



# **Safe Ministry Policy**

## **Vulnerable People, Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy**

### **Mackay Evangelical Church**

**Adopted:** June 2012

**Revised:** June 2013, October 2015, October 2017, October 2018, October 2019, December 2020, December 2021, December 2022

**Next Review:** December 2023

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Statement of Commitment

Mackay Evangelical Church (MAKE) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all people, especially vulnerable people, children and young people who are involved in the life and work of our church. In order to support this commitment, we are dedicated to our Safe Ministry Policy which has policies and procedures in place to effectively address the safety and wellbeing of people in our care, and to prevent mistreatment of any kind.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring that people are respected and valued
- Minimise the risk of harm and mistreatment of people at the church
- Ensure that leaders and programs are safe for people
- Ensuring that vulnerable people, including children, those with disabilities and the elderly, are informed and involved in decisions that considerably affect them
- Thorough handling of all cases of suspected mistreatment and misconduct with integrity and with the involvement of public authorities

## 1.2 Statement of Policy

This document sets out the Church's Safe Ministry Policy and Risk Management Strategy which the Church has adopted in order to provide a safe environment for people, especially vulnerable people and children, protect people from abuse and mistreatment, report mistreatment or suspected mistreatment and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should harm occur.

## 1.3 Scope

The Policy & Procedures apply to:

- All ministries authorised by or under the control of the church, including those ministries undertaken at or away from the church's premises
- All leaders and staff within the church or engaged by the church
- All members, attendees and visitors at church events

## 1.4 Authority

These are the Policy & Procedures of Mackay Evangelical Church (MAKE) and were adopted for use by MAKE on 11 August 2012. The Administration Committee in conjunction with the Senior Pastor, Kids Church Ministry Leader and Safe Ministry Contacts to review these on an annual basis. Mackay Evangelical Church is committed to implementing the Safe Ministry Policy & Procedures and training our leaders in its content and application.

## 1.5 Obligations

### Spiritual Obligations

The core beliefs of the church require us to treat all people with love and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

## Legal Obligations

The church and its leaders are subject to current Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law, including the Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD), Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2016 (QLD) and Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (QLD).

## Ethical Obligations

All people have the right to be safe and protected while in the care of the church. Leaders are responsible for the safety and welfare of people in their care.

### 1.6 Definitions

<b>Child</b>	Any person under the age of 18.
<b>Church</b>	The Mackay Evangelical Church (MAKE)
<b>Helpers</b>	Any unpaid person up to the age of 18 who is invited by a leader to assist them in their ministry.
<b>Leader</b>	Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of children placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a recognised ministry of the church. A leader could include but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pastor</li><li>• Paid staff member</li><li>• MTS worker</li><li>• Kids Church teacher and assistant</li><li>• Crèche teacher</li><li>• Youth leader</li></ul>
<b>Members</b>	Any person, including children, who attends or participates in church ministries.
<b>Ministry</b>	Any organised activity that is authorised by the church.
<b>Ministry Leader</b>	The person recognised and authorised by the church as head of a ministry.
<b>Vulnerable Person</b>	Any person who is at risk of abuse or harm, including children, people with disabilities and the elderly
<b>Safe Ministry Contact</b>	Person responsible for the application and implementation of this policy

## 2 Distribution and Communication

This policy document is made available electronically on the Church website and on Elvanto (church data management system). It is publicised and feedback sought bi-annually, at the commencement of Kids Church programs at the beginning of the year, and at the annual AGM held mid-year, by referring to it in the weekly communication and having printed copies available at these two occasions.

The policy is discussed and sent to all leaders when they commence their induction in the church.

All children are made aware of the policy at the commencement of ministry programs each year.

## 3 External policies

We acknowledge that some ministries in the church might have external affiliation with other organisations. These organisations will possibly have policies governing the issues of member and/or child safety and abuse. The church's policy & procedures are not intended to replace or conflict with other policies, but instead to operate in conjunction with them.

## 4 Policy review

The Policy & Procedures will be reviewed annually in the fourth quarter. The church administrator, in consultation with the Admin Committee, will inform the church leaders when the date of review will occur, and any changes recommended by leaders should be submitted in writing to the church administrator for consideration one month before the review date.

All leaders and church staff will be notified of changes to policies and procedures. The revised policy and procedures will then be publicised and all members of MAKE made aware of changes in the January publication of this document.

The annual review will consider:

- Whether policies and procedures were followed
- Any incidents that occurred in relation to Safe Ministry Policy
- The effectiveness of current policies and procedures in preventing or minimising harm
- Content and frequency of training in the Safe Ministry Policy

## 5 Key Persons

### Safe Ministry Contact

Marek Karcz  
marek.karcz99@gmail.com  
Kate Bialy  
kate.scott.x@gmail.com

### Kids Church Ministry Leader

Jay-Ellen Wright  
jjaewright@gmail.com

**Senior Pastor**

Jai Wright  
0429 852 949  
jaiwright@mackayevangelicalchurch.com

**Independent Contact Person**

Jim Ramsay (FIEC Chaplain)  
1/16 Watership Downs Close, Terrigal NSW 2260  
0417 267 704 (mob.)  
(02) 4384 6418 (home)  
jlramsay@me.com

