

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO A SAFE CHURCH

Nations Church acknowledges God's love for all people and our responsibility as a Christian community to extend our love in God's name to all who come into contact with our church.

An important expression of that love is to provide a safe environment for all people who are involved in our church. Children are a gift of God and we have a particular responsibility to them, to provide a safe and nurturing environment within which they are protected from all forms of harm and are fully supported to grow in faith and discipleship.

As a member of the Australian Christian Churches (ACC) family we are committed to the full implementation of the ACC Child Protection Policy and the ACC Safer Churches strategy within all of our church operations.

In particular we:

- Exercise due diligence in the selection and ongoing supervision of staff and volunteers to undertake key roles in the church, particularly those involving responsibilities for children
- Equip our people in leadership positions with the knowledge and skills to ensure a safe environment within church activities; to recognise the signs that harm may have occurred or has the potential to occur to someone involved in those activities; and to take the appropriate actions in relation to those concerns
- Promote an atmosphere of love, openness and trust throughout all church activities so that all children, families and others feel valued, respected and able to raise issues of concern about matters directly affecting them or concerns they have about others
- Provide avenues through which all people involved in the church may raise concerns or complaints knowing that they will be taken seriously and dealt with respectfully and confidentially
- Continually monitor and review our Safer Church strategies to ensure that we are employing an effective and contemporary range of measures to adequately protect people within our church
- Provide a key point of contact and information in relation to Safer Church matters through the position of Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator

We pray that with the support of God's wisdom and grace we will continue to be successful in providing a loving and safe environment for all who come into contact with our church.

SAFER CHURCHES TRAINING

All volunteers must complete the induction process in its entirety before being able to serve at Nations Church.

This induction process includes but is not limited to the following:

- Completion of the relevant Nations Church Volunteer Form
- Provision of a valid Working With Children Check unless under 18 years of age
- Provision of the contact details of two Referees
- Completion of Nations Church Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Completion of the online induction, Safer Churches Training and any additional ministry specific training

Note - *All Nations Church volunteers are required to be familiar with and abide by the standards of behaviour outlined in the Nations Church Volunteer Code of Conduct. Any volunteer who breaches this Code of Conduct or who behaves in a manner contrary to the instructions outlined in this training may be liable to being stood down as a volunteer and, in the case of any form of inappropriate conduct towards a child or young person, will be reported to Police.*

EVENT SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

External parties involved in a Nations Church event must provide a copy of their WWCC which is verified by the team leader at <https://workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au/card-validation>. This includes, caterers, photographers, setup teams, entertainment providers or suppliers. If you know an external party will be attending an event, please seek clarification regarding WWCC requirements prior to the event.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER MEDICAL CONDITIONS

During your application you are required to inform us of any medical conditions. If you have a medical condition, it is important you discuss this with the person onboarding you, so that we can be well equipped to support you should an issue arise. E.g., Asthma - It's important that we are aware of your asthma management plan and what we need to do if you were to have an asthma attack.

SAFETY FIRST

- Make sure safety is always your PRIORITY
- Enclosed shoes should be always worn
- Use proper lifting technique when carrying heavy loads
- We are a team so if something is too hard or heavy to do by yourself, ask someone to help, DO NOT try to be the hero and do it by yourself

FIRST AID

- Your service team leader or program supervisor will be able to help you contact a trained first aider
- In most cases minor injuries can be treated with items from our first aid kit
- If you use something from the first aid kit, please complete the form next to the kit
- If you use the last of something or a product is running low and will need to be restocked soon, please bring it up in your team de-brief
- Fill out an Incident Report for any incidents that occur during the Sunday service or program and send it to your service team leader or Program Supervisor
- A First Aid officer will be present at all Nations Church services/programs. Ensure you know who your First Aid officer is in case of emergency
- If you see something that looks unsafe do not ignore it. If possible, take the initiative to fix it or speak to your Team Leader if you are unsure

FIRST AID KIT LOCATIONS

BELMONT - Kitchen and reception

BUNBURY - On fridge in kitchen and kids storeroom

MYAREE - Next Gen Foyer near bathrooms and fire exit and main church foyer.

PORT KENNEDY - Kitchen (downstairs)

SCARBOROUGH - Storeroom in Scarborough Community Centre – Meeting Room 2

WANGARA – Jump room, Sprockets room and main auditorium

FIRE SAFETY

Emergency procedure in case of a fire:

- Call “**Fire-Fire-Fire**” to alert others in the building of the fire
- Move calmly to the evacuation assembly area:
 - BELMONT** - Post-box in front of the building
 - BUNBURY** - White Street carpark
 - MYAREE** - Car park
 - PORT KENNEDY** - Verge in front of building
 - SCARBOROUGH** - Gildercliffe Street carpark
 - WANGARA** - Lumsden Road carpark
- Assist any persons in immediate danger - only if safe to do so
- **Call 000** and advise Fire Brigade
- Do not leave the evacuation area until all clear is given
- Refer to the Nations Church Occupational Health and Safety Manual for clarification on any further safety procedures

INCIDENT/INJURY/TRAUMA

Unfortunately, even if you exercise all possible care, there is still a chance a person may get hurt. If something happens, let your Team Leader know. You are legally required to tell them. They will document this injury for future prevention.

