



# GIPPS ST

CHURCH OF CHRIST

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## CLIENT PROTECTION POLICY

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### 2024

Aaron Martin – Responsible  
Safeguarding Officer

(14<sup>th</sup> April 2024)

Michael Widderick – Chair – Leaders of  
the Church

(14<sup>th</sup> April 2024)

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 OUR PURPOSE

To glorify God through providing a secure family environment where each member is encouraged to grow more like Christ and actively promote the good news of Christ to the world.

## 1.2 POLICY STATEMENT

The Gipps Street church of Christ is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its Members, Visitors, Volunteers, Children, Aged and Vulnerable Adults, and Contractors.

The church's Client Protection Policy aims to reduce the risk of abuse occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

## 1.3 SCOPE

This Client Protection Policy applies to:

- All Ministries authorized by or under control of the church, including those ministries undertaken at the church's premises; and
- All leaders within the church or engaged in the church.

## 1.4 AUTHORITY

This Client Protection Policy of Gipps Street church of Christ was adopted for use at the business meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2024

We are committed to implementing the Client Protection Policy and training our Leaders in their content and application.

## 1.5 DEFINITIONS

<b>Abuse</b>	Can consist of one or more of, but is not restricted to the following:
<b>Physical Abuse</b>	Any non-accidental physical injury.
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	Any assault, abuse or threat of a sexual nature, sexual molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation.
<b>Emotional Abuse</b>	The chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person, or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a person's self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include Insulting, bullying, devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or other extreme acts.
<b>Neglect</b>	Characterised by the failure to provide for basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's health or development.
<b>Child</b>	Any person under the age of 18.

**Vulnerable adult** Refers to someone who: “is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illnesses or may be unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against harm or exploitation by another person”

**Children’s Activity Leader** Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 (or is under the age of 18 and is deemed by the Bible School Ministry Leader to meet BlueCard requirements) who is responsible for the control and safety of a Child placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in the church. This could include, but is not limited to, Bible School teachers, youth leaders, kids group organisers etc.

**Children’s Activity Helper** Any unpaid person over the age of 16 who is invited by a Children’s Activity Leader to assist them in their Ministry.

**Church** The Gipps Street church of Christ, located at 52 Gipps Street, Toowoomba, Queensland.

**Leader** Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of members placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a recognised Ministry of the church. A leader could include but is not limited to:

- Religious Practitioner,
- Small group Leaders,
- Counsellors,
- Youth Leaders,
- Bible School Superintendents,
- Teachers,
- Kids’ Club Leaders,
- Scripture Teachers,
- Sports Coaches and Organisers.

Note: Whilst it is biblically recognised that the men of the church have the responsibility for leadership, in the context of this policy “leader” will include those who are responsible for organising and executing an activity, e.g. Bible school classes, ladies’ classes etc.

**Members** Any person, including children, who attends or participates in church Ministries.

**Ministry** Any organised activity that is authorised by the church. (This would include Sunday worship period).

**Ministry Leader** A suitably qualified man recognised and authorised by the church as head of a ministry to oversee the teaching of New Testament Christianity and related church activities pertaining to that ministry.

**Bible School**

**Ministry Leader** The ministry leader authorised and responsible for the overseeing of the Bible School Ministry, which is responsible for all child related activities. Bible School Ministry Leader is also responsible for the selection, recruitment and instruction of Children’s Activity Leaders.

**Contractor** A person or firm that undertakes a contract to provide materials or labour to perform a service or do a job.

## **2.0 POLICY REVIEW**

This Client Protection Policy will be reviewed annually at the first business meeting of each new year. Church Leaders will inform the ministries involved when the date of review will occur, and any changes recommended by the ministries should be submitted in writing to the decision makers for consideration one month before the review date. This policy may be reviewed at any time if considered relevant.

Any proposed changes will be submitted to the Business Meeting for approval before being implemented.

## **3.0 OBLIGATIONS**

### **3.1 SPIRITUAL**

The core beliefs of the church require us to treat all people with love and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

### **3.2 LEGAL**

The church and its Leaders are subject to Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law and are committed to adhering to all relevant legislation.

### **3.3 ETHICAL**

In addition to the definition of Abuse in this document the below are also deemed unacceptable behaviours. These include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature.
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature.
- Suggestive gestures or remarks.
- Jokes of a sexual nature.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Inappropriate literature (e.g. PG, M, MA, R or X rated material used with Children).
- Acts of violence committed by a leader in the course of an activity.