**Nominated Blue Card Contact Person**

Jai Wright  
jai@make.church

## 6 Key Contact Details

**Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services**

Business Hours: 1300 706 147 or 1800  
Outside Business Hours: 1800177135 or (07) 3235 9999

**Police Services**

Emergencies: 000  
Mackay Police: (07) 4968 3444

**Family and Child Connect**

13 FAMILY (13 32 64)  
Act For Kids, C&K and Girudala Community Co-operative Society, 33A Peel Street

**Church Insurer**

EA Insurance: (03) 9890 6851

## 7 Code of Conduct

The Safe Ministry Code of Conduct provides a guide on appropriate behaviour for those supervising and working with people at MAKE.

Should a person or member be unsure whether a particular behaviour is appropriate, they should discuss this with the relevant Ministry Leader with respect to this code.

### 7.1 Interactions with Vulnerable People, Children and Young People

**Behaviours that are expected and encouraged:**

- Treating all people with respect
- Using positive and affirming language
- Be a positive role model
- Refrain from showing favouritism
- Respect and adhere to reasonable parental or carer requests

- All leaders will act transparently, ensuring that another adult is present or within eyesight when they are with a vulnerable person, e.g. male leaders catching up with female members do so in a public setting; having another person present while having meaningful/directive conversations with a person who has dementia that will affect them.

### **Inappropriate behaviours:**

Any inappropriate behaviours that could lead to harm of an individual including but not limited to;

- Physical punishment
- Bullying, insults, name-calling, yelling and racist language
- Inappropriate conversation of a suggestive or sexual nature
- Using coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature
- Misuse of God's name
- Behaviour that would be considered grooming, e.g. inappropriate gift giving to a child or parent, physical touch and attention, giving gifts or special attention to a child or young person, or their parent or carer, making the child or young person feel special and/or indebted to an adult. Making close physical contact sexual, such as inappropriate tickling and wrestling/play fighting. Openly or pretending to accidentally expose the victim to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts (this in itself is classified as child sexual abuse but can also be a precursor to physical sexual assault). Controlling a child or young person through threats, force or use of authority making the child or young person fearful to report unwanted behaviour.
- Attempting to gain control over another person, older or younger
- Suggestive or sexual gestures, remarks or jokes, including inappropriate compliments about a person's physical appearance
- Showing or sharing inappropriate media (e.g. M, MA, R or X rated material)
- Recording or filming, or uploading to the internet, recorded photo or video content, of a child without prior parental/guardian consent
- Engaging with children and vulnerable people in a secretive way
- Attempting to make contact directly with an individual child via phone, text, email, social networking or online networking, without written parental permission

## **7.2 Communication**

The church is committed to good communication with parents, carers, vulnerable people and children. All leaders will encourage openness by listening to people's concerns with a willingness to support and help them. Suggestions for church ministries by members are welcomed.

Leaders commit to reporting any concerns or suspicions about harmful behaviours and significant risks to a MAKE Safe Ministry Contact or Ministry Leader without bias or partiality.

MAKE commits to including vulnerable people and their carers in discussions about decisions that will significantly affect them.

Leaders submit to MAKE's screening process and will submit to disciplinary steps should they be found to violate these commitments or act in an inappropriate or illegal manner.



### **7.3 Physical Contact**

Members will respect a person's feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact of any kind. The age of individuals is recognised as one of the determinants in deciding what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is. Certain behaviours may be appropriate for a younger child (e.g. picking up and holding a 2-year-old child who is crying) but cease to be appropriate for older children (e.g. cuddling a 12-year-old child).

#### **Inappropriate behaviours:**

- Inappropriate or unwanted touching, including kissing, extended hugging or tickling, or carrying older children and sitting them on your lap.
- Any acts of violence by any person.
- Engaging in inappropriately rough physical play with a child.
- Assisting children to do things of a personal nature that they can do themselves (e.g. going to the bathroom).
- Spending time alone or remaining in a confined or secluded space with a child.

### **7.4 Supervision of Children**

Incidents of abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, two leaders should always be present when working with or supervising children. Where this is not practical adjoining rooms should be used by two groups with both groups visible (and preferably audible) to each other, e.g. doors left open or a class operating behind a glass door.

A ratio of 4 children to 1 leader/helper is to be maintained at Crèche (children aged 1 – 3 years).

A ratio of 12 children to 1 leader/helper is to be maintained at Kids Church (children aged 4 – 12 years).

The presence of at least one adult is required in all supervision of children.

Leaders will not visit children in their homes unless a parent is present, or another leader accompanies them.

Leaders will not take a child to any home/residence from church activities or hold private meetings outside of Church-sponsored activities without the approval of the child's parents (recommended written approval).

Leaders wanting to hold an event under the auspices of MAKE church outside of regular church events shall have senior Pastor approval eg. Youth social.

When transporting children, leaders should never be alone with a child in a car. Where this is not practical, leaders will obtain written parental permission (text or email) and take them directly to the agreed destination.

All personal counselling of children is to be carried out within sight of another leader.