If an adult, child or young person is injured, becomes ill, has an accident, becomes distressed or suffers a trauma whilst in the program the following procedure must be followed:

- If you do not have FIRST AID step aside to let the First Aid Officer do their job
- The parent/guardian must be notified. Depending on the situation the parent/guardian may be notified after the program (Child scrapes their knee)
- The Nations Church “Incident/Accident Report” form must be completed. The form must be completed as soon as practical but no later than 24 hours after the incident/Accident. Incident/Accident reports are to be attached to the service team leader report after a Sunday service
- A senior staff member is to be notified immediately of any serious incidents. Please be aware you have a legal obligation to inform them. The chain of command is as follows:
Team member  Service Team Leader  Pastor/Coordinator

FOOD SAFETY

There are several hazards in any kitchen and whenever food is being prepared:

- If you are unwell (especially with a viral illness) do not participate in food preparation or other kitchen activities and inform your Team Leader
- Ensure all food preparation surfaces and utensils are clean prior to starting
- Wash hands before commencing or re-commencing to work with food
- Wear appropriate footwear, long hair tied back and ensure any cuts or abrasions are covered
- Use appropriate utensils for serving food
- Wear food preparation gloves (but only when handling food)
- No children are allowed in church kitchens/food preparation areas

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY

- **The maximum speed limit near and in the church carpark is 5km per hour (walking pace)**
- Never attempt to lift or carry loads if you think they are too heavy
- Use a trolley or get help to lift/carry a heavy load whenever possible
- Do not undertake work for which you are not qualified, such as electrical maintenance or working at heights (> 4.5 metres)
- Do not use chairs/tables or any other furniture or equipment not designed for standing on/working at height
- Keep storage areas tidy:
 - Return items or materials to their correct storage place
 - Keep all doorways, pathways, and access ways clear
 - Keep items and materials off the floor

SPEECH

- Always keep a positive tone! Never gossip about an adult, child or young person or fellow leader. Always encourage and lift up
- To help generate conversation use open ended questions (e.g. "So tell me about...") Avoid yes/no questions
- Have your eyes and ears open for God opportunities
- Always say hello to people and treat them with respect
- Be proactive and instrumental in helping people connect
- Bullying is not acceptable
- Cursing, cussing, crude, or disrespectful language is not acceptable

DRESS

- Closed-in shoes must be worn
- Ensure what you wear is not revealing, for example miniskirts, low cut tops, midriff tops

- We should always look presentable and respectful

ATTITUDE

The attitudes we bring to our work with young people has the potential to impact strongly on their lives. Our attitudes should always reflect those of discipleship for Christ.

- Accept adults, children and young people for who they are
- Look out for the child or young person sitting by themselves
- Leave your judgements behind - not just when talking to children or youth, but when talking to others about them
- Respect other religions and other churches ministries
- Respect children and young people's views

GUIDELINES TO WORKING WITH CHILDREN

ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN

- Always be in clear sight of other volunteers when with children. Never be alone with a child
- Be proactive and instrumental in helping children connect not only with our leaders and volunteers but also with their peers and God
- Have your eyes and ears open to the God-opportunities, keeping an eye out for connecting and encouraging children who look disconnected or upset
- Have regard to the age and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child
- Interactions with each child are warm, responsive and build trusting relationships
- The dignity and rights of every child are always maintained
- Children are to be protected from bullying, violence, and harassment

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Be aware of appropriate physical contact and use discernment as we all perceive things differently.

Appropriate contact may include:

- Bending down to the child's eye level, speaking kindly, and listening attentively
- Gaining permission before hugging a child and respecting their right to refuse. Side hugs rather than front on hugs of body-to-body contact
- Taking a child's hand and leading them to an activity
- Comforting a child by placing an arm around their shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side
- Praising or welcoming a child by holding the child's two hands in yours
- Patting the child on the head, hand, back or shoulder in affirmation (above the elbow). Although if you are in Sprouts, please use discernment as they may need to be soothed through being carried/hugged
- When praying for a child you should pray for people of the same sex and place your hand on their shoulder appropriately after seeking their permission to do so

Inappropriate contact includes:

- Kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you
- Extended hugging or tickling
- Touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume, specifically the buttocks, thighs, breasts, or groin areas
- Carrying older children, including piggybacking, sitting them on your lap or having them rub up next to you
- Younger children may prefer sitting on your lap, encourage them rather to sit next to or in front of you whilst holding their hand if they require comfort

EMPOWERMENT & PARTICIPATION

Nations Church volunteers should actively assist children and adults alike to:

- Trust their feelings and speak up if they feel unsafe or at risk of harm
- Say “no” when they feel unsafe
- Raise concerns about abuse
- Know who to talk to if they feel unsafe or if anything concerns them

NO CHILD ATTENDING OUR PROGRAMS SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO:

- Any form of corporal punishment
- Punishment by solitary confinement
- Punishment by physical restraint or
- Other demeaning, humiliating or frightening punishment

Note - *Physical restraint should only ever be exerted (and with wisdom) when somebody else is being put in danger by a child's actions or a child is putting them self in danger*

SAFER CHURCHES

DUTY OF CARE

Duty of care is ***to do everything reasonably practicable to protect others from harm***. By definition, it is a legal obligation imposed on an individual, requiring that they keep to a standard of reasonable care while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm someone.

- Duty of care is the responsibility of everyone
- We as volunteers, have Duty of Care to the young people and children in our programs. It's something that doesn't need a contract, you could still be liable if things go wrong
- We ensure that a safe spiritual, emotional and physical environment is provided for all children and young people

INTERACTIONS & EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

- Actions speak louder than words. You are representing Nations Church when you serve in our programs
- We welcome and build relationships with our program participants and families
- We are positive and encouraging & respectful
- We are gracious, understanding and forgiving toward others

- We are inclusive of all children, young people, families, and volunteers regardless of our personal opinions
- We ensure all children and young people are included and engaged to the best of our abilities
- We bring an atmosphere of faith and expectation to our programs
- We serve with excellence and unto Christ
- We show teamwork
- Create an open environment where children and young people feel confident and safe in expressing their views and concerns.
- Actively seek feedback from children and young people about their experience in the program and any concerns or suggestions they have
- Educate children and young people about safe and respectful relationships, including on social media
- Encourage children and young people to trust their feelings and to speak up when they feel unsafe or at risk of harm, or if they are concerned about others
- Empower children and young people to feel confident in saying “no” when they feel unsafe
- Provide children and young people with information about whom they should talk to if they feel unsafe, have experienced inappropriate behaviour or have concerns about others.

