

AIM

We affirm that all people have the right to be spiritually, psychologically 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. Our policy has been developed to help us live out the care God calls us to show others and our responsibilities under Australian and Victorian legislation.

This policy aims to minimise the risk of abuse and ministry misconduct, which includes the misuse of positional power. It outlines the commitment of Baranduda Community Church (BCC) to ensure cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled in a consistent, unbiased and thorough manner, in accordance with legislative requirements.

SUMMARY

To build and maintain a safe church community, we are committed to ensuring that;

1. all leaders are appropriately screened, trained and appointed,
2. all programs are led and run in a safe and appropriate manner,
3. there are clear reporting procedures of incidents and concerns in place, and
4. the leadership at BCC regularly review these policies and processes.

SPIRITUAL INCENTIVE

The Bible clearly states that we need to care for those who are vulnerable. The following are a sample of the many.

In John 7:24 we are asked to judge correctly rather than by mere appearances.

Psalm 25:21 speaks of the protection offered by integrity and uprightness while we have our hope in the Lord.

1 Peter 2:17 Asks us to not let our freedom be a coverup for evil, to respect everyone, love the family of believers, fear God and honour secular law givers.

Psalm 82:2 calls us to defend the weak and the fatherless as well as uphold the cause of the poor and oppressed while Jesus spoke specifically in Luke 18:16 of not hindering little children from coming to him.

These texts call for a framework that can develop and protect a culture of safe and caring spiritual discovery.

LEGAL INCENTIVE

In 2012, the Victorian Government initiated a landmark enquiry into the handling of child abuse allegations within religious organisations and other non-government organisations. The resulting Betrayal of Trust final report led the Victorian Government to introduce three new offences.

1. **a grooming offence** which targets communication, including online communication, with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse.
2. **a failure to disclose offence** that requires adults over the age of 18 yrs. to report to the police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a person under the age of 18 yrs.
3. **a failure to protect offence** that applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

1. SAFE LEADERS

All people involved in serving in ministries on behalf of BCC, paid or volunteer, undergo a full screening and training process as outlined below.

Children are defined as those under 18 years of age.

a) Safe recruitment of leaders

We will screen all prospective Ministry Leaders before they are appointed.

Appropriate leaders will have been regular participants at BCC for at least six months (or have been given special approval by the church leadership).

- complete a Leadership / Assistant Application Form, which will be reviewed with the suitable ministry area supervisor or Senior Pastor, including the review of required references to confirm their character.
- be required to know and abide by the BCC Ministry Code of Conduct.
- complete a VIC Working with Children Check or professional equivalent (if working directly with children).

Under no circumstances will a person with a criminal record of child abuse, molestation or similar offences be allowed to be involved in children's or youth ministry.

b) Adequate training and supervision of leaders

We require that prior to commencement of ministry, all leaders;

- are adequately skilled or gifted for the ministry task.
- have completed the Safe Ministry Training Course (www.SafeMinistryTraining.com.au) which outlines appropriate behaviour as well as training in how to identify and report cases of abuse (if in Ministry Leadership role or working directly with children).

BCC will provide support to ensure leaders;

- are supported and encouraged to grow in their skills and gifting.
- are regularly reviewed in relation to their ministry role and the BCC Ministry Code of Conduct.
- refresh their Safe Ministry Training Course every two years.
- maintain a current VIC Working with Children Check (if working directly with children).

2. SAFE MINISTRY SUPERVISORS (SMS)

Two BCC Safe Ministry Supervisors will be appointed to ensure support is available to all leaders and for consistency in the application of policy and procedures related to Safe Ministry practices.

3. SAFE PROGRAMS

We commit to:

Emotionally and physically safe environments

- We will offer participants, including children, the opportunity to provide input in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation.
- We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs. This will be supplied on an "Information form" which will be completed annually for children attending BCC ministries, and reviewed each term.
- All persons providing ministry will exercise a duty of care to establish and maintain safe environments in our church.
- Careful consideration will be made of things such as the activities chosen, the venue, safe ratios of supervision, appropriate child toileting practices, transportation, occupational health and safety, parental or guardian permission and confidentiality of records kept.

