



Mill Park Baptist Church

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

We affirm that all people (including children) have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times. We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety.

God calls his body to minister to vulnerable people. God identified classes of vulnerable people who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (Exodus 22:21-22, Deuteronomy 10:17-19, Jeremiah 22:2-4, James 1:27).

MPBC is committed to protecting the safety of all people within its programs, ministries and events. All people regardless of age, gender, race, culture, disability and family/social background have equal rights to this protection.

Our policy has been developed to help us live out our Biblical mandate, our commitment to safeguarding children and our responsibilities under Victorian and Australian legislation.

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY:

1. To protect children and young people and vulnerable adults who receive MPBC services.
2. To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.
3. MPBC believes that a child or young person should never experience of abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

OUR POLICY AIMS TO:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power.
- Ensure that all cases of alleged or suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled thoroughly.
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe.
- Ensure that all people, including children, regardless of their cultural and linguistic diversity or their level of physical ability, are respected and valued.

Statement of commitment to child safety

MPBC is committed to ministering to children, young people and vulnerable adults by providing an environment that is physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

MPBC is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults by the following safeguarding measures: recruitment processes (screening, selection, interviews etc), WWCC, training, induction, supervision and reviews.

The following values reflect the culture that we are committed to promoting within MPBC: due diligence, integrity, duty of care, transparency, inclusivity, collaborative ministry, Christian ethics and Gospel principles.

WE COMMIT TO:

(a) Safe recruitment of leaders.

We will screen all prospective leaders in our ministries, before they are appointed (i.e. relevant Working With Children Check/National Police Check, Safe Ministry Check).

We will have a minimum church attendance policy (6 months) for all prospective volunteer leaders.

(b) Adequate training of leaders.

We require that all leaders 18 and above attend a Safe Church Awareness Workshop (SCTA endorsed) or other training assessed by MPBC Board to be of equivalent standard, covering relevant topics (particularly child and vulnerable adults protection training) within their first year of ministry and a refresher workshop every 3 years.

We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific training as required.

(c) Have a clear Code of Conduct.

We will adopt and implement a Code of Conduct for all our leaders and volunteers, including boundaries of behaviour and expectations of interactions with children. All leaders will agree to follow our Leaders Code of Conduct.

(d) Continued supervision of leaders.

We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders.

(e) Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious ministry misconduct.

All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to our procedure.

We will listen to and believe children who raise concerns.

We will ensure that procedures are clear and appropriate in responding to allegations of abuse.

Where a leader has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them we will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate denominational help for a just and fair resolution.

(f) Responding to other disclosures of abuse

We will understand the processes of responding to disclosures of abuse and harm including self-harm and suicide ideation (thoughts).

We will ensure that appropriate training takes place to recognise and respond to indicators of abuse and neglect and receive support for all involved in the disclosure (including the leaders/volunteers).

We understand that responding to abuse is not limited to children, but also includes adults within our programs and ministries who may be vulnerable at any given time where abuse could be present and that everyone understands the most appropriate steps to take in supporting our vulnerable people within our community.

(g) Provide an open safe environment.

We will serve participants as servants of Christ, commit to the good news of Jesus and lead in spiritually non-abusive ways.

We will afford participants a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation. We will be accountable and transparent.

All leaders will discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates for establishment and maintenance of safe environments in our church.

The MPBC Board will establish and maintain procedures related to: WHS (Work Health and Safety/OHS), fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures.

Ministry Team Co-ordinators are to maintain in-depth communication with the relevant Pastoral Team member (or Elder) which will include an up-to-date Ministry Commitment.

New ministries are to complete a comprehensive Approval for Ministry process prior to commencing.

(f) Understand and Value diversity

We will be mindful in our approach for all programs to be inclusive for all people. This includes adapting programs for anyone with a disability to receive access to various programs and ministries, as well as provide adequate training for leaders.

We will be sensitive to those from 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD) backgrounds, and those within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with our programs, information, support and services. As well as upholding respect to all cultures and encourage the participation of all people and recognise their unique contribution to our community.

This Safe Church Policy applies to all staff members and volunteer workers associated with the ministry in our church.

Adopted: 20/10/2015

Subsequent Reviews: 17/2/2016, 15/3/2017, 18/3/2020

Next Review Date: January-March 2021

Adopted by MPBC Board

Reviewed by: MPBC Board

DEFINITIONS

Abuse:	abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to: physical abuse, emotional abuse, family violence, sexual abuse, grooming, neglect.
BUV:	Baptist Union of Victoria.
Child:	a person who is under the age of 18 years (including young people).
Disclosure:	a disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in authority/leadership (or a trusted adult) within the church/community 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 investigate and take appropriate action.
Safe Environment:	discharges duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe, including spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.
The Board:	is responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the WHS/OHS and Safe Church Policy and supporting documentation and processes in our church.
Approval for Ministry:	a process of written accountability, whereby the senior church leaders approve the overall program to take place in the church's name.
Ministry Team Co-ordinators:	oversee a group of programs and or events in the church, for example the children and youth programs.
Safe Leader:	has been through a recruitment process, understands responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team player. (This includes Staff, Ministry Team Co-ordinators, Team Members, Junior Team Members, Rostered Helpers and Life Group Leaders.)
Safe Ministry Program/Event:	all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned. These programs have had permission to proceed from a Ministry Team Co-ordinator.
Program/Event Leaders:	responsible for teams and programs. They jointly recruit team members and complete safety management plans for their individual programs.
SCAW:	Safe Church Awareness Workshop.
SCTA:	Safe Church Training Agreement under the National Council of Churches in Australia.
Vulnerable Person:	a person who may be considered to be susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (physical or mental), age, grief, previous experience of abuse, social isolation or financial hardship. In this sense vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.
Volunteer Leader:	As per "Safe Leader" above. (Role specifically has no remuneration provided).