Children are not permitted to leave church premises unsupervised, unless written permission is obtained from a parent/guardian, or they arrived unaccompanied.

Adults and children are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Leaders will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No leader will be alone in a room with a child while either is changing.

Initiations and secret ceremonies are prohibited. All aspects of every child-related program will be open to observation by parents/guardians.

Leaders have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at child-related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

## **7.5 Disciplining children**

It is recognised that discipline is necessary in order to provide a safe environment in which children and young people can learn. The behaviour of one person may disrupt and spoil the enjoyment of the group as a whole. Discipline is not simply about consequences, but about teaching. It is a means of helping to form the character and also of giving security and confidence to all concerned. It is beneficial to all when discipline is wisely applied to any situation (Hebrews 12:5-11).

It is expected that children and young people will comply with the instructions of their leaders and helpers. Leaders and helpers will use positive reinforcement to encourage children to behave appropriately during Kids Church ministry. Children will be respectfully asked to comply with leaders and helpers instructions. Where a child or young person repeatedly presents unacceptable behaviour, parents/guardians must be informed and their assistance and support sought. It may be necessary to ask the child to leave the activity in order to preserve the safety and well-being of others. If there is no subsequent improvement in the situation, then the child must be withdrawn from the activity and parents engaged. No leader or helper of any children's or young people's ministry will use physical punishment, or ridicule, humiliate or isolate a child.

Where any disciplinary action was required, or if any incident occurs during the course of church activities, the leader or helper will complete an incident report detailing the event and actions taken. All reports should be submitted to the relevant ministry leader within 24 hours.

## **7.6 Alcohol & drugs**

The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on church grounds or during an activity is not to be allowed or condoned by any leader. Any person found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be supervised and arrangements made for the person to be returned home immediately.

The only exception is with the consumption of alcohol at a church function intended primarily for adult participation, and where no children or only children accompanied by parents/guardians may attend.

Parents are to administer any prescription medicine required by children.

## 8 Selection & screening

### 8.1 Leaders

We are committed to ensuring all relevant leaders are screened before being selected. The process for placing volunteers in a leader's position in any ministry is detailed below.

- Volunteers will need to be regularly attending church Sunday services and ideally a bible study group in order to be considered for any leadership position in serving at MAKE. This ensures that all volunteers are receiving spiritual input, being encouraged to grow in their faith and living in community with other believers.
- Those who are regular attendees will be interviewed by a church Leader before commencing any leadership position. The Leader will aim to understand the person's interests, skills and experience before placing them in any leadership position. They will consult with the person's bible study leader, or another church leader.
- Should the Ministry team member determine that the person be placed as a volunteer leader in a children's ministry, they will need to have regularly attended the church, or a partner church, for at least 3 months for crèche teachers and 6 months for Kids Church and youth teachers. Kids Church teachers are also required to be formal members of MAKE Church.
- A Working with Children check which complies with the legislative requirements of Queensland will be requested and received prior to the leader commencing a role that involves making decisions for or working with children.
- All relevant leaders will complete Safe Ministry Training prior to commencement of serving and through this process Kids Ministry leaders will be required to provide referees who can confirm that the proposed leader is suitable to work with vulnerable people and there is no reason the proposed leader should not be appointed in such a role.

**Where the church has identified that an applicant/volunteer:**

- **Has been issued with a negative blue card notice**
- **Is a known disqualified person**
- **Has had their blue card or exemption card cancelled or suspended**

**cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for child related ministries or any committee where decisions are made which impact on children at MAKE.**

These offences do not preclude the applicant from serving in other ministries and after careful consideration, the church might welcome the applicant's contribution in more appropriate areas.

### 8.2 Helpers

Helpers are expected to have an understanding of the code of conduct contained in this Child Protection Policy & Procedures of the church and be prepared to work within them. They should also be aware who the Safe Ministry Contacts are and others who they can report a concern to.

Any helper who provides assistance in a children's ministry must be supervised by a leader at all times and will be accountable to that leader.

Leaders who accept the assistance of a helper must be satisfied of the helpers' maturity and their suitability for children's ministry.

## 9 Compliance with the Blue Card System

### 9.1 Blue Card Process

All Leaders must hold a valid blue card before commencing any child related ministry roles, in accordance with the No Card, No Start Law.

The church administrator is the nominated contact person for blue cards and is responsible for managing blue cards at MAKE. The church administrator should:

- Provide potential leaders with information on how to apply for a blue card using the online platform (if they have not already done so) and offer support for the application process.
- Use and keep updated the MAKE organisation Portal to manage blue card records and keep obligations.
- Should a potential leader already have a blue card, the administrator should link the applicant to the MAKE organisation Blue Card Portal.
- If a person leaves the church and ceases volunteering at MAKE, the administrator should unlink the volunteer from the MAKE organisation Blue Card Portal.
- If the card has expired or the status changes the administrator will become aware and will communicate accordingly. Senior Pastor, safe ministry contacts, leadership team and any other relevant ministry leaders will be informed immediately of restricted and/or disqualified persons. The person will cease to serve in child related roles and activities.