Guidelines for these safe practice procedures are provided in the Safe Ministry Training Course, BCC Code of conduct, and additional guidelines for specific ministry areas eg. Keeping Kids Safe at BCC

brochure. Copies of these, along with required forms, can be found on the BCC website or in hardcopy in our Safe Ministry Folder. (Refer to list at end of this policy)

4. REPORTING PROCEDURES

We commit to:

a) Respond to allegations of risk of misconduct in ministry provision

- leader behaviour which breaches the BCC Ministry Code of Conduct will be responded to by a BCC Ministry Leader and / or Senior Pastor in accordance with the Ministry Code of Conduct "When the Code is broken".
- where a leader has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them, we will provide follow up and support to the alleged victims and person accused, and seek a fair and just resolution.

b) Respond to suspicions of children at risk of harm, abuse or neglect or allegations of criminal activity

- all leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of a child at risk of harm, abuse or neglect to a BCC Safe Ministry Supervisor.
- where a leader is suspected of or has an allegation of committing harm/abuse/neglect made against them, we will provide follow up and support to the alleged victims and person accused, and seek a fair and just resolution.
- the Safe Ministry Supervisor will respond to all reports appropriately.
- any allegation of a child at risk of harm, abuse or neglect will be reported to the Victorian Child Protection Service, in accordance with Victorian legislation.
- any allegations that results in the SMS having a reasonable belief that a criminal activity or sexual or physical assault (whether adult to child or adult to adult) has or is probably being committed will be reported to the police
- any allegations of abuse occurring within the activities of BCC and reported to an SMS will be recorded and may be reported to our insurer at the discretion of the SMSs.
- any allegations that results in the SMS having a reasonable belief that a criminal activity or sexual or physical assault (whether adult to child or adult to adult) has or is probably being committed will be reported to the police

The steps involved in responding to suspicions or allegations of a child at risk of harm, abuse and neglect are outlined in the BCC Safe Ministry Incident Response Process.

c) Keep confidential information about both those who are offended against and those who offend out side of those this policy requires to know and any legally required reporting.

5. REGULAR REVIEW PERIODS

It is the responsibility of the Pastoral Leadership Team and Safe Ministry Supervisors to ensure that this policy and the related policy and procedures are implemented, maintained, and reviewed every two years or as required.

The BCC administration team is to provide support as required to ensure data storage systems and paperwork are also updated.

All policies should be reviewed in accordance with relevant State and Federal Legislation.

Contact details:

Senior Pastor

Chris Barnes 0423180944 chris.barnes@barandudacommunitychurch.org

Safe Ministry Supervisors

Phil Terrell 0448208000 terrellphilandjulie@gmail.com

Glenda Taylor 0439582382 glendataylor1@bigpond.com

Supporting Policy and Procedure documentation:

- BCC Ministry Code of Conduct
- BCC Safe Ministry Incident Response Process
- BCC General Recruiting and Screening Procedure
- BCC Working with Children Recruiting and Screening Procedure
- BCC Safe Ministry Training Procedure

Helpful brochures and forms:

- 'Keeping Kids Safe at BCC' brochure which contains Specific BCC Code of Conduct for Working with Children and Youth
- Safe Ministry Training Notes
- Welcome letter for Parents/Guardians (Creche/Kids Church/Youth)
- Information form - Creche/Kids/Youth ministry
- Wise Ministry Practices for Working with Children
- BCC Ministry Application Form and Reapplication form
- Incident report form
- Suspected Risk of Harm Form
- Safe Ministry Concerns - Anecdotal Record Form
- Approval for ministry event form
- Leadership Annual Review Interview outline form