

# North Coast Church

## Child Protection Policy and Procedures



**NORTHCOASTCHURCH**  
Jesus · People · Eternity

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# 1. Purpose

This document sets out the recommended policy and procedures for Child protection at North Coast Church (NCC). It is based on the ChildSafe Code of Practice and reflects the guidance issued by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse. The meaning of the words used in the document are as outlined in the definitions contained in Appendix 1.

## 2. Code of Conduct

A code of conduct is a list of behaviours that are encouraged and expected and a list of behaviours that are not acceptable. It is expected that everyone who work with children at NCC follows this code in all their interactions with children. The code of conduct:

- Makes it clear to adults what is expected. This is especially important as our congregation comprises individuals and families from varied cultures and with varied points of view. The code of conduct gives us a common language.
- Makes it easier to identify and address conduct which 'crosses a line'.
- Helps us to explain to our children behaviour that is appropriate and what they can do if they see or experience any inappropriate behaviour.
- Makes adults less likely to be at risk of a false allegation of misconduct in relation to a child.

All NCC employees and volunteers are expected to abide by the NCC Code of Conduct, which is attached as Appendix 2. Any breaches or suspected breaches of the code must be reported to the Children's Pastors, Youth Pastor or Lead Pastor.

## 3. Employment of staff and volunteers

NCC is committed to ensuring all staff and volunteers understand the requirements and standards set by NCC's Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Any person at NCC who is working with children must:

- be emotionally and spiritually suited to the role to be undertaken;
- be properly trained;
- have been selected for their role in work with children after a proper investigation of their suitability for such work; and
- have their performance in such work periodically reviewed.

Each staff member and volunteer will obtain a Working with Children clearance, undertake Safety Management Online training and agree to abide by the NCC Code of Conduct.

## **4. Child protection complaints against staff or volunteers**

Where there has been a complaint of alleged child abuse against a staff member or volunteer, NCC may, for the period until the final determination of the allegation:

- suspend the individual with or without pay;
- modify the duties of the individual;
- impose conditions on any continued employment of the individual or on his or her involvement in the activities at NCC;
- require that the individual not communicate with specified persons;
- temporarily suspend the employment of the worker while NCC reaches other decisions; and/or
- revoke or modify any decision it has made.

In performing its functions, NCC:

- may discuss the matter with the Child Protection Committee;
- is not bound by the rules of evidence and may inform itself of relevant facts by proper means as it sees fit;
- will give the person against whom the allegations have been made an opportunity to respond to the issue/concern;
- will act with all reasonable expedition.

NCC staff and volunteers will responsibly and reasonably cooperate with law enforcement and child protection authorities in their investigation and any prosecution of child abuse.

## **5. Managing potential child abusers at NCC**

Where a person who is the subject of an unresolved complaint of child abuse, or is reasonably suspected by NCC of having at any time engaged in child abuse attends at any function controlled by NCC, NCC must take reasonable steps to ensure that that person does not have contact with, or communicate with, any child at that function without adequate supervision.

A known child abuser is not to be permitted to be present at any premises controlled by NCC or to take part in any activity controlled by it except in accordance with the terms of a formal agreement entered into between NCC and that person which ensures the safety and wellbeing of children.

If a known child abuser does not comply with the terms of an agreement, NCC may exclude that person from all premises controlled by NCC and activities controlled by it.

## **Integration of person of concern**

NCC may work to integrate (or re-integrate) a person of concern back into the church. NCC will consider the children's safety and the reliability of the person of concern's behaviour in doing this.

Anyone who attends the Church and has a history of abusing children or as a result of reasonable concerns held by NCC, generates a child protection concern, must adhere to the following requirements:

- The person will enter into an agreement with NCC that will regulate the person's involvement in church ministry to whatever level NCC deems appropriate to continue to provide a child-safe environment.
- The person will have regular meetings with a representative from NCC or delegate for accountability as deemed necessary.
- The person will be willing to have their name and appropriate details given to any staff member or pastoral care staff / volunteers who are involved in ministry to youth and children or any other ministries as NCC deems necessary.
- Any other requirements determined by NCC in its discretion in consultation with the Police or any other government or non-government body.

During the integration of a person of concern, NCC will take reasonable steps to arrange appropriate communication, support and pastoral care to any individuals affected by the child protection issues raised.

## **6. Confidentiality**

No staff or volunteers are to make any statement to the media about information obtained during the course of their employment by NCC and all inquiries about child abuse from the media are to be referred to the Lead Pastor.

