



POLICY AND PROCEDUES

Safe Ministry Policy

1. Overview.....	2
2. Purpose.....	2
3. Definitions.....	3
4. Commitment Statements	3
4.1 Commitment to Care for Vulnerable People.....	4
4.2 Commitment to Providing Safe and Accessible Ministries.....	4
4.3 Commitment to Responsibly Recruit Leaders.....	5
4.4 Commitment to Respond Appropriately to Concerns and Complaints.....	6
5. Management of Concerns or Complaints	7



1. OVERVIEW

- a) God calls us to minister to vulnerable people, and Scripture consistently shows His concern for the weak and powerless. He has identified classes of vulnerable people in Scripture who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (see Ex 22:21-22; Deut 10:17-19; Jer 22:2-4; Matt 25:35-40; ; Rom 12:13; James 1:27).
- b) We affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe and respected, and to have their views and opinions valued at all times. We acknowledge that we also live in a country that legislates for people's safety. This policy has been developed to help us live out our Biblical mandate to minister and protect these vulnerable people and to meet our responsibilities under Australian legislation.
- c) We are committed to every member of Wilson Gospel Chapel (WGC) looking out for vulnerable people and understanding how to appropriately raise concerns.
- d) All leadership positions at WGC are voluntary and unpaid in accordance with our understanding of Scripture regarding how the church should operate.

2. PURPOSE

- a) This policy outlines the principles that direct our approach to safeguarding vulnerable people involved with WGC. It applies to the Oversight as well as anyone appointed by the Oversight to represent or work on behalf of WGC.
- b) The Oversight of WGC take responsibility for ensuring that these principles are reviewed regularly and are embedded in the culture of the Assembly at all levels.
- c) The aims of this policy are to:
 - i. minimise the risk of abuse, misconduct, and the misuse of positional power within WGC;
 - ii. ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and misconduct are handled appropriately and thoroughly;
 - iii. ensure that leaders and Ministries are safe;
 - iv. ensure that all people are respected and valued;
 - v. fulfil our obligations under applicable State and Federal legislation regarding the protection vulnerable people.



3. DEFINITIONS

- a) **Child** means an individual or group of individuals who are under the age of 18 years. In the absence of positive evidence as to age, a child is a person who appears to be under 18 years of age.
- b) **Child abuse** means maltreatment done by a person who has responsibility to care for a child.
- c) **Christian Brethren Assembly** means those assemblies listed in Appendix 1 of the Wilson Gospel Chapel Constitution.
- d) **Duty of care** means the moral and legal obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of others.
- e) **Leader** means anyone who has some responsibility at WGC. This responsibility may include a delegation of authority, the care or supervision of others (including children), the ability to recruit others, or being able to make decisions that will affect Ministry participants. A leader acts as a representative of WGC.
- f) **Ministry** means the services, programs, and any other activities organised and run by WGC.
- g) **Oversight** means the management committee of Wilson Gospel Chapel Inc. The Oversight consists of the Elders of WGC and a Deacon appointed as Treasurer.
- h) **Safe environment** means a leader adequately discharging their duty of care by taking steps to keep all those in their care safe, including from spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying), or neglect.
- i) **Vulnerable person** means:
 - i. a child or children; or
 - ii. an individual aged 18 years and above who may be unable to take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves against abuse, harm, or exploitation due to their age, illness, trauma, financial hardship, ethnicity, disability, or any other reason.

4. COMMITMENT STATEMENTS

We affirm that everyone who attends our Ministries needs to be confident that they will be cared for, nurtured, and encouraged as they grow and, at the same time, are protected from spiritual, physical, and emotional harm.



4.1 Commitment to Care for Vulnerable People

We are committed to the Biblical mandate to care for vulnerable people by:

- a) actively preventing harm and abuse and by seeking to provide safe environments;
- b) fulfilling our obligations under applicable State and Federal legislation to protect vulnerable people;
- c) ensuring that vulnerable people are informed and involved in decisions that considerably affect them;
- d) ensuring that members of WGC are involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable people;
- e) recognising the diverse needs of vulnerable people and embedding this care into all levels of our leadership and culture.

4.2 Commitment to Providing Safe and Accessible Ministries

We are committed to providing safe environments for our ministries and ensuring that our ministries are appropriate and do not put people in situations where they could be exploited or abused by:

- a) serving members and those in attendance as servants of Christ;
- b) leading in spiritually non-abusive ways;
- c) minimising the risk of harm by carefully considering the ministries chosen, the venue, safe ratios of supervision, appropriate toileting facilities and practices, transportation, work health and safety, parental or guardian permissions, and confidentiality of any records kept;
- d) obtaining appropriate information relating to ministry participants, including children's health and family circumstances, to ensure that leaders are able to care for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs;
- e) where appropriate, ensuring leaders discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists, templates, or other means of recording the steps taken to maintain a safe environment;



- f) ensuring all leaders are adequately supported and have access to ongoing training and supervision in their roles and responsibilities;
- g) ensuring that issues of workplace health and safety, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures are supervised and regularly reviewed; and
- h) fostering a culture of openness and fellowship by affording participants a say in the ministries in which they participate, valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation.
- i) ensuring that leaders, volunteers, contractors, etc. are not left alone or unsupervised with a vulnerable person (e.g. one-to-one, closed doors, no other persons involved);
- j) where a ministry involves overnight activities or stays (e.g. camps), ensuring that accommodation arrangements are appropriate and procedures are in place to minimise the risk of harm.

