

Footscray Baptist Church – Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

The Footscray Baptist Church celebrates the God-given diversity of cultures. We welcome you to join us in the journey of faith, whatever your race, religion, capability, gender or sexuality.

Footscray Baptist Church acknowledges the Wurrundjeri People of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet.

Footscray Baptist Church welcomes and values every child, as Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' (Mark 10:14b-15)

This Child Safety Policy was adopted by the diaconate of the Footscray Baptist Church in August 2022. This policy will be reviewed every two years. It should be read in conjunction with all other policies of the Footscray Baptist Church including the Leadership Conduct Policy, Church Safety Policy and Procedures, Grievance Policy and Privacy Policy. These policies are available in our Administration office and on our website.

This policy demonstrates the commitment of management, staff and volunteers to child safety and wellbeing and sets out how we will endeavour to keep children safe from harm, including child abuse. We have a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe.

This policy outlines how we will promote the safety and wellbeing of all children in our care.

This policy applies to all leaders, staff, volunteers and members and all activities of the Footscray Baptist Church.

Definitions

Child abuse means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

Child/Children means a person who is under the age of 18 years

Concerns and complaints - A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to Footscray Baptist Church related to one or more of the following:

- our services or dealings with individuals
- allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, or a volunteer of Footscray Baptist Church
- disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
- the conduct of a child or young person at Footscray Baptist Church
- the inadequate handling of a prior concern
- general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

Leadership

- The leadership (diaconate) of the Footscray Baptist Church is responsible to ensure children's safety and responding to any concern or complaint made to the church.
- They will work to create an environment where people feel comfortable to raise concerns about child safety.
- They will work to identify and manage risks of child abuse and harm and respond to any complaints and concerns.
- They will ensure all staff and volunteers receive appropriate training about child safety and wellbeing.
- Every two years they will review both this policy and activities of the church to ensure child safety and wellbeing is central.

Children's Empowerment and Participation

- We will actively seek to include children's ideas and views in our planning and activities.
- We will encourage children to be supportive of each other.
- We will not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between children and will take action where it occurs.
- We respect the rights of children, including the right to feel safe.
- We will endeavour to understand what makes children feel safe and act accordingly.
- We will inform children about what to do if they feel unsafe, namely tell an adult they trust or the Child Safety Officer.
- We will include children in any discussions and ascertain their views about significant changes to the physical environment and any programs that affect them.
- All information for children shall be communicated in simple English that is easily understood.

Culturally Safe Environments for all Aboriginal Children and their families

Footscray Baptist Church is committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated, and Aboriginal families and community members are welcomed and included.

We will do this by:

- An Acknowledgement of Country at all services and events
- Consulting with members of the Aboriginal Community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture
- Support and provide opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture.
- Provide training for staff and volunteers about specifics related to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal Children.
- Celebrate NAIDOC week and National Reconciliation Week in our services
- Seek feedback from any Aboriginal children and families participating in our activities about their experience.

Diversity

We value diversity and equity for all, including children. Therefore, we will:

- Provide training for staff and volunteers on how to support inclusion and cultural safety
- Welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTQ+ children and Aboriginal children and their families.
- Enable children and their families to identify any specific needs they have
- Have zero-tolerance of racism or any form of discrimination, and act where such occurs or any form of exclusion is identified
- Strive to reflect such diversity in our leadership team
- Ensure our physical environment celebrates diversity and enables participation by all

Recruitment & Support of Staff and Volunteers

- All staff, volunteers and leadership must comply with the Leadership Conduct Policy
- All staff, volunteers and leadership must have a current and valid Working With Children's Check
- All staff, volunteers and leadership will be provided with appropriate training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety
- Concerns raised about behaviour will be addressed immediately in line with our Leadership Conduct Policy, Complaints and Grievance policies and procedures.

Complaints and reporting

- All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be taken seriously no matter who makes such a report
- Thorough records of complaints will be stored securely. Written complaints can be made using the Footscray Baptist Church Safe Church Concerns Form. All complaints will be kept confidential and only shared with appropriate authorities should a legal and/or criminal investigation follow

- Such reports will be dealt with promptly and thoroughly and in line with our Leadership Code of Conduct, Church Safety Policy, Complaints Policy and Grievance Policy
- Any potential criminal conduct must be reported to police
- Complaints should in the first instance be addressed to the Child Safety Officer, Pastor or member of the Diaconate
- The Child Safety Person is identified on our website and notice boards and currently is the Pastor, Cheryl Williams.

Non-compliance with this and other policies

Footscray Baptist Church will enforce this policy along with any other child safety policies.

Breaches of this policy will be investigated and may result in a restriction of duties of staff, volunteers or leaders.

Review

Footscray Baptist Church will review its child safety policies and practices at least every two years.

Review of this policy will be conducted by the Diaconate and be informed by consultation with children and their families.

Supporting legislation

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* (including Child Safe Standards)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* (including reporting to Child Protection) and any subsequent amendments to this Act
- *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- *Wrongs Act 1958*

Version Date – August 25th, 2022.

Review Date – September 2024.