DIVERSE NEEDS

- Anticipate and respect children and young people’s diverse circumstances and respond appropriately to those with additional vulnerabilities
- Actively encourage and support the inclusion of all people, including those with diverse needs, in Next Gen activities and programs
- Pay particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, those with a disability and those who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL MEDIA

NOTE: The use of electronic media for communication is part of everyday life. Organisations will commonly use social media as it holds benefits for communicating and promoting organisations and their events. It is wide ranging and efficient, but can also hold some associated risks and unintended outcomes with its use.

- Be transparent and accountable in the use of electronic communications with children and young people
- Try to use group messages rather than personal messages so that there are more people with full knowledge of what is being communicated. If you see a reason to individually message a young person, discuss with your leader and keep them informed
- Keep parents in the loop with what is happening to ensure a good level of trust with them
- Electronic communication with children under 16 should only occur with the full knowledge of the parent/s or carer/s or the child or young person
- Do not transmit or download or store any communication that is: discriminatory, harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit, pornographic, defamatory, threatening under any circumstance.
- If you receive any communication listed above, you must report it to your leader
- If you receive an inappropriate message from a young person immediately report it to your leader
- Do not use social media platforms to hide or represent the sender as someone else
- Set personal boundaries, do not contact students during late hours unless it's an emergency
- Be aware of what you're posting. What you post paints a picture of who you are and how you live
- Participants under 18 may be personally 'friended' on social media sites, however there should be no private messaging to young people of the opposite sex
- Communicate with integrity and maintain accountability with your leader when using social media.
- Social Media site postings can be considered as permanent
- Make sure postings are positive and appropriate to participants, public, organisation and caregivers alike
- Consider whether the program or activity has an authorised site more appropriate for communicating
- Be particularly careful to use appropriate images and photos
- Images and photos should only be used with permission
- Never send electronic communication that attempts to hide or misrepresent your identity

PHOTOGRAPHY

- Taking photographs, videos or any other recording means/form of media are strictly prohibited.
- Only approved personnel are authorised to obtain photographs/videos of children during services
- Volunteers are not to let ANYONE film or take photos of children unless you have been informed prior by a staff member
- If you have not been told prior about a person coming in to take any recordings, ask before you allow anyone to enter the program

TOILETING

To protect and prevent any accusations this procedure must be strictly adhered to:

- Leaders supervising children's toileting must be over 18 years of age
- Leaders should gather all children who need to go to the bathroom and have the children line up at the door
- Two leaders or more depending on the number of children must always supervise toilet trips
- If the toilet is used by the rest of the congregation, a sign needs to be placed outside the toilets when in use for children "Children in toilets, adults please wait"
- A sign should be located at each program unless the toilet is NOT accessible for people outside of the program
- Nations Church volunteers are not to change nappies. If a child needs a nappy changed the parent/guardian is to be contacted

If a child needs assistance:

- Option 1: Have the child come and stand outside the cubicle and assist the child with their pants. Refrain from helping with underwear (unless a Sprout or Rocket who may need assistance). Please assist within the sight of the leader outside of the toilet
- Option 2: Call senior leader/pastor to assist the child. Leader assisting the child must always be in full view of another leader
- Option 3: Call the child's parents to assist

A QUICK GUIDE FOR TRANSPORTATION

- Avoid being alone in a car with a child or young person
- At no time should there be more passengers in a car than the number of seat belts that are in working order and available for use
- All cars will be registered, in good working order and driven by licensed drivers abiding by any licence restrictions (e.g. provisional licence passenger conditions)
- Except in the case of emergencies, prior written consent should, where possible, be given by a parent/guardian if a child and/or young person is travelling in a vehicle driven by a children's worker

TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

- It is highly rare for a Kids Team member to be personally transporting any child in their own vehicle
- In exceptional circumstances approved by the pastor, if you are required to transport a child, this arrangement is between you and the parent/guardian
- Nations Church is not responsible or liable for any transport to and from our programs
- Children will travel in either the Nations church vehicle or a hired vehicle

- A copy of the driver's license must be kept in the vehicle
- Child contact details are to be taken in the vehicle
- A mobile phone must be taken in the vehicle
- Correct ratios must be always maintained when traveling
- A stocked first aid kit must be always kept in the vehicle. The kit must be checked and updated on a regular basis to ensure that any used supplies are replenished
- Written permission from the child's parent or guardian must be attained before transporting the child
- An attendance roll must be taken each time children are transported
- Child roll calls must be made when entering and departing the bus and once the destination has been reached. The roll must then be marked accordingly, and the staff or volunteer must sign that all children are accounted for, and that the vehicle is empty. The program supervisor or Pastor is to then sign once he/she has checked and confirmed that all children are accounted for, and that the vehicle is empty
- An adult must secure children into their seat. It is important that all children are supplied with adequate seating arrangements with sufficient restraints
- Children's windows should always remain closed
- All driving laws must be adhered to

TRANSPORTING TEENS

Students will often ask for lifts to and from certain events or our youth service. Driving a vehicle with teenagers as passengers is a big responsibility and creates an environment where you could be liable for any incidents. Therefore, it's important that when providing transport for a young person that you follow these guidelines:

- Nations Church is not responsible or liable for any transport to and from our programs unless otherwise stated (i.e. bus transport to Beach Party etc.), in which parents permission slips must be signed before students are able to travel by bus
- When providing transport for teenagers, you must have a verbal permission from the parent or guardian to take them to and/or from the program
- We do not condone having a teenager in your car alone with you at any time. If you are only doing one trip, take another leader with you
- At no time should there be more passengers in a car then the number of seat belts that are in working order and available
- All cars will be registered, in good working order and driven by a licensed driver