Exemption cards (which are held by police officers and teachers who are registered in Queensland) now have expiry dates and are valid for 3 years. They will expire if not renewed.

## 10 Training and Management Strategies

We are committed to ensuring that all leaders are appropriately supported and trained.

As part of their induction, all leaders must complete an insurer approved Safe Ministry Training Course which outlines appropriate behaviour including how to minimise the chances of harm and abuse, as well as training in how to identify and report cases of abuse. Leaders will agree to commit to the Church Code of Conduct and be willing to be held accountable for their behaviour. All leaders will be issued with a copy of this policy before commencing their duties. The Ministry Leader will check with them to ensure that they understand:

- The content and application of the Safe Ministry Policy
- Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements

General training for new leaders will depend on the role the person is being trained for, and the prior experience of the person being trained. Training could include a number of activities including leaders observing others performing a role or leading an activity, observing a leader prepare for an activity, assisting another leader in preparing, or preparing under supervision, presenting an activity with feedback from the current leader, and working through books or training guides together with another leader.

The church conducts annual training for all leaders in order to equip them with skills and knowledge to function effectively in their roles. Training is advertised to all leaders across various ministries in the church, and all leaders are encouraged to attend.

Leaders will meet regularly during the year to set goals, discuss concerns, identify and provide support, make decisions regarding the ministry programs and receive relevant training.

## 11 Reporting procedures

We are committed to creating a culture where people feel safe to speak out about inappropriate behaviour without fear. We are committed to listening and responding appropriately to concerns and complaints about behaviour and safety at MAKE. Throughout this process we are committed to protecting the confidentiality, dignity, health and well-being of all individuals involved. Any issues will be managed with a focus on the interest of the vulnerable person.

Vulnerable people, including children and young people, can only be protected from harm if it is reported and dealt with quickly and effectively. The Church has adopted the procedures below to ensure that staff respond as quickly as possible to an allegation of suspicion of harm. Harm can be caused by a single act or omission or a series of acts or omissions.

### 11.1 Mandatory Reporting

It is an offence for any adult not to report sexual offending against a child by another adult to police. This means all adults have the responsibility according to law to report sexual offences against children (for this law, a child means a person under 16 or a person under 18 with an impairment of the mind) to police – unless they have a reasonable excuse not to (see below).

Failure to protect is an offence. This offence requires a person in position of power or responsibility within an institution to reduce or remove a known risk of sexual offending against a child by an adult associated with an institution.

The failure to protect offence applies to everyone if you are 18 or older and associated with an institution that has children in its care, supervision or control, and you:

- know there is a significant risk that another adult also associated with the institution (or who is a regulated volunteer) will commit a sexual offence against a child or children
- have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk
- wilfully or negligently fail to reduce or remove the risk.

The maximum penalty for failing to protect a child from a sexual offence is 5 years' imprisonment.

A *reasonable excuse* includes if:

- you have already reported the offence to an appropriate authority (e.g. Child Safety) or you know another person has or will report it—for example, if you are
  - a nurse and have already reported it to Child Safety
  - a teacher and your school principal or another teacher has already reported the offence according to other laws
- you believe the information has already been given to a police officer
- you received information about the victim who is now an adult and you reasonably believe they don't want to reveal it to the police
- you believe reporting the offence would endanger you or another person (other than the alleged offender) and that failure to give the information to police is reasonable.

However, a 'reasonable excuse' is not defined exhaustively and may include other circumstances.

The law now also specifies that information about a sexual offence against a child that has been gained during, or in connection with, a religious confession, must be reported to police.

Failure to protect vulnerable people and children is a crime (indictable offence) and may result in a criminal record and up to 5 years imprisonment.

To report an offence, contact PoliceLink on 131 444.

If it's an emergency, phone Triple Zero (000).

If you are unsure of your reporting obligations at church, talk to the above listed contacts.

You may wish to get further legal advice if you are unsure about reporting.

## **11.2 What is Harm?**

Harm is defined as 'any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing' (section 9 of the Child Protection Act 1999).

**Abuse/Harm** Can consist of one or more of but is not restricted to the following:

**Physical abuse** – Any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:

- Hitting, punching, kicking (marks from belt buckles, fingers)
- Shaking (particularly babies)
- Burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair
- Alcohol or other drug administration

**Sexual abuse** – Any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential. Examples include:

- Indecent treatment of a child
- Carnal knowledge with or of a child
- Rape
- Incest
- Grooming a child (or their parent or carer)
- Making child exploitation material
- Maintaining a sexual relationship with a child
- Kissing or touching a child in a sexual manner
- Exposing the child to pornography

- Engaging in sexual relations with a child or young person under 16 years of age

**Emotional abuse** – The chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child’s development, self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child’s presence.

