



## Safe Ministry Policy

*Open your mouth, judge righteously,  
and plead the cause of the vulnerable and needy.*

*Proverbs 31:8-9*



# Background & Governance

**Westlakes Independent Baptist Church** has established this policy to clearly articulate our commitment to safeguarding all children and vulnerable people who participate in the life and ministries of our church (Psalm 127:3; Matthew 19:14).

This document outlines the underlying principles that guide our approach to safe ministry and the strategies we are implementing to embed a safeguarding culture in our Church.<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge our responsibility before God, our congregation, and the wider community to provide safe, transparent, and accountable ministry practices.

We affirm our commitment to the NSW Child Safe Standards and to complying with all relevant State and Federal legislation relating to the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people.<sup>2,3</sup> Because the needs of our community and the legal landscape continue to change, we commit to regularly reviewing and updating this policy to ensure its ongoing effectiveness, relevance, and compliance.

The provisions and duties of care in this **Safe Ministry Policy** apply to all people involved in the life, ministries, programs, or activities of Westlakes Independent Baptist Church, including but not limited to the pastor, deacons, ministry coordinators, ministry workers (volunteers), and members.

## 1. Commitment to Safeguard Vulnerable People

Westlakes Independent Baptist Church is committed to the biblical call to actively prevent harm and abuse and to ensure the safety and equity of everyone involved in our organisation, with special concern for vulnerable people who face a higher risk of mistreatment (Psalm 127:3; Matthew 19:14).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> OCG Standard 1- Leadership, governance & culture.

<sup>2</sup> OCG Standard 9 – Continuous improvement

<sup>3</sup> This policy is in accordance with the NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 No 157.

<sup>4</sup> OCG Standard 1- Leadership, governance & culture. OCG Standard 4. Equity & diverse needs. This policy aligns with the NSW Child Safe Standards published by the Office of the Children’s Guardian. See <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-standards> or [ocg.nsw.gov.au](https://ocg.nsw.gov.au)

For the purposes of this policy, Westlakes Independent Baptist Church adopts the definition of a ‘**vulnerable person**’ as outlined in the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986 (NSW)* (current consolidated version, 2026), which includes all children under 18 and any person with cognitive impairment, including intellectual disability, developmental disorders, neurological disorders, dementia, severe mental illness, or brain injury.<sup>5</sup>

Westlakes Independent Baptist Church accepts its responsibility to take all reasonable steps to prevent harm, abuse, and misconduct. We are committed to ensuring that any concerns or allegations are responded to promptly, respectfully, and in accordance with our legal obligations and internal procedures.

It is important that all people involved in our Church (including children and vulnerable people) are informed about their rights, invited to express their individual needs, participate in decisions which significantly affect them, and have their concerns taken seriously.<sup>6</sup> We also want families and communities who are involved in our Church to be informed and involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable people.<sup>7</sup> All people are encouraged to appropriately express their cultural backgrounds and racism will not be tolerated within the organisation.

We are deeply committed to creating a safe and nurturing environment for all children and young people (and other vulnerable people). Our commitment to child safety is unwavering, and we strive to ensure that every child who comes through our doors feels protected, valued, and respected. We affirm our responsibility from God to care for and protect every child entrusted to us (Mark 9:37; James 1:27).<sup>8</sup>

To help achieve this, we encourage every person attending or involved in our organisation to complete the various **Westlakes Independent Baptist Church** Safe Ministry Safeguarding course at <https://westlakes.safeministrycheck.com.au><sup>9</sup>

We have also made this policy (and further information for children, families and vulnerable people) available through our statement page, accessible online through a badge on our webpage <https://westlakes.safeministrycheck.com.au/statement>

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<sup>5</sup> OCG Standard 4 - Equity & diverse needs