BOUNDARIES

- Maintaining appropriate boundaries across our lives, especially with young people in our care is essential
- Violating boundaries can cause harm to others

RELATIONSHIPS

- Ministry is all about building relationships, but for the right kind. It's important to maintain physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries between you and a young person. As a leader and volunteer you are in position of influence and authority so do not abuse that power
- The danger of dependency - when a child or young person becomes emotionally dependent on you because of the position of trust that you have over them. Seek supervision or advice from your Pastoral Leader
- Under no circumstance should a leader or volunteer be dating a student
- Be open and honest about your relationships with a Pastoral Leader, as no good comes out of things kept in darkness or secret
- If you have a problem or disagree with someone, Matthew 18 directs us to bring it kindly and quietly to the person, and should the problem still not be resolved afterwards, to bring in a trusted person. We advise that you bring the issue to your leaders or youth pastor. Let's carry grace for one another, remember we all make mistakes and at the end of the day, we're all on the same team

UNSAFE BEHAVIOURS

As volunteers, it is important that our behaviours set a strong and clear example in terms of keeping young people safe. Some important guidelines include:

- Always be in clear sight of other people when talking with a child or young person. Never be alone or behind closed doors with them
- Do NOT flirt or 'hit on' students
- Never put a child or young person in harm's way. If you foresee a dangerous situation, don't voluntarily put a child or young person in there
- Under no circumstances should you physically harm a child or young person. If a child or young person is being violent to you, let your leader know ASAP
- Under no circumstances should you communicate to a child or young person in any way that is sexual, derogatory, or harmful
- No drugs or alcohol are to be consumed or available at any of our programs or Nations Church event
- Always act with sexual integrity. All inappropriate sexual behaviour is forbidden. Sexual innuendo and harassment of a sexual nature are always inappropriate

CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

We have the privilege of serving children, young people and adults with additional needs (disabilities) in our Ministries. Some examples of the different diagnosis include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Global development Delay (GDD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Hearing impairments and more.

Induction and relevant training will be provided to you to address and discuss issues as well as the relevant management plans/procedures to assist you in supporting the holistic growth of these children.

Heroes Academy is a ministry of Nations Church that supports children, young people and families navigating additional needs.

- We understand and respond to the additional needs of children or young people with developmental delays or disabilities
- We acknowledge that children or young people with developmental delays or disabilities have special needs
- We are to act in ways that communicate effectively with and are supportive of children or young people with developmental delays or disabilities
- We also understand that we will need to be proactive in recognizing the additional vulnerability to harm that children or young people with developmental delays or disabilities experience

OUR COMMITMENT TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

- Nations Church Ministries are committed to supporting parents and guardians to protect their children or young people
- We will offer assistance that builds on a family's strengths, is sensitive to their cultural and religious beliefs and empowers them to meet the changing needs of their children or young people
- Nations Church Ministries are committed to communicating honestly and openly with parents and guardians about the wellbeing and safety of their children or young people if it is consistent with the paramount concern to protect the child or young person from harm and promote the child or young person's development
- We work with our State Executive Body to provide opportunities for formal debriefing and/or counselling families of children or young people who have experienced abuse and any other family in the community who may indirectly be affected by an incident

CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS

- Nations Church take seriously any concerns or issues raised by children, young people and/or their parents/guardians and will act promptly on any concerns raised by children, young people and or their parents/guardians

- We ensure that we promptly report any suspected, alleged or reported crimes against children or young people or other family members to the police or other authorized body in accordance with the policies and operational procedures of the ACC at a local level
- We expect all volunteers to follow our complaints procedure without hesitation in response to concerns raised by children and or their parents/guardians

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

We recognise that caring for and working with children or young people and their families can be complex and challenging. As such, we will provide guidance in relation to your specific role with children or young people and families.

- We are committed to providing volunteers with the necessary support to enable them to fulfill their roles
- We will put in place a management structure that supports and develops volunteers in their roles
- We are committed to providing volunteers with regular supervision and development
- We will work to ensure that volunteers have access to a senior person to assist in making decisions in relation to any action required to protect children or young people from harm

ACC CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The ACC Child Protection Policy contains two purposes related to the provision of safe environments:

- *To provide for and promote the care, protection and wellbeing of Children and Young People in a way that recognises their right to grow in a safe and stable environment and the right to be protected from harm, and to maximise opportunities for Children and Young People to realise their full potential; and*
- *To provide for and promote the provision of services that foster the health, developmental needs, spirituality, self-respect and dignity of Children and Young People by ensuring that persons responsible for Children or Young People within ACC churches are appropriately performing their responsibilities;*

These purposes are out worked in our commitment to ensuring safe environments by working to:

- *Create an environment in which Children and Young People are safe and feel safe; and ensure that Children and Young People involved with our programs, services or facilities are not harmed.*

You can view a copy of the ACC Child Protection Policy [here](#).

ACC SAFER CHURCHES STRATEGY

- ACC Safer Church Guidelines were developed to assist churches to implement the Child Protection Policy
- The Global Safer Churches Coordinator is the key contact point for Safer Church matters at Nations Church
- The ACC State Office has a State Safer Church Officer

FOUNDATIONS OF SAFER CHURCHES

- God's love for all people
- God's gift of boundaries
- Team Ministry
- Duty of care
- Fulfilling organisational responsibilities
- God is love (1 John 4:16)- This is the starting place for Safer Churches

MOTIVE FOR MINISTRY

Our primary motive for establishing and maintaining safer churches for children, young people and all vulnerable people is God's love for us. We are committed to providing people with positive and nurturing experiences and as such we minister out of the love God has for everyone.

