

SAFEGUARDING THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN IN OUR CARE

1. Preamble

The Bible consistently expresses God's concern for the care and well being of the weak, vulnerable, and powerless children in society, in texts such as:

- *(Matthew 19:14) But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."*
- *(Mark 9:36-37) Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, {37} "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."*
- *(Luke 17:2) "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."*
- *(Ephesians 6:4) And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*

At Central Mountains Baptist Church (CMBC) we must be obedient to this responsibility in relation to the care of our children (being any person less than 18 years), and the cognitively impaired. Therefore, we will undertake appropriate screening and background checks on those involved in children's ministries eg Sunday School, crèche, Kid's Church, Scripture, Youth Peoples Group, AWANA and Vacation Bible School.

In the past churches have accepted people of apparently good character / Christian testimony to serve, without great formality, but in the current climate this is no longer sufficient. For any activity involving the custody of children, there is now a clear procedural and legal duty of care. The task is complicated by the fact that people with the potential to abuse are often available, competent and strive to achieve credibility.

In recent years, the community generally has become more aware of the reality of child abuse, whether in the home, institutions, even in the church.

Child abuse is an act that endangers a child's physical or emotional health or development. Forms of abuse include:

- **Physical abuse.** This is where a child has a suspicious current injury that has not occurred accidentally.
- **Emotional abuse.** This is when a person repeatedly rejects the child or uses threats to frighten the child, creating an emotional environment which significantly damages the child's physical, social, intellectual or emotional development.
- **Sexual abuse.** This occurs when a person uses power or authority over a child to involve a child in sexual activity. Physical force is sometimes involved. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. For example sexual touching and exposure to sexually explicit material.
- **Neglect.** This is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.

The immediate and ongoing consequences for victims can be heartbreaking and life destroying. The tragedy of abuse is that there is a betrayal of trust, by relatives, carers, doctors, pastors, other church workers or whoever is in a position of authority and influence over children. As servants of the living God, we must do all that is possible to provide a safe and secure environment for young people who come under our care and supervision. We must be loyal to the trust children place in us.

The current climate has understandably led to suspicion and fear among the general populace. Sometimes even innocent people are suspected and accused of inappropriate behaviour. Accordingly there is also a need for

procedures to safeguard the reputations of our child workers by providing appropriate training, guidelines, and supervision; so that there is no opportunity for false accusation.

It is therefore necessary to have evidence that the church has taken all reasonable precautions in the supervision of children. It is further recognized that some people are not suitable to work with children. For example, people who have been convicted of sexual offences, or who are being investigated regarding such offences, are not suitable for appointment as child workers, and are in fact barred from such work by the NSW “Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012”. Caution will also be exercised in accepting people with a history of serious emotional or mental illness. The adoption of operating and screening procedures set out in this document will therefore exclude some individuals from ministry to children.

The right of confidentiality will be respected during the procedures outlined in this document.

We need to model a standard of care to which the whole community can aspire.

In the event that the behaviour of one of our workers was such as to require a formal apology, and / or compensatory assistance of any kind (including financial), we need to address the situation with due regard for Biblical principles, as well as the legal system.

The key consideration is that we are responsible for the leaders we appoint, and need to take every reasonable care to establish and maintain procedures that minimize the potential for abuse.

In summary, CMBC:

- affirms that children are precious in the sight of God,
- affirms that children are vulnerable to abuse in the community and the church, and
- pledges to safeguard the children in our care by implementing rules and procedures that reduce the potential for abuse.

2. Who Must Comply With This Document?

Anyone seeking to work or lead within a children’s ministry will be required to comply with the rules, procedures and guidelines within this document. This includes those involved in children’s ministries who are themselves under 18.