<sup>6</sup> OCG Standard 2 – Children Participate & are taken seriously

<sup>7</sup> OCG Standard 3 - Families & communities are informed & involved

<sup>8</sup> OCG Standard 1 – Leadership, governance & culture

<sup>9</sup> OCG Standard 7 – Staff Education & Training

This material will help people in our community to better understand their shared responsibility to safeguard vulnerable people around our community and how to raise any concerns. We actively encourage everyone involved in our church to be involved in the effectiveness and ongoing improvement of our policies and safeguarding procedures.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Commitment to Respond to Concerns

We are committed to creating a culture where people feel safe and encouraged to raise concerns about their own or other people's safety.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, we encourage everyone in our Church and in our community to report any concerns they have about the safety and wellbeing of people connected with **Westlakes Independent Baptist Church**. We are committed to listening well and handling all concerns seriously. We will protect the confidentiality, dignity, health and well-being of all individuals involved in any concern raised. Any child-related issues will be managed with a focus on the interest of the child.<sup>12</sup>

All reports will be managed by the **Westlakes Independent Baptist Church** Safe Ministry Contacts.<sup>13</sup>

### Safe Ministry Contacts

**Eshvan Reddy, 0494 040 287, [pastoreshwan@westlakesbaptist.org.au](mailto:pastoreshwan@westlakesbaptist.org.au)**

**James Long, 0401 152 483, [jameslong10@hotmail.com](mailto:jameslong10@hotmail.com)**

The Safe Ministry Contacts (also known as Child Safety Officer) are a sub-committee of the **Westlakes Independent Baptist Church**. When any concerns or allegations are raised, the Safe Ministry Contacts will follow the Safe Ministry Incident Management Process which, depending on the circumstances, may involve reporting the concern or allegation to other entities like the Police, the relevant State Child Protection body, and the insurer of **Westlakes Independent Baptist Church**. In certain incidents the Safe Ministry Contacts will appoint an Independent Ministry Investigator to investigate allegations.

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<sup>10</sup> OCG Standard 9 – Continuous improvement

<sup>11</sup> OCG Standard 6- Child-focused complaint processes

<sup>12</sup> OCG Standard 2 – Children Participate & are taken seriously. OCG Standard 6- Child-focused complaint processes

<sup>13</sup> OCG Standard 8, 9, 10

### 3. Commitment to Screening and Training

We are committed to ensuring all leaders at **Westlakes Independent Baptist Church** are appropriately screened, supported and trained.<sup>14</sup>

This means all members of **Westlakes Independent Baptist Church**, who are involved in serving roles (including anyone working with or around children) must follow the direction of the Safe Ministry Contacts who oversee this compliance.

These ministry workers must:

- a. Be **active members** at Westlakes Independent Baptist Church;
- b. Participate in **an interview** with the Pastor to assess their suitability for ministry, including their character, understanding of safe ministry expectations, and readiness to work with vulnerable people. As part of this process, ministry workers must also provide referees who can confirm their suitability;
- c. Complete an approved **safe ministry training course** which outlines appropriate behaviour, including how to minimise the chance of harm, as well as training in how to identify and report cases of abuse (this can be completed at <https://westlakes.safeministrycheck.com.au>);
- d. Commit to the Westlakes Independent Baptist Church **Code of Conduct**, providing **two referees** including being willing to be held accountable for their behaviour;
- e. If working with children or teens, have a verified and current **Working With Children Check** (WWCC).

No-one with a criminal record of child abuse, molestation or similar offences is allowed to be involved in children or teen ministry at Westlakes Independent Baptist Church.

### 4. Commitment to Safe and Accessible Programs

We are committed to ensuring that our physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing for all involved.<sup>15</sup> Careful consideration will be given to the activities chosen, the venue, safe ratios of supervision,

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<sup>14</sup> OCG Standard 5- People Working with Children are Suitable & Supported, OCG Standard 7 – Staff Education & Training

<sup>15</sup> OCG Standard 8- Physical and online environments

appropriate toileting practices, transportation, work health and safety, parental or guardian permission and confidentiality of records kept.

The Safe Ministry Contacts Team will check-in on **Westlakes Independent Baptist Church** programs to help establish a safeguarding culture and provide ongoing guidance and training as needed.