4.3 Commitment to Responsibly Recruit Leaders

We are committed to the safe and responsible recruitment of leaders by ensuring all prospective leaders go through the following process:

- a) **Attendance:** All leaders must be in regular attendance at WGC (considered to be not less than 26 regular Sunday morning worship meetings in any 12-month period) and have been in fellowship for at least 2 years and therefore known to the Oversight.
- b) **Interviews:** At least two Elders will meet with all prospective leaders prior to their appointment and report back to the Oversight on the suitability of the candidate.
- c) **Screening:** All prospective leaders will be screened prior to their appointment. Leaders must, at a minimum, hold a valid Working with Children Check at all times. Leaders will also be required to provide at least two referees as part of the screening process. Screening may also include any other relevant working with children checks, vulnerable people checks, and/or police checks as might be requested by the Oversight.
- d) **Roles and responsibilities:** These will be clearly outlined to prospective leaders at the start of their appointment.



- e) **Training:** All leaders must complete an approved Safe Ministry-style 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. This training should be renewed at least every 2 years. Leaders may also be asked to attend additional ministry-specific training as may be required from time to time. Using the Safe Ministry Check system, the following training will apply:
- i. Elders: to complete Awareness, Leaders, Supervisors, and Board Members courses;
 - ii. Deacons: to complete Awareness, Leaders, and Supervisors courses;
 - iii. Ministry leaders (e.g. Bible Study group leader): Awareness and Leaders courses;
 - iv. Ministry participants: Awareness course.
- f) **Code of Conduct:** All leaders will be asked to commit to the Code of Conduct and be expected to behave as followers of Jesus, being willing to be held accountable for their behaviour.
- g) **Criminal record:** No individual with a criminal record of child abuse, molestation, or similar offences will be eligible to lead a WGC ministry.

4.4 Commitment to Respond Appropriately to Concerns and Complaints

- a) We are committed to responding to concerns or allegations about behaviour, safety, misconduct, or risk of harm (abuse) by:
- i. creating a culture where people feel safe to speak out about inappropriate behaviour without fear of being rejected or ridiculed;
 - ii. listening and responding appropriately to concerns, complaints, or allegations;
 - iii. protecting the confidentiality, dignity, health, and wellbeing of all individuals involved;
 - iv. managing any child-related issues with a focus on the best interests of the child and reporting to the relevant State Child Protection body;
 - v. requiring all leaders to report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse according to any applicable policies and procedures; and
 - vi. providing support to alleged victims and perpetrators of abuse or misconduct and seeking appropriate help where needed from other Christian Brethren Assemblies for a just and fair resolution.
- b) We are committed to following a suitable incident management process by appointing Safe Ministry Contacts whose duties may include:
- i. managing reports and documentation relating to a complaint or allegation;
 - ii. reporting any criminal activity to the Police;
 - iii. reporting allegations of abuse to the State Ombudsman and the insurer of WGC;



- iv. in certain incidents, appointing an Independent Ministry Investigator to investigate allegations of inappropriate behaviour.

5. MANAGEMENT OF CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS

- a) A concern is a matter that causes worry to a person or that might affect a person's safety or wellbeing.
- b) A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made about a ministry, decision, or action taken by WGC, or of the conduct of a WGC leader or participant.
- c) We are committed to the fair resolution of concerns or complaints and to developing a culture based of mutual trust and respect that promotes the unity of the body of Christ. Our procedures for resolving issues will be honouring to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.
- d) While we aim for peace and harmony, we acknowledge that people sometimes have a complaint about a decision, behaviour, act, or omission that they feel is unacceptable, or become concerned over an incident or action that they find troubling. While most issues can be resolved through direct discussion, there may be instances where this is not possible. We encourage WGC members and ministry participants to raise these matters with leaders.
- e) WGC members and ministry participants may raise a concern or complaint in any way (e.g. verbally, in writing, by email, etc) and with any Elder or Deacon.
- f) We are committed to the following principles to ensure complaints or concerns are addressed appropriately:
 - i. Complaints or concerns will be taken seriously and investigated in a fair and impartial manner.
 - ii. Resolution by direct discussion between the parties involves is preferred, wherever it is appropriate to do so.
 - iii. A person facing a complaint is entitled to know detailed information about the substance of the complaint and to have the opportunity to respond.
 - iv. Procedural fairness is afforded to all parties, which is defined as:
 - a hearing appropriate to the circumstances;
 - a lack of bias;
 - evidence to support a decision; and
 - inquiry into matters in dispute.
 - v. Confidentiality will be observed.



- vi. The complaints management process will be conducted in a manner that is respectful of all parties.
- vii. Complaints will be monitored, and their management evaluated to reduce the occurrence of systemic or reoccurring problems.
- viii. In all matters, the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people is our first priority.
- ix. Persons making a complaint will not be victimised.
- x. It is expected that complaints are made in good faith and are not vexatious or malicious in nature or the product of gossip or hearsay.
- xi. Complaints will be addressed promptly, and complainants will be advised if the matter cannot be finalised within a reasonable timeframe.
- xii. All persons in the WGC community have a right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- xiii. Complaints are to be referred when required to external authorities such as the Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support or the Police. All referrals are to be done through the Oversight, or the Oversight are to be informed of any referral made.