Photos or images of a child will not be published where a parent/guardian has requested this not be done. Private information about a child that may identify them will not be published.

## **7. Physical health and safety**

The physical environment should always be such that the safety of children is paramount, e.g. by taking reasonable steps to ensure that electrical equipment used is in safe working order, floors are kept free of slippery surfaces, food is handled with the care to as far as possible avoid contamination.

## **8. Transportation**

When a young person is travelling in a vehicle driven by a staff member or volunteer, the vehicle must be driven carefully, adhering to the legal speed limits and road laws at all times.

At no time should there be more passengers in a car than the number of seat belts which are in working order and available for use. Cars must be registered and driven by licensed drivers, holding current licences relevant to the type and class of vehicle driven. In addition, motorcycles may be used by the registered owner, but the carrying of children during official church activities as a pillion passenger without parental consent is prohibited.

Hitch hiking is prohibited at all times.

In the event of an accident in which any person is injured, pastors and parents must be informed as soon as possible. All laws regarding the reporting of an accident must be followed.

Anyone who does not drive responsibly must not transport children. Drivers must take children directly to and from arranged venues and not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements without parental or leadership consent except in the case of a genuine emergency.

If a child is travelling in a vehicle driven by a staff member or volunteer who possesses a learners permit or probationary licence, prior written consent must be obtained from a parent or guardian except in the case of a genuine emergency.

Alcohol must not be consumed eight hours prior to or during church children's or youth activities. The use of illegal drugs is not permitted at any time. No driver may provide transport if there is any possibility that he/she may be driving under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol, or under any condition that would inhibit their ability to safely control a motor vehicle. It is the responsibility of the driver to inform leaders of any situation that may inhibit their ability to safely be in charge of a motor vehicle.

## **9. Inappropriate behaviour by staff or volunteers**

Every staff member or volunteer is expected to maintain a high moral code, as outlined in the Code of Conduct. Foul, demeaning, bullying, racist or sexist language is not acceptable, and will not be tolerated by anyone working in ministry. Any person who is concerned about the behaviour of any worker must refer the matter to the Children's Pastors, Youth Pastor or Lead Pastor for consideration and intervention as appropriate.

## **10. Meetings and locations**

To ensure that safety and integrity is maintained for all concerned, staff and volunteers should always conduct one on one meetings in an area that is private but not isolated. Any meeting with a child should take place within view of another staff member or volunteer and where possible the room used for such meetings should have glass inserts in doors or similar which will maintain confidentiality, whilst eliminating a secluded or blind area.

## **11. Registration processes for children**

All NCC children's programs should adhere to check in and out processes. For example: Children in junior programs (under 12 years of age) once checked into an activity must not be permitted to leave that activity or program unless collected by a parent or authorised person.

## **12. Worker identification**

All staff or volunteers should wear name or identification badges or t-shirts while undertaking their duties.

## **13. Camps and excursions**

Parental consent must be obtained at all times for activities that are conducted off site. The NCC Code of Conduct applies to all camps and excursions and appropriate risk assessment of the activity should be undertaken.

In the case of camps and off site special events, parents/guardians must be supplied specific information about the activity, including venue, contact details, transport and sleeping arrangements and emergency/first aid arrangements. Special event medical/information forms and permission to attend special event form must be supplied to, completed by parents and maintained by the responsible program leader.

All staff and volunteers must have read the NCC Child Protection Policy and associated procedures as well as undergone a working with children check and completed a Code of Conduct declaration.

For camps or overnight activities, each person must have separate bedding and provision must be made for private changing and showering facilities.

Other than married couples, staff and volunteers are not permitted to share a bed together at any time.

Children should not (where possible) be permitted to sleep in close proximity to staff or

volunteers. If unavoidable, or for younger children requiring closer supervision, increased levels of supervision and monitoring procedures must be implemented. This also applies to children (boys and girls) sleeping in close proximity to each other.

No persons are permitted to shower together at any time.

At no time are staff and volunteers permitted to provide, allow or consume alcohol or illegal drugs. If leaders are taking prescribed medication that would impair their ability to perform their role effectively, it is their responsibility to advise their designated leader.

In the case of camp fires, the staff and volunteers in charge must follow all local statutory rules and regulations including total fire bans at all times and ensure that appropriate fire safety precautions are in place.

Activities where a degree of risk is involved, for example boating, abseiling, rock climbing, sailing, scuba diving, canoeing etc, such activities must only be undertaken under the direction and supervision of fully qualified persons. All laws, rules and regulations pertaining to these activities must be followed at all times.

