

# ABUSE POLICY



HERVEY BAY GOSPEL CHAPEL

Updates – March 2021



## ***CHILD ABUSE POLICY - HERVEY BAY GOSPEL CHAPEL.***

This policy outlines the overall approach adopted by Hervey Bay Gospel Chapel in response to the need to restrict child abusers from gaining access to children. The members of this church are committed to providing a safe environment for children to hear the gospel, grow in Christ, and for leaders to exercise their ministries.

### **DEFINITIONS**

<b>Child</b>	Any person under the age of 18.
<b>Leader</b>	Any person who is responsible for the control and safety of any child placed in their care in the course of a recognised ministry of the church.
<b>Church</b>	The Hervey Bay Gospel Chapel located at 44 Hunter Street, Pialba, Hervey Bay, 4655.
<b>Ministry</b>	An organised, regular activity of the church that relates to a specific age bracket or theme.
<b>Ministry Leader</b>	The person recognised by the church leadership as head of a ministry.

### **REGISTRATION**

This church is registered with The Commission for Children and Young People (Employer Reference Number 8616) to enable screening checks to be undertaken on its behalf.

See Appendix for a current list of “Blue Card” holders

Each registration is current for 2 years from the date given in the Appendix. Every person who has regular contact with children will be required to have been registered with this Commission (ie to have a “Blue Card”).

## **CHILD MINISTRY POSITIONS**

The following positions and ministries within the church as listed in Appendix 2 have been currently identified as child-related. If a new ministry is started within the church relating to children then this policy will be amended to include the new relevant positions.

If in any physical contact with children, leaders should take care to respect the child's feelings and privacy.

The age of individuals is recognised as one of the determinants in deciding what is acceptable, and unacceptable behaviour.

Leaders normally should not visit children in their homes unless a parent is present and/or another leader accompanies them.

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

Nude swimming, or other such activities, is forbidden.

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

Leaders have the right to ask persons 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.

There shall always be at least two approved leaders at any activity (preferably one of each gender).

If any personal counselling is to be done, it shall be carried out within sight of another leader and should preferably be undertaken by a person of the same gender as the person being counselled.

## **INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR BY LEADERS**

Whilst some actions are not regarded as sexual assault, they are nonetheless regarded as unacceptable behaviour for Christians. Ministry Leaders shall ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained. Unacceptable behaviours include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature.
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature.
- Suggestive gestures, or remarks.
- Jokes of a sexual nature.
- Unnecessary touching.
- Inappropriate literature, or videos (eg PGR, M, MA, R, or X rated material used with younger children).
- Any act of violence committed by a leader in the course of an activity.

## **PROCEDURE FOR NOTIFICATION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

Child abuse is any abusive act or threat to perform such upon a child. It occurs when a person uses his or her power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in abusive activity. It may involve physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

In the specific area of sexual abuse it does not necessarily involve genital contact. It can be 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.

If there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been or is being sexually assaulted on church property or during a church activity, the local Police shall be contacted immediately.

Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:

1. A child discloses that he or she has been inappropriately assaulted, and/or
2. Someone close to a child (eg sibling, relative, close friend) discloses on behalf of that child.

The procedures shall also apply if a child discloses a sexual assault that has occurred somewhere other than the church (eg home or school).

When a child confides in a leader that he or she is a victim of sexual or other abuse, that leader will refer the matter to an Elder as soon as possible. An Elder shall become the liaison person with Department of Family Services, Juvenile Aid Bureau and other Police.

The person to whom the original disclosure is made shall maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Not pushing the child to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the child that they are understood, that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct 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.
- Maintain confidentiality. Only speak to an Elder, parents/guardians (unless they are the alleged perpetrators), Department of Family Services, Juvenile Aid Bureau or other Police.
- The church reserves the right to carry out church disciplinary procedures.

## **PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH PERSONS UNDER INVESTIGATION**

- A person under investigation will be automatically suspended pending the outcome of the investigation
- After investigation, any person found to be guilty of the allegations will automatically have their employment/involvement terminated.

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS**

- The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on the church grounds or during an activity is not to be condoned by any leader. Any person/child

found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be asked to vacate the premises. For children, the parents/guardians will be contacted so the child can be returned home immediately.

- Any alcohol, or illegal drugs found on the church grounds is to be removed and the location of such alcohol or illegal drugs reported to an Elder, who, if necessary will contact relevant authorities.
- Any child required to take medication shall provide written details from the parents/guardians to the Leader of the activity.

## **EXTERNAL POLICIES**

It is acknowledged that some child related ministries in the church might have external affiliation with other organisations. These organisations will possibly have policies governing the issues of child safety and abuse. This policy is not intended to replace or conflict with the other policies, but instead to operate in conjunction with them.

## **POLICY REVIEW**

This policy document and the conditions specified in it shall be reviewed annually by the Elders. Written submissions from members relating to changes to this document are welcomed.

## **Appendix 1 – Current List of Blue Card Holders**

At present there are no Blue Card Holders



## **Appendix 2 – Child Related Leaders and Ministries Within The Church**

Leaders – Elders

Leaders - Craft

Counsellors

Camp workers - Hut Leaders, Study Leaders, Camp Leaders (from this church)