

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Adopted by Georges River Life Care Board on 10th July 2020

COMMITMENT

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE is committed to providing places, services and programs that promote physical, emotional and spiritual health and safety and model the love of Christ to all whom we have contact with, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.

PURPOSE

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE has adopted the *Safe Church Policy* to:

- help us live out the biblical mandate to ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself’ (Mark 12:30-31);
- implement the 10 Child Safe Standards;
- provide a framework to inform the provision of safe environments and programs for children, young people and vulnerable adults; and
- meet our legal obligations in relation to:
 - staff and volunteers engaged in Child-related Work (or, in ACT, Regulated Activities); and
 - reporting matters, including Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct, and Reportable Conduct involving a Child, to government authorities.

The *Safe Church Policy* outlines the commitment of GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE to principles in various areas. More detail regarding the practical implementation of these commitments is available in the relevant procedures and guidelines

SCOPE

This Policy applies to:

- all Directors, staff and volunteers;
- all people who are involved in or participate in GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE and its programs;

1. Activities and Services for Children at GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE commit to providing spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.

1.1 Board of Directors:

- a) recognise that children and young people are an integral part of GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE and talk about this in planning, training events and meetings;
- b) involve children and young people in the routine of GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE where appropriate
- c) consider the needs of children and young people when they make decisions about budgets, buildings, renovations, use of property, décor, or catering; and
- d) encourage children and young people to have input in decisions that affect them by including them in GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE forums and meetings when appropriate.

Staff and volunteers:

- a) listen to children and take seriously what children are saying;
- b) talk with children and young people about the kinds of behaviours, attitudes or 'culture' that they would like to promote in their group;
- c) encourage children and young people to have input regarding the content and activities they would like to be part of their group.

Please see the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People* for more detail.

2. Staff and Volunteers

2.1 Screening, selection and induction of Staff and Volunteers

- a) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will undertake appropriate screening processes for all staff and volunteers
- b) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will engage in fair and transparent selection processes for all staff and volunteers
- c) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will provide appropriate induction for all staff and volunteers
- d) All staff and volunteers are to be recruited, selected and inducted in accordance with the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*.

2.2 Training and Resourcing of Staff and Volunteers

- a) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will ensure that staff and volunteers develop the knowledge and skills to create safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people.
- b) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will ensure that staff and volunteers have access to information about creating safe spaces and that they all undergo appropriate training regarding the available Procedures, Guidelines and Forms.
- c) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will support staff and volunteers with adequate resources to enable them to maintain and promote safe spaces for everyone, particularly children and young people.
- d) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will implement the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers*

2.3 Standards of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers

- a) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will provide spaces, programs and relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe.
- b) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will expect all staff and volunteers to uphold the *Code of Conduct* which includes expected behaviours for those who engage in ministry with children and/or vulnerable people.
- c) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will expect staff and volunteers to follow *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People*.

Please see the *Procedure for Staff and Volunteers* and the *Screening Questionnaire* for more detail.

3. Conflict, Complaints and Concerns

3.1 Responding to Child Protection Concerns

- a) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will ensure appropriate and timely reporting of all child protection concerns and any complaints relating to child sexual abuse and/or sexual misconduct involving a child in accordance with the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*.
- b) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will ensure that all child protection concerns and complaints will be reported to the relevant government departments and, if necessary, Police as soon as possible and in accordance with legislative duties.

3.2 Complaint Handling

- a) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will respond to complaints in accordance with the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers.
- b) Where there is a complaint that a staff member or volunteer has engaged in abuse, including child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct involving a child, GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will treat the allegation as a serious breach of the Code of Conduct and respond in accordance with the Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers.
- c) In the event of receiving a complaint that relates to a minor breach of the Code of Conduct or a grievance, GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE may determine to respond to the matter in accordance with the Procedure for Resolving Conflict.

Please see the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns and the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers* for more detail.

4. Safe Environments

4.1 Physical Environments

- a) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will ensure that physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
- b) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will comply with Work, Health and Safety requirements.
- c) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will consider the impact of the physical environment on the potential for risk to children and vulnerable people.
- d) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will identify and address risks arising from the physical environment in which programs and activities take place.