Precautions must be taken by staff and volunteers in relation to swimming/water activities.

The safety of the swimming area must be thoroughly examined in relation to depth, currents and obstacles. A leader must be appointed to oversee and supervise the activity at all times.

Appropriate swimming attire must be worn by all persons at all times.

## **14. Initiation/secret ceremonies**

Initiations and/or secret ceremonies are prohibited.

## **15. Reporting and documenting concerns**

### **15.1 Reporting**

Any person in a position of responsibility who receives a child protection concern is to:

- In the case of any act where an injury is present, consider whether immediate medical attention should be sought.
- Provide reassurance, support and pastoral care to the individual making the disclosure.
- If the disclosure is made by a child away from parents and the information **does not**:
  - indicate the involvement of the parent in the alleged child protection

concern; or

- no concerns exist about the parents' ability to act protectively;

then the parent or provider should be advised immediately.

- If the disclosure is made by a child away from parents and the information **does**:
  - indicate the involvement of the parent in the alleged child protection concern; or
  - concerns exist about the parents' ability to act protectively;

then the child should be protected and the information brought to the attention of the Children's Pastors, Youth Pastor or Lead Pastor. The concerns should then be brought to the attention of the Police and/or child protection services as necessary so protective and safety concern can be addressed.

- If the disclosure involves an incident that occurred at NCC premises then immediately all reasonable steps are to be taken to see that:
  - the Children's Pastors, Youth Pastor or Lead Pastor (as appropriate) is advised;
  - the act or omission causing the concern does not occur again;
  - if the incident was witnessed by other members of NCC, effective communication is provided to establish a proper account of the incident and confirm to them that the matter will be dealt with properly.

## 15.2 Documenting

Upon receiving a disclosure or observing a concerning physical injury or incident the church representative is to complete as soon as possible a written report. This report should contain relevant information surrounding the incident. The report should include but not limited to:

- Date and time;
- Name of the child involved;
- Name of the person making the disclosure, if applicable;
- Name of person making the report;
- Details of the concern or disclosure;
- Description of any injuries if applicable (e.g. location, shape, colour etc.);
- Details of any person of concern identified;
- Action taken after disclosure or concern raised.

This completed report should be provided to the Children's Pastors, Youth Pastor or Lead Pastor.

## **15.3 Action**

The person receiving the report should:

- Check that the report contains all relevant details;
- Check that the child, family or individual has received an appropriate response;
- Ensure, as far as reasonably possible, that the person of concern does not represent any immediate child protection risk;
- Get and provide appropriate communication;
- If the incident occurred at NCC, and the incident involved an offence likely to be considered child abuse then advise police and child protection authorities immediately;
- Provide support or pastoral care as required to the person with whom this concern was raised;
- See that a meeting is arranged involving NCC leaders as appropriate to formulate NCC's response and action plan to the raised child protection concern.

Staff and volunteers must not make any statements about child abuse encountered in the course of their employment by NCC to any alleged perpetrator or anyone associated with or representing that alleged perpetrator.

NCC is to take reasonable steps to ensure that pastoral care and support is made available to NCC persons who are impacted by the allegation as appropriate.

## **15.4 Database / clearance information**

NCC will store all reports relating to child protection concerns. This data base should contain the initial child concern report and all other information in regards to the response provided by NCC.

## **16. Child protection risk management**

The co-ordinator of a planned activity is to undertake a Child Protection Risk Assessment for the activity.

The questions in identifying risk are:

- What are the practical details of the activity?
- What could go wrong?
- What is the probability of something going wrong?
- What would the consequence to the scheme?

High risk factors may include:

- Locations which are public, overcrowded or isolated;

- Activities which involve one to one contact, physical contact, personal hygiene tasks, swimming, bathing or changing;
- Supervision which is non-existent or informal.

## Appendix 1 – Definitions

**Child** means a person who is under the age of eighteen years old.

**Child Abuse** can take a variety of forms, including:

- Physical abuse where victims suffer harm to their bodies.
- Emotional abuse which is a chronic attack on the victim's self-esteem including by exposure to a dysfunctional environment including domestic violence.
- Sexual abuse where the abuser's conduct towards the victim, viewed objectively, is for the sexual gratification of the abuser.
- Neglect, which is the failure of a carer for a child to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical treatment and supervision.

An abuser is usually someone older and more mature than the victim, but an abuser can be another child. While most abusers are in a position of authority over the child, such as a parent, teacher or caregiver or the like, it can be anyone whose actions directly affect the child.