**Neglect** – Characterised by the failure to provide for the vulnerable persons basic physical and emotional needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person’s development, for example:

- Insufficient food
- Unhygienic living conditions
- Failure to provide health care
- Leaving vulnerable persons unattended

### 11.3 Signs of Harm

#### General indicators of child abuse:

- Showing wariness and distrust of adults
- Rocking, sucking or biting excessively
- Bedwetting or soiling
- Demanding or aggressive behaviour
- Sleeping difficulties, often being tired and falling asleep
- Low self-esteem
- Difficulty relating to adults and peers
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Being seemingly accident prone
- Having broken bones or unexplained bruising, bleeding, swelling, burns, tears, cuts or welts (this includes genitals or anus)
- Being unable to explain an injury, or providing explanations that are inconsistent, vague, or unbelievable
- be frequently depressed, feel suicidal or attempt suicide
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Being withdrawn or overly obedient
- Being reluctant to go home or afraid of being alone with a particular person
- Creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse
- Know more about sexual activities than other children their age

- Play in a sexual way
- Masturbate more than what's normal for their age and stage of development
- Refuse to undress for activities or often wear layers of clothing
- Have unusual vaginal odour or discharge
- Have itching or pain in the genital area, difficulty going to the toilet, walking or sitting
- Have a sexually transmitted disease, especially in a young child
- Have torn, stained or bloody clothing, especially underwear

### **General Indicators of sexual abuse:**

Child sexual abuse is when an adult, a stronger child or a teenager involves a child in sexual activity. Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional, including:

- kissing, holding or fondling a child in a sexual way
- exposing genitals to a child
- talking in a sexual way that's not appropriate for the child's age
- making obscene phone calls, text messages or remarks
- persistently intruding on a child's privacy
- penetrating a child's vagina or anus by penis, finger or other object
- having sex with a child under 16 years of age
- showing pornographic films, magazines or photographs to a child
- having a child pose or behave in a sexual way
- forcing a child or young person to watch a sexual act
- forcing a child or young person to have sex with another child
- oral sex
- rape
- incest
- child prostitution.

### **General indicators of neglect:**

- Malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food
- Poor hygiene, matted hair, dirty skin or body odour
- Unattended physical or medical problems
- Comments from a child that no one is home to provide care
- Being constantly tired
- Inappropriate clothing, especially inadequate clothing in winter
- Frequent illness, infections or sores
- Being left unsupervised for long periods



#### **11.4 What is a 'disclosure' of harm?**

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen to a person.

Disclosures of harm may start with:

- "I think I saw..."
- "Somebody told me that..."
- "Just think you should know..."
- "I'm not sure what I want you to do, but..."

It is important to act quickly and in the best interests of the person after a disclosure of harm is received, irrespective of the alleged source of harm.

#### **11.5 What is a 'suspicion' of harm?**

A suspicion of harm is when someone has a reasonable suspicion that a person has suffered, is suffering, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm. A person who has been, or may be experiencing, abuse may show behavioural, emotional or physical signs of stress and abuse. It is irrelevant whether the harm has been caused at a church event or by a church attendee, or at some other place by somebody unconnected with the Church.

You can suspect harm if:

- a person tells you they have been harmed
- someone else, for example another child, a parent, or an employee, tells you that harm has occurred or is likely to occur
- a person tells you they know someone who has been harmed (it is possible that they may be referring to themselves)
- you are concerned at significant changes in the behaviour of a person, or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries, or
- you see the harm happening.

#### **11.6 Managing and Recording a Disclosure or Suspicion of Harm**

##### **Managing a Disclosure of Harm**

If a disclosure of harm is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be suppressed.
- Remain calm and listen attentively, actively and non-judgementally.
- Ensuring there is a private place to talk.
- Encouraging the person to talk in their own words and ensure open-ended questions are asked (e.g. 'Can you tell me what happened?'). Don't ask leading questions which tend to suggest an answer.
- Ensuring that the person is advised that the disclosure cannot remain a secret and it is necessary to tell someone in order to get help.

- Not pushing the person to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the person that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they have done the right thing in disclosing the incident.
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator. If the leader is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it may be advisable for another person to assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation.
- If the alleged assault has taken place recently, clothing worn by the child should be retained and handed to the police for forensic examination.
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Not attempting to investigate or mediate an outcome.

The person who receives the disclosure should document it clearly and accurately, including a detailed description of:

- the relevant dates, times, locations and who was present
- exactly what the person disclosing said, using “I said,” “they said,” statements
- the questions you asked
- any comments you made, and
- your actions following the disclosure

The form in appendix A should be used to document disclosures.

### **Managing a Suspicion of Harm**

In relation to a ‘suspicion’ of harm, leaders will:

- 
- remain alert to any warning signs or indicators
- pay close attention to changes in the child’s behaviour, ideas, feelings and the words children use
- make written notes of observations in a non-judgemental and accurate manner
- assure a person that they can come to talk when they need to, and listen to them and believe them when they do
- If unsure or believe it is worth escalating talk to safe ministry contact who may decide to report the suspicion.

## **11.7 Reporting Disclosures or Suspicions of Harm**

### **Reporting at Church**

Where an allegation is made:

- If there is any immediate danger or threat of danger, the Police Services are to be contacted
- A report needs to be written within 24 hours of the incident or first suspicion of safety concerns

- The report should be sent immediately to either the Senior Pastor, Safe Ministry Contact or Children’s Ministry Leader
- The Senior Pastor and/or relevant Ministry Leader and a Safe Ministry Contact are to meet within 48 hours
- The Senior Pastor, Safe Ministry Contact or relevant Ministry Leader can decide to refer the matter to the relevant authorities (Police Services or Child Services)
- The person who received the information is encouraged to be involved in the reporting process to the authorities. The person receiving the information is able to report it independently to the relevant authorities.