## **4.0 SELECTION & SCREENING**

### **4.1 CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY LEADER**

Children's Activity Leaders hold a position of high responsibility and therefore must be carefully selected and screened. Prior to commencing work, Children's Activity Leaders will:

- Be Members of the church and will have regularly attended the church for at least 6 months.
- Be deemed by the Bible School Ministry Leader to have understood the responsibility of the position and possess the skills necessary for the role.
- Have read, understood and been trained in the Client Protection Policy
- Have a current Blue Card and this must be confirmed by the Blue Card Services Department (or if under the age of 18 and is deemed by the Bible School Ministry Leader to meet BlueCard requirements)
- Have read, understood and signed a Code of Conduct form (Appendix 3)

- Completed Safe Ministry Check – Leader Course

## 4.2 BIBLE SCHOOL MINISTRY LEADER

Bible School Ministry Leaders are to be appointed only after the following procedures have been carried out:

- When this position is vacant, a person will be nominated for the role by the general business meeting.
- Candidates must complete an application form (Appendix 2) which requests details of referees and permission to contact them.
- Referees will be checked and spoken with to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position and the conversation will be documented and retained on file.
- They must have a current Blue Card and this must be confirmed by the Blue Card Services Department
- They must have read, understood and signed a Code of Conduct form (Appendix 3)
- Completed Safe Ministry Check - Staff & Board Member course.

## 4.3 CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY HELPERS

Helpers must be fully aware of the content of the Client Protection Policy before commencing duties.

Any Children's Activity Helper who provides assistance in a Children's Ministry must be supervised by a Leader at all times and will be accountable to that Leader.

Leaders who accept the assistance of a Children's Activity Helper must be satisfied of their maturity and their suitability for Children's Ministry.

## 4.4 MINISTRY LEADER

A suitably qualified man recognised and authorised by the church as head of a ministry to oversee the teaching of New Testament Christianity and related church activities pertaining to that ministry. They are responsible for providing a safe and stable environment for each of these activities. If these activities involve Children, the Bible School Ministry Leader is responsible for ensuring adequate Child safety measures are upheld. Ministry Leaders are required to consult Bible School Ministry Leaders to ensure all members are provided a safe environment. Prior to commencing work, Ministry Leaders will:

- Be Members of the church and will have regularly attended the church for at least 6 months.
- Have read, understood and been trained in the Client Protection Policy
- Have read, understood and signed a Code of Conduct form (Appendix 3)
- Completed Safe Ministry Check – Leader Course

## 4.5 UNSUITABLE APPLICANTS

Where the church has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence or where an applicant refuses to present their Working with Children Check and/or Blue Card, they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for child and/or vulnerable adult related ministries (as a Bible School Ministry Leader, a Children's Activity Leader or a Children's Activity Helper).

These offences do not preclude the applicant from serving in other Ministries (excluding access to all children and vulnerable adults) and the church would welcome their contribution in more appropriate areas, subject to the approval first, then strict supervision and oversight of the respective Ministry Leader.

## 5.0 TRAINING

All Ministry Leaders, Children's Activity Leaders and Children's Activity Helpers will be issued with a copy of this policy and training by the Bible School Ministry Leader in:

- The content and application of the church's Policies & Procedures,
- Reporting procedures and the associated legal requirements.

## 6.0 CODE OF CONDUCT

All Children's Activity Leaders, Children's Activity Helpers, Bible School Ministry Leaders & Leaders will be issued with the Code of Conduct for interacting with children and young people (see Appendix 3) before commencing their roles. This code of conduct form must be read, understood and signed, and it will be retained on file.

## 7.0 BLUE CARDS (WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK)

It is important to the Gipps Street church of Christ that it complies at all times with the requirements of the Blue Card Services Department. As such, compliance with Chapter 8 of the Working with Children(Risk Management &Screening) Act 2000 (which regulates the Blue Card system) is to be maintained.

The Gipps Street church of Christ requires all in a position of Bible School Ministry Leader to obtain and, if necessary, authorise a Blue Card. We will not:

- Allow volunteers to commence/continue duties until they have received their blue cards, nor
- Allow anyone to continue duties who:
  - Withdraws their consent to employment screening.
  - Has had their blue card suspended or cancelled.
  - Has received a negative Blue Card notice.

A register of all workers within child related activities and their Blue Card status is to be maintained at all times by the Bible School Ministry Leader.