**Team Member** includes any staff member, team leader, or other persons who are employed or appointed by the Church or acting in a voluntary position, in which they work with, or are in close proximity to children or young people, or engaged in any forms of pastoral care.

**Person of Concern** A person identified by NCC as someone who has prior conviction of offences involving child abuse, sexual activity or promiscuity. This also includes those suspected of or under investigation of similar acts.

# Appendix 2 – NCC Code of Conduct

## 1. Behaviour

All Team Members are expected to maintain a high moral code and model appropriate Christian behaviour, demonstrating to children that they are valued and respected.

### How

- Treat all participants with respect and take notice of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner - it is easy to 'love the lovable', but those who are not easy to love often need more love from us.
- Avoid behaviour that gives the impression of favouritism or encourage 'special' relationships with individual children.
- Do not engage in inappropriately rough physical play.
- Always be within view of another Team Member when with a child, including when transporting children to venues.
- Dress modestly.
- Do not show or share sexually suggestive material to a child in any form, including email, text, movie or sound file.
- Ensure any television programmes, videos, music, magazines or displays shown or used as part of the group's activities are suitable in content and appropriate to the age group represented, with due regard to Christian values.
- Do not take someone else's child to your home, or encourage private meetings outside of church activities, unless parental/guardian consent has been obtained.
- Do not behave or allow any participants to behave in any way that could be construed as bullying or harassment.
- Recognise if you are tempted to act inappropriately towards someone in your care, and get counsel from the NCC leadership as to what to do.
- Dealing with difficult behaviour in a child:
  - In the first instance, give a firm but gentle verbal correction which is respectful and age-appropriate.
  - For a younger child a short period of "time out" may be appropriate (one minute for each year of the child's age; not for children under three years of age).
  - When a child is unresponsive or responds unsatisfactorily to reasonable requests to comply with the required standard of behaviour, the matter may be reported to the parent/guardian.
  - In extreme cases, children may be precluded from activities for a period of time until an undertaking is given to behave within acceptable limits. If this decision is made, the parent is to be informed and where possible

included in the negotiations regarding management strategies and restoration to that activity.

## **2. Language**

What we say as Team Members reflects our values. It is vital to communicate in a way that upholds what we believe. It is important to use language that affirms the worth, dignity and significance of the participants.

### **How**

- Do not use profane language.
- Do not use derogatory language towards Team Members or participants – even when meant as sarcasm or as a joke.
- Do not use ‘in jokes’, negative language, put downs or sexist language with other Team Members or with participants.
- Do not talk down or be superior with children or young people, instead speak to them as people of value.
- Where private conversations are necessary, the Team Member and child must remain visible to another Team Member in the group.

## **3. Physical Contact**

Physical touch has an important role in building health relationships, however, physical contact between adults and children can be misconstrued. It is your duty to be alert to such circumstances and ensure you are always be SEEN to be doing the right things as well as knowing that you are.

### **How**

- Allow children and vulnerable people to choose the degree of physical contact they have with you, apart from exceptional circumstances or when needing medical attention.
- Do not initiate close physical contact, this should come from the participant, if at all.
- Touching a child between the neck and the knees should be avoided, although contact with the bony areas of the body such as the shoulder, elbow or head, is generally acceptable (but be aware that this varies between cultures – if in doubt – ask).
- A sideways hug around the shoulders is more acceptable than an arm around the waist.
- There will be occasions where displays of affection are natural. Children must not be shunned if they initiate and demonstrate their need for comfort, bearing in mind the age of the child and the circumstances. Care needs to be exercised that such

situations do not occur in private.

- On no account must any form of corporal or physical punishment be administered.
- The only form of physical restraint appropriate is to protect children from harm. This includes reasonable restraint to stop a fight, to stop bullying or to avoid an accident.
- What is reasonable and lawful will depend on the circumstances and appropriate judgement should be used.
- Do not engage in physical contact that could be perceived as a threat.
- As a general rule, open displays of affection initiated by children in the presence of others are acceptable.
- Team Members must be aware that consistent contact with the same person may give the impression of favouritism, it is unwise and may result in others competing for attention or feeling left out.
- Do not engage in any physical activity that is, or may be construed as sexually stimulating to the Team Member or participant.

#### **4. Program Style**

Children or vulnerable people are not always able to sense the risks associated with participating in activities. Adults need to ensure activities are age appropriate and safe.