Any disclosures of harm, reports of suspected abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location.

### **Reporting to the Authorities**

If an individual believes a person is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, they should immediately contact the Queensland Police Service by dialling 000.

A report should be made to the Queensland Police Service if the person:

- Is at imminent risk of harm
- has been the victim of a criminal offence

If there is a reasonable suspicion that a child (including an unborn child) has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm AND does not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm, a report **must** be made to Child Safety.

### **Determining whether there is a reasonable suspicion of harm**

Considerations when forming a reasonable suspicion about harm to a person include:

- Whether there are detrimental effects on the person’s body or their psychological or emotional state
  - that are evident to the leader
  - that the leader considers are likely to become evident in the future; and
- in relation to any detrimental effects mentioned above
  - their nature and severity, and
  - the likelihood that they will continue, and
  - the child’s age (if relevant).

### **Determining if there is a parent willing and able to protect the child**

A parent may be willing to protect a child, but not have capacity to do so and therefore they are not considered ‘able’. This may include parents suffering from a severe mental health condition or physical illness/injury.

Alternatively, a parent may have the capacity to protect a child (i.e. they may be able), but may choose not to do so (i.e. they are not willing). This may include a parent continuing a relationship with a person who is sexually abusing their child.

In some circumstances, a parent may be both not able and not willing to protect the child from harm.

In some cases, the circumstances in which the harm occurred will be so serious that it can be presumed there is no parent able or willing to protect the child. If there is considered to be at least one parent both 'able' and 'willing' to protect the child, the child is considered to not be in 'need of protection'.

### **Referral to Family and Child Connect**

There may also be other circumstances where there is concern for a child's welfare but it does not reach the threshold to be considered a disclosure or reasonable suspicion of harm. Family and Child Connect Services can provide information and advice about connecting families with support services. A mandatory reporter (doctor, teacher, police or child care worker) can refer a family without their consent, but others require the consent of the family to make a referral.

The criteria for Family and Child Connect Service to work with the family is:

- the referred family has a child 18 years or under,
- the child is not currently in need of protection,
- without support the child, young person or family are at risk of entering or re-entering the statutory child protection system,
- the family would benefit from access to intensive and specialist support services, and
- the family has multiple and complex needs.

### **Church Action**

Where a report of disclosure or suspicion of harm involves a complaint against a church leader:

- Any leader accused of harm will be removed from all children's ministry, leadership positions and any ministry deemed inappropriate by the nature of the complaint, pending the outcome of all investigations.
- The person will be removed from their position on the church database until the complaint is resolved.

It is vital that clear guidance and advice be sought by the Queensland Police Service or Child Services as to who should tell the child's parents about the disclosure and the action taken and who can give ongoing help and trained support to the child.

The Senior Pastor and Safe Ministry Contact should nominate a person to provide counselling and support to the vulnerable person and their family.

The church reserves the right to decide what action to take and to carry out church disciplinary procedures in accordance with the constitution of the church. This includes:

- Reinstating the person as a leader in ministry if the complaint is found to have no basis
- Removing the person from all child-related ministries or other ministries caring for people
- Requiring the person to cease to have any contact with children at the church other than unavoidable incidental contact
- Asking the person to leave the church

### **Review of the Safe Ministry Policy**

A review of the operation of policies and procedures should be undertaken following a disclosure or suspicion of harm being actioned to consider the application of the policies and whether there are any changes necessary, for example, whether they are suitable for:

- responding to a person when a disclosure is made - protecting people from harm, and
- assisting involved parties within your organisation, and
- identify any additional training requirements.

## **12 Managing an incident of the Safe Ministry Policy**

For the purpose of this document any policy breaches will be referred to as incidents.

An incident is any action or inaction of any member of the organisation, including children and young people, that fails to comply with any part of this policy.

Who is to comply with the plan?

The Safe Ministry Policy applies to:

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Parents
- Children
- Members and visitors of MAKE

All members of the church are encouraged to report an incident in order that appropriate consequences are enforced and training provided so that an incident can be minimised and avoided.

### **12.1 Process for Reporting an Incident**

All incidents should be documented by either the person reporting the incident, or the person responsible for managing the incident. A template incident report form is included in Appendix B. The outcome of the incident is also to be recorded on this form. Forms will be stored securely and confidentiality maintained.

### **12.2 Process for Managing an Incident**

All incidents will be managed in a fair, unbiased, consistent and supportive manner. The consequence of an incident will depend on the seriousness of the breach. Should a person fail to change their behaviour and there is another incident that occurs in the same way for a second time, the incident would be considered more serious and further action taken, for example a repeated minor incident would become a moderate incident.

