



# child protection

the MINISTRY PAPERS

**LEADERS:...**before taking someone through this paper, review the two key introductory MINISTRY PAPERS: 'the ministry training church' and 'meeting one to one'.

Connect. Grow. Serve. After **connecting** to God through trusting in Christ, a vital way we can **grow** is through a growth group and a vital way we can **serve** is through a ministry team. It is essential for all leaders serving in ministry teams to be familiar with our child protection policy. The paper is designed for your child protection officer to introduce you to the policy.

The Bible shows us that we live in a moral universe, because it is created by the holy God. Therefore, our actions matter, they have consequences and effect relationships. The doctrine of the Trinity tells us that relationship, and personal relationships are not incidental to reality, but are the heart of reality.

The church should be a refuge for children and young people, and indeed anyone who is vulnerable and needy. It should be somewhere they can feel safe and find help. It is therefore important that we as a church have both a policy and a process to deal with allegations of abuse and to minimise the risk of abuse occurring in the future. This also mitigates the biggest risk to the church: the misrepresentation and dishonouring of God and damage to His mission caused by the occurrence of abuse itself and also failures in the handling of allegations of abuse, both of which undermine our credibility and our message.

That is why we have Breaking the Silence, more commonly called BTS3. It's our policy and process. It is more than just a document that allows us to meet our legal and social obligations. It discusses the issue of abuse from a church perspective, provides a framework for assistance, prevention and education, and allows us to respond appropriately where an allegation is made or an incident is reported. And it covers more than just children. It applies to all leaders in every situation. This Ministry Paper will give you a glimpse, mainly focusing on the Code of Conduct. For more info go to [www.pssd.org.au](http://www.pssd.org.au) and click on "Child Protection Unit"



## read 1 Peter 5:1-4

1. How are leaders within the church described?

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2. What attitude should we have to our roles as ministry leaders?

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3. How can you better serve the children or young people in your ministry?

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## our policy

You can read our policy on the posters and brochures around the church.

**Breaking the Silence 3 is more specific in its dealings with abuse other than child sexual abuse. As a church we are concerned for all people, regardless of age, who are abused in any way.**

### Breaking the Silence covers:

- child abuse,
- sexual abuse of children and young people, and
- the abuse of authority by those in position of authority within the church

# the impact of abuse

When we allow abuse to occur within the church, when we ignore the impact that abuse has on those in our care, or when we respond to allegations by suppressing the truth, we strike at the heart of our relationship with God as His church. For the sake of the gospel and God's holy name we must ensure that we make every effort to prevent abuse within the church, help those who are hurting, offer the gospel to those who offend and learn to respond appropriately when confronted by abuse.

While seeking justice for the vulnerable among us we must also recognise that there is the possibility of vexatious, false, mischievous or misconceived allegations being made. These allegations, whether deliberately malicious or sincere but misconceived, can have an enormously damaging impact on those accused. BTS3 not only seeks justice for those that have been abused, but also to put into place preventative measures that reduce the possibility of false allegations being made. Further, it seeks to establish a process that gives both the complainant and the accused access to justice, careful investigation, confidentiality and to pastoral care and professional services.

Everyone involved in ministry with children or young people is required to report evidence of conduct which harms a child.  
That means you!

Regardless of whether there is a legal requirement to report abuse, the church has agreed that any person working with children or young people must report any abuse. Things that **MUST** be reported include:

- any sexual offence, or sexual misconduct, committed against with or in the presence of a child or young person, including a child pornography offence (that is pornography showing children),
- any assault, ill treatment or neglect of a child or young person, or
- any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child or young person, whether or not these actions take place with the consent of the child or young person. This also includes situations where a child is living with Domestic Violence.

Conduct reasonable for discipline or management of children or what is reasonably necessary to attract attention is excluded.

If a complaint is made to you:

LISTEN, listen, listen... and do not add anything.

Ascertain the gist of the allegation. Ask what can be done to make them feel safe.

Obtain appropriate details while being aware that at this early stage it is not appropriate to probe too deeply.

Report: make notes of what was said – report to the police if it is urgent and to the Child Protection Unit directly or via your local leadership immediately.

Provide details of the process and who you will talk to.

*Memorise the above LAORP points because you'll only get one chance and what you say or do could have a big impact on how the matter proceeds including encouraging the victim to take the matter further and affecting the outcome of future legal proceedings. **Test yourself now.***

## who do you tell?

Any report must go to the church's Child Protection Unit but you may also have someone that your church has nominated to take reports locally. It may also be necessary to report to DOCS or the police but your local representative and the Child Protection Unit can assist you. See page 4 for contact details. Do you know who to tell locally?

## sensitivity is vital...

at all stages of the process. children and young people need to know that they can talk to someone and know that the information will be treated sensitively.

Do not express disbelief, rather affirm the person for telling you.

Discuss any fears they have with them but be careful that the comfort you give is achievable. For example, you can't promise them that the alleged offender won't find out.

Talk to the Child Protection Unit or your local child protection representative immediately.



## Think about whether this conduct would need to be reported:

A toddler at MOPS who is always in dirty clothes, no shoes and soiled nappies

Yes  No

A girl from youth group won't swim and you notice bruising under her clothing.

Yes  No

A kindergarten child who walks alone to and from kids club to home which is several streets away.

Yes  No

A female youth group leader who sends SMS messages to a particular male student on a daily basis.

Yes  No

A child in crèche who when asked to draw their family draws their father hitting their mother.

Yes  No

An outgoing kids club member who suddenly becomes reserved and becomes very nervous when his father collects him.