##### **How**

- Set clear boundaries and rules for activities to ensure that participants' safety.
- Be willing to drop or amend an activity if you sense that it is not working safely or is making participants feel angry or isolated.
- Ask your Team Leader to help you plan well.
- Games that require participants to be on their own or out of sight need to be managed carefully.
- Ensure activities do not make participants feel stupid or embarrassed. While competitive games can be fun, if they exploit gender, intellectual or physical differences then they should be avoided.
- Be punctual. Staff and volunteers should stick to timetables to the best of their ability.

#### **5. Cultural Awareness**

Cultural differences may affect the degree of participation of children and vulnerable people in activities and games. Team Members need to ensure activities show sensitivity and respect for other cultures and traditions.

##### **How**

- No pressure should be applied to participants from other cultures to force participation.
- The family has many forms and leaders must respect a participants' views.
- Team Members need to be sensitive about using words which make assumptions about participants' background, family status or principal caregivers.
- Your team should have zero tolerance for language or activities that discriminate on the basis of gender, race age or ability.

## **6. Special Needs**

Teams need to be inclusive of people with special needs. People with special needs may include very small children and people with intellectual, mental or physical disabilities.

### **How**

- Being inclusive has more to do with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn and make the effort than with a list of do's and don'ts.
- You may need extra help. The number of extra Team Members will depend on the particular needs of the child or vulnerable person – some may need a one on one ratio.
- Privacy and respect are particularly important for participants with special needs who may need help with toileting. Find out as much as you can in advance and when in doubt, ask.
- Activities need to be structured yet flexible to ensure that children with special needs can participate.
- Encourage all children to participate, play and learn together; your attitude and behaviour will have a significant influence on how others react.

## **7. Toileting**

Wherever possible, parents and care givers should see to the toileting needs of their children. However, if it is necessary for Team Members to assist with toileting during a program, this must be done in accordance with the NCC guidance.

### **How**

- Where practicable the parent should be responsible for attending to the child - remind parents and caregivers to take children to the toilet prior to checking the child into the kids' program.
- When crèche staff and volunteers must assist a child, two adult workers must accompany the child and the child should be encouraged to manage him/herself to the fullest possible extent, according to ability.

- Male leaders are not to assist in the toileting of girls.
- At no time should a child be allowed to enter a public toilet alone whilst placed in a kids church/ crèche or other church related activity/program.

## **8. Ratios**

Maintaining an appropriate ratio of adults to children promotes safety and minimises risk. Every program must have a safe number of adult Team Members in relation to the number of participants.

### **How**

There is no fixed ratio which will necessarily satisfy the duty of care in all situations. It will depend on all of the circumstances which will include:

- The age, needs and behavioural history of the children present;
- The skills and experience of the staff and volunteers;
- The environment in which the children are placed;
- The nature of any risks to which the children may be exposed;
- The ready availability of backup if there are difficulties.

The following may be used as a rough 'rule of thumb':

- Under two years of age: 1 Team Member to every 5 children
- Two years to school age: 1 Team Member to every 5 children
- Primary school age: 1 Team Member to every 8 children
- Secondary school age: 1 Team Member to every 10 -15 children

Notwithstanding these minimum ratios, it is recommended that, for children of primary school age or younger, a minimum of two staff or volunteers be present at all times.

## **9. Privacy**

Team Members have an obligation to protect the privacy of the participants.

### **How**

- Do not publish photos or movies of a child, including online, consult with a Team Leader before using any images taken while at NCC.
- Do not disclose private information about participants unless required (e.g. in an emergency).

## **10. Disclosures of Abuse**

During the course of an activity, a child or vulnerable person may disclose information about abuse to a Team Member. Team Members must handle the disclosure

appropriately.

## **How**

- Report any concerns you have that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm or abuse.
- If a child makes a disclosure of abuse to you, use the L-I-S-T-E-N model:
  - **L** – Listen, don't counsel or ask leading questions
  - **I** – 'I believe you. It's not your fault'
  - **S** – Support – reassure the child people will support / protect them
  - **T** – Tell your Team Leader or Children's Pastors as soon as possible
  - **E** – Emergency – if a child is in immediate danger, call 000
  - **N** – Notes – write down what the child told you, using their words

# Declaration

I have read the Child Protection Policy and Procedures for working with children in North Coast Church activities.

I understand and will comply with the Code of Conduct.

If I breach the Code in any way, I will immediately inform my Team Leader, the Children’s Pastors or the Youth Pastor as appropriate.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness date:** \_\_\_\_\_