- Our motivation for health and safety is love for people - Jesus said “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31). This includes doing all that is reasonable to protect others from harm
- Servant Leadership - We are called to be leaders, not like those who lord it over people... but as leaders free to serve. Jesus is the ultimate example of this “just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:25-28). Fostering a servant leadership style, aids in the development of an environment which is conducive to relationship

REPRESENTING GOD

- When we are appointed by our church to a position of service, including as volunteers, the church is asking us to represent God
- Our church is trusting us to represent the good news of Jesus in all that we do

MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

- Boundaries are important to providing a safe church environment. It is through crossing the boundaries applying to someone else’s personal space, acceptable touch, words, or relationships that abuse can occur or be perceived to occur
- Crossing boundaries may be intentional, in which case the risk of abuse occurring is highest. However even unintentional boundary crossing can cause discomfort or distress and may even result in perceptions or suspicions of abuse
- We need to be respectful of the boundaries of everyone
- Not all boundaries are the same
- Ministry is about serving people, therefore life is filled with dual relationships; that is, where those who are entrusted with the power and authority to serve will also be engaged in friendships with those we serve
- Boundaries are set in a relationship to minimise the potential to cause harm
- Be respectful of people's personal space needs

Many situations will involve a degree of physical contact with others. We need to ensure that we respect boundaries through maintaining appropriate touch in these situations.

A GUIDE TO APPROPRIATE TOUCH

PROVIDING SAFE TOUCH (PHYSICAL CONTACT)

- In general, respond to touch initiated, rather than initiate it
- Be respectful of people's personal space needs
- Always seek permission before initiating a touch, e.g. “Would you like a side hug?”, and also watch for non-verbal cues such as the person pulling away when touched
- If initiating touch, keep it brief, i.e., touch only if to satisfy the immediate need

- Be aware of different types of touches and focus on good touches
- **Out in the open:** Avoid initiating touch when not in the full view of others
- **Non-intimate touch (safe zones):** Only touch neutral or 'safe' zones, e.g. from the shoulder to the elbow - it is important not to touch below the top third of the back
- **An open position:** Standing or sitting side-on, rather than in front of the person (outside their personal space). This enables the volunteer to remain close enough to provide comfort, but not so close that the person can "drape" themselves on them. It also enables the leader to "control" the situation more effectively

Good touches – where a person feels safe, comfortable, and respected, include:

- Touches that focus on neutral body zones, such as brief side hugs (non-intimate touch)
- Touches that involve the hands, such as high-fives or shaking hands

Bad touches – where a person feels intimidated, degraded, or is harmed, such as causing pain or touching in intimate areas or in an intimate manner (including sexualised touches)

Confusing touches – where a person feels wary or uncertain about the intention or meaning of the touch, such as staring, prolonged or tight hugs or tickling

MANAGING THE TOUCH ENVIRONMENT

- If you are aware, or suspect, that someone is likely to initiate a touch that may become prolonged or intense, circumvent the situation by encouraging the person to sit down and then arrange yourself at an angle to avoid close body contact between the two of you
- If a person is becoming distressed and the interaction prolonged, ask another leader to join you
- Ensure all touch occurs in a public setting, where you are always in view of others
- When praying for young people you should only pray for people of the same sex (this is preferable in the case of other adults also), place hands on their shoulder appropriately

THE POWER OF WORDS

- Words carry great significance - the universe was created with a word. We need wisdom and discernment when using words as it is as easy to offend and do unintentional damage
- As a general principle... think and pray before you speak or act
- It is important to be wise where and when we communicate. If you need to have a private conversation with a child or young person then do so in a public place and ensure you have told someone, a fellow leader that you are having the conversation. Consider your positioning in relation to being overheard but also being seen (stay in sight)

THE POWER OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- The way you communicate without words is almost as important as the way you use words. Your body language, positioning, appearance, and the use of your eyes send powerful messages which can support or act to counter your words
- Invasion of someone's personal space can be intolerable and care should be taken in your placement of chairs, furniture, and yourself in relation to others

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Leaders or helpers are not to be alone, one-on-one, with a child or young person. This includes toileting of young children – it is advisable that only parents or guardians change nappies
- Where possible, both male and female leaders should be available to provide support for both boys and girls
- In relation to camps or overnight settings, it is not advisable for leaders to sleep in the same room as children or young people. Leaders should be sleeping in a designated leader's space (cabin) nearby. An exception to this might be made in dormitory settings where larger groups of children or young people are accommodated, and it is possible to assign more than one leader per dormitory

TEAM MINISTRY

- We establish and maintain safe environments for each other and those to whom we minister when we work as the 'body', or minister in transparent and accountable 'team' context. Ministry is safe when we view it as a 'body' or 'our' ministry rather than 'solo' or 'my' ministry
- We protect each other and those to whom we minister when we minister in teams
- We need to be transparent and accountable by being willing and able to show others how we care for people by communicating openly and honestly with each other
- Children and young people learn from the behaviour and language of Team Members as they relate to each other. Leaders by nature are under constant observation and credibility and trust is easily lost. We need to be Christ-like in our approach to people by being positive, loving and edifying, as opposed to devious, sarcastic, and discouraging

CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

SELF PROTECTION AND AWARENESS

We care when we actively assist Children or Young People to:

- Trust their feelings
- Say no when they feel unsafe
- Understand when to be confidential and when to talk to others about concerns
- Find safe people to talk to
- Know when they feel vulnerable
- Have a say in the activities and programs in which they participate as far as is practical

BEING AWARE OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

Warning:

This section covers difficult issues which may have personal relevance either for yourself or for loved ones. There are circumstances where it would be unwise to complete this training online, as the appropriate pastoral support is not available to you.

Recognising these issues, we have chosen to present this online training as we believe it is an important topic that needs to be accessed by a wide range of people working with children, young people and vulnerable people as part of their training. Please make an assessment as to whether it will be appropriate for you to undertake this training online.