#### **MINOR INCIDENT**

A minor incident include actions such as failing to report within a 24 hour period

- The responsible person will acknowledge that the behaviour is inconsistent with the Safe Ministry Policy and emphasise the relevant component of the child and youth Safe Ministry Policy, especially the code of conduct, to the person.

### **MODERATE INCIDENT**

A moderate incident include actions such as swearing at children.

- The pastor will acknowledge that the behaviour is inconsistent with the Safe Ministry Policy and emphasise the relevant component of the Safe Ministry Policy, especially the code of conduct, to the person.
- A formal written warning will be issued.
- Further education and training will be provided.

### **MAJOR INCIDENT**

A major incident include actions such as isolating children.

- The pastor will acknowledge that the behaviour is inconsistent with the Safe Ministry Policy, and emphasise the relevant component of the Safe Ministry Policy, especially the code of conduct, to the person.
- A formal written warning will be issued.
- Further education and training will be provided.
- Closer supervision will be provided.

### **EXTREME INCIDENT**

A extreme incident include use of excessive physical force to restrain children.

For an extreme breach, the incident will be documented as soon as possible. The Senior Pastor and/or relevant Ministry Leader and a Safe Ministry Contact are to meet within 48 hours to meet to discuss the incident and decide on an appropriate course of action.

The Senior Pastor and Safe Ministry Contact should nominate a person to provide counselling and support to the person, their family, or any others involved.

The church may decide to carry out church disciplinary procedures in accordance with the constitution of the church. This includes:

- Removing the person from all child-related ministries or ministries involving care of others
- Requiring the person to cease to have any contact with children at the church other than unavoidable incidental contact
- Asking the person to leave the church

## **13 Risk Management Plans for High Risk Activities and Special Events**

We are committed to ensuring that spaces and activities for which we are responsible are safe and do not put people at risk of significant harm. A Risk Management Plan is a process where an activity is assessed for risks, deciding on how to manage the risk, deciding whether risk levels are tolerable, and assessing the effectiveness of the risk management plan.

Risk Management Plans have been created for regular Sunday Services, including Kids Church Ministry. Please see Appendix C for a Risk Management Plan.

Risk Management Plans should be drawn up for all special events and high-risk activities. These are activities:

- where volunteers or people external to the church are involved
- that take place at an external venue
- involve significant hazards such as hazardous equipment or water hazards
- involve large numbers of people

Examples of special events include:

- MAKE’s annual birthday celebration
- Sandcastle competition at the beach
- MAKE Saturday Drive

### 13.1 Risk Management Process

#### Step 1: Describe the activity

Briefly describe the activity and state the purpose, elements, location and people involved.

#### Step 2: Identify the Risks

Brainstorm potential risks. Consider sources of harm, where, when and how harm might occur.

Checklist of General Risks to consider for special events:

- Transportation to/from/at a venue
- Supervision of children
- Play equipment
- People becoming lost

#### Step 3: Analyse the Risks

Consider the likelihood of the risk:

<b>Almost Certain</b>	Almost certain to occur in most circumstances
<b>Likely</b>	Likely to occur frequently
<b>Possible</b>	Possible and likely to occur at some time
<b>Unlikely</b>	Unlikely to occur but could happen
<b>Rare</b>	May occur but only in rare and exceptional circumstances

Consider the Consequence of the risk:

<b>Critical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical incident. (e.g. Death or permanent disability of adult or child; high level of distress to other parties)</li> <li>• Sustained negative publicity or damage to reputation from a national perspective or from the community welfare perspective.</li> </ul>
<b>Major</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple injuries requiring specialist medical treatment or hospitalisation; and/or major occupational health safety &amp; welfare liability incident / issue.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major incident which damages public or parent confidence.</li> <li>• One or more children are lost from the main group.</li> </ul>
<b>Moderate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serious injuries and/or illness.</li> <li>• Complex welfare and/or health care issue.</li> <li>• Serious disruption or incident, resulting in distress to children and adults.</li> </ul>
<b>Minor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor first aid or minor occupational health safety &amp; welfare liability incident / issue (e.g. minor cuts, bruises, bumps).</li> <li>• Minor behavioural issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Insignificant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No treatment required.</li> </ul>

#### Step 4: Evaluate the Risks

Evaluate the risks using the likelihood and consequence of each risk and plotting them on the risk analysis matrix below:

		Likelihood				
		Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain
Consequence	Critical	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Major	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Extreme
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
	Minor	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Insignificant	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate

#### Step 5: Manage the Risk

Consider options to control and manage the risk. Then consider how likely it is for the risk to occur after control measures have been put in place, and how bad the outcome would be if the risk was to occur. If you assess that a risk is still highly likely and the outcome would result in harm then the activity may need to be reconsidered.

#### Step 6: Review

Identify the person responsible for review the risk management plan after the event or activity.

A template for a Risk Management Plan is included in appendix D.