## 5. Commitment towards Compliance

### a. Compliance with Legislation

At Westlakes Independent Baptist Church, we are committed to the protection of vulnerable people and complies with all relevant legislation and regulatory requirements applicable in our jurisdiction (including child protection, mandatory reporting, and working-with-children laws).

This commitment is implemented through:

- A documented **Safe Ministry Policy** reviewed regularly,
- **Mandatory screening** of all staff and volunteers (including background checks and reference checks),
- **Ongoing Safe Ministry training** for all ministry workers,
- Clearly defined **codes of conduct**,
- Established **incident reporting and response procedures**, including mandatory reporting where required by law.

These practices are embedded into all ministry operations and are monitored by designated leadership responsible for safeguarding.

### b. Unsupervised Settings: One-to-One Contact with Vulnerable People

The church recognises that some pastoral contexts may involve limited one-to-one interaction (e.g., hospital or home visitation). In such cases, the following safeguards are required:

- **Church visitation is conducted in pairs** or in visible/public settings,
- Ministry workers must maintain **appropriate physical, emotional, and conversational boundaries**
- Regular **check-ins and accountability structures** are in place (e.g., reporting visit completion report deacons meeting)

### c. Supervision Between Vulnerable People

Westlakes Independent Baptist Church does not permit vulnerable people (including children or at-risk individuals) to be left in unsupervised one-to-one situations with each other.

To prevent harm:

- A **minimum supervision standard** is maintained in all programs (e.g., two approved leaders present).
- Activities are conducted in **observable environments**.
- Leaders actively **monitor group interactions**.
- Clear guidelines are in place regarding **appropriate behaviour between participants**.
- Any concerning behaviour is **documented and escalated** according to reporting procedures.

These practices promote a safe environment and early identification of any inappropriate behaviour.

### d. Overnight Activities (Camps and Retreats)

In building unity and fellowship, Westlakes Independent Baptist Church conducts occasional overnight activities (e.g., camps, retreats) and is committed to ensuring these environments are safe, well-supervised, and compliant with safeguarding standards.

#### Accommodation Arrangements:

- Participants are housed in **shared, age-appropriate sleeping arrangements** (e.g., cabins or dormitory-style settings).
- Leaders are assigned to supervise groups and **do not share sleeping spaces with minors unless appropriately screened and authorised**.

#### Safeguards and Procedures:

- A **minimum leader-to-participant ratio** is maintained at all times.
- Leaders are **appropriately screened and trained** in Safe Ministry practices.
- Clear **codes of conduct** apply to all participants and leaders.
- Activities are conducted in **group settings**, with no unsupervised isolation.
- **Gender-appropriate supervision** is provided where applicable.
- **Night-time supervision protocols** are established and communicated.

## **Managing Contact and Safety:**

- Interaction between participants and leaders is **observable and accountable**.
- Boundaries regarding **physical contact and personal space** are strictly enforced.
- Any concerns, disclosures, or incidents are **promptly reported and documented**.
- Emergency procedures and **parent/guardian contact systems** are in place.

These measures ensure that overnight programs are both enriching and safe for all involved.

We are committed to creating a culture of safety, accountability, and care. All policies are regularly reviewed, ensuring that these standards are consistently applied across all ministries.

## **6. Commitment towards Biblical Foundations for Safe Ministry**

### **The Godly Role of a Ministry Worker (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:2-4)**

At Westlakes Independent Baptist Church, we recognise that serving in ministry, especially with children, teens, and vulnerable people, is not merely a task but a **sacred calling from God** (Colossians 3:23-24). Ministry workers are entrusted with care, discipleship, and protection, and Scripture provides clear guidance on the character and conduct expected of those who serve.

### **Biblical Qualities of a Ministry Worker**

#### **a. Above Reproach (1 Timothy 3:2)**

- Ministry workers must live lives that are blameless and beyond accusation.
- Our actions, words, and interactions must reflect Christ, especially when serving vulnerable people.

#### **b. Sober-Minded and Self-Controlled (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)**

- Ministry workers must demonstrate calmness, wisdom, and good judgment.
- Patience and discernment are essential when guiding children and responding to challenges.