Abuse occurs when trust or power is misused, and can include neglect, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, sexual grooming, and exposure to domestic violence.

Awareness and understanding of abuse of children and vulnerable people is important and relevant to us all. It is the responsibility of each one of us to protect children, young people, and vulnerable people from neglect as well as from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, and to report any abuse that is suspected or discovered.

Children and vulnerable people do not generally have the power to stop abuse. They rely on others to help them.

The secrecy that surrounds child sexual abuse ensures that:

- There is great pressure on children not to tell. They may feel ashamed, be afraid of being either further abused or blamed, or that they or someone else will be in trouble
- They may have to tell several people before they are believed
- They may never be believed
- They may be persuaded to change their 'story'

ABUSE DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS

The following slides provide definitions of the different types of abuse that may be encountered by children, young people, and vulnerable adults in our Church community.

Volunteers and leaders may become aware of an abuse situation through direct observation or information provided by the abused person or others.

In other situations, we may encounter “indicators” that abuse may be occurring. Some common indicators of the different types of abuse are also provided. It is important to understand however that the presence of indicators does not mean that abuse has occurred, only that there is reason for concern and that these concerns should be appropriately reported to allow follow up by the relevant church representatives.

NEGLECT

Definition

Continued failure by a parent or carer to provide a child with the basic things needed for their proper growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care, and adequate supervision.

Possible indicators

- Poor standards of hygiene leading to social isolation or poor health
- Inappropriate clothing for weather conditions
- Extended stays at school, public places, others’ homes
- Extreme longing for adult affection
- Self-comforting behaviour, e.g. rocking, sucking
- Delays in developmental milestones
- Low weight for age and/or failure to thrive and develop
- Untreated physical problems e.g. serious nappy rash
- Extreme anxiety about being abandoned
- Inadequate supervision for child’s/children’s age
- Scavenging or stealing food and focus on basic survival
- Parents or caregivers who are observed as:
 - Unable or unwilling to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, safe home conditions
 - Leaving child/ren without appropriate supervision
 - Abandoning a child
 - Withholding physical contact or stimulation for prolonged periods
 - Unable or unwilling to provide psychological nurturing

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Definition

Non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child caused by a parent, carer or any other person, such as beating, shaking, laceration, burns, fractures, poisoning, attempted suffocation, physical mutilation.

Possible indicators

- Unexplained bruising to face, head, or neck
- Bruising showing the shape of the object that caused it e.g. belt buckle, lacerations and welts
- Explanation of injury is not consistent with the injury
- Abdominal pain caused by ruptured internal organs
- Fractures of bones
- Burns and scalds (including cigarette burns)
- Drowsiness, vomiting, fits, or retinal haemorrhages
- Aggression or withdrawal
- Inappropriate clothes for weather conditions
- Discomfort with physical contact, and emotional problems
- Sudden and/or dramatic change in behaviour
- Family history of violence
- Parent/s or caregiver who:
 - Provides an explanation of a child's injury which is not consistent with the injury
 - Says that they fear injuring their child

EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Definition

Behaviour by a parent or carer that destroys a child's confidence resulting in significant emotional disturbance or trauma. Psychological abuse damages a child's intellectual faculties and processes, including intelligence, memory, recognition, perception, and moral development.

Possible indicators

- Passive and aggressive behavioural extremes
- Habit disorders
- Feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves
- Inability to value others
- Lack of trust in people and expectations
- Lack of interpersonal skills necessary for adequate functioning
- Extreme attention-seeking behaviour
- Bullying

- Disruptiveness
- Persistent running away from home
- Parent/s or caregivers who are observed engaging in:
- Constant criticism, belittling or teasing
- Regular ignoring or withholding praise and attention
- Excessive or unreasonable demands
- Persistent hostility and/or verbal abuse
- Rejection and scapegoating
- Belief that a particular child is bad or evil
- Using inappropriate physical or social isolation as punishment
- Domestic or family violence

SEXUAL ABUSE

Definition

Sexual abuse is when an adult or someone who is stronger, bigger, older (includes other children) involves a child in a sexual activity by using their power over a child or taking advantage of a child's trust. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. Bribes or threats are often used to make them participate in the activity, which can include sexual touching, sexual intercourse, sexual suggestions to children, including exposure to pornographic material, use of children in production of pornographic videos or films, exhibitionism, child prostitution.

SEXUAL GROOMING

Sexual grooming is a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child, as a precursor to sexual abuse and can include persuading the child that a 'special' relationship exists; spending inappropriate special time with the child; inappropriately giving gifts; showing special favours to the child, but not other children; talking about sexual activities; 'accidental' touches of the child outside of the 'safe zones'.

Sexual Abuse – Possible Indicators

- Child or child's friend telling you about it, even indirectly
- Describing sexual acts
- Excessively seductive behaviour
- Going to bed fully clothed
- Sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for age
- Regressive behaviour e.g. sudden return to bed-wetting
- Bruising or bleeding in the genital area
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Bruising to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs
- Self-destructive behaviour
- Suicide attempts/self-mutilation
- Child being in contact with a known sex offender

- Anorexia or over-eating
- Adolescent pregnancy
- Unexplained accumulation of money and gifts
- Persistent running away from home
- Unusual aversion to physical contact
- Inappropriate expressions of friendship with an adult
- Sudden or dramatic changes in behaviour
- Psychological disorders such as disassociation
- Parent/s or caregivers who:
 - Expose a child to prostitution or pornography or using a child for pornographic purposes
 - Intentionally expose a child to sexual behaviour of others
 - Have a previous conviction or suspicion of child sexual abuse
 - Coerce a child to engage in sexual behaviour with other children
 - Make verbal threats of sexual abuse
 - Deny an adolescent's pregnancy
 - Keep tight control over a child's movements, e.g. not allowing child to develop relationships where they might disclose

WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Definition

A child being present (hearing or seeing) when a parent or sibling is subject to physical abuse, sexual abuse, or psychological maltreatment and/or the damage caused to person or property by a family member's violent behaviour. Domestic violence can occur in any type of domestic relationship, including spousal relationships, intimate personal relationships, family relationships and informal care relationships. It is possible that there may be multiple perpetrators and victims within the household.