3. Compliance

Step	Action
1	<p>Complete the Required Child Protection Training.</p> <p>The type and content of the Child Protection Training will be determined by the pastor, in consultation with the church leadership.</p> <p>The aim of this training is to ensure that our workers are equipped to understand the issues of child abuse, i.e. how to avoid it, recognize it, address it and minimize the risk of false accusation.</p> <p>The Child Protection Training must consist of at least one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attending a CMBC training seminar on Child Protection. 2. Attending a training seminar on Child Protection at an Australian Fellowship of Bible-Believing Churches (AFBC) church eg Emmanuel Baptist Church at Glenwood. 3. Completing a CMBC training package on Child Protection. This training package will utilise the many resources now available (notably DVDs / videos and written materials). 4. Attending an external training seminar on Child Protection. This is especially relevant for those in key leadership roles and those employed by CMBC. <p>All workers must undertake the required training before they take up a children's ministry role.</p>
2	<p>Apply for a 'Working With Children Check'.</p> <p>This is a NSW legislative requirement for <u>all</u> persons over 18 years old who are seeking or currently engaged in either paid or voluntary work with children.</p> <p>To do this, you must do the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete the online form at www.newcheck.kids.nsw.gov.au. Once the form is submitted, you will receive an application number. Please record it. 2. Go to any NSW Motor Registry. You will need the application number you received when you submitted the online form PLUS proof of your identity. A fee is payable for this check only if you are in paid employment with CMBC. 3. Forward the details of the 'Working With Children Check' (including the application number) to CMBC's clerical assistant or pastor.
3	<p>Read and sign CMBC's form 'Child Worker's Declaration'.</p> <p>This form is to be renewed every three years.</p> <p>At that time, (or any lesser time if circumstances warrant), further checks will be undertaken <i>if considered necessary</i> by the pastor, of the person's suitability to continue in children's ministries.</p> <p>A copy of a 'Child Worker's Declaration' is attached (Annex 1).</p>

4	<p>Complete and sign CMBC's form 'Application For Children's Ministry'.</p> <p>At the discretion of the pastor, an interview with the proposed child worker may be required. The interview panel will be drawn from among the pastor and deacons, and their wives. The panel will normally be chosen by the pastor. The make up of the interview panel will depend on the position under consideration, and should include at least one female member. The interview and documentation process will be implemented and maintained by the pastor or a person appointed by the pastor. The set questions for the interview will not preclude additional questions of a more general nature if needed.</p> <p>At the discretion of the pastor, any referees nominated by the proposed child worker may be contacted. In such cases, the referee will typically be contacted by letter and asked to complete a questionnaire relating to the intended appointment.</p> <p>A copy of an '<i>Application For Children's Ministry</i>' is attached (Annex 2).</p> <p>A copy of the '<i>Suggested Interview Questions</i>', '<i>Letter to Referee</i>' and the questionnaire referred to within the '<i>Letter to Referee</i>' ('<i>Questionnaire to be Completed by Referee</i>') are attached as Annexes 3, 4 and 5.</p>
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Please note the following guidelines:

1. Workers will normally have been known to CMBC (or a sister church) for at least six months.
2. Only those children who have proved to be sensible can be workers in children's ministries.
3. Leadership roles will only be appointed to adults (i.e. those 18 years or older).
4. Mixed gender activities should have mixed gender workers.

ANNEX 1 – CHILD WORKER’S DECLARATION

1. I will not counsel a child (i.e. a person less than 18 years) alone. In cases where a 1:1 interaction is considered essential, I will ensure it is made within sight of another worker. I will be careful about discussing family or private matters with a child.
2. **Men only** – I will not take a toddler to the toilet and/or change nappies.
3. I am aware that a child worker should be present with children from the arrival of the first child to the departure of the last child. In a classroom situation, if there is only one student, I acknowledge that there must be at least two workers present, but if there is more than one student, then one worker may be sufficient. For trips, camps and outings I acknowledge that there are to be at least two workers with children at all times, and I will take care that there are adequate workers to ensure the appropriate oversight and safety of the children at all times.
4. I am aware that there will be times when parents are responsible for supervising their children at church or a church activity. This includes before and after any church activity or during the worship service when a child leaves to go to the toilet. Whilst responsibility rests with the parents during these times, nonetheless I will act with reasonable care if I see any risk, taking into account the age of the child and the circumstances. For example, if I see a toddler enter a car park unsupervised, I will act.
5. If a child has to be touched, this touching will only be to the head or shoulders. Once a child has reached school age, I will not allow them to sit on my lap. I acknowledge that even though a child may enjoy appropriate physical contact, the initiative must always come from the child. I will discourage inappropriate touch by the child. I will avoid any activity (or words) that normally would be construed as sexually provocative / stimulating to another person, and will take action if a child initiates such behaviour themselves (inadvertently or otherwise) toward myself, another child worker or another child. I will not administer physical punishment, even in (apparent) fun, as it may reasonably be construed as physical abuse and result in negative consequences.
6. I am aware of the power of the spoken word among young people. I acknowledge that children are at an emotional, impressionable and vulnerable stage of life, and must not be subjected to words that tend to ridicule, mock or abuse in any way. I will not subject a child to language, literature, or videos of a coarse nature or inappropriate to their age/level of development.
7. I will take care in the context of physical games, both in regard to injury that may be caused, and also in relation to the example that is set for the children.
8. If I have either direct evidence, or a reason to suspect that inappropriate activity of any kind is taking place or has taken place here or elsewhere, I will report the situation to the pastor and if considered appropriate, also to the ministry leader.
9. I have never made any kind of sexual approach to a child whether verbal or physical at any place nor at any time. I have never been involved with or convicted of, nor am I currently under investigation for any violence, sexual assault, or other crime against a child. I understand that a NSW Government ‘Working With Children Check’ showing clearance to work with children must be obtained to verify my claims (not applicable if you are less than 18 years old). I will make the results of this check available to the clerical assistant for verification. I understand this clearance lasts for five years. I understand that the applicable government agency responsible for child protection will conduct interim criminal history checks during this period.