#### **c. Respectable and Hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2)**

- Ministry workers should create a welcoming, safe, and warm environment.
- Kindness, approachability, and trustworthiness are essential.

#### **d. Able to Teach (1 Timothy 3:2)**

- While not all ministry workers are formal teachers, all must model Christlike behaviour.
- Biblical truth should be reinforced through both words and actions.

**e. Not Given to Drunkenness or Addictions (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)**

- Ministry workers must be free from substances or behaviours that impair judgment.
- Abstain from drugs, excessive alcohol, and addictive habits that compromise witness.

**f. Not Violent, But Gentle (1 Timothy 3:3)**

- Ministry workers must respond with gentleness, even in difficult situations.
- Discipline must be loving, measured, and never harsh (Ephesians 4:15).

**g. Not Quarrelsome or Greedy (1 Timothy 3:3)**

- Ministry is service, not self-gain.
- Avoid arguments, pride, and selfish motives.

**h. Faithful in the Home (1 Timothy 3:4-5)**

- Ministry workers should model godliness in their family life.
- A strong walk with Christ at home strengthens ministry effectiveness.

**i. Mature in Faith (1 Timothy 3:6)**

- Ministry workers should demonstrate spiritual maturity and stability.
- Remain rooted in Scripture and growing in wisdom.

**j. Good Reputation with Outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7)**

- Ministry workers must reflect Christ in all areas of life, workplaces, social settings, and online.
- Our testimony matters.

**k. Serving with a Pure Conscience (1 Timothy 3:9)**

- Ministry workers must hold to the faith with sincerity and integrity.
- Commit to godly living and biblical truth.

**l. Tested and Approved (1 Timothy 3:10)**

- Ministry workers should be evaluated before serving.
- Be willing to undergo training, accountability, and spiritual growth.

### **m. Faithful in All Things (1 Timothy 3:11)**

- Ministry workers must be dependable, trustworthy, and consistent.
- Keep commitments and serve diligently.

### **n. Leading by Example (1 Peter 5:2-3)**

- Ministry workers are shepherds, not dictators.
- Serve willingly, humbly, and as examples to the flock.

### **The Weight of This Calling**

Jesus warns that causing a child to stumble is a serious offence (Matthew 18:6). Thus, serving vulnerable people including children's and teen's ministry is a **divine trust** which requires us to **commit** ourselves to:

- **Personal holiness** (1 Peter 1:15-16)
- **Spiritual growth** (Colossians 2:6-7)
- **A servant's heart** (Mark 10:45)

Therefore, by embracing these biblical standards, ministry workers honour God, protect the children in our care, and set an example for the next generation of disciples.

## **7. Safe Ministry Practices for Working with Children and Vulnerable People**

### **a. Supervision and Care of Children**

- Children must always be under appropriate supervision during church activities.
- Parents or authorised guardians must sign children in and out of events.
- If personal care is required, two adult leaders/workers must be present unless otherwise agreed upon with parents.
- Adults must not be alone with children in changing areas.
- Overnight accommodation or off-site excursions require strict supervision and written parental consent.

### **b. Transporting Children**

- Best practice is to have two adults present when transporting children.

- If a child must travel alone with an adult (with parental consent), the child must sit in the back seat.
- Every child must be accounted for at the end of a journey.
- Vehicles must be registered, roadworthy, and driven by fully licensed drivers.
- No more passengers than available seatbelts.
- Children must not be transported on motorcycles during church activities.
- Alcohol or illegal drugs must not be consumed before or during transport.
- Drivers must take children directly to and from arranged venues without unauthorised detours.
- Learner or probationary drivers require written parental consent (except in emergencies).
- Any accidents must be reported immediately to the pastor, ministry coordinator, and parents.

### **c. Appropriate Conduct and Boundaries**

- Conversations must be edifying and consistent with biblical principles (Ephesians 4:29).
- Access to alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, vapes, and pornography is strictly prohibited during church activities.
- Unique situations requiring one-on-one interaction must ensure visibility and accountability.
- Physical contact must be minimal, appropriate, and publicly observable.
- Ministry workers must not give gifts to children without parental permission.