Possible indicators

- Displays of aggressive behaviour
- Development of phobias and insomnia
- Displays of anxiety
- Symptoms of depression
- Diminished self-esteem
- Poor academic performance and problem-solving skills
- Reduced social competence skills, including low levels of empathy
- Displays of emotional distress
- Physical complaints

OTHER TYPES OF ABUSE

BULLYING

- Bullying behaviours can include minimisation of concerns expressed by the target of the behaviours, lying, covert or overt intimidation of a target through words or actions, guilt-tripping, threats to the target or target's family/friends
- Cyber-Bullying and grooming on the internet include the use of any form of telecommunication or electronic communication to sexually groom, bully, suggest an inappropriate relationship be formed, or engage a child in sexual language or behaviours

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

This involves the perpetrator inappropriately using their position (role) in the church to satisfy their own needs or using a child for their own benefit. For example, "if I do this, then God will love me" or "God will be happy if you do this".

REPORTING CONCERNS OR PEOPLE AT RISK

CONCERNS SHOULD BE REPORTED WHEN:

- A child or young person discloses that they have been or are at risk of being abused
- Someone else (regardless of age) discloses that they know of a child or young person who has been and/or is at risk of being abused
- There are concerns that the child or young person may have been or is at risk of being abused based on their physical appearance or behaviour
- **You are not required to establish or investigate if abuse has occurred. You are required to report reasonable suspicious or concerns of abuse, including the grounds for concerns**

REPORTING OBLIGATIONS:

- When a staff member, leader or volunteer receives a complaint, report of inappropriate behaviour or expression of concern from a child, young person or vulnerable adult, they must respond respectfully, sensitively and in a supportive manner, providing assurance that the matter will be taken seriously and that it will be dealt with in a fair and just manner
- Staff members, leaders and volunteers may become aware of information concerning actual or potential abuse, either through their own observations or information provided by others (e.g. parents, friends or other external sources). In some cases, this may be information or observations that clearly indicate that abuse has or may occur, or in others information or observations that are sufficient to cause suspicion that abuse has or may occur
- Staff members, leaders and volunteers have an overriding obligation to protect the safety of children, young people, and all other Church members, and are therefore required to report the information immediately, whether it is based on actual knowledge or suspicion

PROCESSES FOR REPORTING:

- All concerns for people at risk should be reported according to the procedures outlined in the Responding to Disclosures of Abuse Procedures
- Information concerning actual or potential abuse must be reported immediately to a Pastor or the Safer Churches Coordinator. Under no circumstances is the staff member, leader, or volunteer to undertake any investigations or inquiries on their own behalf into the matter
- Details of the matter including the information on which the knowledge or suspicion of actual or potential abuse is based should be recorded on a Safe Church Information Report form. The form may be completed by the staff member, leader, or volunteer or alternatively the information may be provided to the Pastor or Safer Churches Coordinator, who will complete the Safe Church Information Report
- Staff members, leaders and volunteers should treat information concerning actual or potential abuse of a service user as highly confidential. Under no circumstances should they inform the alleged perpetrator of the matters under report
- When the disclosure or information is reported to a Pastor, then it is the responsibility of the Pastor to take any immediate action to ensure safety (e.g. in the context of reported abuse during a Church event or activity). As soon as practicable after receiving the report, the Pastor should provide the details to the Safer Churches Coordinator

SAFE LEADERS

- Safe leaders are transparent and accountable leaders
- Safe teams are accountable to the organisation and each other

DISCLOSURES

A disclosure is when someone (it can be a child, young person or adult) tells you that someone is harming them or that they are receiving abuse. Abuse can be anything from neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, bullying etc.

You **MUST** respond immediately if:

1. A child, young person or adult tells you they have been or are at risk of being abused
2. Someone tells you that they know of a child, young person or adult who has been or is at risk of being abused
3. You have concerns that a child, young person, or adult may have been or is at risk of being abused based on their physical appearance or behaviour

If this does happen, you **MUST** report to a Pastor or the Safer Churches Coordinator immediately.

DO'S & DON'TS

When dealing with a disclosure please follow these DO's and DONT's when supporting the young person.

- DO - Listen - do not add anything to what the person says (you'll need to write this down verbatim)
- DO - Reassure - they should know that they have done the right thing by speaking to you about it
- DO - Inform - let the person know that you do need to tell people who can help **(you're legally required to!)**
- DO - Ensure - let the person know they are not in immediate danger
- DO - Keep it brief - this is not the only time the person will have to share their story and you may hinder an investigation
- DO – Establish if it's safe for the person to leave the program
- DON'T - have a long conversation
- DON'T - start an investigation into the information
- DON'T - promise the person that the abuse will stop
- DON'T - promise the person that you will keep it a secret
- DON'T - tell anyone that does not need to know
- You are not required to establish or investigate if abuse has occurred, but rather report reasonable suspicions or concerns of abuse including the grounds of concern to a Pastor
- It is important to look after yourself, talk to a Pastor if you would like further counselling for yourself too as we know it can be difficult to process what you have just heard.