10. **Pastors only** - When a report of inappropriate activity is received, I will ensure that an appropriate investigation / action / report will be implemented. According to the circumstances, this response plan may include reporting the situation to the police, to the relevant government department, and to the insurers. The response plan may also include the provision of counseling as appropriate to both workers in child ministry and to the victims of abuse.

11. I realise that a high standard of Christian conduct is expected of me and willingly declare the following:

- I will carry out my ministry responsibility with faithfulness. I will make proper arrangements if for some reason I must be absent from a ministry commitment. Proper arrangements includes contacting my ministry leader or, if I am a ministry leader, the pastor.
- I will do my best to cooperate with the overall programme of the church and with my ministry leader. If at any time this becomes impossible, I will resign and let someone else take my place so that the cause of Christ may not be harmed.
- I will spend adequate time preparing for each ministry opportunity.
- I will pray regularly for those children under me in ministry.

I understand that should I fail to meet my commitments as set out above, I could be asked to withdraw from children's ministry at Central Mountains Baptist Church. I make this declaration believing it to be true.

Full name: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ANNEX 2 – APPLICATION FOR CHILDREN’S MINISTRY

FULL NAME: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____

ADDRESS: _____

MARITAL STATUS _____

OCCUPATION: _____

MINISTRY INTERESTS: Sunday School / AWANA / Youth / Crèche / Kid’s Church / Scripture / Vacation Bible School / Other (Please specify)

Have you received a ‘Working With Children Check’ showing that you have been cleared to work with children?

What is your ‘Working With Children Check’ number?

Have you read and signed a ‘Child Worker’s Declaration’? _____

List any other names by which you have been known (including maiden name)

List the name of any other churches in which you have served in children’s ministry and the nature of that service

Why do you wish to serve in children’s ministry? _____

List any education, training, gifts, secular jobs, or other factors that you feel have prepared you for ministry to children _____

List any other churches that you have regularly attended in the last 5 years

List the name, address and telephone number of two people who can provide references based on working with you in a child related area (secular or spiritual)

The information contained in this application is true to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ANNEX 3– SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

NAME: _____
MINISTRY: _____
PANEL: _____

As you have expressed an interest in a ministry position that involves contact with children, and because we have an important duty of care to protect children under our care, we ask that you answer the following questions, and sign this record of interview.

1. Can you elaborate on the reason (s) given in your application for wanting to be involved in this ministry?

2. Can you share with us any positive experiences in your past involvement with children?

3. What about negative experiences?

4. Do you feel that you are a positive role model for children, and/or are you comfortable with the idea of being a role model?

5. Have you ever had a situation, directly or indirectly, where you feel a child was sexually provocative? If so, describe the incident, and how you handled it, or would handle it if it happened?

6. Is there any other information relating to your suitability for this ministry that we should be aware of?

Signed: _____
 (Interviewee) (Panel Chairman)

Date: _____

ANNEX 4 – LETTER TO REFEREE

Central Mountains Baptist Church,
17 Woodland Avenue,
HAZELBROOK NSW 2779

Dear

CHARACTER REFERENCE

(Name of worker) has offered to help with our children's ministry.

Before any workers are appointed, we must take all reasonable care to satisfy ourselves that they are suitable. In particular it is our responsibility to ensure that the children in our care are not subjected to harm of a physical, emotional or sexual nature.

(Name of worker) has given us your name as someone who is in a position to give a character reference.

We will be grateful if you could complete the enclosed questionnaire – the information you provide will remain confidential.

(Name of worker) would mainly be involved with children (age range) as (brief description of work).

With thanks,

Yours sincerely,

(Pastor)

ANNEX 5 – QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE COMPLETED BY REFEREE

Name of proposed worker _____

Your relationship with (*name of worker*) _____

How long have you known (*name of worker*) _____?

From your knowledge of and experience with (*name of worker*) please comment on his / her suitability to work with children / young people / the cognitively impaired.

Specifically comment on his / her honesty, reliability, and experience / capacity in working with children / young people / the cognitively impaired.

Are there any other comments you would like to make about (*name of worker*)?

Signed : _____

Date : _____

Name : _____