## 8.0 REPORTING PROCEDURES

The Gipps Street church of Christ strictly adheres the reporting of all abuse. We are committed to building an environment where either a victim or employee/volunteer feels able to report such abuse.

Upon a disclosure of harm or suspicion of harm, the Gipps Street church of Christ will implement the **Disclosure of Harm Procedure** (See Appendix 4), including the completion of an **Incident Report Form** (See Appendix 5).

If there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a Child and or a Vulnerable adult has been or is suffering abuse, the Police and the church's insurer will be contacted immediately.

Any disclosures by a Member, reports of suspected abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur. Members alerted to any allegations of harm are to consult the Bible School Ministry Leader and they will handle all documentation and oversee the reporting process. In the absence of the Bible School Ministry Leader or if the disclosures relates to the Bible School Ministry Leader. The disclosure will be reported to the Chairman of the Business Meeting.

The church reserves the right to carry out church disciplinary procedures in accordance with biblical principles.

Where an allegation is made the accused Leader will be automatically suspended from all ministry activities of the church pending the outcome of all investigations.

The automatic termination of their employment, or involvement with your organisation if found guilty of committing sexual abuse (either by an internal investigation or by a court)

## 9.0 PLAN FOR MANAGING BREACHES

A breach is any action or inaction by any member of our organisation, including children, young people and vulnerable adults, that fails to comply with any part of the Client Protection Policy.

In the case of a breach:

- All people concerned will be notified.
- All people concerned will be able to provide their version of events.
- The details of the breach will be recorded in a secure password protected environment with access limited to specific individuals of the church
- Matters discussed will be confidential.
- A relevant outcome will be decided.

The specific nature of the breach will give insight on what the specific outcome will be. Outcomes may include but are not limited to:

- Emphasising the relevant component of the Client Protection Policy
- Further education or training
- Providing closer supervision
- Reviewing current policies and procedures and developing new policies and procedures if necessary.

## 10.0 HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES

In the case of high-risk activities or special events being conducted, a **Risk Management Planning Form** (See Appendix 6) will be completed by the organisers and all other relevant persons. In doing so, risks should be identified, considered and reduced. This Risk Management Plan is adapted from *Standards Australia's AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk management— Principles and guidelines*.

When developing "The Risk Management Plan" for camps and external activities the following points are to be addressed in addition to the general risk assessment of the day-to-day activities to be undertaken during the activity.

- Before the Activity: Planning and set up of the activity.
  - Attendees:
    - The camps are for those aged 12-18.
    - Those who are over 18 are either Leaders or "Children's Activity Leader" (Refer Client Protection Policy for definitions).
  - Travel:
    - When travelling in vehicles or by bus supervisors to be located to ensure adequate supervision of all participants to eliminate blind spots.
  - Accommodation:
    - Camp Sites:
    - Only venues where sleeping arrangements are to be considered where all attendees are separated by sex and supervisors can be located to ensure adequate supervision of all participants to eliminate blind spots.



Immediate members, (eg husband, wife, daughter, son), of the of the same family may stay together in separate accommodation (eg family cabins) if deemed appropriate by the Activity Director.

- When considering venues, the following arrangements are mandatory:
  - Only venues where showering and toilet arrangements for all attendees are separated by sex
  - Only venues where adults and children are in separate areas and have separate showering and toilet arrangements
  - Only venues where supervisors are in separate areas and have separate showering and toilet arrangements
  - Children showering and toilet areas to be signed “Children Only”
  - When adults need to enter children showering and toilet areas for cleaning, access to be signed “No Entry Cleaning in Progress”

The Risk Management Plan will be reviewed after each event to analyse its effectiveness and efficiency.

## **11.0 COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT**

The Gipps Street church of Christ recognises that a safe environment is more easily established and maintained when policies and procedures are communicated well to all persons involved. It is also important that these things are supported and respected.

To assist in communicating the child protection strategies in this policy, following any changes or review the following will be undertaken:

- Each Member will have access to a printed Client Protection Policy upon request and the policy is published on the church’s website, <https://www.gippschurch.com/protectionpolicy>
- Each Leader and Helper will receive training in the Client Protection Policy during their induction. Refresher training will be undertaken annually thereafter. The Responsible Safeguarding Officer diarises all induction and refresher training.
- The Gipps Street church of Christ congregation will be advised by an appropriate announcement at the conclusion of the Sunday morning worship period.
- The Gipps Street church of Christ with an email address will be emailed a copy of this policy and copies will be made available at the church building, 52 Gipps Street Drayton, for those members without access to email.
- A letter providing information for parents and carers (See Appendix 7) will be on display at the front entrance to the building.

