union of Victoria's (BUV) Code of Ethics and Conduct* (where applicable). It also includes disclosures made to KSBC about any child protection concern.

Disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in authority/leadership (or trusted adult) within KSBC that they have been subject to abuse or knows of abuse. A disclosure may or may not be an allegation or a notifiable circumstance, but it is the responsibility of the person in authority to manage, refer and take any appropriate action.

Governance body means the body designated by the constitution of the church to be responsible for the management of church affairs. At KSBC this is the Diaconate.

Mandatory Reporting Legislation: Victorian law means that people involved in religious ministry are legally required to report known or suspected child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities. This is in addition to existing obligations to report to the Commission for Children and Young People under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Failure to report abuse is a criminal offence. [CCYP | New laws requiring people in religious ministry to report child abuse](#)

Victoria has a **Reportable Conduct Scheme** to oversee allegations of child abuse and misconduct. [CCYP | Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)

The Child Safe Standards require organisations involving children to have policies, procedures and practices to keep them safe. [CCYP | Child Safe Standards](#)

Vulnerable means the state of being unable (or reduced capacity) to take care of themselves, or unable (or reduced capacity) to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma, grief, disability, social isolation, financial hardship or any other reason. In this sense vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

The Working with Children Check (WWCC) helps protect children from physical and sexual harm. The WWCC is just a starting point. It screens a person’s criminal records and any reports about professional conduct. The WWCC does not assess a person’s suitability to work with or care for children in a particular role. It is the responsibility of KSBC to assess if a volunteer is suitable to work with children and continue monitoring their behaviour around children.

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POLICY NAME	Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (previously 'Safe Church Policy')	POLICY NUMBER	
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PERSON RESPONSIBLE	Safe Church Team and Deacons	VERSION NUMBER	4