

## Safe Church Policy

### Preamble:

Recommendations by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (December 2017) highlight both legal and moral reasons why churches must do all in their power to ensure the safety of vulnerable people who participate in the life of the church.

Tasmanian Baptists has a legal responsibility to ensure member churches are both aware and compliant with legislation and best practice regarding the care for vulnerable people, with emphasis on the care and safety for children.

The Royal Commission brought down 10 proposed standards that the government and the legal system could use to measure appropriate duty of care for children. They are as follows:

1. Child Safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved.
4. Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are considered.
5. People working with children are suitable and supported.
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused.
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training. (NB Staff includes volunteers)
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
9. Implementation for the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is Child Safe.

This policy is designed to discharge the responsibilities of the Baptist Union of Tasmania as well as provide a mechanism to ensure that churches can comply with these standards.

### Effective Date:

October 27, 2018

### Definitions:

- **Pastor:** Those who have registered with and been accepted by Tasmanian Baptists as APL - Accredited pastoral leader, RPL - Registered pastoral leader, IPL - Interim pastoral leader, RET - Retired pastoral leader, PT - Pastor in training.
- **Leader:** Those who have been appointed by the church to provide leadership in a ministry, programme or activity of the church. These people may work alone or as part of a team. They can be either a paid employee of the church or a carry out their duties in a voluntary capacity. Those involved in leading services where children are present (leading worship, playing instruments, etc) are leaders according to Tasmanian Law.
- **Safe Church Awareness Workshop (SCAW):** This is a full day's training (9.30-4) usually held on a Saturday. This workshop is designed to raise awareness of all areas of safety and related compliance that need to be addressed by the church. All participants receive a workshop manual which contains all relevant material, recommendations for best practice and some pro-formas for policy and forms that could be used. Risk management processes are also contained in the workbook.

- **Safe Church Awareness refresher (SCAR):** This is a 3-hour session designed to do three things: 1. Review the material covered in the full day workshop; 2. Advise of any relevant changes to legislation that impact on safe church compliance; 3. Provide churches with an opportunity to assess how they are tracking in the implementation of safe church policy and procedures.
- **Safety Management Online (SMO)** is an on-line training and management system. The following information is from their website. SMO includes:
  - Management of staff and volunteer appointments including Working With Children Checks,
  - Clear appointment criteria that are being met,
  - Staff and volunteer training, including online learning modules with tests,
  - Training modules appropriate to ascending levels of responsibility,
  - Programs and activities facility to help embed a risk-management approach to children and vulnerable people,
  - Extensive customisable resources and procedural templates; and
  - An incident response template.

All Tasmanian Baptist member churches can access this system and on-line training. Our Administrator facilitates this access.

### Policy aims:

To ensure churches are aware of and able to meet their legal and moral obligations to ensure their churches and personnel are capable of protecting the vulnerable people who access the church.

### Policy:

- This policy applies to all member churches of Tasmanian Baptists.
- This policy is relevant for all people over the age of 18 who are serving with Tasmanian Baptists and/or as a leader in a local Baptist Church that is a member of Tasmanian Baptists. Leaders includes but is not limited to, pastors, leaders of ministries (volunteers or employees), deacons, elders, council members, preachers, worship leaders and staff.
- The above-named personnel must complete the Safe Churches Awareness Training as recommended by the [National Council of Churches on their website](#). Currently this means attending a SCAW in the first year of ministry and a SCAR every three years.
- If SCAW or SCAR are not available in Tasmania, then the training provided by SMO can be used as a substitute.
- All pastors and leaders serving in member churches must have current working with vulnerable people cards. (it is a recommendation of this policy that these people also have a National Police Check every 3 years.)
- All churches must write their own Safe Church Policy (Pro forma in the SCAW handbook) and keep records of how this policy has been implemented.
- All member churches must demonstrate their compliance with the 10 standards as identified in the preamble. (Note that having pastors and leaders aware of the information communicated through SCAW will assist them in how to comply with the 10 standards.)
- Member churches must keep up to date and comprehensive records of all leaders in their church and what training they receive and the date it has been undertaken.

- Each church will appoint a **Safe Church Officer** who is responsible to ensure this policy is implemented in their church.
- An annual audit to determine each church's compliance with this policy will be conducted by Easter each year by the Tasmanian Baptists office.

#### References:

- Protecting Australia's children - National Framework <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/protecting-children-is-everyones-business>
- Child abuse royal commission - <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission>
- Safe churches – [www.safechurches.org.au](http://www.safechurches.org.au)
- Safety Management Online (Scripture Union's online child safe training) <https://www.childsafe.org.au/>

#### Policy History:

Adopted by Council: 15 September 2018

Adopted by Tasmanian Baptist Assembly: 27 October 2018

Amended 12 September 2020