### **d. Toileting Children**

- Parents should attend to their child's toileting needs whenever possible.
- Children should be encouraged to manage themselves where appropriate.
- If assistance is required, another adult must be informed before leaving and upon returning.
- Male leaders must not assist girls, and female leaders must not assist boys.

### **e. Online & Media Safety**

- Ministry workers must not communicate privately with children online or via social media.
- Any necessary communication must include the parent or guardian.
- Photos or videos of children may only be taken with parental permission.

### **f. Illness and Injury Management**

- Injuries must be reported to the ministry coordinator and the child's parents and treated in a visible, safe location.
- First aid should be administered in the presence of another adult where possible.

## **g. Managing Inappropriate Behaviours in Children**

**Westlakes Independent Baptist Church** is committed to providing a safe, calm, and nurturing learning environment for all children. Behaviour management must always be **loving, consistent, and child-safe**, reflecting biblical principles of gentleness, patience, and respect (Ephesians 4:15).

### **Behaviour Guidance Flow**

#### **STEP 1: Gentle Redirection**

**When:** Minor disruptions, talking out of turn, lack of focus

**What to do:** • Use the child's name, give a clear, calm instruction, redirect attention to the activity

**Example language:** "Let's listen now." "Please sit with your group."

#### **STEP 2: Supportive Intervention**

**When:** Behaviour continues after redirection, child is distracting others, ministry worker needs support to continue teaching.

**What to do:** Ministry workers comes alongside the child, sits near them or removes them briefly from the group (within the room), speaks calmly and respectfully.

**Example language:** "Let's take a moment and reset." "You need to help the class by listening."

#### **STEP 3: Clear Warning & Choice**

**When:** Behaviour persists despite intervention

**What to do:** Explain the consequence clearly, Give the child a simple choice.

**Example language:** "If the behaviour continues, you will miss out on the activities and the Reward because we'll need to take you upstairs to your parents."

#### **STEP 4: Escalation to Parents**

**When:** Behaviour escalates, child is disruptive or unsafe, previous steps have not worked.

**What to do:** Child is calmly taken to their parents, provide a brief, factual explanation, no arguing, shaming, or emotional pressure.

**Important:** This is a **last necessary step after giving every opportunity**, not the first response.

### **Step 5- Aftercare & Follow Up**

- Teacher/coordinator notes the incident if needed.
- Follow-up conversation with parents may occur later (not during the service unless necessary)
- Child is welcomed back warmly the following week.

Date Instituted by **Westlakes Independent Baptist Church**: 30/04/2026

Date of next Review by **Westlakes Independent Baptist Church**: 30/04/2028

## Glossary of Policy Terminology

**Governance Body** A Governance Body is a group of people that has the authority to exercise governance over an organisation or entity. Examples of a governance body in your organisation may include the pastors, elders, committee or board members.

**Organisation** An organised group of people with a particular purpose. Your faith based organisation may be a church, mission organisation or ministry group.

**Safeguarding** Safeguarding is protecting the welfare and human rights of people that are, in some way, connected with your Organisation or its work – particularly people that may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. As such, safeguarding is part of your organisation's primary duty of care.

**Safe Ministry Policy** Statements that set expectations for decisions made, or actions taken by, members of an organisation related to the protection of rights of vulnerable people and the duties of, as well as the terms and conditions of engagement for, organisation members & volunteers.

**Safe Ministry Contact** A Safe Ministry Contact is someone in your organisation who will hear your concern, and help you work out what to do. Also previously known as the Child Safety Officer.

**Incident Management Process** A document that outlines the process of and assists Safe Ministry Contacts in responding appropriately to concerns raised.

**Vulnerable People** While the term 'vulnerable people' includes everyone under the age of 18, and any person with cognitive impairment, including intellectual disability, developmental disorders, neurological disorders, dementia, severe mental illness, or brain injury.