

West Preston Baptist Church

POLICY - Police & Working with Children checks

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Identify which church people require Police checks and Working with Children checks.
- Outline the procedures necessary to undertake these checks.

'Police checks' provide a record of any prior financial fraud or serious criminal offences.

'Working with Children checks' assists in protecting children from sexual and physical harm by ensuring that people who work with, or care for, them are subject to a screening process. They are conducted by the Department of Justice & Regulation and screen a person's criminal records and in some cases their professional conduct. The WWC Check focuses on serious sexual, violent and drug offences. The Department continues to monitor these records for the life of the WWC Check.

1. Police Checks:

Policy for Police Checks:

A police check is required for all senior leaders prior to commencing in their role and periodically thereafter. At WPBC, people in the following roles must have a Police Check:

- Minister
- Treasurer (renewed annually)
- All deacons
- Worship coordinator
- Pastoral Care coordinator
- Children's ministry coordinator
- Any other ministry coordinator, if new initiatives arise,
- Safe church concerns person/s
- Anyone regularly handling church money – currently this is the Hall Hire coordinator and those who count the offering.

The checks must be done every 3 years, except for the Treasurer which will be done annually. The results of the check must be verified by a "nominated" person. This person will be the Church Secretary. The results of the check for the Church Secretary must be verified by another deacon or the minister.

The only information recorded in church records will be the **date** the Church Secretary verified the result of the check. This will be recorded in the "Police Check Log.xlsx" on Microsoft Teams (Secretary > General > Safe Church > Police Checks). The purpose of keeping this information is to ensure the next check is done when required.

The procedure for how to undertake a police check is outlined in a separate instruction document.

a) Results of Checks:

The results of a police check are provided by the Victoria Police on a **strictly confidential** basis and are only provided to the applicant. The information must then be provided by the applicant to the Church Secretary of deacons.

Once this information is provided to the Secretary, it must not be passed on to any other person or organization. The information must not be included in any data base or filing system. When the verifying procedure is complete, the information provided must be returned to the applicant.

A police check will either;

- State that the applicant has no disclosable record, or
- Give details of any disclosable record (including, where appropriate, if the individual has been charged with offences, or is under investigation regarding outstanding matters that have not yet been heard at court).

b) In the advent of the applicant having a disclosable record:

Victoria Police recommends that consideration of the information contained in the National Police Certificate provided by the applicant should form only one part of the assessment process for the applicant's suitability for employment/voluntary purposes. In forming assessments, the nominated person will advise the Deacons. Where relevant information is provided, the nominated person will consider:

- the scope of the applicant's criminal history
- the nature of the offence and the relationship of the offence to the position/profession
- the period of time that has elapsed since the offence took place
- whether the offence was committed as an adult or juvenile
- the severity of any penalty imposed

After taking these points into consideration as part of an overall decision-making process, the suitability of the applicant remains with the deacons.

2. Working with Children (WWC) checks:

Policy for WWC checks:

Working with Children checks are a legal requirement for any organisation that is involved in child-related activities, and legislated under the Victorian Working with Children Check Act (2005). Full details can be found at <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>

A valid Working with Children check is required for all adults who have regular, direct and unsupervised contact with children. At WPBC, people in the following roles must have a WWC:

- Minister
- All deacons
- Children's ministry coordinator
- Children's ministry leaders (plans the program)
- Children's ministry helpers (support the program on the day)
- Sunday morning prayer team & prayer coordinator
- Pastoral care team
- Safe church concerns person/s

NOTE: Although there are exemptions to this requirement under the Act (for example, parents volunteering in an activity in which their child participates, and teachers, who are assessed under a similar scheme by their registration body) WPBC still requires a WWC check for these people, as this is the only way to ensure ongoing notification of relevant offences.

The **'nominated person'** responsible for the WWC checks will be the church Secretary or approved delegate. The delegate must be approved by the Diaconate and will be a member of the church leadership group.