## **12.0 RECORDS**

All records will be securely retained. Documents will include all personnel employment, incident and investigation reports, liability insurance policies and other relevant incident-related correspondence. Records to be retained for no less than 50 years.

## APPENDIX 1 – LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Legal requirements as given by the *Blue Card Services QLD*.

<b><i>Mandatory Requirements</i></b>	<b><i>Location</i></b>
<b>1. A statement of commitment</b>	<b>Client Protection Policy – Section 1.2</b>
<b>2. A code of conduct for interacting with children and young people</b>	<b>Client Protection Policy – Section 7.0</b>
<b>3. Procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing people</b>	<b>Client Protection Policy – Section 4.0</b>
<b>4. Policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines</b>	<b>Client Protection Policy – Section 8.0</b>
<b>5. A plan for managing breaches of the risk management policy</b>	<b>Client Protection Policy – Section 10.0</b>
<b>6. Policies and procedures for compliance with Chapter 8 of the Act</b>	<b>Client Protection Policy – Section 9.0</b>
<b>7. Risk management plans for high-risk activities and special events</b>	<b>Client Protection Policy – Section 11.0</b>
<b>8. Strategies for communication and support</b>	<b>Client Protection Policy – Section 12.0</b>

## APPENDIX 2 – APPLICATION FORM

### LEADER APPLICATION FORM

Position Applied For:

#### Personal Details

Full Name:

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Home Ph.:

Mob Ph.:

Work Ph.:

Email Address:

Please list all **Places of Worship** that you have attended regularly in the last 3 years.

Date (Approx.)	Place of Worship

Please list any **qualifications** you have that relate to working for the church.

Date	Qualification	Institution

Please provide any **experience** you have had that relates to working for the church.

Date	Organisation	Position

**References**

Please provide details of two people we can contact, who can comment on your suitability for this position:

**First Referee**

Full Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Ph.:

Mob Ph.:

Work Ph.:

Email Address:

Position & Organisation:

**Second Referee**

Full Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Ph.:

Mob Ph.:

Work Ph.:

Email Address:

Position & Organisation:

**Declaration:**

Have you:

Read and understood Gipps Street church of Christ Client Protection Policy & Code of Conduct? Yes / No

Ever been in serious breach of Gipps Street church of Christ Client Protection Policy & Code of Conduct? Yes / No

Had someone express concerns about your behaviour towards a child? Yes / No

Ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of an investigation relating to the abuse of a child or inappropriate sexual behaviour. Yes / No

I confirm that the information provided on this application form is true and correct.

I confirm that I have not withheld any important information relating to my suitability for this position.

Applicants Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 3 - CODE OF CONDUCT

### Statement of Commitment

The Gipps Street church of Christ is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its Members, Visitors, Volunteers, Children, Aged and Vulnerable People. The church's Client Protection Policy aims to reduce the risk of abuse occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

### Who must comply with this code of conduct?

This Code of Conduct applies to all Helpers, Leaders and Bible School Ministry Leaders as defined in **Section 1.5** of the *Gipps Street Church of Christ Client Protection Policy*.

### Standards of Behaviour

Behaviour	Appropriate	Inappropriate
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Using encouraging and positive words and a pleasant tone of voice</li><li>Open and honest communication</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Insults or name calling</li><li>Bullying, swearing or yelling</li><li>Sexually suggestive comments/jokes</li></ul>
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Showing a Christ-like example</li><li>Building relationships based on trust</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Favouritism</li><li>Contact outside of regular times without the parent's explicit permission.</li><li>Harassment</li></ul>
Physical Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Allowing for personal space</li><li>Touching due to medical emergency or protecting from physical harm</li><li>Non-threatening</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Violent or aggressive behaviour including hitting, kicking, slapping or pushing</li><li>Kissing or touching of a sexual nature</li></ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All aspects of every activity will be open to observation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Using alcohol or other drugs before or during church activities</li><li>"Initiation" activities and secret ceremonies</li><li>Being alone in a room with a child. More than one child or adult must be present at all times.</li><li>Being alone in a room with a vulnerable person</li><li>Male members only involved if the vulnerable person is female.</li></ul>

Please note, it is not the responsibility of the Church or its Leaders to discipline a Child. If a Child does not abide by the rules set down by the Leader, or is an obstruction to the care of other Children or may cause harm to other Children, the Child will be removed and referred to their parent or guardian. At no time will a Leader administer any form of physical, emotional or mental discipline.