# APPENDIX A – Report of Disclosure or Suspicion of Harm to Children at MAKE

Date of Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Reporter's Details	
Full name	
Ministry Role	
Contact details	

Child's Details	
Child's full name	
Child's age	
Child's contact details	
Child's class	

General Description of Incident Reported (e.g. Verbal, Physical or Sexual Abuse):
List below a detailed description of what occurred, including relevant dates and times. Include observations on indicators of abuse, safety concerns, verbal comments, conversations

Action Taken:

- Contacted Senior Pastor or Independent Person
- Contacted Police
- Contacted Child Support Services
- Contacted ANSVAR (Insurer)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to Senior Paster or Kids Church Ministry Leader within 24 hours in person or via email.

## APPENDIX B – Incident Report Form at MAKE

Date of Report: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Reporter's Details</b>	
Full name	
Ministry Role	
Contact details	

Name(s) of person/people involved in incident	
<b>Date and time of incident</b>	
<b>Location of incident</b>	

<b>General Description of Incident Reported</b>

<b>Action Taken</b>

<b>If no action taken - reason</b>

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to Senior Pastor or Kids Church Ministry Leader within 24 hours in person or via email.

## APPENDIX C – Risk Management Plan for Kids Church Activities at Fitzgerald State School

Activity Description	Risks Identification	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Evaluation	Risk Management	Person Responsible for Review
Children playing outside the hall before and after service.	Child may wander away onto busy road or hall car park or be vulnerable to approaches from public outside (strangers).	Possible	Critical	High	Encourage children to stay in the hall by providing balls and jumping castle in the hall to play with. Child-proof grills are across exits from the hall.	Kids Church Ministry Leader
Kids Church Classes for Primary School and Crèche.	Child or children being left alone with an adult opens up the possibility for abuse or inappropriate behaviour.	Possible	Moderate	Moderate	Ensure minimum of two people leading each kid's church group. Where this is not possible due to lack of leader numbers kid's church must be run in full view of another Blue Card approved leader. Proximity of teaching rooms right next to each other when only one leader available to lead a kids group with glass doors to maximise visibility and accessibility amongst rooms. Crèche must always have two leaders.	Kids Church Ministry Leader
Children needing to go to the toilet	Risk of physical or sexual abuse to child in bathrooms	Unlikely	Major	Moderate	Older children should go to the bathroom themselves. Parents of crèche aged children should take their children to the bathroom and change nappies.	Kids Church Ministry Leader

## APPENDIX C – Risk Management Plan for Church Activities at BCC Cinemas

Activity Description	Risks Identification	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Evaluation	Risk Management	Person Responsible for Review
Children playing in the foyer before and after service. The foyer has automatic doors which open onto the carpark.	Child may wander away onto busy road or hall car park or be vulnerable to approaches from the public outside (strangers).	Possible	Critical	High	Encourage children to stay in the cinema by providing games and jumping castle in the cinema to play with. Parents are responsible for the care of their own children before and after kids church. Welcome team shut cinema doors during the service.	Kids Church Ministry Leader
Kids Church Classes for Primary School and Crèche.	Child or children being left alone with an adult opens up the possibility for abuse or inappropriate behaviour.	Possible	Moderate	Moderate	Ensure minimum of two people leading each kid's church group. Where this is not possible due to lack of leader numbers kid's church must be run in full view of another Blue Card approved leader. Proximity of teaching rooms right next to each other when only one leader available to lead a kids group with glass doors to maximise visibility and accessibility amongst rooms. Crèche must always have two leaders.	Kids Church Ministry Leader
Children needing to go to the toilet	Risk of physical or sexual abuse to child in bathrooms	Unlikely	Major	Moderate	Children will be offered the opportunity to use the bathroom en route to the Kids Church venue as a group with teacher supervision. If required during Kids Church, older children, year 4 - 6 and above are required to go to the bathroom in pairs.	Kids Church Ministry Leader

					Teachers to contact parents of children in year 3 and below to take their own children to the bathroom. Parents of crèche aged children should take their children to the bathroom and change nappies.	
Children leaving Kids Church venue and wandering off	Children getting lost, exiting to carpark, going into a different cinema room, being approached by unsafe person	Unlikely	Major	Moderate	Cinema doors closed during Kids Church. Place signs at entrances to church meeting and Kids Church meeting.	Kids Church Ministry Leader
Movement of people around the cinema room	People injuring themselves on stairs	Possible	Minor	Moderate	Ramps available, adequate lighting. Rule of no running in the cinema for children.	Kids Church Ministry Leaders
Kids activities at the front of cinema after church	Jumping castle collapsing onto children People tripping on sound equipment or games	Possible	Minor	Moderate	Jumping castle roped to weights to prevent collapse. Musicians to move equipment back against wall after final song. Sound equipment packed up immediately after service. Adequate lighting and games without many small parts made available.	Senior Pastor
Kids Church outdoor activities behind cinema	Unfenced section of outdoor area leading to carpark being accessed by children. Loose gravel that children could trip on. Sunburn	Unlikely	Major	Moderate	Place younger children in enclosed section, and older children closer to unfenced section. First aid kit available. Children to wear shoes. Limit outdoor time to 15 mins, if area is used longer, sunscreen and hats to be used. Children to bring water bottles.	Kids Church Ministry Leaders

# Appendix D - Template for Risk Management Plan of High Risk Activities

Activity Description	Risks Identification	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Evaluation	Risk Management	Person Responsible for Review