The nominated person will use the "Check Status Online Enquiry" to confirm the validity or authenticity of a WWC Check card before appointing the volunteer to the children's ministry team. This enquiry is also done **every 6 months**, to ensure the ongoing validity of all cards. If the nominated person also requires their own WWC check, the Minister will confirm the validity of their status.

Information stored:

The information recorded in church records will be:

- Unique Application Receipt Number (received when they lodge their application).
- Record the WWC Check Number, which is different from their Application Receipt Number.
- Confirmation that the number has been checked every 6 months

This information will be kept in a secure private place.

Procedure for Working with Children checks:

A working with children check is applied for online. [Working with Children Check \(service.vic.gov.au\)](http://service.vic.gov.au). Applicants will need to prove their identity, fill out an online form, make payment if applicable and consent to passing information to WPBC.

If a prior WWC Check exists, volunteers are required to notify the Department of Justice that WPBC is to be added to their list of volunteer/employee sites. <https://service.vic.gov.au/update-your-working-with-children-check-details>

Volunteers can work with children once their application has been submitted.

Once an application is processed, the volunteer will either

- Receive a WWC check card.** This needs to be shown to the nominated person or children's ministry coordinator **OR**
- be issued with an **Interim Negative Notice**. The volunteer is giving an opportunity to make a submission to the Department of Justice as to why they consider they should pass the check. By law, the volunteer must inform the organisation of this. Whilst it is still legal for people to work with children after being issued an **Interim Negative Notice**, due to exclusions in the General Liability Insurance Policy that covers all Baptist Churches in Australia, the church will not allow anyone with an interim Negative Notice to continue working with children until the matter is resolved.

This will be resolved with the issuing of a WWC check card, or

- the issuing of: **Negative Notice. The church will receive notification that the applicant has been issued a Negative Notice, but not the reason.** (see below)
Any person who receives a Negative Notice is not permitted to work with children in any way. The following paragraph outlines the steps that are to be taken if this situation arises.

NEGATIVE NOTICES and other persons of concern:

A person of concern is someone who:

- i. has failed a working with children or police check
- ii. has pleaded guilty to, been convicted of, or has admitted to a sexual criminal offense;
- iii. is currently charged with a sexual offence;
- iv. has been the subject of an allegation of a sexual offense and this was not properly investigated;
- v. is deemed to be a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults because of an adverse risk assessment; or
- vi. exhibits constant wandering across other people's sexual boundaries.

If it comes to light that a person who attends WPBC is a person of concern, that person needs to enter into a **WRITTEN SAFETY AGREEMENT** as a condition of their ongoing participation in church life and activities.

The BUV will be advised immediately in this instance, and the **BUV Professional Standards Office** will be involved in preparing the safety plan.

References:

1. "An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern - Individual Accountability & Safety Agreements". <https://www.buv.com.au/resources/professional-standards>

Document revision	
Review Period:	24 months
Next review due:	August 2025

Document control					
Version number	Description	Author	Position	Approval Date:	Approved by:
1	Development of policy	Tony Williams	Deacon Treasurer	15 August 2010	Diaconate
2	Review of policy and incorporation of Working with Children check	Paul Hicks	Secretary	14 th May 2012	Diaconate
3	annual review & update	David Buesnel	Minister		Diaconate
4	annual review & update	Elizabeth Williams	Deacon	19 August 2014	Diaconate
5	Annual review	Kerry Edwards	deacons	13/7/15	deacons
6	Biannual review and updating in light of Safe Church changes	Elizabeth Williams	Secretary of Deacons	30/6/17	deacons
7	Additional requirement for hall hire and playgroup coordinators to have police checks.	Elizabeth Williams	Secretary of Deacons	6/8/18	deacons
8	Biannual review	Kirsty O'Donohue	Deacon	3/3/19	Deacons
9	Add item e) in Procedure for Working with Children checks	Jonathan Mynard	Secretary of Deacons	5/1/21	
10	Additional roles required to have police and WWC checks Edit procedure for how to apply for a WWC	Elizabeth Williams	Compliance team	14/08/2023	deacons