As a volunteer at Nations Church, it is your personal responsibility to fully understand and comply with the reporting process for Disclosures of Abuse. If you have any questions regarding adherence to the policy, please contact the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator or email saferchurches@nationschurch.com

Nations Church – [DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE FORM](#)

Reporting of a Disclosure:

1. A disclosure is made to a volunteer team member (or they determine that there is reason to believe a child (under 18 year old) is at risk)
2. The volunteer team member immediately advises the most appropriate staff member present (if for example it's during a connect group – the leader needs to hand the connect group over to an appropriate person so that they can upline immediately (For sexual assault see Mandatory reporting process)
3. The staff member explicitly asks the child 'if they will be/feel safe going home?
4. The staff member then immediately contacts the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator. Please do not wait until the end of the program to phone. The staff member then follows their instruction. If the police need to be called the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator will coordinate an appropriate response. See step 7 if you cannot reach the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator

5. The volunteer with the staff member together completes the Safer Church disclosure form as per normal
6. The Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator will handle the disclosure
7. If the staff member is unable to contact the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator. The staff member must escalate to the most senior staff member on-site to ascertain if the child is at risk and the Police need to be immediately called. If the police are to be called to attend then please phone a member of the Executive or Campus Pastor for further instructions

Examples:

- *A child attending Youth discloses that a parent they live with semi regularly physically abuses them at random times. They had not been hurt for a little while, but it does semi-regularly happen” Youth attempt to call the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator – but they are unavailable. What do they do? Answer is that Most Senior Staff member on site call the Police. As there is a risk to the child’s safety*
- *A child attending Youth discloses that a parent they only live with on the school holidays (it’s currently during the school term) physically abuses them when they are living with them. Youth attempt to call the Safer Churches Officer/Safer Churches Coordinator – but they are unavailable. What do they do? Answer is the child is going home to a parent that is ‘safe’ so they are not in imminent risk so the child can be released at the end of the night from the program, and they should have a phone call back from the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator within 24 hours*

CONFIDENTIALITY

- It is important that we Never promise to keep a secret. According to state legislation, some information **must** be reported. E.g., Suicidal thoughts, sexual abuse, self-harm
- Don’t share a person’s personal information with other people, even if they are friends.
- If in doubt, ask your direct leader

MANDATORY REPORTING - WA STATUTORY REPORTING OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

As from 1 November 2022 ACC Pastors are required by law to report child sexual abuse if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child:

- has been the subject of sexual abuse that occurred on or after 1 November 2022;
- is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse

Note: Mandatory reporting is of uttermost priority and needs to be addressed immediately (as priority over programs and such). Sexual assault disclosures need to be made to the most senior Staff member present at the time.

A Volunteers role in Nations Church's Mandatory Reporting:

Scenario 1:

8. **A disclosure is made to a volunteer team member** (or they determine that there is reason to believe a child is at risk) who then advises their credentialed line manager (most senior person present at the time). A decision is made that a Mandatory report is to be made
9. The volunteer then immediately completes the Safer Church disclosure form as per normal
10. The Credentialed line manager then immediately contacts the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator to advise and determine if the child is at immediate risk
11. The credentialed line manager then follows the instructions of the Safer Church Officer/Coordinator. If the Child is in immediate risk the Police may also be called at this stage
12. The Credentialed Line Manager then within 24 hours (earlier depending on the imminent safety risk to the child) complete the mandatory reporting (written and verbal)

Scenario 2:

1. **A disclosure is made to a volunteer team member who happens to be a mandatory reporter through their place of employment** (or they determine that there is reason to believe a child is at risk) who then advises their credentialed line manager (most senior person present at the time)
2. A decision is made that a Mandatory report is to be made
3. The volunteer then immediately completes the Safer Church disclosure form as per normal
4. The Credentialed line manager then immediately contacts the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator to advise and determine if the child is at immediate risk
5. The credentialed line manager then follows the instructions of the Safer Church Officer/Coordinator. If the Child is in immediate risk the Police may also be called at this stage

6. The Mandatory reporter volunteer team member and the Nations Church Mandatory reporter then both within 24 hours (earlier depending on the imminent safety risk to the child) complete the mandatory reporting (written and verbal)
7. The Mandatory reporter volunteer team member and the Nations Church Mandatory reporter both email **saferchurches@nationschurch.com** and provides the Date, Time, and Reference Number of the report

Scenario 3:

1. **A disclosure is made directly to a credentialed minister** (or they determine that there is reason to believe a child is at risk)
2. A decision is made that a Mandatory report is to be made
3. The credentialed minister immediately contacts the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator to advise and determine if the child is at immediate risk
4. The credentialed minister then follows the instructions of the Safer Church Officer/Coordinator. If the Child is in immediate risk the Police may also be called at this stage
5. The Credentialed minister then within 24 hours (earlier depending on the imminent safety risk to the child) complete the mandatory reporting (written and verbal)

Note- If the staff member is unable to contact the Safer Churches Officer/Coordinator. The staff member must escalate to the most Senior Staff Member on-site to ascertain if the child is at risk and the Police need to be immediately called. Please phone a member of the Executive or Campus Pastor for further instructions.

HELPFUL LINKS

Below are some helpful links that can help you understand issues better that you may come across:

- Child Safe Organisations: <https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/>
- National Office for Child Safety: <https://childsafety.pmc.gov.au/>
- Child abuse (or if a child is at risk of being harmed)- sexual, physical, emotional, neglect, witnessing domestic violence: <https://www.blueknot.org.au/Resources/General-Information/Types-of-child-abuse>
- Physical violence: www.ourwatch.org.au
- Stalking: http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/crime/domestic_and_family_violence/what_is_stalking
- Emotionally harmful behaviours: www.healthyplace.com
- Domestic violence: www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au
- Elder abuse: www.myagedcare.gov.au
- Self-harming/suicide risk: www.sane.org
- Australia's national sexual assault, domestic and family violence support service:
Call **1800 RESPECT** 1800 737 732 available 24 hours a day 7 days a week