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**In the event that this code of conduct for interacting with children and young people is breached, actions will be taken in accordance with our organisation's plan for managing breaches of the Client Protection Policy.**

*"I have read, understood, and will act in accordance with the above code of conduct."*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 4 - DISCLOSURE OF HARM PROCEDURE

### RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE

*Remain calm and find a private place to talk.*

*Explain that they have done the right thing in telling you but that you'll need to tell someone who can keep them safe*

*Only ask questions to confirm the need to report the matter.*

*Do not attempt to conduct your own investigation*



### DOCUMENTING A DISCLOSURE

*Complete an Incident Report Form and include:*

*Time, date and place of disclosure*

*Accurate and detailed description of the disclosure and what actions have been taken.*

*Date of report and signature*



### REPORTING A DISCLOSURE

*Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) – 1800 811 810*

*Queensland Police Services – 4615 3000 (or in emergency – 000)*

*Ansvar Insurance (the church's insurer) – 1300 650 540*

## APPENDIX 5 – INCIDENT REPORT FORM

To be used for documenting a disclosure or suspicion of harm.

Report completed by: _____	
Date: _____	Signature: _____

Disclosure made to \_\_\_\_\_ (Their Name)

by \_\_\_\_\_ (Their Name)

on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) at \_\_\_\_\_ (Location).

Description (including what happened, what was said and any actions taken):



## APPENDIX 6 – RISK MANAGEMENT PLANNING FORM

<b>Describe the activity</b> <i>Identify all elements of the event from beginning to end</i>	<b>Identify Risks</b> <i>Something that could happen that results in harm to a child or young person</i>	<b>Analyse the Risk</b> <i>(Likelihood/Consequences)</i>	<b>Evaluate the Risk</b> <i>The level of risk (according to the table below)</i>	<b>Manage the Risk</b> <i>Assess the options</i>	<b>Review</b> <i>Nominate who will review after the event/activity</i>

Determine **likelihood** of the risk by using the left hand column of the **Risk Analysis Matrix** (below). Use the impact information to determine the **consequences** level. Combine the Consequence and Likelihood ratings to arrive at the **Risk Level** (i.e. *Low, Medium, High or Critical*). **CONSEQUENCES**

LIKELIHOOD	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
<b>Very likely</b> Expected to occur in most circumstances	Medium	Medium	High	Critical	Critical
<b>Likely</b> Will probably occur in most circumstances	Low	Medium	High	High	Critical
<b>Possible</b> Might occur at some time	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
<b>Unlikely</b> Not expected to occur	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
<b>Rare</b> Occurs in exceptional circumstances only	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

## **APPENDIX 7 – LETTER: INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS**

### ***Information Regarding Child Services and Protection***

At the Gipps Street church of Christ we have a vibrant and growing Bible School. This is an important part of who we are, and we are keen on making sure that this continues.

Creating safe and supportive environments for children and young people is everyone's business. Our congregation is committed to providing the highest standard of service to children and young people and ensuring they are kept safe from harm. In order to create a safe and supportive service environment for children and young people, organisations must initiate and maintain ongoing planning and commitment.

In a safe and supportive environment, services and activities are provided so children and young people:

- feel safe and protected from harm.
- feel encouraged to participate.
- are consulted and respected, and
- have their best interests considered and upheld.

In accordance with the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000, the Gipps Street church of Christ is required to have a written child and youth risk management strategy (called the ***Client Protection Policy***) to protect the children and young people in our organisation from harm. The strategy will help ensure our organisation is a safe and supportive service environment for children and young people, by identifying and minimising risks. This includes working through the Blue Card system.

The child and youth risk management strategy addresses the following elements:

- a statement of commitment
- a code of conduct for interacting with children and young people
- procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing paid employees and volunteers.
- policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines.
- a plan for managing breaches of the child and youth risk management strategy.
- policies and procedures for implementing and reviewing the Client Protection Policy and maintaining an employee register for blue cards.
- risk management plans for high-risk activities and special events, and
- strategies for communication and support.

As a member or visitor, it is important that you feel involved and able to contribute to this work. If you would like more information about this or would like to obtain a copy of the Client Protection Policy, please see the Responsible Safeguarding Officer, Aaron Martin.