Yes  No

# our code of conduct

It is essential at all times for those in a position of authority within the church to maintain a level of professional behaviour which separates them from those to whom they are caring and cannot be misconstrued by them or others. The following are boundaries set by the church and, while they are not intended to be definitive and must be read in conjunction with the provisions of Breaking the Silence, they must be adhered to by those in a position of authority within the church and may be used for guidance when setting their personal boundaries.

The following constitutes our Code of Conduct for behaviour for a person in a position of authority within the church:

1. You will not be involved in any sexual behaviour with a person below the age of consent or a person under your authority, pastoral care or counselling.
2. You will not exhibit behaviour that could be considered to be coercion or grooming behaviour.
3. You will not make any sexual innuendos such as suggestive looks, sounds, words, acts or gestures.
4. You will not make any sexual comments, jokes or show any sexual visual material.
5. You will not ask any questions about the intimate details of a person's sexual life. Very occasionally, it may be necessary within the context of pastoral care to ask questions about a person's sexual life or history. This should be done extremely carefully and with another person present (such as the person's husband or wife or a trusted friend). You must never give detailed revelations about your own sexual life.
6. You will not give any inappropriate gifts or correspondence (including email and text messaging), including those of a sexual, suggestive or romantic nature.
7. You will not touch, hug, or kiss any person in a way that is inappropriate to the situation, or uncomfortable or confusing for the receiver.
8. You will not touch any sexual part of the body, including the "only kidding" or accidental occasions of sexual touch.
9. You will not violate a person's right to physical privacy and personal space, including being alone in the bedroom or bathroom or inappropriate exposure during activities that require dressing or changing clothes.
10. You will not visit a child or young person in their own home unless a parent is present or you visit with another person in a position of authority within the church with parental permission.
11. You will not conduct a camp or other activity involving overnight accommodation without appropriate "camp parents" (ideally a married couple over the age of 25 years, of known maturity and Christian commitment) approved by the supervising body.
12. You will not provide any form of accommodation for any reason where there is not strict segregation by sex, with the exception of married couples and families. Supervision of children and/or young people must be provided by a person of the same sex.
13. You will not participate in or allow nude swimming or other such activities.
14. You will not participate in or allow initiations and secret ceremonies.
15. You will ensure that any activity involving children and/or young people are open to observation by parents and other adults with a legitimate interest.
16. You will not take advantage of the perception of physical contact, affection and learned sexual actions that some victims of abuse display.
17. You will not take advantage of the conscious or unconscious use of sexually provocative behaviour that some victims of abuse use to meet their own needs for affection or other requirements.
18. You will ensure that when you are providing pastoral care or working with members of the opposite sex that there are other people in close proximity or within hearing distance, regardless of where the activity is taking place.
19. You will not allow a child to sleep in close proximity to an adult, other than a parent or guardian, unless there is a significant separation, and privacy of all parties is respected.
20. You will not allow an adult to share accommodation with one child or young person only unless they are a parent or guardian.
21. You will not drive a child or young person unaccompanied.



Discuss any conduct that you are surprised is included as inappropriate in this Code.

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The Code of Conduct does not cover all situations, for example what do you think would be appropriate if a child in your care needs to go to the toilet?

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The Code of Conduct is all about boundaries. These don't just apply to ministers. They apply to anyone with a position of authority within the church, paid or unpaid, and to all those who work with children and young people. Being in this position demands that we are more careful in maintaining appropriate boundaries that:

- protect us from false, misconceived, malicious or vexatious accusation,
- create an environment where abuse is difficult to hide and where those in our care are protected, and
- ensure that proper procedures for dealing with allegations are adhered to at all times.

It is important to realise that boundaries are not simply about sexual boundaries, although this is the most common problem. Other boundaries may be crossed by those in ministry because of their unique and powerful role in people's lives. Whenever someone is vulnerable, those in a position of authority within the church must actively maintain appropriate boundaries, rather than passively assuming that they are there.

**holes in the fence**

Did you know that points 18, 19, 20 and 21 of the Code of Conduct can be changed at a local level? This is because these have to apply differently in every different place where we do ministry. Do you know what applies at your church?



**read 1 Peter 1:15**

1. Why is it important for us to be holy?

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2. Think about all the different people you work with. What are some personal boundaries that you think you should have?

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3. How would you deal with a child or young person wanting to talk to you privately about something?

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4. What would you do if a child or young person in your care gets injured? Who do you tell? How do you make a record of it?

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5. Discuss how you manage and/or discipline the children or young people in your ministry, ensuring that all methods are appropriate considering their age and maturity.

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**want more training?**



Get the Breaking the Silence DVD/Video and Workbook from the Child Protection Unit. It's everything you need to know about BTS3 in a two hour training package.

**report to...**



**Child Protection Unit** – 02 9690 9324 or 0427 421 467, emcclean@pcnsw.org.au

**National**  
Kids Help Line  
1800 55 1800

**NSW**  
DoCS Help Line 13 21 11  
DoCS Mandatory Reporting Line 133 627

**ACT**  
Family Services – (Nth) 02 62071466  
or (Sth) 02 62071069 or (ah) 02 62070720

**NT**  
F&CSO Reporting line  
1800 700 250

**QLD**  
Dept of Families 0732248045  
or (ah) 1800 811 810  
Crisis Care 07 3235 9999  
or 1800 177 135

**SA**  
Child abuse report line  
13 14 78

**TAS**  
Human Services (24 hrs) 1300 737 639  
or 03 62307833

**VIC**  
Human Services  
03 9616 777  
Child Protection Crisis Line (24 hrs) 13 12 78

**WA**  
Family & Children's Services  
08 9222 2555  
or 1800 622 258  
Crisis Care Unit  
08 9223 111  
or (24 hrs) 1800 199 008

**your child protection officer is...**