- e) If GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE has any residential property that is identifiable as being church property then GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will ensure that all regular adult occupants of that property obtain and hold WWCC or WWVP clearance for the duration of their residence.
- f) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will consider whether any services it supports, including overseas services, have appropriate child protection practices in place? (This includes consideration of whether supporting orphanages overseas is appropriate)

4.2 Online Environments

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will promote safe online behaviour in any electronic communication

Please see the *Guidelines for Activities with Children and Young People* for more detail.

5. Risk Management

5.1 Persons of Concern

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will manage any person identified as a Person of Concern in accordance with *An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern*.

5.2 Risk Assessments

- a) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will ensure that Leaders complete and make a record of a risk assessment in relation to any program or activity undertaken at, for or with GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE.
 - a. for regular activities, the risk assessment will be conducted at least annually and whenever there are significant changes in the program activities, attendance or location.
 - b. for special activities the Leader will complete a risk assessment.
- b) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will ensure that appropriate and reasonable precautions are adopted to address risks identified as part of a risk assessment. When considering what measures are appropriate, GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will consider the likelihood of an incident occurring, the seriousness of the consequences and the difficulty of avoiding the risk.
- c) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will store risk assessment forms in a secure location for a period of at least 45 years.

6. Third Parties and Affiliated Entities

- a) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will require any third party (tenant or external party using church property) that provides services to children and/or young people to provide written confirmation of their compliance with the Child Safe Standards at least annually.
- b) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will ensure that any affiliated entities (any entity or program that is, or is represented as, a service of GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE) comply with Child Safe Standards including annual reports to the governance body regarding child safety.

7. Recordkeeping

7.1 Storage of Records

- a) GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will retain all written records for a minimum of 45 years, in hard copy and/or electronically in a secure manner.
 - a. Where records contain, or may contain, sensitive information, they will be kept in a manner that protects confidentiality and will only be accessed by a limited number of authorised persons.
 - b. Where records are kept in hard copy, they will be held in a secure location with proper consideration of access, and physical conditions.
 - c. Where records are kept electronically, they will be monitored to ensure security and ongoing accessibility.
- b) Records to which this item applies includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Service Information Sheets
 - b. Staff and Volunteer files
 - c. Attendance (sign-in/sign-out) sheets
 - d. Risk assessment forms
 - e. Safe Church Register
 - f. Safe Church Concerns forms and any contemporaneous notes regarding reporting decisions
 - g. Annual Safe Church commitment by third parties and affiliated entities
 - h. Dated copies of any *Safe Church Policy, Procedure, Form* or associated document in force at any time

Please see the *Privacy Policy* for more detail.

8. Review and Accountability

8.1 Internal Review

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will review this policy annually.

8.2 External Accountability

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE will seek advice from and communicate with the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Manager in relation to any Reportable Conduct, Child Protection Concerns and/or Complaints against Accredited or Recognised Ministers in accordance the Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers and the Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns.

9. Definitions

In the *Safe Church Policy* and associated documents, unless the context otherwise requires:

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE means the organisation which adopted this *Safe Church Policy*, as indicated on the cover of the Policy.

Complaint includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE's *Code of Conduct* or the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (where applicable). It also includes disclosures made to an institution about any child protection concern.

Creating Safe Spaces means Creating Safe Spaces training offered by the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT or alternative training that is Safe Church Training Agreement approved and has a face-to-face component.

Disclosure means a process by which a person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused or neglected.

Governance body means the body designated by the constitution of GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE to be responsible for the management of GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE affairs.

Mandatory Reporting Legislation means

In NSW, the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*

In the ACT the *Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)*].

Reportable Conduct Legislation means

In NSW the *Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW) / Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)*

In the ACT the *Ombudsman Act 1989 (ACT)*].

Safe Church Register means the register required to record information relating to

In NSW staff and volunteers who engaged in Child-related Work and their relevant details in accordance with section 9A of the WWCC Legislation.

In the ACT, staff and volunteers who engaged in a Regulated Activity and all relevant WWVP clearances.

Vulnerable means the state of being unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason, and includes those that suffer disadvantage such as social and financial hardship.

WWCC Legislation means the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*.

WWVP Legislation means the *Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 (ACT)*.

Young person means a person who is 16 or 17 years old.

