

OUR CHURCH IS A SAFE PLACE

(Safe Church Policy)

Adopted at Church Family Meeting on 28 July 2013.
Updated August 2020. Affirmed by Elders and Deacons.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Armidale District Baptist Church is committed to providing a safe environment for the church family and the community.

To the best of our ability we will provide:

- A safe place for all people of all ages to attend.
- Safe systems of work, safe equipment and a safe environment.
- Suitable and adequate instruction and training where necessary.
- Safe handling and storage of substances.
- Adequate First-Aid facilities.

Responsibilities of our Church Family:

We will encourage our church family to identify and report any hazards or potential hazards, and to be involved in making our environment a safe place.

SAFE LEADERS

We commit to:

1. Safe Recruitment of Leaders

- We will screen and interview all prospective ministry co-ordinators and leaders in our ministries before they are appointed. They will be required to sign this document as well as the "We Care for One Another" document (our Protective Behaviours Policy) and the Leadership Covenant Brochure.
- For those working with children we will recruit using the Working with Children Check guidelines.

2. Adequate Training and Supervision of Leaders

- We will ask all leaders to complete the online component of Creating Safe Spaces (or other endorsed program) before commencing and to complete the face-to-face workshop within nine months. Leaders need to complete a refresher course every three years.
- We commit to ongoing training, supervision and support for our ministry leaders and workers.

3. Responding to Allegations of Risk or Harm (Abuse) or Serious Ministry Misconduct

- As per the Office of Children's Guardian guidelines implemented on 1 March 2020, we recognise all Church Leaders, Ministry Leaders and people serving in a children's ministry or requiring a Working with Children Check as "Mandatory Reporters" who are, by law, required to report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse.
- A Mandatory Reporter must make a report to the Department of Communities and Justice when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm (and those grounds arise in the course of, or from, their work or role). Mandatory reporters can call the NSW Child Protection Helpline on 132 111. The Child Protection Helpline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Mandatory reporters are protected from liability for defamation and civil and criminal liability. A mandatory report does not constitute a breach of professional etiquette or ethics, or amount to unprofessional conduct. All mandatory reporters are legally protected against retribution for making or proposing to make a report.
- For more information see <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme/religious-groups-faq>
- We ask that all Mandatory Reporters sign the "Our Church is a Safe Place" Safe Church Policy and also, alongside their Mandatory Reporting, inform our "Safe Church Team" if there are any incidents that require reporting. The Safe Church Team is also always available to talk through suspected incidents or concerns about a child or other vulnerable person.
- Where a leader has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them, the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT complaints policy will be followed.
- The "Safe Church Team" may consult the Baptist Association of NSW & ACT Standards Manager with any questions of harm or abuse, past or present.

SAFE PROGRAMS

We commit to:

1. Physically & Emotionally Safe Environments

- We will offer participants, including children, the opportunity to provide input into the programs and activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation in all areas of the life of the church, as far as is reasonable and practical.
- We will obtain information from the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.
- Our leaders will exercise a Duty of Care at all times.

2. Safe Online Environments

- We will model and promote safe online behaviour in any online or other electronic communication.
- We will check that material is age suitable.
- As leaders, if we become aware of cyber-bullying between children, we will take appropriate action to investigate and work through the problem.

Following the amendments from the Office of Children's Guardian that were implemented on 1 March 2020 we ask that this document be signed by the Elders, Deacons and every church Ministry Leader, along with every person working with children within the church.

Name: Signed: Date: