

# Bethel Church Wauchope – Child Safe & Protection Policy (2025)

## 1. Policy Statement

Bethel Church Wauchope is committed to providing a safe and caring environment where everyone, especially children and young people, can experience God's love, grow in faith, and participate in ministry without fear of harm.

We believe that every person is made in the image of God and deserves to be treated with dignity, respect, and compassion. The abuse or mistreatment of children and vulnerable people is always unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

This policy sets out how Bethel Church Wauchope will:

- Promote the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Prevent, identify, and respond to child abuse and neglect.
- Comply with NSW and Commonwealth legislation and the expectations of The Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Australia.
- Ensure that all ministry activities are conducted safely and ethically.

Bethel Church Wauchope requires all staff, ministry leaders, and volunteers involved with children or young people to be trained, screened, and accountable under this policy.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff, volunteers, and ministry leaders at Bethel Church Wauchope.
- All programs, services, and events involving children or youth, whether on church premises, in homes, or off-site.
- Contractors and visiting ministry teams where children are present.

This policy is to be read alongside:

- Bethel Church Wauchope Code of Conduct
- Foursquare Australia Safe Ministry Guidelines
- NSW Child Protection laws and the Working With Children Check requirements

### 3. Guiding Principles and Biblical Foundation

- **Children are valued by God** – “Children are a heritage from the Lord.” (Psalm 127:3)
- **Jesus welcomed and protected children** – “Whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes Me.” (Matthew 18:5–6)
- **The Church is called to love and care** – “Love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)

Therefore, Bethel Church Wauchope will:

- Actively protect children and young people from harm.
- Build a culture of safety, respect, and accountability.
- Support families and caregivers as primary nurturers of faith and wellbeing.
- Follow Jesus’ example in how we treat the vulnerable and speak truth with love.

### 4. Definitions

**Child:** Any person under 16 years old.

**Young Person:** Any person aged 16–18 years.

**Child Abuse:** Any act or omission that endangers a child’s health, safety, or wellbeing, including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse or exploitation
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Neglect (failure to provide basic care)
- Exposure to family or domestic violence

**Reportable Conduct:** Sexual offences, sexual misconduct, assault, ill-treatment, neglect, or behaviour causing psychological harm by an employee or volunteer (as defined in the *Children’s Guardian Act 2019*).

**WWCC:** Working With Children Check – a NSW Government clearance required for anyone in child-related work.

**Leader or Helper:** A person, paid or unpaid, who has authority, influence, or care for children in any church program.

**Organisation:** Bethel Church Wauchope, affiliated with The Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Australia.

## 5. Legal and Denominational Context

Bethel Church Wauchope upholds all NSW and Commonwealth legislation concerning child protection, including:

- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*
- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012*
- *Children’s Guardian Act 2019*
- *Crimes Act 1900* (failure to report and failure to protect offences)
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*

### Foursquare Oversight

Bethel Church Wauchope is part of the Church of the Foursquare Gospel Australia Limited.

As such, it is accountable to the **District Supervisor** and the **National Office** for compliance with Foursquare Safe Ministry standards.

Serious allegations or breaches will be reported to the District Supervisor and, where appropriate, to the relevant external authorities.

## 6. Prevention and Recruitment

### 6.1 Safe Recruitment Practices

To ensure the safety of children and youth, Bethel Church Wauchope will follow strict recruitment procedures for all roles involving contact with minors:

- All applicants must complete a volunteer or employment application form.
- Two referees must be provided, including at least one who can comment on the person's suitability for working with children.
- A face-to-face interview will be conducted by a ministry leader or pastor.
- All applicants must provide a valid WWCC number, which will be verified before commencement.
- The applicant must complete approved **Safe Ministry Training** prior to or within the first month of service.
- A signed agreement to the **Leadership Conduct Covenant** and this **Child Safe & Protection Policy** is required.

### 6.2 Training

All leaders and helpers in child-related roles must complete:

- Initial Safe Ministry and Child Protection training before starting service.
- Annual refresher training sessions.
- A full retraining every two years (covering legislative updates and review of best practices).

Training records will be securely maintained by the Church Administrator.

## **6.3 Probation and Supervision**

New staff and volunteers will serve a three-month probation period under supervision. During this time, their performance and adherence to policy will be reviewed before ongoing approval.

## **6.4 Disqualifying Offences**

No person convicted of sexual offences, child abuse, violence, or related misconduct will be permitted to work or volunteer with children or youth.

## **6.5 Promotion of a Safe Culture**

Bethel Church will display child safety posters, provide child-friendly complaint pathways, and communicate this policy to parents and carers through visible and accessible channels.

# **7. Safe Conduct and Supervision**

## **7.1 Code of Conduct**

All staff, leaders, and volunteers must:

- Treat all children and young people with dignity and respect.
- Listen to and value their ideas and concerns.
- Maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries.
- Use positive, age-appropriate language.
- Avoid any form of abuse, neglect, harassment, or discrimination.
- Refrain from physical punishment or aggressive discipline.
- Never be alone in a private or secluded space with a child (unless unavoidable and another leader is informed).
- Report any concerning behaviour immediately.

## **7.2 Supervision Ratios**

Recommended supervision ratios:

- Preschool: 1 adult per 5 children
- Primary: 1 adult per 8 children
- Youth (12+): 1 adult per 10 young people

At least two screened adults should be present in every activity, ideally of both genders when possible.

## **7.3 Physical Contact**

Physical touch should always be:

- Appropriate to the child's age and situation (e.g. high-five, fist pump, etc.).
- Non-sexual and never secretive.
- Avoided in private areas such as bedrooms, bathrooms, or vehicles.

## **7.4 Transport**

- Parents are responsible for drop-off and pick-up unless otherwise arranged.
- If transport is provided, at least two adults must be present in the vehicle.
- Consent must be obtained from parents or guardians before transporting a child.

## **7.5 Photography and Media**

- No photos or videos of children are to be taken without consent from a parent/guardian.
- Photos must not be shared on social media or websites without the consent of parent/guardian and approval from church leadership.
- Children should never be identified by full name online.

## 8. Recognising and Responding to Concerns

### 8.1 Recognising Signs of Abuse

Leaders and volunteers should be alert to signs such as:

- Unexplained injuries, frequent absences, or sudden changes in behaviour.
- Fear of certain adults or reluctance to go home.
- Knowledge or behaviour that is inappropriate for their age.
- Disclosure or hints from a child about something being wrong.

### 8.2 Responding to Disclosures

If a child discloses abuse or harm:

1. **Listen carefully** – allow the child to speak freely without interruption or judgment.
2. **Believe them** – never dismiss or minimise their account.
3. **Stay calm and supportive** – reassure the child that they did the right thing by speaking up.
4. **Do not promise secrecy** – explain that you must tell someone who can help.
5. **Record what was said** – write down exact words as soon as possible.
6. **Report the matter immediately** to your Ministry Leader or the Senior Pastor.

### 8.3 Immediate Danger

If a child is in immediate danger, contact **Police (000)** without delay, then inform church leadership.

## 9. Reporting and Documentation Procedures

### 9.1 Internal Reporting

All staff and volunteers must report concerns to:

- The **Senior Pastor**, or if unavailable,

- The **Designated Child Protection Officer**.

Reports must be made **as soon as possible and within 24 hours**.

## 9.2 External Reporting

If there is reasonable suspicion of significant harm, a report must be made to:

- **Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)** – 132 111 (24/7), or
- **NSW Police** – if a criminal offence is suspected.

Use the **Mandatory Reporter Guide** at [reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au](http://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au) to help determine whether a report is required.

## 9.3 Reportable Conduct

If the allegation involves a staff member, volunteer, or leader:

- Notify the **Children’s Guardian** under the *Children’s Guardian Act 2019*.
- Inform the **District Supervisor** of the Foursquare Gospel Church Australia.
- The individual may be **stood down** during investigation to protect all parties.

## 9.4 Confidentiality

All reports and investigations must remain strictly confidential.

Only those directly involved in the process should be informed.

Gossip, speculation, or discussion of allegations outside authorised channels is not permitted.

## 9.5 Documentation

- A **Child Protection Incident Report Form** must be completed within 24 hours of an incident.
- All reports, notes, and correspondence will be securely stored in a locked cabinet or encrypted digital file.
- Access to records is restricted to the Senior Pastor, Child Protection Officer, and (if applicable) District Supervisor.



## 10. Support and Pastoral Care

Bethel Church Wauchope is committed to providing pastoral and emotional care for anyone affected by abuse or allegations, including:

- The child or young person and their family.
- The person making a report.
- Any person accused (who must still be treated with fairness and dignity until investigations are complete).

Professional counselling and referral support will be offered where appropriate.

## 11. Information Sharing

Under *Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, Bethel Church Wauchope may share relevant information with other prescribed agencies (e.g. schools, DCJ, health services) to promote a child's safety or wellbeing.

Information will only be shared by authorised personnel and recorded for transparency.

## 12. Accountability, Oversight and Review

### 12.1 Oversight

Bethel Church Wauchope's Senior Pastor and Church Board are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

They are accountable to the **District Supervisor** and **National Office of the Foursquare Gospel Church of Australia**.

### 12.2 Annual Review

This policy will be reviewed **annually**, or sooner if:

- Legislation changes.
- There is a significant incident.
- Feedback from leaders or parents suggests revisions are needed.

All leaders must re-sign the policy annually and complete refresher training.

### **12.3 Breaches of Policy**

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from ministry roles or termination of employment.

## **Agreement to Policy**

I have read and understood the **Bethel Church Wauchope Child Safe & Protection Policy (2025)**.

I agree to uphold its principles, follow its procedures, and report any concerns regarding the safety or wellbeing of children and young people.

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

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

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

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendices

## Appendix A – Reporting Flowchart

### If you suspect harm or abuse:

1. Ensure the child is safe.
2. Report immediately to the Senior Pastor or Child Protection Officer.
3. Contact DCJ (132 111) or Police (000) if risk is significant.
4. Record details on the Child Protection Incident Report Form.
5. Inform the District Supervisor if the matter involves a church leader or employee.

## Appendix B – Indicators of Abuse

*(Summarised from NSW Department of Communities and Justice guidelines)*

- **Physical:** Bruises, burns, fractures, or injuries with unclear explanations.
- **Emotional:** Withdrawal, anxiety, fearfulness, self-harm.
- **Sexual:** Age-inappropriate behaviour, fear of physical contact, sexually explicit talk.
- **Neglect:** Poor hygiene, constant hunger, unattended medical needs.

## Appendix C – Sample Child Protection Incident Form

To include fields for:

- Date, time, and location of incident
- Child's name, age, and contact details
- Description of incident or disclosure (exact words used if possible)
- Action taken and person(s) notified
- Signature of reporter and date

## Appendix D – Training and Screening Record

To be maintained by the Church Administrator, listing:

- Name of worker or volunteer
- WWCC number and expiry date
- Safe Ministry training dates
- Role description and supervision notes

## Appendix E – Key Contacts

- **Senior Pastor:** David Morgan, 0413456999, david@bethelwauchope.church
- **Child Protection Officer:** Elizabeth Morgan, 0432439500, elizabeth@bethelwauchope.church
- **District Supervisor (Foursquare):** Paul McCarthy, 0422967964, president@4sq.org.au
- **NSW Child Protection Helpline (DCJ):** 132 111
- **Police (emergency):** 000
- **Office of the Children’s Guardian:** (02) 8219 3600